FAILURE TO DELIVER: TRANSITIONAL MASCULINITIES IN LATE AND POST FRANCOIST FILMS (1963-1984)

BY

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DISSEETATION

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ABSTRACT

After his electoral victory in the 1982 General Elections, Alfonso Guerra, the Vice President of the first Socialist Government after Franco’s dictatorship declared, using a very colloquial Spanish expression: “Vamos a poner a España que no la va a conocer ni la madre que la parió” (we are going to change Spain so radically that not even her own mother is going to recognize her). That radical change proposed by Guerra had in fact started almost twenty years earlier: the 1960s and 70s constitute a period that was decisive for many aspects of Spanish society, ripe with transformations that would make the country a totally different one. After 38 years of dictatorship, the death of general Franco on November 20th, 1975 marked the symbolic end of an era, and the official beginning of a transformation that had begun more than a decade earlier. The 1960s brought a number of economic and social changes that led the country from Franco’s post-civil war isolationism and his regime’s tight control of culture and ideology to the opening to new ideas that were already circulating in the rest of Western Europe. The transformation was not only a political affair, but a revolution that, socially speaking, would not leave a stone unturned.

Among the many social changes that were contemporary to this political upheaval, gender roles suffered a transformation that was equal—if not greater—in grade to the general change so colorfully described by Alfonso Guerra. I aim to study one aspect of that amazing transformation, and in particular, the way it affected masculine gender roles. “Failure to Deliver: Transitional Masculinities in Late and Post Francoist Films (1963-1984),” explores the evolution of models of masculinity in mainstream cinema during these transitional years. This period is considered as one of the most prolific in Spanish film, as its corpus includes more than a thousand films that chronicled the social transformation from perspectives, themes, genres and variations in an almost limitless diversification. This short but extraordinarily fruitful period of Spanish cinema ended with the Law of Cinematography of 1982
and the progressive assimilation of its topics and styles to other European cinemas.

I start by examining the historical circumstances that made possible the shift between the Catholic, patriarchal Spain that had remained basically unchanged for almost 200 years to the post-modern country that has become internationally known for its liberal views on the last years of the first decade of the 21st century. Economic, political and social factors had their role in Spain evolving from a mainly rural, underdeveloped country to an industrialized and urban society. The gist of such transformation can be summarized in a period of roughly 25 years: from the middle sixties, marked by the country’s economic boom, called ‘desarrollismo,’ to the early eighties, and more exactly 1982, when the Socialist Party won the general elections and had access to power after almost 40 years of illegality under Franco’s dictatorship. The clash between the conservative ideology endorsed by Francoism and the new social models that trickled into the country due to increased contact with the rest of Europe. Fueled on the one hand by migration of workers to Germany, Switzerland, and France, and, on the other hand, by the arrival of thousands of Northern European tourists to the Spanish beaches, Spaniards were brought into close contact new ideologies, cultural models and systems of belief.

One of the most interesting aspects of the cinematic corpus of the period is the way that filmmakers negotiated the existence of censorship, and the effects of its disappearance. The end of censorship did not bring a sudden leap in quality, but it allowed the expression of social and political discourses that had been repressed for years. In such a context popular cinema appeared as a especially productive medium to express what had theretofore been clandestine or simply as a way to chronicle the social and political transformation that was taking place. Although the censorship of scripts pre-shootings ends by law in February of 1975, it is not until 1977 that this practice disappeared completely; at the same time that the country celebrates its first free and democratic elections after the dictatorship.

In these circumstances political ideology became a pervasive presence in Spanish films of the period, but always within the limits of a realistic and generic formula that would make
them accessible to popular audiences and not compromise their commercial careers. Thus, these films kept attracting audiences under the guise of generic formulas like the musical, the comedy or the melodrama. If in some case comedies or musicals would vindicate the ideological structures of the past, as the decade advanced melodramas were increasingly used as a way to build a critique of the politics of the dictatorship, while they appealed to nostalgic feelings and started a vein of social criticism.

While the political aspects of this revolutionary period have been discussed exhaustively, issues of gender in Spanish film of the period have attracted much less attention until very recently. The transition period is particularly interesting when thinking of how the radical change in “systems of belief” marks a vertiginous evolution in the models of masculinity that were being given space in mainstream narratives. And cinema, in a country where the better part of the population had been denied access to higher education during almost forty years of dictatorship, remained one of the most important venues for the circulation of ideas, topics and concerns that affected the greater part of Spanish society.

My dissertation explores the images and functions of masculinity as represented by four extremely popular Spanish actors/entertainers in mainstream Spanish cinema during the 1960s and 1970s. Although these films have been categorized as banal (particularly in Spain), my contention is that their popularity is linked to the fact that they capture the anxieties and projections of a changing society. I argue that the protagonists’ failed attempt to reconcile Francoist moral values with neo-liberal modernization produces an inevitable contradictory performance of maleness, one that, often unwittingly, defies Spanish heteronormative masculinity. Of particular interest to me is how their star personas can be linked to specific moments in the nation’s history, as well as particular ways in which their fictional masculinities represent or contest traditional normative patriarchy and its relation with ideas of the nation.

Along my dissertation’s four chapters, I chart the evolution from the folksy, patriarchal image of singer and actor Manolo Escobar and his roles in rags-to-riches narratives in
“españoladas” or Spanish folkloric musicals, to more critical views of masculinities in other popular genres such as comedies and melodramas. My first chapter deals with Escobar’s model of a working-class man who reaches success and assumes the traditional values of patriarchy supported by Francoist ideology. In it, I study chronologically a number of his films that faithfully reflect national concerns (immigration, idealized representation of the rapid development of industrial and tourism sectors) in a rapidly changing society. My second chapter explores the roles played by Alfredo Landa, whose characteristic depictions of the stereotype of faulty Spanish masculinity were described with the generic term “Landismo.” While Escobar always played characters who succeeded in their attainment of the privileges of traditional masculinity, Landa’s male characters always faced a quandary. They invariably appear at a loss when, on the one side they are made to comply with the traditional role of family provider and dutiful husband, while on the other they also must face the new obligations—and temptations—that came with Spain’s late industrialization and development of a potent tourist industry. I also present the evolution of Landa’s later roles in films of the 1980s and 1990s, where he seems typecasted into characters who appear increasingly out of touch with the changing social mores. Once sexy comedies were made obsolete by the end of censorship, his star persona was increasingly identified with an ever more tragic narratives of old-fashioned men who were defeated in their struggle to impersonate a successful image of masculinity.

My study also explores masculinities in transition to more nuanced and melodramatic models that emerged after the end of Francoist censorship, including the politicized characters—such as homosexuals and terrorists—played by actor José Sacristán. The third chapter analyzes the male melodramas in which Sacristán came to personify the Spanish average man and his “heroic” quest to ride the times. Not only did he represent characters who embodied the political fight for democracy, but also explored the limits of new gender definitions in narrations where women abandoned their traditional submission or by playing a number of homosexual roles, in melodramas were “coming out” could only be explicit when associated
with a progressive political stand. The evolution of José Sacristán’s star persona experienced a radical transformation. From his early comedic roles, similar to Alfredo Landa’s representations of faulty masculinity, he went on to play a number of prominent roles in the films of the “Tercera vía” (the third way.) These name described a number of melodramas of the late seventies in which middle-aged characters struggled with the social transformations of the period by trying to shed a past of sexual and political repression and embrace the new post-Francoist freedoms. In them, Sacristán played characters who look for different models of masculinity, and often sublimate their repressions by trying to assume political leadership or a progressive lifestyle. Later on, this new model of masculinity included sexual nuances, as in the films of Eloy de la Iglesia—who assumed a political and moral stance with his melodramas about social outcasts—in which Sacristán played roles related not only to progressive politics but also to sexual deviancy.

The final chapter of my dissertation is devoted to the actress Bibi Andersen, who first became famous in the early 1970s as a transsexual whose image became an icon of the social transformations that the whole country had gone through. I examine how her initial marginality found a way to become mainstream and her image was negotiated in Spanish media. More precisely, I look at films that narrativize that evolution and became poignant chronicles of the deep transformation that gender definitions suffered in little more than twenty years. From one of the first Spanish films on transsexuality, *Cambio de sexo* (Vicente Aranda, 1977), where she plays herself, to Pedro Almodóvar’s early films, in which her roles are ironic comments not only of film genres, but also of traditional gender roles. Cast as a femme fatale, a mother who leaves her daughter to her transsexual ex-lover, or as a lesbian jail chick, her image renders a satiric comment at the same time that opens a world of endless possibility when gender ascriptions are concerned. In fact, her contemporary ubiquitous image in the media as an elegant middle-aged woman, is not only constantly present in Spanish television’s talk shows, but is also the public image for a line of beauty products. Bibi Andersen—who now has changed her name to a more Spanish version, Bibiana Fernández—
bears witness to the fact that star discourses are closely related with social upheaval and change. Stars can become indissolubly associated with particular genres, but they can also trade on this relationship later on their careers, exemplifying social trends and evolution. In the case of Andersen, her constant evolution unveils the power of mainstream media to assimilate marginal discourses and commodify them for mass consumption. But if we assume a historical perspective, Andersen’s success in remaining a public figure points to a contemporary tendency towards recovering certain gender models that at one point seemed at the verge of extinction and revalidate them through performativity.

In summary, my dissertation studies the evolution of the masculine role models in Spanish mainstream cinema during the transition to democracy. Based upon insights drawn from Film Studies methodologies such as Star and Genre Studies, I argue that this process reflects the anxiety and self-perceptions of Spaniards as well as the relation between gender and ideas of the nation. I argue that upon awakening from a 40 year stagnant period of patriarchal traditionalism, Spanish society needed to come to terms with the paradigms of new urban, industrialized and late capitalistic modes in a comparatively short period of time, and that the fast transformation of masculine roles in mainstream film is one of the main witness of its consequences.
To my mother and sister, for their unconditional support.

To Xavier, for his love and patience.

To my grandfather, who set the ball rolling by giving me art books and novels when I was ten years old.

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Introduction

"Vamos a poner a España que no la va a conocer ni la madre que la parió”
(After us, Spain is going to be so changed that not even her own mother is going to recognize her)

—Alfonso Guerra.

After his electoral victory in the 1982 General Elections, Alfonso Guerra, the vicepresident of the first Socialist Government after Francisco Franco’s dictatorship declared, using a famous Spanish expression: “Vamos a poner a España que no la va a conocer ni la madre que la parió.” That radical change proposed by Guerra had in fact begun almost twenty years earlier: the 1960s and 1970s constitute a period that was decisive for the Spanish society, one that was ripe with political, economic and cultural transformations that would lead the country into a totally different direction. The death of general Franco on 20th November 1975 marked not only the transition to democracy for Spain, but also the symbolic end of an era, as well as the official beginning of a transformation that had begun more than a decade earlier. The 1960s marked a number of economic and social changes that led the country from Franco’s post civil war isolationist regime, with its tight cultural and ideological control to one that welcomed new ideas that had been already circulating in the rest of Western Europe. This transitional period not only witnessed a political change, but also a social revolution that would leave no stone unturned.

One of the most influential changes of the period was the cultural reconstruction of
traditional gender roles, equal—if not bigger—in grade to the general change so colorfully described by Alfonso Guerra. From a society in which gender roles were rigidly defined, the Spanish population gradually came to accept and assimilate the new mores imported by way of the increasing contact with Western Europe. This newly liberated cultural space throughout the 1970s provided the site for the emergence of a timid liberation from moral constrain inherited from the dictatorship. This space of freedom also redefined myriad possibilities for new sexual and gender expressions. These expressions were only possible in the realm of the imaginary until the nascent democracy finally legalized divorce, contraception, abortion and homosexuality (whose public display was punished with jail time under Franco’s administration).

This dissertation aims to study one aspect of this amazing transformation in an era of progressive opening of political, economic and cultural barriers that had been unthinkable under the political and social circumstances under the dictatorship. In particular, my project will address the ways masculine gender roles came to be redefined in Spanish films. The study of masculinities is increasingly gaining pride of place in Spanish scholarship, as the works of Fouz-Hernández or Paul Julian Smith bear witness. Along similar lines, this work will provide a historiographical revision of the images of Spanish traditional masculinity and its transformation during the last years of Franco’s dictatorship and the period that followed his demise and the transition to a democratic government. The objects of my historical and cultural analysis of Spanish society and culture are popular films of the period between the early 1960s and the early 1980s. Popular films are part of a coherent body of national narratives that map the slow transformation away from the traditional model of patriarchal masculinity that was so useful for Franco. The dictatorship presented a model of a nation that relied heavily on a nationalist stance, and included the presentation of Francisco Franco as authoritarian father of a country that needed to be firmly guided away from dangerous forms of modernization and back onto the path of the traditional model of Spanishness. The evolution to a new model of masculinity, including the acceptance of more flexible gender
roles and sexual orientations. However, this process was complicated by the negotiation of new economic conditions as well as by the absence of a nascent feminist conscience in a society largely defined by its profoundly sexist attitudes.

Within a theoretical frame that includes cultural theory and film and gender studies, I will examine popular films of the period to see how stars' narratives and film genres worked as vehicles to implement or to question the rigidity of gender roles. We will see how genres such as the "Españolada" (the Spanish folkloric musical), the "sexy" comedy or masculine melodramas progressively define the possibility of deviance from the traditional patriarchal model. Another tool that has proved extremely useful when examining different models of masculinity is stars studies. The Spanish stars whose particular expression of gender I examine in my dissertation include Manolo Escobar, Alfredo Landa, José Sacristán and Bibi Andersen. All of these have been—and still are—stars whose impersonations of gender can be considered as highly representative. They are significant because they portray stereotypes that go from the dominant model of patriarchal male heterosexuality represented by Escobar, to Andersen’s particular version of transsexuality. Furthermore, these stars' appeal Spanish audiences during the late 70s made them not only part of popular culture but also the successive steps in a process which included the “mainstreaming” of possibilities of gender expression which would have been considered totally marginal under the dictatorship. An essential first step to this study starts with the examination of the historical circumstances that made possible the political and social shift from the Catholic, patriarchal Spain which had remained unchanged for almost 200 years, to the post-modern country that has now become internationally known for its liberal views.¹

¹ This image of openness that has been widely exported cinematically speaking by filmmakers like Pedro Almodóvar is not the only argument: Same-sex marriages were legalized in 2005, and currently the Law of Abortion is being revised following the many protests and requests for a more open and permissive version.
Historical Circumstances and Social Transformation

Spain has evolved from a mainly rural, underdeveloped country to an industrialized and urban society. Such changes were influenced by various economic, political, and social factors in a period of roughly twenty-five years. In the mid-’, the country welcomed its economic boom, called “desarrollismo” And in the early eighties, the Socialist Party gained political power and emerged from almost forty years of illegality under Franco’s dictatorship when in 1982, the party won the general elections. It is not surprising that the Socialist Party’s main slogan for their campaign was ”Change” (El cambio), which certainly summarized and banked on the expectations of the majority of the Spanish society.

Thanks to the massive economic liberalization of the 1960s and 1970s, the late Franco years saw the introduction in the country of the modes of international capitalism. Spain’s rapid modernization was reined by official Francoist propaganda under the policy of “development without change” (Crumbaugh 261). Thus, the atavistic and politically repressive ideology of the dictatorship was still being promoted during the latter stages of the dictatorship, as it was being showcased as compatible with the country’s transformation into a consumer capitalist society. Franco’s regime encouraged rapid capitalist development, which was accompanied by the opening of its geopolitical borders that promised an increased social freedom. Until the 1950s, Franco’s governments followed the fascist model of war economy which was implanted in the years 1937-39. This model was dominated by the political policy of autarky and interventionism, a policy which supported the notion of self-reliance, whereby the country must produce everything it needed, regardless of the cost. That control, presented as a political ideal, worked as long as the international shortages resulting from the Second World War remained the norm. But later on, while the Marshall Plan set the rest of Western Europe on its feet, Spain’s ostracism, as a fascist state, was the norm that dictated its isolation from the international money market, and made clear the political implications of the autarky. Those were the “years of hunger” (marked by a per capita income that had
been reduced by almost one-fifth compared to that of 1936.)

The late 1950s signaled the beginning of a deep economical transformation. A team of professionals called “the technocrats”, who belonged to the Catholic organization, Opus Dei, entered the government. These technocrats introduced a new economic policy which sought to integrate the country into the world of Western capitalism and the European market. Their 1959 policy of “Plan de Estabilización” opened the country to foreign investment and devaluated the peseta, hoping to force Spain into a bigger reliance on export earnings. Gradually, as the Spanish government became more cognizant of its economic and financial interests, the country slowly evolved into a capitalist, market economy. This economic movement proved to be so successful that by the 1970s, the opposition government repeatedly denounced the danger and evils of domination by multinational companies (Carr 50-54). This was the political foundation for the “economic miracle” of the 1960s, one that had as a consequence the dramatic growth of metallurgy, the chemical industry, food processing, as well as the car industries.  

There were also other social aspects that contributed to the country’s transformation. Rural poverty experienced during the ‘hunger years’ drove hundreds of thousands to Spanish cities and to the factories of France and Germany. More than 1,300,000 Spaniards emigrated to other European countries, while the mobility inside Spain affected 4,000,000 people, from a population of little more than 30 million (Fusi 355). Another consequence of these migrations was the rapid process of urbanization; that meant a total transformation for Spanish society, for the concentration of the population in urban centers facilitated education and social homogenization. External migration and tourism also helped to encourage more tolerant attitudes than the one that the Catholic Church and the Francoist government had endorsed.

\[\text{2} \quad \text{When the SEAT factory was set in Barcelona in 1952 its managers worried that the market might not absorb a 100 cars a month, by 1975, the national car industry was producing three quarters of a million of cars a year (Carr and Fusi, 56.)}\]

\[\text{3} \quad \text{By 1970, 1,600,000 Andalusians were living outside their native land, (Carr 66), and by the mid 70s, the active population engaged in agriculture had fallen from 50% to 15% (Pérez-Díaz 11).} \]

\[\text{4} \quad \text{Between 1960 and 1975 the number of secondary school students multiplied sevenfold.}\]
during the long years of the dictatorship (Longhurst 18).

But the most striking transformation was the one experienced by the service sector, which was notably fueled by the growth of the economy, and multiplied by tourism. It was its expansion that profoundly modified the society of the 1970s. Three factors contributed to this economic growth: the tourist boom, the earnings of emigrants working abroad and foreign loans. Particularly extreme was the growth of tourism. By 1973, 30 million foreign tourists brought 3,000,000 dollars to the Spanish economy (Carr and Fusi 57). This transformation could be seen in the rapid process of urbanization as the population concentrated in urban areas and on the Mediterranean coasts. But the consequences of the tourist boom were also sociological: Hooper relates how traumatic the contact was between a society whose principles had remained almost frozen in time for the better part of two hundred years and a new way of life in which men seemed to have no shortage of money and women walked around virtually naked (20). The result was shock in many cases, and that happened more often among men than among women. 5 This outcome is not surprising considering the dramatic contrast between the role that men were traditionally expected to fulfill in Spanish society, their economic hardships, the rigidness of their gender roles, and the abyss that separated them from the new economic, social, and sexual perspectives that tourism appeared to suggest.

The process of industrialization and economic change that had taken fifty years in Great Britain and France, materialized in Spain in a mere twenty years. Shock among the population was just one of the consequences, as the older pre-industrial values persisted alongside the new ideas of the era of capitalistic growth: “Spain was to experience a unique combination of social stresses which in Western Europe took place successively and not simultaneously” (Carr and Fusi 95). Contradictions between the official ideology and the demands of indus-

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5Hooper relates how “In the mid-“, the Civil Hospital in Málaga enlarged its psychiatric wing by adding a ward specifically to cater for young patients. It immediately became known as ‘The Waiters’ Ward’. According to a study carried out in 1971, 90 per cent of all non-chronic mental illness in the rural parts of the province of Málaga was among teenage males who had gone to work on the coast” (21).
trial society remained abundant. The status of women is a telling example. For instance, during the ’ women who married stopped working to become housewives. Even as late as 1977, feminine employment was seen as uncomely in rural areas (García Ferrando 184).

Traditional Spanish social structure experienced a total transformation. The ranks of the traditional middle classes that had supported and benefited from Franco’s dictatorship were joined by the expanding number of white-collar workers. This new class of workers not only partook in much more radical ideas and attitudes, but also supported the new habits brought upon by consumerism, that is, in the form of purchasing household appliances or second homes on the coast or in the Sierras. As for the working class’ standard of living, it rose to meet European levels by the mid-1970s. Deprived of a working-class culture, its more economically developed portion became fully immersed in the mechanics of consumerism, as they acquired middle-class lifestyles. Their mobility also made them conscious of the importance of education as a means for social mobility. This shift in values was also a consequence of a change in the age of social stakeholders, who advocated for a change in society and politics. For instance, the vast majority of the voters in June 1977 belonged to a postwar generation. Traditional values gave place to a change that seemed to affect first on a superficial level, such as fashion or musical tastes, by importing foreign icons such as the miniskirt, the ”ye-ye” music, or The Beatles. It may be true that the younger generation progressively rejected the moral structure of traditional Catholicism reinforced by the dictatorship. But to overcome the inherited model of gender roles was a much more difficult business. The end of media censorship after Franco’s death in 1975 had, as one of its consequences, the flooding of kiosks with a number of new magazines that combined political analysis with centerfolds of actresses posing suggestively with little—if any—clothing, in a phenomenon called “el destape” (the uncovering”) which extended itself to the television.

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6a pop music movement of the early 1960s, primarily European, spearheaded by young women who offered in their songs and images a suggestive mix of innocence and sexual innuendo. Some of their most famous representatives include Françoise Hardy and Sylvie Vartan in France, Mina and Rita Pavone in Italy and Massiel and Karina in Spain
the theater and the cinema. This sexualization of the public sphere took place at the expense of the female body, and prolonged beyond its expiring date the separation between gender roles in a society whose moral imperatives had been determined for decades by tradition and Catholicism, and reinforced by the regime’s alliance with the Church. If men were traditionally supposed to have sex and women were not, by now, everybody was entitled to accessing it, provided that the traditional objectification of women remained perpetuated in its sexual aspects. Women were free to have sex now, but always at the expense of men’s necessities. This new found freedom was frequently disguised as the politization of sexuality. “Free love” was frequently presented as a desirable consequence of leftist, “progressive” politics, without considering how male-chauvinist attitudes to women remained unchanged in any other aspect of life.

The tendency to expose sexuality in media has been described by Carr as follows:

"Weekly magazines have discovered the market value of a combination of oppositional politics and formerly forbidden sex: full frontal nudes accompany leading articles by prominent politicians. Pornography itself has created a new minor industry: it pontificates on the ideal length of the penis, on ways to excite women, on the ‘naturalness’ of incest and lesbianism, on the excitements of bestiality—all concealed by spurious appeals to the tolerance necessary for a democratic system. The cinema has exploited to the point of saturation the eroticism that for years was denied it. This does not mean that Madrid and Barcelona have become the Copenhagens of Latin Europe; but 1977 is a far cry even from 1975" (132).

This revolution in the cultural and social modes does not mean that the rigid gender stereotyping that has marked Spanish history disappeared from one day to the next. The code of moral values that is known as “machismo”, and the extraordinarily severe repression that Spanish women have endured span from a long tradition related to the concept of honor and was not to disappear easily. A man was supposed to lose his honor when his
wife cuckolded him or a daughter lost her virginity before marriage. The first was not only considered an offense, but during the dictatorship, female adultery was punished by the law, while a husband committing the same “crime” was only punished if he could be proven to have committed “public” scandal. As for single mothers, they used to be expelled from the paternal home and found themselves unable to find any respectable employment. (Hooper 165)

Gender and Popular Cinema

While the political aspects of the period have been exhaustively discussed, issues of gender in Spanish film of the same period have attracted much less attention until very recently. Feminist and queer scholars have produced a number of works that strive to bring to light matters of gender stereotypes and how all these transformations affected and changed them. Only in recent years do we find studies on issues of masculinity in Spanish film (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito). The transition period is particularly interesting when we think of how the radical change in “systems of belief” marks a vertiginous evolution in the models of masculinity that were being given purview in mainstream narratives. As such, cinema, in a country where the majority of the population had been denied access to higher education for almost forty years of dictatorship, remained one of the most important venues for the circulation of ideas, issues and concerns which affected Spanish society at large.

Films, as part of the culture industry, constitute a site where dominant ideologies and the status quo find a niche of common expression (Adorno and Horkheimer 1993). Films can be read as texts which produce meanings at a number of levels: narratively, but also visually and symbolically. Their status as popular cultural products and the fact that they need an immediate audience also gives us information about their power to relate to contemporary

\footnote{\textit{"Although adultery by either sex was a crime, punishable by between six months and six years in prison, there were different criteria for men and women. Adultery by a woman was a crime whatever the circumstances, but adultery by a man only constituted an offense if he committed it in the family home, or if he were living with his mistress, or if his adulterous behavior was public knowledge"} (Hooper 167).}
issues. There are not sufficient audience studies in Spanish cinema, but there are some examples that can be very revealing. Esther Gómez-Sierra’s study of the testimony of a female filmgoer and her experience of regular attendance at a “cine de barrio” (double-bill local cinema) in Madrid’s barrio de Malasaña between 1945 and 1955 is exemplary in the sense that she can count on the valuable testimony of a viewer regarding the importance of film-going during the regime: “There was nothing else, back then. There was no television; cinema was the people’s passtime... (...) we all went” (93) (En aquella época no había otra cosa, no había televisión; el cine era el pasatiempo de la gente... íbamos todos).

Popular cultural products such as film find a way to connect with audiences, thanks to what Barry Jordan defines as “an ability to tune with the audience’s tastes, to register their desires, not to mention their fears, anxieties, dilemmas, problems... (for) at the bottom, popular cinema cannot function or be commercially successful if it ignores the social and cultural context in which it operates.” Furthermore, in the Spanish case, film has been a particularly popular medium. That did not change throughout the many political transformations suffered by the country during the 20th century. As Carr and Fusi note, in 1947, there were over 3,000 cinemas with an average sitting capacity of 500 (119). At the time, only the United States had a greater number of cinema seats per capita. The cultural divide between the masses and the elite that the regime encouraged through censorship was reinforced during the 1960s by the television, which contributed to enlarge the popularity of the national brand of mass entertainment: soccer and bullfighting. And that, together with kiosk literature, radio, and cinema, constituted the main staple of most Spaniards’ cultural diet. Spanish genre films like light comedies, or musicals based on ‘Spanish Songs’ or “Españoladas” (Carr and Fusi 119) remained popular during the 1940s and 50s. During the 1960s, comedies stayed strong and other genres, such as horror and ‘spaghetti westerns’ also came to compete for the audiences’ attention (129).

The study of audiences is a difficult task, as the concept of audience proves to be very elusive, and it is not possible to define it as a homogeneous entity. Esther Gómez Sierra
quotes Hayward, when she points out that “the spectator can no longer be seen as the single construct of an ideological apparatus. Audiences are multiplicitous. There is not a ‘female’ or ‘male’ spectator but different socio-cultural individuals all busy producing reality as the films rolls by. Age, gender, race, class sexuality affect reception and meaning production” (101). Therefore, a possible alternative would involve using other approaches such as gender studies when considering how the sexual and gender revolution affected the country’s cultural products; and genre and star studies more specifically, when studying the role of film.

**Theoretical Approach: Genre and Star Studies**

Genres set up a relationship between the filmmaker and the audience. They encourage the public identification and familiarity with the conventions that they reinforce. Film scholar Rick Altman affirms that the pleasure of genre film spectatorship derives more from reaffirmation than from novelty (25). In the case of Spain during the transition period, the rapid pace of social and political change meant that reaffirmation was a particularly welcoming element as the future appeared charged with uncertainties. But another pleasure of genre films is to see how they adapt themselves to contemporary mores and values. In that sense, genre studies becomes a very apt tool to study how films integrated into their narratives, new social mores and preoccupations, which give them solutions that were conveniently sanctioned by the conservative element that integrates a generic film. Indeed, in genre criticism, a film is seen as a product of its time.

As for star studies, it is a form of discourse analysis that explores how the star is developed both in films and in other media, such as print media, posters and advertising, interviews, etc. Stars can become indissolubly associated with particular genres. But they can also trade on this relationship later on in their careers. By looking at the star narratives of a number of Spanish actors, I aim to showcase the slow but unstoppable change that the country’s transformation conveyed in the models of masculinity that these thespians transmitted in
their attachment to determinant genres. Dyer remarks how stars have a privileged role in the definition of social roles and types, and how they exist at a point of intersection between public demand and the producer initiative, and thus constitute a phenomenon of consumption (Stars 8, 10) whose definition depends on a number of elements that are intimately related, both to industry demands but also to consumer preferences.

Critical Reception of Spanish Film of the 1960s and 1970s

This transitional period (1973-1982), together with the period immediately preceding it, during the 1960s, has been one of the most prolific in the history of Spanish film. Pérez Rubio and Hernández Ruiz note this phenomenon, by remarking how this national case, in spite of the larger number of films, in contrast with the Russian or the Italian case, failed to produce a new mode of cinematographic language. This corpus (179), included more than a thousand films, chronicled the social transformation of Spain from multiple perspectives, themes, genres and variations, in a limitless diversification that ended with the Law of Cinematography of 1982 and the progressive assimilation of its themes and styles by other European cinematic traditions. The end of censorship did not bring a sudden improvement of the films’ quality, but it led to the proliferation of expression of social and political discourses that had been repressed for years. Popular cinema became a medium where artists could express what had theretofore been clandestine, or it provided a means to chronicle the social and political transformation that was taking place. The censorship of scripts pre-shootings ended by law in February 1975, but the censorship of finished films only disappeared completely in 1977, at the same time that the country celebrated its first free and democratic elections after the dictatorship. But there was a limit as to what seemed to be the unlimited possibilities of freedom, and those were the limits of the industry. Pérez Rubio and Hernández quote Manuel Trenzado, in his global analysis of the period (183):
“La estructura de la industria española y la debilidad de los circuitos cinematográficos alternativos no daban para producir un cine radical rupturista, que no se plegase a la legitimidad oficial del consenso y la reconciliación.” (the structure of the Spanish industry and the weakness of the alternative cinematographic circuits did not allowed enough space to produce radical, breaking-through cinema, that did not bend to the official legitimacy of consensus and reconciliation).

This way, extreme and experimental options were discarded, and there was a tendency to remain within the limits of the “acceptable,” limits that were defined by the collective consensus to let go of the recent memories of the political confrontation and to try to recreate a “reality” in its widest sense, from its most subjective to the documentary style. The element that was always present, whatever the genre, style or theme, was ideology and political allusions. They were a constant presence in Spanish films of the period. Even if they were always within the boundaries of a realistic and generic formula, which would made these films accessible for popular audiences without compromising their commercial success. Thus, these films kept attracting audiences under the guise of generic formulas such as the musical, the comedy or the melodrama. If in some case these films would vindicate the ideological structures of the past, such as those in the decade before, they were also used to critique the politics of the past, at the same time, appealed to nostalgic feelings among the audiences while starting a vein of social criticism.

Film critics and scholars usually classify films made in Spain in the 1960s and 1970s into two main categories. The first was ”metaphoric” films, which were made in defiance of the Francoist censorship but managed to avoid it due to their rounds (and relative success) at international festivals. These films prominently depicted male stunted masculine figures from the middle class, as in Carlos Saura’s Pippermint Frappé (1967), La caza (1966) or Ana y los lobos (1973), whose psychological problems usually exposed personal Oedipal conflicts with Spain’s collective turmoil, such as the political and social repression that marked their director’s generation.
The second class of films was a wide category that included a colorful range of “sub-genres,” but were the ones which kept producers and theaters in business. These included thrillers, horror films, comedies and even musicals. This last group was focused on what has been called ”españolada” or ”Spanish comedy muscals” whose origins were derived from other Spanish historical forms of popular entertainment including zarzuela (Spanish operetta), sainete, variedades and género infimo. These products have been generally derided by film scholars as low-brow, superficial and guilty of aesthetic and intellectual underdevelopment (“raquitismo estético e intelectual.”) (Monterde, 34) and, at the same time, accused of being a right-wing cinema (“un cine de derechas”) (Hopewell, El cine español, 324).

Noted Spanish film scholar Santos Zunzunegui supports the view of most academics in emphasizing the importance of the first category and its hierarchical superiority to the second. He calls the first group “Nuevo cine español” and qualifies it as the main “figure” against which he considers the background (“el fondo”), as “a standard production formed by sub-genres and coproductions without any interest except the purely statistic” (una producción estandarizada formada por subgéneros y coproducciones sin más interés que el puramente estadístico) (Zunzunegui, 29). José Antonio Monterde gives a looser—but all the same deriding—classification of the “tendencias cinematográficas” del tardofranquismo, which include “metaphorical cinema, independent movements or even the tradition of subgeneric cinema for consumption” (el cine metafórico, los movimientos independientes o incluso la tradición del subproducto de consumo) (1993).

Zunzunegui and most of the traditional academic writing on Spanish film clearly adopt a high-culture point of view that seems to overlook the fact that popular films are certainly worthy of scholarly interrogations. If we consider Raymond Williams’ “social” definition of culture as “a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior” (Williams, 57), “culture” would include undoubtedly Monterde’s “subproductos del consumo”. It is precisely these mass cultural products that will constitute our object of research. Spanish
popular film has been included only lately in academic fare as an object of study. And, as these first works show, there is a rich repository of filmic texts that constitute very valuable documents and examples of the way culture has been accessed and produced by the Spanish population during the 20th century. The intersection between cultural and film studies is a good place to start considering how much Spanish popular cinema can tell us about the processes that bring together society and culture, how they influence each other and how that mechanism helps us to portray a social group in its historical circumstances.

Intersections Between Cultural and Film Studies

A theoretical framework that could also be useful to us when studying popular films is John Fiske’s concept of “producerly text.” He defines such a framework as popular, accessible texts which allow the reader to participate in the construction of meaning (103). The meanings of any producerly text can be produced by the audience. But at the same time, the producerly text exposes the limitations of its preferred meanings as well as it contains its own contradictions. Fiske argues that it is inevitable that popular culture gets out of control in a hierarchical society (104). The textual is thus connected to the social experience, as popular productivity escapes textual control. Thus, people will only choose texts that offer opportunities to resist, evade or scandalize hegemonic forces. As such, we must ask ourselves what in the texts under study in this project has attracted popular approval. Spanish “sub-genre” films reunite the two conditions that Fiske marks as arousing interest when picking an object of analysis. Firstly, they have been derided by critics; secondly, they have been widely consumed.

One of the reasons behind the success of popular films is its narrative appeal to a wide segment of the population. Audiences identified with its motifs, themes and images visual messages which are closely linked to their immediate experience. In the 1990s, film studies have shifted their focus towards social history, and this new approach is certainly useful
when analyzing these popular filmic narratives. When discussing the social dimension of film, Mary Beth Haralovich signals how social history of film is intent on analyzing the ways in which film ”participates in the production and distribution of social knowledge”(4) and how social historians should be intent on discovering the relationship between dominant culture, and how people negotiate their places within, as well as ”within the fissures and contradictions of those structures” (6). Popular films can be examined within the context of film studies both as a cultural product and a social practice, not valuable only in itself but also for what it tells us about the systems and processes of culture (Turner, 41). Films and the film industry are closely related with other social processes. Haralovich, quoting Allen and Gomery, observes how films derive their representations from their social environment, and how they can be considered as social-historical documents:

”the film industry does not “reflect” social life but draws upon patterns which have a certain currency, adapting them to the constraints of cinematic specificity, narration and modes of production. Films which address contemporary daily life are resonant topics for the social history of film, for the application of theories of subjectivity to that social history and for the possibilities of historicizing subjectivity” (13).

From this point of view, film narratives can be considered within a context that is both textual and social. Myths, beliefs and practices find their expression in culture narratives, whereby they are reinforced, criticized or just reproduced. As such, social change can be followed and studied through changes in thematic or formal trends in narratives. Shifts in attitudes toward gender relations and the ideologies that support them can be traced in the various representations of different institutions, as well as the way how characters react to conflict. (Turner 106)

These visual narratives can be read from a double point of view. Louis Althusser (28-9) coined the term “symptomatic reading”. It is a strategy of interpretation that not only
investigates the films’ structural dominants but also the absences and omissions that the dominant ideology seeks to repress, contain or marginalize. Film studies have made a fruitful use of this strategy. Indeed, movies are created by directors and production companies. But ultimately, they are made successful by audiences, for they are capable of distinguishing which narratives address their desires and needs and which do not.

My task is then to do a symptomatic reading of the gender stereotyping dominant in Spanish popular film of the late and post Francoist era. The ways they were contained, exposed, or used as political metaphors will inform this work. In the first chapter, we will look at a model of heterosexual patriarchal masculinity, singer and actor Manolo Escobar and the way he was showcased in Spanish musicals or “Españoladas”, and how his stereotypical persona became in fact a site where the tensions for change in gender models are contested.

In the second chapter, I will examine the phenomenon of ”Landismo”, named after the actor Alfredo Landa, whose “sexy comedies” became a vehicle for the representation of a masculine figure in crisis, unable to fulfill the old patriarchal model and always involved in a perpetual losing fight to adopt the new, more liberal sexual and gender modes increasingly pervading Spanish society.

The third chapter will be a study of the male melodramas, which starred during the period by José Sacristán. He came to personify the Spanish average man and his “heroic” quest to ride the times and adopt a meaningful and active role in the nascent democracy. Not only did he represent characters who embodied the political fight for democracy, but also explored the limits of new gender definitions in filmic narratives where he played a number of non normative masculinities, including terrorists, homosexuals or transvestites, in melodramas where “coming out” could only be explicit when associated with a leftist political stand.

The final chapter will be devoted to actress Bibi Andersen, who first became famous in the early 1970s as a transsexual starlet. Her image became an icon of the social transformations that the whole country had gone through. We will examine the way her initial marginality
found a way to become mainstream and how her image was negotiated in national media. More precisely, we will look at films that narrativize that evolution and that became poignant chronicles of the deep transformation that gender definitions suffered in little more than twenty years.

In summary, my dissertation explores the images and functions of masculinity as represented in mainstream Spanish cinema during the 1960s and 1970s. Although these films have been categorized as banal (particularly in Spain), my contention is that their popularity is tied to the fact that they capture the anxieties and projections of a changing society. I argue that the protagonists’ attempts to reconcile Francoist moral values with neo-liberal modernization progress produces an inevitable contradictory performance of maleness, one that (often unwillingly) defies Spanish hetero-normative masculinity. My project implies the questioning of the high-low divide, as I analyze what it is about these mass media products that allowed them to achieve such level of consensus in mainstream society, including, presumably, with members of the audience who were not necessarily politically aligned with the Francoist regime. Drawing from genre and star studies done on Hollywood and other European cinemas, I argue that the typecasting of male stars, the construction of spaces and mise en scène and the cinematic implementation of traditional genres as comedies, folkloric musicals and melodramas contribute to facilitate counter-hegemonic readings.
Chapter 1

“Moderno pero Español:” The Narratives of Patriarchal Masculinity During the Development Years

desarrollismo

“Señores, yo soy un hombre del siglo veinte, pero español. Que es tanto como reírse del mundo entero menos de Dios. Me gusta oír la campana de mi parroquia arrebatá, pero a mí también me gusta cantar un ritmo yeyé y hasta protestar si algo no está bien.

(...) A mí me enseñó mi abuelo que lo primero es ser formal. Y yo repito lo mismo, que ciertas cosas no han de cambiar. Que vengan los modernismos
si solo son para mejorar,
porque sé también
que la vida está un poco achuchá
y hay que torear y echarle valor.”

(Gentlemen, I am a 20th century man, but Spanish. That means I laugh at the whole world, except at God. I like hearing my church’s bell toll, but I also like singing a “yé-yé” tune, and even protest if something is not right. My grandfather taught me that the most important thing is to be reputable. And just like him, I say that certain things are not to change. Modernity can come, but only to make things better, because I also know that life is hard, so we must put a fight and pluck it up.”) Lyrics from Manolo Escobar’s song *Moderno, pero español* (1970)

Manolo Escobar came to be known in the height of his career, that is, in the late 1950s and 1960s, as *la voz de España* (the voice of Spain) and has been described as “the single most popular male media star in Spanish history” (Crumbaugh, *Spain*, 62). He became a national icon, first as a singer of popular flamenco music, and then on screen, with a number of extraordinarily popular musical films throughout the 1960s and 1970s. No other masculine star can personify like him the models of dominant masculinity that circulated in Spanish mass culture at the time. His “rags-to-riches” star narrative was composed of a number of elements that conveyed contemporary issues like emigration, the transformations of a rural into an urban society, the lures of rising consumerism or the tourist boom, and how these phenomena affected the way that men were being portrayed in mass media. His public image also managed to convey the pressures and contradictions that Spanish society, in a precarious balance between the traditional and the new, had to assimilate in the short period of time that is marked by the *desarrollismo* of the late and post-Francoist years. The Escobar image

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1 Period between the years of 1962 and 1968 in which Spain experienced an outstanding economical development by way of the growth of both the manufacturing and service sectors.
that was circulated contained allusions to traditional models and the way that they contained
the new social changes, as we can see in the lyrics above. Nevertheless, his star persona also
communicated an optimistic, successful image of masculinity that managed to keep at bay
the anxieties that those transformative years brought into the national panorama.

Against the scenario of the effects of the 1950s and 1960s economic boom and the way
it altered ways of living and the kinds of cultural products consumed, popular texts become
both a valuable repository of contemporaneity and clear expressions of social and economic
change. Dyer points to how stars are representations of people and thus relate to ideas
about what people are or are supposed to be like (1998, p. 20.) This chapter intends to
examine what was the social relevance of the images of masculinity offered by examples
taken from the nineteen musicals Manolo Escobar starred in from 1963 to 1982. These
popular films of the late and post Franco period are especially meaningful as their success
is an unmistakable clue of how their narratives expressed widespread concerns that range
from class to societal expectations and gender definitions. In the case of Manolo Escobar,
his performances were taken as revealing the personality of the star, but that personality is
the result of a fabrication expressed through films, interviews, publicity, etc. And that is a
fabrication whose ideological dimension is intent upon preserving the status quo (Dyer 24).

Dyer also suggests, quoting Brown and Eckert, that stars embody social values that are
to some degree in crisis. He quotes the work of William R. Brown on Will Rogers, who
embodied the American Dream at a point in time when the Depression made the dream
increasingly hard to believe (25). In a similar fashion, the spectacle of Escobar’s flawless
masculinity and control in personal and economic matters probably points into the direction
of these same circumstances as becoming out of control. In his repeated performance of the
rags-to-riches narrative, these films hint at a very actual preoccupation in the Spain of the
late development years or desarrollismo and the end of Francoism. What of the old Spain
would survive into the future?

Manolo Escobar started his career on the radio, the main mass entertainment medium
during the 1940s and 1950s in Spain, as a singer of flamenco and “coplas.” His rise to stardom is also related to a masculinisation of popular Flamenco music. While the coplas had been almost exclusively sang by women, the 1950s saw the rise of a number of masculine stars who sang and acted in Spanish folkloric films, like Rafael Farina or Antonio Molina. But what is particularly idiosyncratic of Escobar’s songs and films is the way they incorporated contemporary themes into their lyrics, going beyond the tragic stories of the “coplas” or the localist allusions to Andalusia, to include in them the socio-economic changes of the so-called “development” years, or años del “desarrollo” (Crumbaugh 266). His songs not only dealt with the usual topics of flamenco mass entertainment (the idealized Andalusian rural world of green wheat fields, flowers and passionate women), but also alluded to such contemporary icons of modernity as the miniskirt or the image of Spain, which was being commodified to attract European tourism to the land of the sun and endless enjoyment of food, wine, beaches and flamenco (most particularly, in the popular copla Y viva España).3.

That change must have touched a sensitive nerve for Spanish audiences, as Escobar’s songs became staples of Spanish popular culture. Songs like Mi carro, El Porompompero, Y viva España became hits, and at the same time, mixed traditional themes of folkloric fare with different aspects of contemporary cultural anxieties. An especially significant example is La minifalda, whose lyrics alluded to the alarming velocity of feminine liberation that Spanish masculinities had to deal with. According to Manolo’s song, what was a Spanish man to do when his girlfriend wore a miniskirt? To express his dislike, of course: “No me gusta que a los toros te pongas la minifalda: porque pueden ver tu cara y pueden ver tus tus

2Andalusian popular ballads. A type of Andalusian-style song that flourished in Spain in the 1940s. It originated in the “cuple,” or light songs whose topics could contain sexual allusions and which, at the beginning of the century, composed what was called the “género ínfimo.” As cuplés were banned by Francoist censorship after the Civil War, they were succeeded by the coplas, which favored love stories with tragic endings and contained allusions to forbidden passions.

3“Spain is different” was Franco’s regime’s slogan for tourism, what Crumbaugh calls “the perfect nexus of mass culture and political propaganda”, sentence in which “the difference becomes a mode of mass cultural production that responds not only to the need for political propaganda, but also taps into the consumer demand for variety” (265). The great majority of them became extremely popular and have been considered later epitomes of the populist image of Spain related to the economic development of the 60s and early 70s.
rodillas” (I don’t like you to wear your miniskirt when you go to the bullfight: because people can see your face and your knees), thus expressing his advice on such a controversial topic. That is, how Spanish men should manage women’s shy attempts of liberation from the rigid sexist structures inherited from the first half of the 20th century.

Escobar’s musical success was further exploited in film. In 1963 he starred in his first musical, *Los guerrilleros*, and the success of the formula determined the production of seventeen more films with him as a main star in the following nineteen years. What made Escobar relevant was his power to attract audiences even in those moments where uncertainty was the country’s natural state. At the peak of his success, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Spain found itself at the end of a long dictatorship that had marked 40 years of political repression and tight state control, being submerged in the vortex of social, economical and political change. How does a star achieve success when the values of a society are in flux?

According to Richard Dyer’s description, "the success myth tries to orchestrate several contradictory elements; that ordinariness is the hallmark of the star; that the system rewards talent and 'specialness'; that luck, 'breaks,' which might happen to anyone, typify the career of the star; and that hard work and professionalism are necessary for stardom” (Dyer, 42). All of these elements appear in one way or another in Escobar’s films, reinforcing the image that had been already publicly circulated through the press and the radio in the earlier part of his singing career. Escobar’s success probably resides in his capacity to modernize the traditional brand of masculinity, at least in his façade. And of course, change starts on the outside. The singer of popular flamenco started his “modernisation” by abandoning his musical trade’s usual “Andalusian” garb, usually a *traje corto* (or riding suit), *Cordobés* hat and other embellishments (See illustration 1.5). He can only be seen in such a typical Andalusian style in his first records lapels or in his first 1963 film, *Los guerrilleros*, a costume drama where his role of foreman of a rural state provides for plot justification to his riding suit. But from his second film on, he adopted a totally contemporary image of middle class masculinity, with ordinary two-piece suits, which, by reinforcing his image of upward
ordinariness, brought an element of modernity to the image of the traditional flamenco singer, as we can see in image 1.4. For the elements of character that adorn the star figure, Escobar’s star narrative and success was unfalteringly built, as we are going to examine, on a story of hard work, honesty and humble origins that would multiply its echo and reinforce itself in most of the films’ narratives he starred in. The myth of success would be present in all except two of his films. 4

Escobar’s narratives situate him in the role of a singer, either a singer in-the-making, or one already successful, and his diverse adventures derived from this rags-to-riches narrative. Economic and personal success constitute a staple in his films, whose narratives provide vicarious identification processes for a population that had suffered both political and social repression and economical hardship through the Civil War and the post-war “Hunger years.”

Manolo Escobar’s attractiveness to his audience can be explained from a double perspective: that of his star persona, which brought together well-established ideas of masculinity with a certain degree of modernization, and the way he managed to update and remake a genre, the españolada. This specifically Spanish genre, after having enjoyed a phenomenal success for most of the 1940s and 1950s, was in the 70s very much in the wane. All of Escobar’s musicals were deployed to cater for audiences who enjoyed both the ”españolada” genre specifics and the star and most probably invested them with their feelings of nostalgia for old folkloric forms of music and song in the changing times of the desarrollismo. Both genre and stardom work towards an unusual degree of identification on the part of the audience, as is the case with these films. Babington and Evans point to the fact that film musicals are a particularly interesting case in sociological terms, as they are associated not only with great enjoyment, but with precise historical and ideological elements. 5

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4 The exceptions are El Padre Manolo and Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella, two atypical products of his filmography. In the first he impersonates a singing priest who solves mysteries in the side, and in the second, which is based on a true story, a gypsy who got rich through reclaiming the family subsides from the French state by pretending to have an impossible number of children, and Los Guerrilleros, where he plays a foreman fighting the invading French in a costume drama, and En un lugar de la Manga, where he is an artisan who makes guitars.

5 In their words, “Musicals give such intense pleasure to so many people (even structuralists and semiol-
Rick Altman (1987) have read musicals as resistant to typical audience positioning because of the direct address of the viewer by the performers during musical numbers, recalling more participatory modes of live entertainment, as the music hall or the vaudeville. In musicals, the star is permitted to break a Hollywood taboo and look directly into the lens to address the audience (Feuer, 2). Feuer also reminds us how Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel suggest that the emergence of stars marked the transition from ‘folk’ art to ‘popular art’, and thus creating an audience out of a community (2). She affirms that the musical would be the next step in that evolution, thus signaling the evolution of the genre from folk to mass status, but at the same time remaining strongly rooted in concepts that reinforce the idea of its popular origins and encourage mechanisms of identification, by putting up ‘community’ as an ideal concept (3). In the musical, there is great importance given to humanistic relations between people, so that the mass-produced character of the film disappears from view. This would explain the enormous success that the Spanish musical enjoyed during Franco’s dictatorship, when freedom of expression was strictly controlled by censorship. The tight control that the regime exerted over any kind of public media marked the disappearance of what Jo Labanyi, quoting Rowe and Schelling, calls “any form of collective sphere other than that imposed by surveillance” (2000, p. 67), the possibility of collectivity denied except in the space for mass culture.

If the musical genre works as a “suture” for the audience seen as a community, stardom also works towards reducing distances between film and audience. Dyer reflects on how much work audiences accomplish in constructing character in films. The presence of the star already gives spectators a very clear idea of what the character will be like and what he represents, and that was particularly true in the case of Manolo Escobar, as his star persona
and his characters shared an unusual degree of identification. The act of casting mobilizes a set of meanings that are carried by a particular star and make them part of the character (Dyer, 1982). But of course, it is not only the audience that brings meaning into the film, but also films, conversely, do their job when generating meanings.

Another of the reasons of Escobar’s success and enormous popular appeal are the elements of identification contained in his star narrative. Stardom is a vehicle for an ambiguous discourse, one that promotes both existing social structures but also the possibility of human agency. It promotes capitalism, but also ways that are available for individuals, when conforming to social and economic conditions, to transcend marginalisation. In the case of Manolo Escobar, his working class roots and his success narrative allowed his spectators to identify with his image and to share vicariously the limited possibilities of change offered by late Francoism. Escobar is but one example of the narratives of economic success that were being made into urban legend during the 50s and 60s by the changing economic and social panorama that could be glimpsed through the press, the nascent television and advertising. It is not surprising that the success narratives were focused on the world of entertainment. In a country in which the investment on education had been extraordinarily low, with a 3.5% rate of illiteracy in 1983 (Hooper, 258), the possibilities of climbing the social ladder were very low. The rags-to-riches narratives circulated in popular culture during the dictatorship included the achievement of success in soccer, bullfighting and flamenco music. Famous success narratives of the 1960s included the bullfighter El Cordobés and singers of popular music like Raphael or Manolo Escobar. We can see in these public figures a combination of the traditional and modernized masculinity, that, as can be seen in Escobar’s song “Moderno pero español,” is intent on reassuring that the basic patriarchal values that kept men

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6In spite of the fact that the public expense on education had doubled 1962 and 1976 (Hooper, 258)

7It is interesting to note how the three were not only part of the culture of evasion, but also considered catalysts of nationalistic feelings, and hence supported by Franco regime’s. It is interesting to remember how the three of them were also related to issues of masculinity: Carr notes the existence of a myth of ‘Spanish style’ of football, the “Spanish fury,” “impetuous in its attack, an incarnation of those Hispanic values exalted by the propaganda of the regime” (Carr and Fusi, 122.)
in control were respected.

Manolo Escobar, Raphael, and El Cordobés shared star narratives that emphasized their humble origins. Turner reminds us of how a star’s attractive to audiences depends on her degree of representativeness, some recognizable element that the spectators use to relate themselves to the star on the screen. According to Turner, “star status carries with it the potential to individualize and particularize even the most general of social types. Dyer talks of stars ’transcending’ their type by being, paradoxically, both representative and unique. At the same time, “the ways in which an audience will understand the role of the star refer to the social and ideological meanings that he or she carries. Since stars are iconic representations of recognizable social types, they are composed within the field of dominant and competing definitions of society” (1992, pg. 106). To understand how Escobar was experienced and used by his audience, we need to explore his star text, which is comprised of many elements prior to his films. Radio shows, concerts, publicity stills and records as well as interviews and articles worked together to make the singer the public image of a successful man of “desarrollismo”. His biographies and interviews were intent on stressing his humble and rural origins and a story of success, after his emigration to the city, fed by effort and honesty. Escobar is undoubtedly a product of his specific historical moment in the sense that he manages to transmit an image that included many elements which spoke to his audience in the same terms they had been addressed by Franco’s régime ideological apparatus, but that at the same time included the contemporary experience of a society which was immersed in its conversion to modern capitalism. His biography included, on the one hand, traditional elements, like close family ties and marriage, but also referred to the contemporary phenomenon of immigration. Manolo’s immigration to Barcelona from rural Andalucía, and his stories of hard work spoke to the experience of thousands of Spaniards.

When compared with the effects on the Spanish population of the 1960s’ economic boom, and the way it altered its lifestyles and aspirations, Escobar’s biographical detail not only contains the typical “rags-to-riches” narrative details, but also more concrete specificities.
that are intimately related to the Spanish context. These include Escobar’s narrative of emigration to the city, or the way he used his star status to benefit his extended family, by including his elder brothers in his success when he employed them as guitar players—see image 1.6. Thus, he inserts himself in the Spanish patriarchal tradition by including his family in his own success, and of course, one of his most well-known songs was the one dedicated to his own mother, “Madrecita María del Carmen.” Nevertheless, as the song quoted at the beginning of this chapter proclaims, he is also “a man of the 20th century,” for he also included an element of modernization in his personal narrative by marrying a German tourist, and therefore re-validating the traditional patriarchal model of masculinity, one that is able to “conquer” and domesticate the new aggressive brand of femininity personified by the foreign bikinied tourist in the national imaginary in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The relevance of Escobar’s star narrative at the time can be clearly seen in the presence (and re-telling) of contemporary cultural and social narratives in a biography that was published in 1964. Written in the first person singular, it intends to stress Escobar’s humble, rural origins. It describes how he was born in a modest family in a remote village in Andalucia, one of ten siblings, and how he emigrated to Barcelona in 1946, when he was fifteen, together with two of his elder brothers and leaving his parents behind. His emigration is being described in a rhetoric that evokes and celebrates the capitalist ideology that was being implemented by the regime at the time, as a search for fortune—“en busca de buena fortuna”—and equated with an exotic, carefree adventure. Indeed, the geographical displacement of millions of Spaniards due to economic hardships is deprived of any economic or political connotation.

The contemporary references do not stop at internal immigration. Notoriety and a rosy path to success is associated with the description of his contracts for a tour in France with other folkloric singers, and to sing in clubs in the Catalan coast and in Seville, a fact that points towards his ability to conquer foreign audiences, as well as a narrative that evokes similar trips of other Spaniards working in Germany or France. At the same time, his shows
along the Spanish coast also parallel with the rhetoric of the Spanish nation, which seeks to “conquer” Europe by way of its sun, beaches and *joie de vivre*. The same rhetoric of tourism that was being implemented by Franco’s government’s Ministry of Tourism.

Escobar’s fan literature, and more specifically, his 1964 biography also stresses the importance of elements that mark social status and act as complements of masculinity, as are his cars and success with women. For instance, the car he drives, a “Ford Falcon”, is not the first car he drives. ⁸ And he is also successful in seducing and marrying the German tourist he met when working at the Catalan coastal town of Platja d’Aro. The narrative itself remarks on the unlikelihood and on the symbolic value of such an occurrence in a light tone: “Parece el argumento de una película de actualidad turística. Un artista de cante español se enamora de una turista y se casa con ella. Me dediqué a desempeñar con ella mi papel de español irresistible. Me gane un tortazo de categoría. Pero lo que vino después valió la pena” (It sounds like the plot of a film about tourists. A Spanish song artist falls in love with a tourist and marries her. I worked hard in playing my role of irresistible Spaniard. She slapped me. But what came afterwards was worthwhile). Escobar’s narrative not only validates and enhances the figure of traditional Spanish masculinity, but it also showcases its artificial nature (“my role of irresistible Spaniard”). In spite of this contradiction, he is described as being capable of controlling what later on would appear to be much more difficult to manipulate: the figure of the sexualized, powerful woman that the foreign tourist represented. That deed points towards the masculine anxieties to control a new, more independent feminine model that would ultimately determine a slow but inevitable change in Spanish gender roles. A change that was but a late reflection of what had happened in the previous decades in other Western countries and that now was leaking in through the influence of tourism.

Escobar’s model of masculinity was not only capable of controlling the new, sexualized

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⁸(Manolo Escobar. Biografía Ilustrada. Barcelona: Ediciones Este, 1964. The entire text of the leaflet (including both covers) is posted on line in Manolo Escobar’s unofficial fan page, at www.manoloescobar.net. (11/22/08)
models of bikinied femininity that were being seen on the Spanish beaches to the amazement of the locals, he was also showcased as an example of economical and social success for any man of the working class. The Escobar’s rags to riches narrative contained in this early biography gets to be more detailed in later versions, although the basics remain. In the same biography previously alluded, his narrative of honesty and hard work is reinforced by the list of his many jobs in his way to fame. After working in the metallurgy and chemical industries as well as being a carpenter, Manolo and four of his siblings finally became workers at the local post office.9 This job list is a reminder of the many possibilities offered to immigrant workers who moved from the south to the north and from the west to the east coast in the years of economic development. This biography situates his definitive claim to success in 1961, when he stars his own show in Córdoba, and starts an ascending movement that would turn into an acting career when with his first film, Los Guerrilleros, in 1963. The way his biographer describes his film roles point to the utopian character that these narratives attribute to his depiction of a man from the working class: “The characters he interprets are friendly and from the people, like himself, and they move around beautiful and attractive women. And there is always a happy end.”10 This quotation obviously stresses the many perks that Escobar films offered to audiences, and how he was definitely inscribed in narratives of popular culture.

The construction of Manolo Escobar’s stardom is not an original one, as it reproduces the same narratives that were used to promote the images of his predecessors in the popular flamenco genre, the “folklóricas,” that is, the female singers of Andalusian folkloric music who rose to fame between the 1920s and the late 1040s. The only original trait is the gender bender that Escobar represented. Apart from that, the construction of Escobar’s star

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9 This detail personifies one of the dream jobs in Spanish popular narratives of the 20th century: to become a civil servant, with a job from which you can never be sacked, payed holidays, and free afternoons. That is, the second best to winning the lottery.

persona has much in common with other popular stars in the Spanish context. During the first half of the 20th century, popular song, closely related to the stage and with a folklorist tone, generated a number of female stars enormously successful like Concha Piquer, Imperio Argentina, Lola Flores or Estrellita Castro. All of them started their careers singing on stage and were popularized on the radio during the 1930s and 1940s. They had one thing in common: the dynamism embodied by their star narratives in a national panorama in which women were invariably represented in passive, submissive roles marked by the dictatorship’s ideological position. When their careers crossed to the film industry, all of these female performers and the roles they embodied in films have one thing in common. Far from historical and static images, as Queen Isabel II or Teresa de Jesús’ in contemporary costume dramas, they are models of ‘becoming’, that is, they represent narratives of success embodied in characters who constituted acceptable icons of sexiness by means of a hybridization of the figures of the femme fatale and the girl-next-door. (Eva Woods, 2004, 44.) Escobar would also build a clean, modestly attractive image that, without being aggressively sexual, would still be considered appealing to female audiences (see figure 1.1. At the same time, this image could be a model for masculine achievement.

The fact that Manolo Escobar’s narrative of success had to be modeled after feminine examples undoubtedly points to the complexities of the representation of working class men in Spanish culture. The working class presents a masculinity that could be threatening for the middle class, controllers of the cultural–and economical–production. Therefore, these men were often presented as feminized and unthreatening. Their menace assuaged by the fact that their only pretense is to become another member of the middle class by way of hard work and honest means. That is the case of Escobar, whose honesty appears foregrounded in all the characters he represents. At the same time, his wholesome and composed appearance captivated the female audience. Escobar, with his composed and clean looks, follows closely the model described by Fouz and Martínez as representative of a properly masculine ideological and social model: “In Spanish cinema, the physical signal corresponding to the favored
ethical will has traditionally been a combination of good health and neat looks, instead of the upright muscularity that would have been rarer in the local talent than in Hollywood. Constructing heroic bodies in Spanish cinema has, therefore, been more a matter of translating the abstract (psychological, ethical, ideological) heroic qualities of the hero into a set of conventional visual bodily attributes (one of which is, sometimes, muscularity; but also an appropriate hairstyle, a low and masculine voice pitch, clean and neat clothes, a shaved face, masculine movements that denote spotless heterosexuality and so on” (68).

Normative heterosexuality is not the only trait that the “folklóricas” female stars and Escobar shared. They also had in common a career trait. Like many of the stars of the classical Hollywood musical, they made a successful transition from stage to screen, where they starred in “españoladas.” The “españolada” is the quintessential Spanish musical genre, with a long story both on stage and screen, one that is closely related to meanings of the nation, as it tapped into thematics that were considered intrinsically Spanish. Thus, the folkloric film could be considered as one of the most important cultural products for an analysis of how Spanish identity was constructed at the time by a specific segment of the population.

As Borau explains (Borau, 321), the term españolada has its origin in the French “espagnolade,” and alludes to the presence of Spanish—and specially Andalusian—themes in novel, theater, music and painting from the beginning of the 19th century. But if in France the popular versions of the genre had become associated with operetta, in Spain, sainetes and zarzuelas (or Spanish operetta)\(^{11}\) were the repository of the “españolada” on stage. Frequently derided by critics because of its conservative ideological content, other authors, like playwright Rodríguez Méndez, have pointed towards the so called “género chico”’s capacity to reflect “the actual cultural practices of the pueblo” and most specifically, of the traditional working-class districts of Madrid (Thompson, 56). It was precisely sainetes and zarzuelas’

\(^{11}\)Sainetes were short plays which, using characters that could be described as stereotyped, made social commentaries in a comical tone (see the second chapter for a more extended study). Zarzuela was the Spanish version of operetta
authors who wrote the first adaptations of the genre for the screen in the 1900s (Arniches, Alvarez Quintero, Quintero y Serrano) in search of the cinematic equivalent of their popular success in theaters. As (Borau, 322) notes, “españolada” was originally used to designate the films made abroad about Spain, specially the ones from France and Hollywood, as the Rudolph Valentino’s vehicle—*Blood and Sand* (Fred Niblo, 1922). The genre was revitalized and made enormously popular during the Second Republic by the works of film director Florián Rey and star Imperio Argentina, and its best known directors (Florián Rey and Benito Perojo) and stars went on working after the ’39, making it difficult, as Jo Labanyi notes, to distinguish the films that preceded the war from the ones that followed it. Lissette Rolón Collado quotes Román Gubern and Jo Labanyi when she locates the españolada’s golden age during the Second Republic (Rolón Collazo, 22). Utrera and Labanyi mention the ideological reinterpretation that the folkloric subgenre suffered after 1939, but also the contradiction in terms, as those films were reinterpreted as vehicles for symbols of the nation in contrast with its class-based “popular” reading on the years of the Second Republic, immediately preceding the ’39 (Labanyi, 29). In fact, she concludes that one of the possible causes of the success of these “españoladas” was that they were almost the only cultural products that survived the war and could be linked back to the times of the Republic—see Labanyi12.

The folkloric genre has also been considered as a testing ground for problems, ideas and discourses affecting Spanish society from the 1920s to the present, as “the effects of modernisation, shifts in gender relations, and class destabilizations presented themselves through the prism of these films” (Woods, 16). In the case of Manolo Escobar’s films, it is their investment in gender and class relations that I find particularly interesting. Covering as they do the two decades that preceded and folloing the end of Franco’s dictatorship,

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12 Tambien hemos llegado a la conclusiון (y esto lo dijo uno de nuestros entrevistados) que el cine tuvo tanta importancia en la inmediata postguerra, entre otros motivos, porque fué la unica cosa que tuvo cierta continuidad con la Republica” (We have also concluded (and this was said by one of our interviewees, that film was so important in the postwar period, among other reasons, because it was the only thing that had a certain continuity with the Republic) (Labanyi, “Lo andaluz en el cine”, 8).
their portrayal of femininity, and most particularly, masculinity as it is incarnated in the characters played by Manolo Escobar, can be read as a visual representation of the change in gender roles, and of a series of social transformations that took place during the period called “Transición”, which would finally leave Spain a totally different country.

While “españoladas” had been part of the Spanish popular culture landscape for most of the 20th century, we must not forget how Franco’s dictatorship and its tight ideological control over any cultural production, soon determined the genre’s ideological adhesion of the genre to Catholic morals and mores. In spite of that, the issue of how these products were received is more complicated, as their success lies in the fact that they still allowed plenty of space for audience identification. After all, the genre was dominated by heroines of non-white and poor origin, which inhabited a fantasy world constituted by a rural, ancestral Andalucía that, according to Jo Labanyi, came to stand for the whole of Spain (Labanyi, Hybridity, 59) She also remarks how “fetishistic camerawork and flamboyant performance style create an extraordinarily high degree of identification with the usually gypsy heroine. Most of the times, the heroine was played by a major star, and the plots would normally involve a rags-to-riches narrative that implied the possibility of incorporating these marginal elements of the population into the nation-formation project that early Francoism promoted, and therefore included the popular classes in its political project.—see (Labanyi, Hybridity, 61). The “españolada” star was usually both singer and dancer,¹³ and the most usual plot involved the gypsy heroine’s seduction of an upper-class white male suitor, and the narration of how her dazzling abilities could not only win her a better place in society but also a hard-earned identification with the audience¹⁴, as Labanyi argues (Hybridity, 60). This process of identification would then not work along the lines of gender but of social class, which again is

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¹³Some examples were Imperio Argentina, Lola Flores, Estrellita Castro, Carmen Sevilla or Paquita Rico, fixed presences in magazines, films and radio shows, and who assumed their roles of stars with gusto in these times of misery and international isolation marked by the autarky.

¹⁴These “gypsy” heroines were played by major stars—whose name appeared before the film’s title— and the film’s plot would normally involve a “happy end” marriage to a white landowner, thus allowing spectators belonging to groups categorized as “other” a high degree of identification to spectators.
not an aspect to be forgotten in the poverty-striken years of postwar Spain. Thompson, when talking about the representations of the *pueblo español* in the plays of José María Rodríguez Mendez, describes a “long suffering population inhabiting a kind of repetitive *intrahistoria*, never benefitting of the convulsions taking place on the surface of public history, eternally distrustful of political agendas, clinging to folk traditions” (Thompson, 25). That same description could be applied to the representation of the country that españoladas endorse, as a genre that in fact allows for the creation of a site of representation for a microhistory of the Spanish lower class and their emotional investment as well as their views on gender and class.

The representation of gender is precisely one of the most relevant aspects of the españolada. So the fact that the genre’s narratives suffered a gender shift in the 1950s, and female stars were substituted by men, points to a particularly relevant detail. As for the historical context to this change, we must remember how the latter part of the 1950s was marked by a number of political and social changes. They include the end of the postwar “hunger years”, a meaningful change in Franco’s cabinet in 1957, now dominated by the Opus Dei “tecnócratas”.15 These new ministers and members of the cabinet gave an important impulse to the Spanish tourist industry, relaxed censorship and started a new era of industrial development and consumerism, propitiating the introduction of novel technologies and commercial strategies like advertising and television. (Woods, 17).

The successful españoladas of the 1950s can be certainly considered a cultural product that echoed the economic changes, and the ideologic stagnation that were being implemented from the government’s ranks. These films were made on both sides of the Pyrenees, starring Antonio Molina on the Spanish side and the exiled singer Luis Mariano on the French. The

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15 Franco’s regime was practically bankrupt when he decided to include in his 1957 cabinet a number of professionals, the so-called “tecnócratas” that belonged or sympathized with the secretive Catholic fellowship, Opus Dei. This religious group saw capitalist development as an opportunity, and used their control of it as a way to spread their ideas. They came to dominate Franco’s cabinets during his last decades, giving an important impulse to the economy through their development plans (or “planes de desarrollo”) that certainly helped to extend the life of a political regime that was becoming increasingly anachronistic. (Hooper, 17, 18).
films with Luis Mariano showcased a kind of star persona that echoed international airs. Dashing attractive with a commanding and powerful voice, his figure was a product much in the wake of Mario Lanza’s Hollywood manufactures.\textsuperscript{16} Luis Mariano enjoyed a tremendous success first on stage and then on film. A Spanish political exile, he became at the end of the WW II one of the most important singers of the Paris operetta scene, who frequently sang in films inspired by Spanish themes as \textit{La belle de Cadix} (Raymond Bernard, 1956). He also sold millions of records, and his films became astounding screen box hits, where he sang and acted with famous Spanish singers like Carmen Sevilla. These productions were dubbed into French and Spanish, like \textit{Andalousie} or \textit{El Sueño de Andalucía} (Vernay and Lucia, 1950) and \textit{Violetas imperiales} (R. Pottier and F. Bernal, 1952)—see (Borau, 541). These films were part of a number of European co-productions in the 1950s, marked by the collaboration between the Italian, French and Spanish film industries. These French-Spanish co-productions were what Monterde calls the “españolada histórica” (35). These films linked directly historical narratives with the picturesque and the exotic that the Spanish singer, exiled to France during the Spanish Civil War, represented for French audiences,\textsuperscript{17} which at the same time were also being consumed in Spain.

In the case of Luis Mariano’s counterpart in the Spanish film industry, Antonio Molina, the latter was usually cast as the main character in a number of rural melodramas in which he played characters resigned to the immobility of their fate, as in \textit{El pescador de coplas} (Antonio del Amo, 1954) or \textit{El Cristo de los faroles} (Gonzalo Delgrás, 1958). Terenci Moix

\textsuperscript{16}While there has been an emphasis in recording the high culture products that the French espagnolade produced—Merimée’s opera Carmen being the all-favorite example,—the presence of Spanish folklore in popular French culture has been frequently disregarded by academia.

\textsuperscript{17}In \textit{Le prince de Madrid}, his character, Goya, sang lyrics as improbable as the following:

\begin{quote}
\texttt{Espagne tu chantes pour moi le beau soleil et la joie tu donnes ce bonheur de vivre qui brille dans le yeux du peuple espagnol…}
\end{quote}

(Spain you sing for me, the beautiful sun and the happiness, you give this joie de vivre that shines in the eyes of the Spanish people.) Quoted by Moix, 199.
quotes the publicity text of the production company Cifesa for the film, that affirms that the fishermen of the film title, are “Son humildes y honrados pescadores, que tienen por ideales de redención y ambiciones de gloria el cante flamenco y la lidia. Son jóvenes martirizados por los más rudos trabajos y la más negra miseria, pero estoicamente alegres.” (humble and honorable fishermen, whose ideals of redemption and ambitions of glory are flamenco singing and bullfighting. These young men are made martyrs by the hardest jobs and the blackest misery, but stoically happy) (190). The text emphasizes then not the narratives of success of the españoladas starred by the “folklóricas”, except for a gender shift. It is interesting to mark how the image of Spanish working-class man or rural worker is represented in relation to ideas of resignation and conformity with one’s fate, an attitude that summarized very accurately how most of the Spanish population perceived possibility of change for the better as next to impossible, and at the same time conveyed conformity as the only possible answer after that the political repression and tight control of the information that the Franco’s regime had exerted in the country since the Civil War.

Conversely, the meta-cinematic narratives of Escobar’s films celebrated the possibilities of change and success in the new economic context of the development, or “desarrollismo” while stressing the idiosyncratic characteristics of the strictest separation between gender roles advocated by the régime. In the same way that women could imagine alternative subjectivities and formulations of sex, work and class when watching the female stars of the 1940s (Woods 2004, 43), Manolo Escobar’s characters proposed an utopian vision in which the transformations brought by the new economic and social conditions would only represent obstacles that could be easily overcome, and that would ultimately leave the traditional image of masculinity inherited from the past unscathed. Manolo Escobar’s movies proposed a framework inside which, the rise of consumer culture brought by ‘desarrollismo’ and the threat it posed to the traditional image of Spanish masculinity could be controlled. Men could have their cake and eat it too. The status quo and/or the traditional system of values remained secure at the same time that the delights of consumerism (and of a more open
attitude to sex on the part of foreign women) could be enjoyed unproblematically. That juxtaposition between a masculine image and the icons of modernity can be easily read in image 1.3 in which the singer appears against a background that marks the technological advances of the country in the shape of a brightly illuminated highway.

With Escobar, working class men gained visibility in spite of the odds that the new conditions of capitalism and consumerism imposed. At the same time, Escobar’s ladies on the screen, which range from the innocent girl from the provinces to the foreign tourist, and, in his latter films, even to professional women, chronicled the change in feminine behaviors throughout a relatively short period of time. Escobar’s male characters document the masculine struggle to control the emergent image of a more powerful feminine image that had started with the presence of European tourism and gradually extended itself to the Spanish feminine population. The nineteen years that spans Escobar’s filmic career, from 1963 to 1972, document the increasing presence in his films of a female protagonist whose emergent power became more and more difficult to contain. Particularly interesting is how his star narrative paralleled these anxieties of control of the female image. Manolo Escobar represented—as the feminine stars of the 1940s—the lower class and still represented the same narratives of success. The only difference was gender. Now it was a man from the popular classes, the one who wooed and married a higher class wife, and who could, as Labanyi suggests, have responded to the need “to offer models of social mobility to an increasingly discontented male workforce” (Labanyi, 65). In this fashion, the apparently rigid ideological discourse of these musical films also contains a space for the subordinate and the resistant, and point to the right to better social and economic conditions. These films, with their Technicolor, musical numbers and upbeat narratives constitute a collective daydreaming space for Spanish audiences. Indeed, if its male components could enjoy a

\[18\] In that sense, these working class characters also found their representation in literature: they share more than a casual resemblance to a character like Pijoaparte, to name just a literary counterpart in Juan Marsé’s *Ultimas tardes con Teresa*, as a rural immigrant who uses his assets—in his case, his extraordinary beauty—to try to hook up with a bourgeois girl and who at the same time daydreams stories that elevate him from poverty and marginalization.
high level of identification with the star’s plight and later success, women could at least enjoy
the possibility of watching the dashing Manolo not only sing, but also enact with gusto his
part of a heartthrob in the unaltering romantic subplot that was always part of the show.
The image of this musical number in which Escobar sings the pleasures of a job well done in
the factory’s daily toil from the film Entre dos amores, witnesses this upbeat image of the
working class man (figure 1.2).

The way that the working class man gained representativeness through the españolada
does reproduce the same “rags to riches” narratives that had been used by female stars in
the older versions of the genre. But the similarities do not stop there. The female characters
in popular filmic narratives or soap operas escaped their restricted social role, and their place
in the private sphere, to gain access to the public sphere through consumerism. Eva Woods
document how the image of the “folklórica” appears in explicit relation to consumerist
discourse, as they were leaders in fashion and their specularized images appeared, as well in
film as in magazines or other media, dressed in haute couture and wearing furs and jewels
(51). In the same sense, Manolo Escobar epitomizes the rise of consumer culture in the
1960s, for he impersonates the possibility of becoming part of the urban setting, and its
new consumerist uses by way of emigration. This move from the rural to the urban could
be read by audiences as an access to class mobility that had already been epitomized by
his star narrative and also vicariously enjoyed in its display of consummables such as cars,
houses with gardens and swimming pools or fancy suits. In Relaciones casi públicas (Sáenz
de Heredia, 1968), the ambitions to join the happy ranks of consumerism is summarized in
a question constantly repeated by Escobar’s character to Concha Velasco, who impersonates
a journalist ready to manipulate the news in order to make him famous: “Will I get a
Mercedes?” The gender shift is central in the movie. Now the star in the making is a man,
and the person who will work to make his ascension possible, a woman. The result: “Manolo”
will become the successful “Escobar.” This follows thus the basic model narrative of success
that had already been widely used not only in españoladas, but also in Hollywood classical
musicals, like the multiple versions of *A Star is Born*.

Manolo Escobar’s film narratives of success also convey the pleasure that resides in the improbability of its occurrence. Obviously, not everybody in the audience would be able to “make” it in such a spectacular way as the singer, but the presence of this element of success in the plot allows the audiences to question the norm that keeps them from enjoying the pleasures that can be associated with privilege. Fiske calls it “the pleasures of seeing the dominant, controlling explanations of the world at the point of breakdown, pleasures that are particularly pertinent to those who feel barren from participating in controlling discourses of any sort, scientific or not” (116). According to Fiske, the success of such narratives of excess is proportional to the extent of dissatisfaction in a given society (118), and certainly, the Spanish population, in spite of the better economic conditions, had had plenty to go through during the Civil War and the postwar years not to enjoy these films filled with music, color, luxurious accoutrements, attractive main characters and comic relief.

We could also say that part of the pleasure resides in the fact that the films’ plots and characters are so sketchy that the films’ narratives are full of gaps. Therefore, as Fiske puts it when he writes about soap operas like *Dallas*, these films allow “producerly” viewers to include their own meanings and construct their culture with them (121). These popular films and their obvious narratives leave plenty of spaces for the spectator to fill from the perspective of their social experiences, and thus to construct links between the text and their own social realities: “the refusal of depth and of fine distinctions in the text devolves the responsibility for producing them to the reader” (122-123). Audiences thus were treated to a double activity, that of offering relevant meanings and multifarious pleasures, and among them, the power to produce those same meanings. In the context of the political repression and the control exerted by the government over any cultural manifestation, the characteristic that Fiske attributes to popular culture as the “art of the make-do” (4) is especially relevant in the Spanish case.

The high degree of participation that the folklorist genre allowed in audiences was com-
plemented by the relationships that are established between star and public. According to Andrew Tudor, audience-star relationships can be defined in two categories: as self-identification and imitation. While in the first, “the audience member places himself in the same situation and persona of the star”, the second entails “the star acting as some sort of model for the audience.” —quoted in (Dyer, 20)). Manolo Escobar’s films exploit numerous possibilities for audience identification by interpellating the cinematic spectator in a way that can be gender-determined. Male audiences were not obviously formed by aspiring singers, but by the working and middle-class population whose aspirations to better life conditions had been suddenly encouraged by the fast economic growth and the social modernizations that were leaking in in spite of the severely restrictive political regime. Barry King has suggested that stars are in fact “models of rapid social mobility through salary”—quoted by (Dyer, 42). In the case of Escobar’s roles both his public image and his film narratives inform of that mobility. If in real life audiences could read and see in the press his luxurious cars and fancy villa on the coast, in films, the accoutrements of luxury were also composed of similar elements. Elegant suits, expensive cars, houses decorated with game trophies and peopled by butlers and maids, or the fancy London education he can provide for his daughter (in the film Entre dos amores), all of which contribute to shape an image of identification for masculine audiences. But at the same time, Dyer reminds us that “class connections, breeding, education or ‘artistic’ achievement” (21) are not encouraged as desirable consequences of success. Indeed, economic success does not encourage social mobility, as that same Escobar’s film, “Entre dos amores comes to demonstrate. The film’s plot presents an already successful singer that has sent his daughter to England to get the best education possible. On her return, Manolo’s protagonist wishes her to participate in a riding competition along with aristocrats to prove how social barriers have been overcome. However, this pressure proves to provoke her death and the subsequent melodrama. Her father’s crisis will only be resolved when he marries Patricia, his daughter’s Irish instructor. This subplot reinforces the idea that success must contain itself inside class barriers, and that even though Escobar
has achieved success, he is to consider himself as still part of the working class, albeit a “model” for honesty and hard work. In one of the critical moments of the film, Manolo affirms that the only way for him to keep on with his life in spite of the tragedy is to keep all of his professional compromises, and that is exemplified in a musical number in which he sings the song “Trabajando en una fábrica” (working in a factory) performed in a set that portrays a fantasized image of a factory populated with a ballet of “factory workers” whose movements mimic the work at an assembly line. The happy ending will not only involve Escobar to assume his working class origins and audiences, but also getting the girl, who in being a blonde, blue-eyed foreigner, Patricia, embodies the fantasy of the “sueca,” or Swedish girl, without any of the trouble related to class or religion: she is Irish, therefore Catholic. Working class men could then have their cake and eat it too, without becoming a social menace to the middle class. In that sense, the film presfigures what will become an unsolvable anxiety in the contemporary “comedia celtibérica”: Fouz-Hernández quotes Pavlóvic when she defines the masculine characters’ position as one betraying an “eagerness to perform masculinity and national identity” (39).

In fact, Escobar’s first film, Los guerrilleros (1963, Pedro Luis Ramírez) is a wonderful example of how he became a paragon for working class masculinity and national identity. In fact, we could also affirm that this first film’s use of the historical genre was intended as a way to integrate the emerging singer Manolo Escobar in the star system by way of showcasing him in the same kind of vehicle that had proved successful some years prior for Luis Mariano, as well as in the generic costume dramas that were abundantly produced during the dictatorship years. The film’s narrative takes place during the Napoleonic Wars, and thus transforms its national inscription into a narrative of nation-formation. As Thompson reminds us, it was precisely the Napoleonic invasion of Spain during the early years of the 19th century and its consequences the reason behind the encouragement of the ‘proto-nationalism’ according to which the idea of patriotism began to be identified with the state more than with the monarchy itself (23). And the “War of Independence” as it is called in
Spanish historiography, was part of the historical motifs adopted by the Francoist regime as sites of national identification, and subsequently, a recurrent theme in political propaganda and state-sanctioned culture19, as in the case of the 1940s costume dramas.

In *Los guerrilleros*, Manolo Escobar plays the role of Antonio, the foreman who takes care of the cattle belonging to an aristocratic family. Together with Juan, played by the real bullfighter Fermín Bohórquez, they incarnate the two main characters, the roles of ‘guerrilla’ heroes who fight against the invading French a war that the Spanish nobility seems unable to lead or fight. In fact, the family ties between the French and the Spanish aristocrats compromise any possibility of response on the part of the powerful, so class loyalty appears to be stronger than national identifications. We must not overlook how these two characters, the overseer and the bullfighter, represent a model of heterosexual masculinity closely related to the idea of the nation. In the words of George L. Mosse, when relating nationalist feelings and masculinity in modern Europe, “Manliness was invoked to safeguard the existing order against the perils of modernity, which threatened the clear distinction between what was considered normal and abnormality. Moreover, manliness symbolized nation’s spiritual and material vitality” (23). In the absence of an effective bourgeoisie or aristocracy, the representatives of the popular class take over and stand for the kind of masculinity that is capable to defend the integrity of the national territory. In doing it, they use not only the strategies of war in a general sense, but also specific tactics linked to local (Spanish/Andalusian) customs. The Spaniards’ tricks to defeat the French include the use of distractions in the shape of traditional folklore represented by flamenco music and bullfighting. The French troops do not seem so difficult to defeat, as they appear to fall head first into the traps laid by the ‘guerrilleros’, and which include dancing, singing and partying at the tavern owned by “Salvaora” (played by the famous folkloric singer Rocío Jurado), or at a feigned ‘gypsy’ baptism celebration, or at the bullfighting specially staged to divest

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19One of the most popular costume dramas of the post-war period, Agustina de Aragón (Juan de Orduña, 1950s) precisely recreated the battles taking place around Zaragoza during the French invasion.
their attention from military matters. In *Los Guerrilleros*, the strategies that the Spanish fighters employ in fighting the invading French are characterized not only by superior cunning and their ability to attain victory, but also connected to those external manifestations of uniqueness (flamenco song and dance, bullfighting) that were being marketed at the moment that the Spanish tourist boom started during the early 1960s.

This display of the French troops and leaders’ love of Spanish cultural activities and of the advantage taken by the native Spaniards is a clear reminder of the country’s contemporary investment in the tourist business. Judging by their interest on flamenco partying and bullfighting, the representation of the French in the film shares more similarities with the contemporary foreign tourists of the 1960s than with Napoleon’s soldiers.

As for the spaces in *Los guerrilleros*, the site of the fight for the nation’s freedom is explicitly marked as Andalucía. Jo Labanyi remarks that the portrayal of Andalusia in the first decade of Francoism conveys the notion of center versus colonized territory (*Hybridity*, 23). The image of Andalusia in flamenco lyrics and in popular film is akin to the image of the “south” as colonized territory, as this costume drama exemplifies. In Manolo Escobar’s films, the representation of the south suffers an evolution that is marked by emotional but also economic factors. The south is first seen as a rural space of nostalgia, frozen in time and space and representative of the virtues of Spanishness. At the same time, we should not forget that Andalusian folkloric images became during the dictatorship the metonymic expression of the nation.20

Not only *Los guerrilleros*, but other Manolo Escobar’s films also mark the nostalgia for the rural, including *Mi canción es para tí* (Ramón Torrado, 1965) and *Relaciones casi públicas* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1968). In both of these films, the rural is presented as a space increasingly unable to contain the ambitions of the aspiring star, who is obliged to

20 One of the most extraordinary commentaries on this fact is Luis García Berlanga’s film *Bienvenido Mister Marshall* (1953), that follows the adventures of the inhabitants of a small Castilian village, who decide to dress up as flamencos in order to appeal to Americans and get money from the Marshall Plan.
emigrate to the city—represented by Madrid as capital city and site for “centrality”—in his quest for success. Both films obviously refer to the contemporary phenomenon of rural immigration, where 1,300,000 Spaniards searched for jobs in Europe, mainly in France and Germany, and four million more changed their place of residence inside the country between 1963 and 1974 (Fusi and Palafox 1997, 355).

The narrative of immigration is specially poignant in _Mi canción es para ti_, where Manolo plays the role of a “bracero,” or farmhand, unable to get a chance to do any other job or to find a chance for success. That inability is further emphasized by his inability to get a modern man’s proper due: the girl and the car. Both are exemplified with the rich American visitor’s red convertible that Manolo enviously watches from a distance and the unattainability of his beloved Amparo, a poor orphaned girl who is being pushed into the arms of the rich Florencio by her own aunt. Manolo will hit the road of emigration to the city, where he will experience all the harshness of his situation as the possibility for a chance to succeed or even of a job gets dimmer. The character’s poverty as a process of emasculation is further emphasized when he is reduced to washing dishes and doing housework in exchange for his lodging expenses at the boarding house where he lives in Madrid. This curious feminisation of the character that had been previously described as a hearthrob by the laborer girls, as adorable “with or without singing,” speaks directly to Spanish audiences’ experience of the economic hardships of emigration and symbolizes the displacement suffered by the many Spanish men, who were forced to abandon not just their homes but also their social status and roles.

The film’s narrative exposes a curious splitting in a surprisingly high number of characters. In his “pensión” Manolo meets another Amparo, but this one is a flamenco performer in a nightclub, with whose owner she seems to be having an affair, and with whom she tries

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21 Of course, Barcelona (where the real Escobar made it to success) or Bilbao are absent from these narratives as they would attract attention to urban centers which contained conflicitive matters like Basque or Catalan nationalistic feelings, or the social problems derived from rural immigration.

22 By 1970, 1,600,000 Andalusians were living outside their native provinces, 712,000 in Barcelona alone (Carr and Fusi, 66).
to negotiate a job for Manolo. Thus, as both the city and the country, the two Amparos seem to represent the traditional virgin/whore duality by way of the dichotomy between the urban and the rural. While the first Amparo is successful in resisting the advances of the landowner don Florencio, the city one has fallen victim to the warped morals of city life and its corrupting effects. The lesson is clear: economic success is attainable for a woman, but at the price of her virtue.

Manolo will suffer a similar fate with very different consequences. He and his sidekick Tumbafillo are also tempted to become successful by illegal ways, and that implies a trick to kidnap the famous South American singer Curro Lucena (also played by Manolo Escobar). As the stardom narrative would predict, the trick works perfectly and Manolo achieves fame and money when he is discovered as a singer. In the case of our protagonist, his trick is morally justified by the way Curro Lucena is portrayed as a shady character who takes advantage of rich old ladies and steals from them. Moreover, by doing what he does, the main character’s representation of Spanishness substitutes the “foreignness” of Curro, already portrayed as a threat. This way, Manolo’s breach of the law and of loyal competence is presented as totally justifiable, and seems to corroborate the idea that, when it comes to upwards social mobility, there is a clear gender separation. It is dangerous for women to go to the city and try to fend for themselves, but men’s efforts will be rewarded with success. Once Manolo becomes a famous singer, he will remain untempted by further adventures, before returning to his original place to marry his sweetheart and enjoy the richness garnered in the city. This narrative undoubtedly appealed to the feelings of nostalgia of the rural emigrant audiences and to their wish not to lose contact with their origins (furthermore, this patriarchal rhetoric imposed on the working class corroborates Jo Labanyi’s affirmation that the folklóricas stars of the 40s offered to the working class examples of social mobility and economic success that were unthreatening to the status quo(2000, 211). At the same time it clearly expresses the need to apply a gender bias to such examples, so that this model of masculinity for the popular class remained unthreatened by the female workforce that forcibly also had to look
for job opportunities somewhere different than their original birthplaces.

1.1 The “Hall of Mirrors” Effect: Mechanisms of Double Identification

In the vast majority of his films, Escobar represents the role of a neophyte entertainer in the process of becoming a professional, but the other particularity that many of these films share is that the star Manolo Escobar also has a presence in the plot. Jane Feuer (1993) points out how the ‘amateur’ being the main star of the musical is a common presence in Hollywood musical, and how it implies the erasure of the economic side of celebrity: “Amateur entertainers, on the other hand, can’t exploit us because they are us” (13). This stratagem eliminates the distance with the public, encourages mechanisms of identification, and enhances the sense of participation with the film audience. In these narratives, “Manolo” is then the name of a singer in-the-making trying to emulate the success of the “famous” Escobar, a role model of singing finesse and honesty that his amateur counterpart, always called Manolo, imitates with success. Therefore, audiences could experience a doubled or split identification with Escobar’s process of “becoming”. They did not only experience the joy of being successful, but also the triumphal feeling of achieving it.\footnote{Jane Feuer documents the double process of identification with performers and live audiences in the Hollywood backstage musical (1993, p. 30.)} Thomas Schatz describes the opening scene of An American in Paris, in which Gene Kelly/Jerry Mulligan dances while informing us that he is an expatriate painter, but also an American ex-GI. As the sequence closes, he looks at a self-portrait he has sketched and erases his own face from the canvas/screen. According to Schatz, that moment marks the character’s abandonment of his fictional identity to become his “own transcendant musical star persona” (215). On the contrary, in the case of Escobar, when he doubles his presence in his films, his star persona gets to be constantly deconstructed and rebuilt, thus reinforcing the importance of
Escobar’s star narrative and undermining the relevance of the films’ plots, which become mere vehicles for showcasing the star, his performance and the process through which he achieves success. Even if this enhanced self-reflectivity seems to point to the decadence of the genre, it did not affect the audiences’ degree of identification. If we consider that the public was also being encouraged to actually become part of the audience in the film when the musical numbers are performed through subjective camerawork, the triple game of identification, with Escobar the star, with his amateur version, and with the public on the screen, becomes very difficult to resist. These rapid shifts of viewpoints triply the sense of participation, by adding the element of access to the creative moment of the spectacle, and thus intensifying the experience of watching a musical performance (Feuer, 30). But, at the same time, the trick allowed audiences a more direct access to Escobar’s star narrative as an experience of success, by making them experience a parallel process and therefore joining him, in a joyful communal feeling, in the process of creating the new “modernized” Spain without losing sight of the traditional values that had became part of what was perceived as the nation’s collective identity.

The films that exemplify this plot are *Mi canción es para tí*, *Me has hecho perder el juicio* and *La mujer es un buen negocio*. In the first as we just explained, Escobar’s splitting is justified morally by the plot. The successful singer is “Curro Lucena”, and the different name already gives us a hint. He impersonates the double, the “bad” twin, the one whose immorality justifies his substitution by the wholesome figure of Manolo Escobar’s star persona. Curiously, this subplot will be turned around in its foundations in other occurrences: *Me has hecho perder el Juicio* (Juan de Orduña, 1973) and *La mujer es un buen negocio* (Valerio Lazaro, 1978.) In *La mujer es un buen negocio*, where the diegetic Escobar appears first as “poor” Manolo the shoeshine, but also as “Manolo Escobar” himself, the shoeshine’s girlfriend’s obsession—her bedroom is covered with Escobar’s real posters, no doubt an interesting borrowing from extra-diegetic reality. Pepa’s fandom of the star and love for his double, the shoeshine, further emphasize the validity of both the star and the
aspiring singer, and at the same time encourages and justifies the very phenomenon of fandom in all its commodifying glory. The final scene, in which both Manolos finally meet in the flesh and find themselves singing on the same stage, conclude with a touching scene in which Manolo the star advises Manolo the shoeshine on how to solve his economic and personal troubles. Obviously he impersonates a figure of authority that can provide with the solution to the narration’s conflicts, and therefore shows the patriarchal authority that is a founding part of his star persona. But the fan phenomenon is not the only reference to “modernity” in the film. The director of the film, Lazarov, of Romanian origin, was a regular producer and director in Spanish national television, more specifically, for his inclusion of technical aspects that were seen as revolutionary at the time. His original use of the camera included his creative use of the zoom, described by himself as “something that makes you sicker than a roller coaster”\textsuperscript{24} and that consisted on the repeated zoom in and zoom out and became his signature shot. It became so popular that a pop dance group, regular in the Spanish television, was christened after it (the ballet Zoom). And of course, what better way to “modernize” both the film and the “españolada” genre than using the popular troupe to include some contemporary dancers’ movement and Lazarov’s signature camera moves.

\subsection*{1.2 The New Space of the Nation}

The use of the camera and of the ballet “zoom” point towards a modernization that is also present in the representation of the nation and its spaces. This phenomenon can be clearly seen in \textit{La mujer es un buen negocio}, a remarkable example of the insistence on the representation of Andalusia as the peripheral space of the South in Manolo Escobar’s films, as well as its evolution. Eva Maria Woods has already remarked the presence of Andalusia as a substitute for a lost past, nostalgically reconstructed and stereotyped so as “to preserve forever the pre-capitalist, feudal-like and dependent character of an exotic internal other

\textsuperscript{24} In an interview recorded for the Spanish television in the 1970s and that can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7zRVoZuIml.
can be explained by the concept of the fetish,” and how on the societal level, fetishism “results from the effort to preserve the prevailing social order (capitalism)” (Woods, 210). In the case of Escobar movies, this fixed image of Andalusia presents an evolution, reflecting a wish to change so that everything remains the same. By way of the conversion into capitalistic mode, the old fetish, the object of nostalgia becomes, thanks to its new consumeristic uses, a site of tourist exploitation. Svetlana Boym declares that nostalgic longing is defined by “the loss of the original object of desire, and by its spatial and temporal displacement”, but also points out that in Western culture, there is a “souvenirization of the past,” as “the past eagerly cohabits with the present” (Boym 2001, 31). In that sense, these films offer a deep investment in their own historical moment. If Andalusia represented the nostalgia for the space of the rural “pueblo” in Mi canción..., the southern countryside acquired a completely different character than their representation in En un lugar de la Manga and Un beso en el puerto. In them, Andalucía’s dry lands and its spaces of rural poverty becomes the ideal site for its tourist exploitation. Sunny virgin beaches are soon part of a landscape of high rise hotels and the white streets of the little villages appear populated by eager tourists riding the “burro-taxis”.25

The space of the past becomes thus the space of the very present that symbolizes the country’s tourist and economic boom, and one in which the characters played by Manolo Escobar get intimately implicated. In En un lugar de la Manga, the idea of the re-making of the nation is contained even in the title, a word game with the famous opening words of Cervantes’ Don Quijote de la Mancha, “En un lugar de la Mancha” (someplace in the Mancha.) Juan, the character played by Manolo, shows his reluctance to sell his grandfather’s land so that a tourist complex can be built. The reason for his negative to sell his piece of land is related to an old historic feud between his grandfather and another peasant that ended in the second’s death and his burial in the house’s grounds. The incident is cunningly described

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25Burro-taxis were a typical tourist attraction at the time, that consisted in guided donkey rides around the beaches and the countryside surrounding the town or resort.
as happening at a time “cuando era normal tener armas en casa” (when it was usual to have weapons in the house), in a deft way to avoid the mentioning of the Civil War. Manolo, as the dutiful grandson who wants to protect his grandfather by keeping the story under wraps, also represents the old ways of the artisan and its “authenticity” in contrast with the ways of consumerism and the easy money that is made by all of the peasants and real-state agents involved in the speculation. As Annabel Martín notes, Manolo clings to his small workshop and the artisan production of guitars, and when tempted to expand his business so that he could give employment to more people, he retorts that his wish is to “dar a cada guitarra cuanto más pueda de sí mismo.”

His resistance to modernisation appears entrenched in the tradition and the popular, as his wish to preserve the past. Martín makes a political reading of the film, in which the final sale of the grandfather’s land to the developers, once erased the traumatic past, is considered as a movement to get rid of the “peso de la historia” by way of erasing the memory of the Civil War to achieve “felicidad colectiva” (204, 205). This political reading ignores conflicts involving spaces and social class.

The film chronicles the transformation of the rural into a commodity and a space of fantasy, and the way this transformation is able to remedy the historical misery of the working classes, as well as the way that the middle classes profited from the economic benefits generated. The Spanish population’s wish to participate in the economic phenomenon of tourism and the riches it generated is still disregarded as “la promesa del bienestar individual” regardless of “los restos incómodos del pasado” (Martin, 205).

Although in En un lugar de la Manga Escobar appears as a rural type, a defender of tradition in the face of the threat of uncontrolled commodification of the rural space, in many others, Escobar is mainly presented as a successful urban type of rural origin, a hero who succeeds in making it big in the city. The continuous presence of these two contrasting spaces points towards a very contemporary view of the stereotypical Andalucian space of the “españolada.” In his first films (Los guerrilleros, Mi canción es para tí) Andalucía is

26 “Give to each guitar the most from himself”
substituted by either a representation of nostalgia, recovered from the past and read as the site of the nation as in his first costume drama of the War of Independence, or in the shape of the “pueblo,” the small rural place the contemporary character emigrates from in search of economic opportunities. This image of fetishistic nostalgia, that undoubtedly worked for emigrated audiences, had a tendency to disappear in later films, in a process of commodification that transformed the space of nostalgia into a tourist site. This process was described by Crumbaugh as “the Spanish national identity’s ontological shift from essence to global commodity” (247). A number of Escobar’s films chronicle the transformation of the poor white coastal villages into tourist traps like Torremolinos, La Manga del Mar Menor or La Costa Brava. Tourist developments are the new arcadia, the place that guarantees access to easy money, either through land speculation (En un lugar de la Manga), or by having access to easy or power-invested foreign women (Un beso en el puerto, la mujer es un buen negocio, Donde hay patron…). In later coproductions with Latin American film companies which also starred Manolo Escobar, this space of exploitation is occupied by Latin American countries such as Puerto Rico, Peru and Argentina. In them, the old Spanish colonies are “recovered” as markets of consumption and at the same time they are presented as spaces of tourist exploitation in the filmic narrative. That happens during the late 1970s, in the films Eva, ¿Qué hace ese hombre en tu cama? (Tulio Demicheli, 1975) and Alejandra mon amour (Julio Saraceni, 1979). Again, it is worth noting how these narratives follow closely the old “españoladas” plots of emerging, poor singers who marry above their humble class origins, but now showcasing the spaces of commodification constituted by Puerto Rican, Peruvian or Argentinian tourist attractions.
1.3 Manolo versus Conchita, “copla” versus “yé-yé”:

Containing Feminism and Modernisation

Steven Cohan reminds us of how the musical film contains not only the narrative activity of the film’s plot, but the performances of the stars that remain in excess of it (Cohan, 49). In his view, the presence of a man in such showstopping numbers, instead of working as a manoeuvre that posits him in a feminized position, in fact offers “a highly self-conscious and theatrical performance that constructs his masculinity out of the show-business values of spectatorship and spectacle” Cohan:1993. Clearly, given the relation between masculinity and the nation in the imaginary of the dictatorship, Manolo Escobar’s brand of masculinity included, apart from his singing skills, a symbolic load that included references and parallelism to the idea of the nation.

In the case of Pero... ¡En qué país vivimos! (José Luís Sáenz de Heredia, 1968) both the narrative and the performances are integrated in a common objective: a project to define Spain as a nation in the context of the uneven ‘modernity’ of the 1960s. The question is exposed in binary terms: traditional copla (masculine) vs. modern yé-yé (femenine), man vs. woman, national vs. foreign, Spanish wine vs. whisky. And of course, the conflict had to be resolved with a happy ending which contained the modern into the limits of the traditional. That meant, in the case of this musical comedy, a reaffirmation of patriarchal values and the control of this incipient feminist consciousness via traditional marriage.

These pairs of opposites are impersonated by two music stars, Manolo Escobar and Conchita Velasco, both at the peaks of their singing careers at the time. In fact their star power and their capacity to portray relevant issues for contemporary audiences were reflected in the extraordinary success of five musical vehicles which they costarred from 1967 to 1971. Actually, Manolo and Conchita played similar roles in similar narratives in three of them: Manolo played, as in the rest of his films, the traditional, old-fashioned model of masculinity, while Conchita Velasco played a “modernized” version of femininity, representing a model
of woman who had gained independence from the virgin/whore duality and the traditional representation of woman in Spanish culture by remaining single and having a profession (lawyer, journalist, real state agent, even professional card reader). Meanwhile the character impersonated by Manolo depends on her help to achieve his objectives. This type of plot was a clear example of a timid advent of the new ideas of feminism that were spreading from other countries, and whose arrival in Spain was a consequence of its opening to foreign ideas that the end of autarky and the boom of tourism entailed. Conchita Velasco was the perfect vehicle to impersonate such foreign influences. Although she started her career in variétés (vaudeville) and achieved fame and success with comedies of the late 1950s such as *Las chicas de la cruz roja*, (Rafael J. Salvia, 1959). The highest point in her career was in the late 1960s, when she became a pop singer, directly influenced by the *yé yé* pop movement. This movement took place mainly in France in the late 60s, and its performers (France Gall, Françoise Hardy, Sylvie Vartan, Jane Birkin) were young girls who, dressed in miniskirts, sang edulcorated pop numbers about themes related to female adolescence, providing youngsters and especially young girls with figures of identification. The phenomenon was quickly imported from France, and very young singers like Massiel, Marisol, Rosalía, Rocío Durcal or Conchita Velasco became national icons for the younger generation. It is not difficult to see how these images of young women’s ‘independence’ and modernity, in the context of the times, could be seen as threatening to traditional models of masculinity.

In that sense, the five films costarred by Manolo Escobar and Conchita Velasco were a clear example of social anxiety about gender roles. In all of them, Conchita represented an active, professional female whose modernizing ways were finally contained by the romantic subplot with the masculine star. This feminist threat was represented, in two cases, by direct rivalry in *En un lugar de la Manga*, and in *Pero...¡En qué país vivimos!* In these films, Manolo and Conchita impersonate characters who directly compete against each other. In the first film, they are rival singers who represent modernity and tradition, and in the second Conchita plays a state agent who needs Manolo to change his mind about not selling a piece
of land that will make possible a tourist development. These types of plots situate the female character impersonated by Conchita Velasco in a position of power regarding the male rarely seen in Spanish cinema during the dictatorship. There is even a component of class in *Juicio de Faldas*, where Manolo Escobar plays the role of a self-made truck driver (now proprietor of three vehicles, and object of lust for many girls, as the comedic role played by Gracita Morales, who pursues him relentlessly, lets us know.) “Manolo” needs the help of Marta, a lawyer in a prestigious firm, to defend himself when Gracita accuses him falsely of rape (with the intention of getting a promise of marriage that will make her drop her charges). This inversion of the traditional patriarchal roles, with Manolo as the truck driver and Marta as the middle-class lawyer, on the one hand, could be attributed to the habitual plot device in “españoladas” by which the protagonist, male or female, falls for a higher class partner and thus achieves social and economical mobility. But there are a couple of variations that make this film stand apart. Even if Conchita Velasco’s Marta needs to recognize that she owes her job to her grandfather, who preceded her in the law firm, it is thanks to her that Manolo gets to win his cause. This is a curious inversion of the traditional identification of the sexes with high and low culture, as the masculine is traditionally identified with high culture and the feminine with the low (Syeburth, 10).

Manolo the truck driver, finally marrying Marta the lawyer, is a plot line that contains a message of empowerment for working class masculinity, by way of a rags to riches narrative (Manolo is presented as a driver who has worked hard enough to buy his own fleet of trucks and to get the upper-class girl. Therefore, the traditional “españolada” narrative in which the main character’s social climbing was due to marriage switches gender. It is now the working-class man who becomes an empowered individual, following a narrative of individual success that emphasizes virtues, including honesty, force of will and hardwork. Escobar personified these kind of narratives adding the advantages of the support of his own success in his star persona, and at the same time offering the audience the pleasure of imbibing a number of elements that contributed to their enjoyment: luxurious accoutrements
that become accessible by proxy, music and song, attractive actors in a mixture of disparate element that add up to the feel-good atmosphere.

Velasco and Escobar’s characters also impersonate a contrast of opposites. The narrative plots in these films usually put him in a problematic position (a singer who wants to achieve success, a truck driver that has wrongly been accused of rape, a club manager under the thumb of a ruthlessly corrupt partner) to which Conchita tries to provide proactive and “modern” solutions. That way, Manolo is posed in passive roles while the plot is thrust forward by Conchita’s proactive characters with strategies that prove to be too daring and comically ineffective. These narrative solutions point clearly to a problem of gender “containment”. The active, modern, professional woman impersonated by Conchita seem to be an inevitable-and threatening- consequence of modernity that needs to be contained by tradition in the form of heterosexual romance. This “happy” ending will consist in making her renounce to her “wrong” ways and bow to Manolo’s traditional model of Spanish masculinity.

Another relevant aspect about Pero...¡En qué país vivimos! is that both Manolo and Concha are given a “singing” voice, so the representation of the confrontation between the modern and the traditional is not only embodied in the film’s narrative, but also exposed as a spectacle. But the representation of the national in this case is also linked to the process of modernization and commodification that Spain is going through. The idea of the confrontation between tradition and modernity, between Spanish *copla* and *ye-ye* music is just a commercial strategy on the part of a publicity agent to sell alcoholic drinks, more specifically, whisky and Spanish wine, so music does not only impersonate the ‘essence’ of the nation but is also a commercial strategy. In fact, we could say that the representation of the nation *has become* a commodity. I would say that this legitimation of the new commercial practices is the deep message of the film. It conveys the idea of the inevitability of modernity under the new capitalistic modes that are part of the 1960s economic boom, but that need to be contained with an ideological frame of traditional Spanishness. Annabel Martin notes how the gist of our national identity is contained, and saved by way of maintaining our “structures
of feelings” in the form of ”amor romántico y (de) la familia” (Martin, 186). Therefore, the film not only documents Spain’s transformation into a consumer capitalist society, it also showcases the Spaniards’ resourcefulness when marketing their own culture. Of course, the prevalence of the Spaniards’ traditional modes help to institute Manolo Escobar and his chivalrous performance of Spanishness as the winning side. Thus, the narrative conclusion entails Conchita succumbing to Manolo’s charm for the sake of his love and renouncing her “aggressive” ye-yé girl identity in the process. Thus, her new brand of femininity can be adequately contained within a traditional structure of patriarchal dominance.

The particular impersonation of the Spanish masculinity that Escobar’s star persona and songs projected was defined by himself in a 1976 interview as “a product of the people” (“soy un producto neto del pueblo”) at the same time that he assured that his image was that of the happy Spaniard (“doy la imagen del español feliz.”) But Escobar’s rosy image was not universal. In fact, not all opinions were unanimous, and his popular image, whose marketing shared many techniques from the populist brand of fascism that the regime rhetoric had implemented for forty years, was criticized by more progressive partisans of the press and the intelligentsia. In 1974, the Cartelera Turia Team, when writing an account of the Spanish genre cinema classified Escobar under the banner, “Los flamencos del plan de desarrollo” (the flamencos of the development plan), and defined him in the following words:

“Simboliza el “milagro” español de los 60, el sueño utópico del self-made man ibérico: el gran éxito logrado a través del cante pues representa en este ámbito lo que “El Cordobés” en el de los toros. El hombre que, de no tener nada, lo

27 The anonymous interviewer seems to have a very different view of the singer: “Todos los años debuta Manolo Escobar en un teatro madrileño trayendo así una y otra vez el estandarte de su españolismo lleno de carros y de madrecitas María del Carmen. Que por algo Manolo es el prototipo del celtíbero tópico, que por algo usa patillas desmesuradas sobre su cara ancha, y tupé, y camisas de tergal rosado, y sonrisa perpetua de anuncio dentífrico, sonrisa de usuario de “600” en trance de pasar al “127.”” (Every year, Manolo Escobar premieres in a Madrid theatre bringing once and again his particular brand of hispanism, full of carts and mothers María del Carmen. It is not for any other reason that Manolo has become the stereotype of the topical Spaniard, or uses enormous sideburns on his wide face, and toupee, and pinkish tergal shirts, and permanent smile of toothpaste commercial, the smile of the consumer of a compact car about to switch it for a bigger one” Fotogramas, “27)
ha conseguido todo (popularidad, millones, admiración), y en el que todos los peones, los albañiles, los metalúrgicos, los operarios, los auxiliares de correos, etc., se miran en un espejo risueño y generoso, capaz de hacerles creer en el feliz porvenir con sus tranquilizadores pasodobles, ese limbo donde todos los españoles se contentan con ser millonarios... de ilusiones.” (151) (He symbolizes the Spanish miracle of the 1960s, the utopian dream of the Iberian self-made man: the enormous success achieved thanks to singing, as he represents in music the same as the Cordobés in bullfighting. The man that, starting from zero, has achieved everything (fame, millions, admiration.) In him, all the laborers, builders, metal workers, the post office workers, etc. look at themselves in a jolly and generous mirror, capable of making them believe in the happy future with his soothing pasodobles, that limbo where all the Spaniards are happy to be millionaires... in illusions.)

The Cartelera Turia Team seems to obviate the power of musicals to empathize with the audience, and how deft these films were in providing entertainment at the same time that they showcased a sunny and tranquillizing view of the social transformations that loomed in the horizon. Spanish society was riding the winds of change at a speed that, in a short notice, would make of Escobar’s compromised brand of modernization a mere anachronism. The singer’s times of glory ended with the 1970s. And although he still continues to tour and sing, his incursions into film finished with the decade. Nevertheless, his presence on the small screen continues. The Spanish Public Television Channel (TVE, Televisión Española) has been offering Cine de Barrio, a weekly program that broadcasts old films from the 60s and 70s on Saturday afternoons for 12 years. Among these films, Escobar products have had a prominent presence. Cine de Barrio, together with the soap opera Cuéntame, (Tell me), which narrates the adventures of a low-middle class family during the 1970s, and which has been on the air for eight seasons, enjoyed high ratings and their long standing bear witness to the ongoing fascination of the Spanish public with the revision of its recent past. Their
longevity on the air betrays the existence of the feelings of nostalgia, although in younger audiences, their success could also be attributed to a camp approach or a revision of the past in a country for which history and trauma still hold important associations. All these reasons are probably at the root of Spanish audiences’ willingness to revisit these popular cultural products which reconstruct a time of confusion and change as a happy occasion.

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Figure 1.1: Manolo Escobar as a sex symbol.
Figure 1.2: Manolo Escobar impersonating a factory worker in a musical number in “Entre dos amores.”
Figure 1.3: Manolo Escobar, man of the “desarrollismo”.
Figure 1.4: Manolo Escobar, in a modernized image.
Figure 1.5: Manolo Escobar in “traje corto.”
Figure 1.6: Manolo Escobar and his brothers.
2.1 Spanish Masculinity at a Crossroads: The “Desarrollismo” or Development Years.

During most of the 20th century, Spanish cinema offered images of iconic masculinities that were surprisingly subdued if we consider, as Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito suggest, the “tradition of masculine muscul arity that can be traced through most of Western civilisation” (64). Spanish leading males mainly consisted on “hearthrobs, pater familias and cute boys” (65) who always appeared immaculately dressed and who never exhibited their bodies. Spanish leading men of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s offered “a combination of good health and neat looks” (68) that are very apt to describe the conventional model of masculinity that became dominant in Spanish society, conveniently adapted to the limitations imposed by the national reality. In fact, their stereotypical slenderness and lack of muscularity can be read as a side effect of the extended period in which the country’s economic development did not rise above subsistence level. During the mid 1930s, the civil war, and the prolonged postwar and autarky period that lasted well into the 1950s, food scarcity was a daily reality. As for these leading males’ modesty, it is not surprising that bodies appeared covered in the context of the ideological control that the Catholic Church exerted thanks to its privi-
leged status in relation to the Franco regime. Actors like Alberto Closas, Vicente Parra or Carlos Larrañaga became the images of manhood extolled as the living example of patriotic and moral feelings that constituted the ideological base of the dictatorship. Their image of unfaltering masculinity, visual epitome of the traditional Catholic and patriarchal model, as well as the collective belief in its validity was about to collapse in the light of the new socio-economical and political circumstances of the 1960s and early 1970s, in what is called the late Francoist period. Kaja Silverman coined the term “historical trauma” to describe similar phenomena similar to the changes that Spanish society experienced, and their influence on models of gender. In her words, “historical trauma” describes “any historical event which brings a large group of male subjects into such an intimate relation with lack that they are at least for a moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus, and so withdraw their belief in the dominant fiction” (Silverman, 55).

The psychic effects described by Silverman can be explained in the Spanish case in economic, political and social terms. The economic boom of the “desarrollismo” or development years—that took place during the late 1950s and 1960s, meant Spanish society’s immersion in consumerism and the capitalistic mode, as well as the exposure to new gender models. The change in gender models, part of the rapid evolution in social mores, was a phenomenon hastened by the increasing contact with foreign customs. The contact with tourists on the homeland soil, as well as the increasing number of Spanish emigrants abroad, constituted two constant sources of observation of different habits and morals for a population that had been kept isolated by twenty years of the dictatorship’s isolationist politics. These new uses meant a challenge against the traditional moral and ideas that had been propagated by the political regime and supported by a strict censorship. The dictatorship had reinforced a model of behavior based on patriarchal traditions but also on the Catholic Church’s sanctioned model of family and morality. This traditional model presented a marked contrast with the looser attitude to gender roles and sexuality that northern Europeans experienced during the 1960s.
In the case of Spain, foreign tourism was undoubtedly the phenomenon that hastened the change in gender roles and sexual mores. The seasonal arrival of northern European visitors that began as a trickle in the 1950s, had become a booming industry by the early 1970s. By 1972, seasonal employment rose to 600,000 people. By 1973, Spain was being visited annually by 20 million tourists bringing with them 3,000 million dollars (Carr et alii 57-58). During the 1960s and early 1970s, and for the first time ever, the Spanish coasts were populated by bikiniied foreign girls, iconic images of the liberated European girl that the figure of the mythical “sueca” (Swedish girl) exemplified. The Swedish girl had become for some European nations, as well as the U.S., the epitome of sexual freedom, a sexualized “other” in a movement that had much in common with the renditions of the sexualized oriental women popular in the 19th century. This reading of the Swedish girl was based on a number of cultural products (especially soft porn films) that suggested a much more open view on sexuality on the part of Scandinavians than what had been permitted at the time in Spain. A good example of the reach of the phenomenon is, as unusual a suspect as it could be considered, Ingmar Bergmann’s *Summer with Monika* (1953), which was exhibited in the US with the intentionally misleading title of *Monika, Story of a Bad Girl*, and whose poster, featuring Harriet Anderson sunbathing with a revealing top, is stolen by François Truffaut’s alter ego Antoine Doinel in *Les Quatre cents coups* (Antoine Truffaut, 1959). These images of scantily clad, sexually liberated girls became an icon of the sexual revolution that was under way in Northern Europe and North America, which were already over the first wave of feminism that had been inaugurated by the Kinsey reports in the 1950s, with the revolutionary idea that women also experienced sexual pleasure.

There is another factor that contributed to the modification of the role that had been assigned to masculinity for most of the century, and that was the process of commodification that increasingly permeated Spanish society. Added to the ever-growing exposure to sexual references that foreign tourism brought, we find the anxiety to participate in the new capitalist, consumerist system with its myriad new accoutrements, increasingly perceived
as desirable elements to be acquired. Carr and Fusi emphasize the exponential growth of industrial production and consumerism at the time in Spain: “When the SEAT factory was set up in Barcelona in 1952, its managers were concerned that the market might not absorb a hundred cars a month; by 1975 Ford, Chrysler, Citroën, Renault and SEAT were producing three-quarters of a million cars a year. There were comparable expansions in all consumer durables: washing machines, refrigerators, television sets” (56).

This flood of vehicles and household appliances offered a stark contrast with the scarcity that the Spanish population had suffered during the 1940s and most of the 1950s as a consequence of Franco’s policies of autarky and the country’s exclusion from the Marshall Plan. Both factors, consummerism and new sexual referents, constituted themselves as generators of an increasing feeling of masculine insecurity and unfulfilled desires. Men found themselves suddenly addressed by a number of requirements that inserted them in a fast-growing capitalistic structure, and that required a great number of them to abandon their rural origins by the thousands, looking for unskilled jobs in the new urban industrial centers as well as in tourist sites, or even in other European countries. (Carr and Fusi; Carr and Aizpurua, 57,58). Immigration was also marked by a gender element, as Michael Kimmel reminds us:

“en los procesos migratorios, el 90% de la población está constituída por varones que dejan a sus familias y hogares en busca de trabajo en otros países. Si miramos el porcentaje de inmigrantes en la unión europea, veremos que la abrumadora mayoría son hombres.” (quoted by (Carabí and Armengol, 23))

(In migratory processes, 90% of the population is constituted by males who leave their families and homes in search of work in other countries. If we look at the percentage of immigrants in the European Union, we will see that the majority are men).

But men did not only experience a revolution in their work habits, but also in their modes of consumption. Relocated in the big cities or in tourist sites along the Mediterranean coast,
men would often experience a complete change in their views of life as they suddenly discovered that they were required to become consumers and were faced with the new pleasures, and the new anxieties of installment purchases or mortgages.

The feelings of anxiety that arose with the new situation had very limited possibilities of expression. According to Kimmel, “las estrategias a las que se ha recurrido para solventar las numerosas crisis de la masculinidad (la necesidad de mantenerse fuerte, seguro y estable como hombre, la necesidad de verificar la propia masculinidad, etc. ) siguen siendo las mismas (...) el autocontrol, la huída y la exclusión” (the strategies used to solve the many masculinity crises (the need to keep oneself strong, reassured and stable as a man, the need to verify one’s own masculinity) (qtd by Carabí, 20). Mechanisms of self-control are central in the experience of individuals in Western cultures, who become subjects by interiorizing structures of power (Foucault 130, 131). Although Foucault is referring to religious and political matters, politics and gender become indistinguishable in the Spanish case. Governmental censorship was designed so that the Spanish citizens’ access to any information which deviated from the political and social views sanctioned by the Francoist regime was banned. The consequences were a reinforcement of the traditional gender models defined by the Catholic Church and conservative patriarchy, as any divergence from the normative political and sexual positions were being carefully monitored and punished.

In this repressive context, the image of masculinity was being more questioned in popular culture than in high culture products, which during the 1960s and 1970s were often focused on issues of political expression, seen by the Spanish leftist ‘textitintelligentsia as a much more urgent question than any issue of sex or gender. Questions of gender were thus conveniently bypassed during the 1960s and early 1970s. It would not be until the second half of the 1970s that feminism or homosexuality started to find a voice in writers such as Esther Tusquets, Juan Goytisolo and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán or film directors like Eloy de la Iglesia and Ventura Pons.
2.2 Comedy, a Vehicle for the Safe Representation of Deviance

By contrast, earlier popular films, and more particularly, comedies, had the advantage of being a cultural product easily produced and consumed, in which direct references to contemporary reality were allowed. Comedies offered an experimenting ground where it was possible to combine elements that had won the audience’s favor in previous occasions with references to current events, in an apparently harmless generic containment.

There are particularly two generic aspects of comedy that allowed for the safe representation of any dangerous contradiction between the sanctioned models of behavior and the new circumstances that challenged them: pardon and incongruity. In comedy, pardon acts as a guarantee of permission. Comedy is at once critical and corrective, but at the same time it performs a moral function. Stott introduces the idea of mockery and ridicule as a weapon, as an “ethically determined tool, one that can be applied to both good and bad ends” that was used in Tudor and Stuart England as a mean of extending social norms (133). Michael Bristol agrees that “ridicule is a recognized element in law enforcement, in the punishment of insubordination and in the everyday feeling of superiority enjoyed by nobles in respect to their servants” (qtd. by Stott 133). The concept that here is employed in relation to social class can also be applied when talking about gender and its limits of representation. Deviance from the norm can be portrayed in comedy provided that the structures of comedy manage to keep it controlled by the mechanisms of pardon and incongruity. Any forbidden deviance, any unseemly model is redeemed by the pardon that is granted by the prevalence in comedy of the happy end. The importance of pardon in comedy can be explained in the terms that Schaeffer uses to describe its relevance in laughter theory: “We are asked to find in the matter presented to us whatever gives us the pleasure that expresses itself in laughter, and we are also given a general pardon and indulgence against whatever breaches of logic, decorum, and morality we may make in arriving at that pleasure” (21).
Comedy is thus capable of containing any problematic issue, as pardon will be granted by the happy end. The final reconciliation or happy end of comedy will then have the effect to bring back the prevalent order and thus convert the comic into a function of patriarchal discourse.

In the Spanish sexy comedy, the progressive invalidity of the traditional model of masculinity is retold as a conflict between the traditional and the modern. One of the most usual plots refers to the traditional Spanish model of indissoluble marriage between a domineering husband and a submissive wife, its integrity threatened by the intromission of elements like economic difficulties, emigration, foreign models of independent (and sexually liberated) femininity and other motifs. All these elements collaborate in generating a number of conflicts that propel the comedy plots but are conveniently contained by the happy end and its power to restore a sense of harmony. Hokenson quotes Paul Lewis commenting how humor originates in “startling incongruity, (…) and entails the two stages of perceiving it and then resolving or mastering it (in a release of tension), so it is playful (not serious) and subjective” (130).

Incongruity theory proves then to be useful in a situation that requires the negotiation between the old models and the new circumstances, when it becomes necessary to deal with the uncertainties of change. It becomes a master tool when dealing with conflicting views of gender roles: by making it an integral part of humor, the traditional order is restored in an exercise of power that requires “the creation and use of humor”, which thus becomes “a force in controlling our responses to unexpected and dangerous happenings” (130). Lewis understands that the spectator encountering a particular combination of ideas and finding them incongruous, assumes “that it would be correct, appropriate and ethical to find this incongruity amusing” (qtd. in Honkenson, 131.) This mechanism gives us the clue about the function of comedy in times of change, and, when dealing with crisis of masculinity, explains how characters, whose function consists in reinforcing the preexisting models, come to embody ideological contradictions.
2.3 Comedy, the Spanish Way.

Comedy has been one of the genres that has had a stronger presence in Spanish cinema. Since the beginnings of film in Spain in the first decade of the 20th century, comedy became a popular staple in silent film due to its relatively cheap production costs, the possibility of improvisation, and its close relationship to the Spanish tradition of "sainete" and the spectacles of "variedades" (Huerta Floriano, 113). Huerta Floriano also points to the class element that defined film audiences in the earliest years of the 20th c., as middle classes considered films a show of the lowest taste ("un espectáculo de ínfimo gusto", 114.) Producers favored films based on works related to popular literature and short pieces that had been extremely successful on the stage. The genre that was most successfully imported from the theater was the sainete. Sainetes were usually short pieces that were heavily indebted to the "costumbrista" pieces of the 19th century. Its themes are based on everyday life, as it includes mentions of the social and political events of the day. Its characters are usually sketchy, and reflect popular types belonging to the working or middle classes. The sainete is particularly successful in critical moments of history, as in its ideologically flexibility, it can as often be read as conservative and offering the refuge of the old customs or as opening a window to new mores, and in short, to modernity. By 1925, "sainetes" were being written specifically for the silver screen (Huerta Floriano 118), and by the middle 1930s, when talkies were being produced, the Spanish film industry was already reaching what by many authors consider a golden age. Comedy had a particularly important role in the years of the Second Republic (1931-1939), as not only experienced and prestigious directors as Benito Perojo and Florián Rey found a continuity in their careers making comedies, but there was a also a new generation that cultivated the genre, including playwrights like Edgar Neville, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia and Eduardo García Maroto. In short, comedies and musical films constituted the spine of the filmic production during the Second Republic, but barely survived the economic, ideological consequences of the civil war and the post war
period, from the mid 1930s to the late 1940s. Only popular theatrical models were still being adapted during those years, including Jardiel Poncela’s comedies of the absurd and the Andalusian and Madrilenian “sainetes.”

This continuity of the influence of sainete along the story of Spanish film deserves special attention, as its repercussion has lasted until contemporary times. Spanish comedies imported a number of characteristics from sainetes, as their allusions to social and political reality, the collective protagonist, the characters based on popular types, the presentation of a common problematic and the glorification of the popular. After all, comedies can offer a carnavalesque reading of the most controversial aspects of social and cultural conflicts, and, in this sense, they also fulfill a function of exorcism: at the same time that political or social events of the day are presented on stage, they provide the popular and the middle classes with escapist entertainment, along the lines of Bakhtin’s *carnivalesque* function. In that sense, the sainete fulfills many of the functions of the *carnivalesque*: in its portrait of a group of characters that face a common conflict and solve it satisfactorily with the aid of a conservative ideology, it is a genre that offers refuge from the unknown consequences of modernity.

Spanish film comedy adopted another important characteristic of the sainete, and that has to do with the importance of thespians. In these sketchy pieces, the actors’ images and acting style become incarnations of stereotypical images—or popular types—of Spanishness, allowing an unusual grade of identification on the side of the audience. This idiosyncrasy of the genre was shown at its best in the Spanish film comedy of the 1950s, which has been qualified as being in debt both with the ”costumbrismo” of the sainete at the same time that is populated by actors who represented popular types, and whose theatrical experience became crucial in that respect. Actors like José Isbert, José Luis López Vázquez, Chus Lampreave, or Manolo Morán appeared in films like *El cochecito* (Marco Ferreri, 1960) or *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall* (José Luis García Berlanga, 1953), whose social critique was heavily based on a penchant for “la exageración, (...) la deformación sangrante, (...) la exacerbación de los rasgos
singulares, de la conversión de las personas en personajes” (the exaggeration, the extreme deformation, the intensification of odd characteristics, the transformation of persons into characters) (Castro de Paz et alia, 126). Still Huerta Floriano points to the ”sainete” and Spanish picaresque literature as clear influences in the aforesaid films (4), which were part of the few filmic examples of social critique that passed the control of censorship in the 1950s.

Along its history, Spanish film comedy has shown a remarkable capacity to adapt its generic structures and suit both the traditional forms of Spanish theatre and literature as well as to the historical, political and social background. In the Spanish case, this last circumstance is particularly important, considering the upheavals that the country went through both at the end of the 19th century as for most of the 20th: the first Republic, the monarchic Restoration, Primo de Rivera’s Dictatorship, the second Republic, the Civil War, Franco’s dictatorship and the transition to democracy during the last decades of the 20th century. It is particularly during this last period, from the middle 60s on, when the staggering transformation that Spanish society experienced found a faithful correlative in film comedy. Other factors also influenced the growing importance of the genre: the economic and social changes that were transforming the country did not have a political correlative, as Franco’s regime strived to perpetuate itself along the 1960s and up to the dictator’s death in 1975. Inefficient in its economic politics, one of the few areas in which the government still maintained a high degree of activity and sufficiency was censorship. In the context of this tight control, comedy became one of the few cultural products whose generic characteristics allowed the expression of ideas and issues that would be too dangerous to posit in more “serious” genres. The characteristics of the genre provided a safe background for the portrait of threatening social changes. After all, Zizek argues that comic and carnivalesque presentations of dictatorships are not necessarily attacks to totalitarianism, but an integral part of the whole and a way to channel tensions that would be dangerous if expressed in a less forgiving form: “A certain kind of carnivalesque suspension of the rule of law is part of totalitarian regimes (...) Even the elements of critique are absorbed as comedies contain
elements of pardon and incongruity that contain political and social mechanisms of control and the resistance that they can generate. So this kind of obscene comedy is not simply the way to undermine totalitarian regimes; it is part of these regimes themselves” (Zizek, 2008).

Albert Cooks agrees with this view: "Comedy can be used in the service of repression (...) the denigration of difference found in racist and sexist comedy, reinforces and validates a discourse of power that relies on the systematic humiliation of targeted groups to secure its own sense of identity (...) comedy is approval, not disapproval, of present society; it is conservative, not liberal.” (qtd. in Stott, 67). And curiously, it was the subgenre of sexy comedy that proved its capacity to express, and at the same time, to contain the masculinity crisis that took place during the Late Francoist period.

2.4 The Sexy Comedies

The unapologetically conservative ideological adscription is an important, if not the most, reason why the comedic subgenre of the late 60s and 70s was mercilessly trashed by critics and academics. The different names that were used to describe it (comedia sexy celtibérica, la comedia desarrollista de los años 60, cine de destape, cine del destete, cine de reprimidos, las comedias de conquistadores y paletos, cinema of the uncovering, of the breasts, cinema of the repressed, comedies of conquerors and rednecks) tell us a lot about the contemporary historiographers and specialists’ attitudes and anxieties. It is difficult to ignore in these critiques the references to the masculine and feminine bodies, to sexual repression and to how problematic is the construction of the nation in Spanish popular culture.

The sexy comedies of the early 1970s have been considered low cultural products, nevertheless their power to reflect the masculine anxieties of the transitional period between Franco’s last years and the establishment of democracy has been only recognized in recent bibliography. Their existence and development are directly linked to their specific historical period, as they can be read as texts that prominently depicted the anxieties of consumerism
and changing gender roles. In them, we can see how consumer goods and cultural experiences are increasingly presented as indispensable commodities being marketed to male and female consumers (the electrical appliances, the “utilitario”, the summer holidays and the sunday picnic, the television set, the record player.) The emphasis on consumables is accompanied by the protagonists’ inability to fulfill the new needs brought forward by consumerism, and their efforts to be part of the “modernized” Spain by means of immigration, “pluriempleo” (multiple jobs), or even better, by winning the “quinielas” or football lottery. At the same time, these films chose to tease and lead on the audience with the promise of sex and then refused to deliver. There was actually very little sex in the sexy comedies, as the censorship allowed the discussion and narrativisation of sexual topics, but it still forbade their public display (see Pavlóvic, 82 and Fouz-Hernández, 12).

The whole body of the subgenre is thus populated with caricaturized masculine figures who struggle to comply with their phallic legacy, and whose failure to fulfill the role of the stereotypical, patriarchal male constitute fodder for the representation of the carnivalesque and at the same time serve to propel comedy plots. They fully embody this conflictive incongruity by means of their comical rendition of the impossibility to solve the conflict that the new social and political circumstances, loosely defined as the “modern” or “modernity” by the film dialogues, poses to them. These narratives of unfulfilled desire strive to represent a farcical approach to what Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito call the “producto nacional” (11), the Spanish ideal of masculinity, failing to deliver in most of the cases in front of the modernized foreign femininity. Both Fouz and Pavlóvic (82) also point to the connection between masculinity and the nation, as they point to the pervasive presence in their plots of foreign blonde females showing a growing interest in the “producto nacional”, represented by the Spaniards, anxious to enjoy the shy liberalization that came with the development years. As Pavlóvic notes, the Spanish male protagonist is “often pathetic, and his eagerness to perform both masculinity and national identity destroys the desired effect.” (82) The identification between gender and nation can be explained by the mythologized
social ideal of masculinity that the Francoist regime promoted, and that is widely reflected in examples like Carrero Blanco’s demand to form “hombres y no maricas” (men and no sissies) able to defend the spirit of the Movimiento1: “la virilidad, el patriotismo, el honor, la decencia” (virility, patriotism, honor, decency) (Victoria Prego qtd. in Pavlóvic 82).

The male protagonists of the sexy comedy struggle to comply with their socially established heterosexual roles, and thus they problematize the connection between gender and nation. The male characters’ presence in the sexy comedy becomes a carnivalesque rendition of the impossibility to fulfill the image of the traditional masculinity and patriotism, although their metaphorical emasculation at the hands of the attractive and sexually active foreign females is conveniently resolved when these masculine characters returned to their Spanish wives and fiancées by the end of the film. If these films, on the one side, point to how the new economic circumstances and the modernized foreign femininity—_independent, sexually active and demanding_—constitute threats that will ultimately dispatch the increasingly anachronistic masculine gender model, they also foreground the problems that these social changes entailed for men. These carnivalesque models of masculinity suffer all kinds of indignities along the films’ narratives, and therefore serve as the comedic scapegoats both to the male and the female public. Women could enjoy the momentarily humiliation of the traditionally dominating masculine figure, while men could see their deepest fears of castration being played out but finally forgiven and forgotten by way of the happy end. The plot’s most usual final resolution was marriage, as the comedies’ narratives never failed to provide a conveniently passive and traditional girl who would forgive the sinner’s digression and be ready to marry him and collaborate to restore his masculinity, in a comforting regression to the most conservative ideological positions.

The number of low-budget, successful comedies that follow this model is staggering, but

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1The Movimiento Nacional designed the regime’s totalitarian ideology and the mechanisms designed to support it: the Spanish Fascist Party (La Falange), the _Sindicato Vertical_ or the only legalized Union, grouping all workers and employers, and, last but not least, all the public employees, who had to swear fidelity to the principles of “El Movimiento.”
there is very little variety in their motifs, themes and plots. In the middle of this uniformity, the genre conventions and the actors’ typecasting also helped to build a solid structure that ensured success by way of the audiences’ familiarity with the images and stories that populated the screens. As it has been traditional in Spanish popular theater, actors who populated these narratives of masculinities in crisis were pigeonholed within the possibilities of a rigid typology that composed a gallery that represented the average Spaniard. Some names we can cite as examples are Alfredo Landa, Paco Martínez Soria, José Luis López Vázquez, Mariano Ozores, Manolo Gómez Bur, José Sazatornil or Juanjo Menéndez. These actors were tabbed as characters that could be read as naive and inferior (“a mediocre Spaniard, with various sexual traumas (…) short, ugly, a bit bald, funny, repressed and shy” (Freixas qtd in Pavlíovíć 81), and at the same time, scapegoats who could safely represent the incongruity between the traditional model of masculinity and the new needs posed by modernity. Fouz-Hernández also suggests the link between this kind of representation of the Spanish man as laughable and inferior with questions of nationality, as they could be read as a ”metaphor for the Spanish crisis of self-esteem as an underdeveloped nation” (66). Spanish audiences, thanks to the mediatization that the comedy workings allowed, could see in them inferior doubles who vicariously enjoyed modern pleasures but would finally be saved from the abyss of the unknown future that the changing historical circumstances would make them unable to ignore.

Their success depended directly on their capacity to impersonate the most intimate anxieties of the social moment, and which were intimately related to the conflict between the traditional and the new, and how that conflict was reflected in changing social and gender roles. The new social mores that could be observed thanks to European tourism and the impending political changes that Francisco Franco’s old age foreshadowed—he finally died the 20th November 1975, at the age of 83, after a two-year-long period of declining health—loomed large in the horizon during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Added to the economic boom that took place in the 1960s, models of gender and class were being rocked by
the new variants being introduced in the Spanish equation. In the face of such a revolution, the Spanish sexy comedy offers the same conservative haven that the sainete had procured 70 years prior.

### 2.5 El Landismo

"Landismo" was the term that came to define the characters that the Spanish actor Alfredo Landa played in sexy comedies, and, by extension, the ingrained conflict between tradition and modernity that was an integral part of their narratives. The term was given an entry in the monumental Diccionario del Cine Español, which points at its temporal limits, from 1969 to 1978, and determines its influences: “su comicidad no dependía tanto ya de la “sophisticated comedy” a la americana o del costumbrismo de raíz neorrealista como del sainete reconvertido en vodevil, es decir, del sexo como motor primordial (pero también oculto, tanto en lo visual como en lo ideológico) de la ficción.” (its comicality did not depend as much on the American-style sophisticated comedy or on the costumbrismo influenced by neorrealism as much as on the sainete that had become vaudeville.) The article also mentions the industrial implications of the phenomenon, as a number of production companies (PICASA, IFISA, Belén Films, José Frade PC, Aspa Films of Pedro Masó PC) as well as directors (Pedro Lazaga, Javier Aguirre, Ramón Fernández o Luis María Delgado) collaborated to convert these comedies into an industrial phenomenon, to the extent that their importance could be compared to the power of representation of the Hollywood classical comedy or of its Italian equivalent, la commedia all’italiana.

The overwhelming number of films in which Alfredo Landa took part during the period (seventy-one between 1965 and 1980) and his roles, playing the average Spaniard made him a national star, as his name became a neologism to define the kind of faulty masculinity that the Spanish sexy comedy presented to the audiences. But the birth of the term has a lot to do with Alfredo Landa’s acting ability and his power to represent all the contradictory
terms that were part of his impersonation of contemporary masculinity. The combination of factors formed by Landa’s impeccable technique, his physical appearance—short, bald, crooked legs—allowed him to impersonate all the contradictory terms that were part of his representation of contemporary masculinity. The capacity of Landismo to summarize the different styles of the Spanish comedy tradition, and the needs that the historical circumstances imposed on the comedic genre had as a consequence a huge audience response and the industrial exploitation of Landa’s presence in sexy comedies.

Landa’s characters reveal how masculinity is as much a performative masquerade as femininity. The roles that he played strive to represent the traditional image of gender, but are systematically defeated by the changing social and economic circumstances of the Spain of the time. This way, “Landismo” calls into question whether masculinity can ever be assumed to be an authentic condition in any culture. Hence, the convenience of the use of comedy as a genre to reflect this fact: only comedies can allow the representation of such a transgression and dedramatize it as a faulty masculinity. Any contradiction with the norm is solved by the comedy narratives by way of mechanisms of pardon, so that the traditionally dominant ideologies of gender can be restored in their closure.

In Landa’s case, his comic characters present a mixture of ineptitude and sexual desire that ultimately reveal a streak of male anxiety about virility. Many aspects of Landa’s acting collaborated to his success in the highly farcical sexy comedy: his theatricality, his willingness to expose his defects, his capacity for self-parody, his aura of failure, his identification with the anti-heroic and his air of vulnerability contributed to create a star persona who could constitute laughing stock but at the same time appeal to masculine audiences for some degree of identification. His short and chubby body constitutes the site where masculinity’s incongruities were played out and where the patriarchal model of traditional male, integral part of what Kaja Silverman calls the ”master narratives” of contemporary society, is being challenged. Pavlović, Fouz-Hernández or Santos Zunzunegui, among other critics, have exposed the importance of Landa’s physicality: his inadequacy is stressed by a number of
physical characteristics that makes him a carnivalesque rendition of patriarchal masculinity, "Short (...), balding, a little overweight and not good-looking" (Freixas qtd. in Pavlovic, 81) and owner of a couple of crooked legs that became an icon of his ineptitude. Landa’s legs became an apt metaphor for the narrative of embarrassment that was constantly showcased in sexy comedies, consisting on “fantasies of endless sexual activity contrasted to the reality of anxious and incompetent lovers” (Pavlovic 82). Considering the negative implications of his physique - ”Alfredo tiene las piernas un poco arqueadas (...) entonces cuando le sacaban en calzoncillos pues siempre era carcajada segura” (Alfredo’s legs are a little bit crooked... so when he appeared on screen in his underpants, the audience broke up in laughter) (Recio qtd in Pavlovic 81), it sounds somewhat contradictory when a number of authors qualify his figure as representative of the average Spaniard. In what light did Spanish men see themselves so that they would consider themselves to be in the losing side when choosing between Landa instead of other, more normative masculine hearthrobs? According to El Diccionario del cine español, his physique is a perfect reflection of the internal contradiction between tradition and modernity that his comedies contained:

“representación acaso metafórica de las tensiones psicológicas del período: o bien en eterno estado de vigilia, siempre alerta y ojo avizor, o bien sumido en una inoperante somnolencia, producto en casi todas las ocasiones de un agobiante ambiente familiar, el nuevo español se debatía penosamente entre la estabilidad que se encontraba a punto de dejar atrás y las borrosas e inciertas perspectivas que empezaban a dibujarse ante sus sorprendidos ojos” (maybe metaphorical representation of the period’s psychological tensions, either in eternal state of vigilance, always alert, or drowned in a passive sleepiness, product in almost every case of a stifling family background, the new Spaniard struggled between the stability he was about to abandon and the fuzzy and uncertain perspectives that started to form before his eyes) (627).

Landa’s comical persona can be equated, in psychoanalytical terms, with an embodiment of the concept of lack, a lack that stands for the Spanish man’s incapacity to respond to
the new sexual and economic conditions in the light of the distance from the normative masculine model that his short—almost a kristevian abject—body and his crooked legs glaringly mark. The Landismo embodies an unleashed libido: the stereotyped characters that Landa played strive to get into bed with objectified representations of sexualized foreign tourists in an endless circle of unfulfilled desire. In all his glorious ugliness, he personifies what Zizek calls "the dream of the non castrated vitality in all its power" (Plague 185), a figure of unrepressed sexuality who is finally properly castrated by the narration—that marks him as unfitting, as his insufficient body announced—and who must be put in place by the comedic closure of marriage. The happy end invariably portrays the Landaesque characters renouncing sexual fulfillment with the sexually active foreign beauties and opting for marriage with the traditional Spanish woman. Marriage in this sense functions as the ultimate site of male fantasy, as it marks the social contours of hegemonic masculinity, and defines a space where the Spanish male, momentarily threatened by sexually aggressive foreign females, recovers his traditional privileges by acquiring a submissive, acquiescent wife. That way, any sign of weakness or inadequacy is finally contained by social structures, which will ultimately allow men to save face.

Along those lines, if the Spanish male is going through a period of neurosis, the partial release of his repression that we can see in sexy comedies could be equated to the Freudian concept of perversion in his exaggerated exhibition of the masculine libido. In that sense, Zizek considers comedy, “the privileged space in which we experience this indestructible life ("vulgar, opportunistic, terrestrial") as perversion—reduced to its bared bones, perversion is a defense against the threat of mortality as well as the contingent position of sexual difference: in the perverse universe a human being can survive any catastrophe, adult sexuality is reduced to a childish game, one is not forced to die or to chose one of the two sexes.” (Camp 2000)

Zizek’s vision of the comedic world helps us to interpret the "Landismo" as a perversion that offers a temporary defense against the threat of castration, but a perversion that needs
to be repressed with the sexual castration so that the male individual can reenter the old patriarchal order and recover the masculine privileges.

All the range of comedies to which Landa lent his characteristic persona along the 70s have one thing in common: to offer a site of identification between Landa’s body and the critical moment that the dominant idea of masculinity was going through. Even before the representation of femininity started to get a central role in all the exhibitionist glory of the "destape" –the uncovering of the feminine body that was progressively allowed by censorship and that became a staple in sexy comedy—there was a body of films that anticipated the themes, motifs and narratives that would be later fully embodied in the sexy comedy, and that was the “paleto comedies”, or comedies of country bumpkins.

2.6 Paleto Comedies: The Country, the City and the Man in Between.

The paleto comedy sub-genre was based on a conflict between the city and the modernization it represents seen as corrupt, and the countryside, contemplated, in all its Arcadian splendor, as the embodiment of traditional values. The tension between city and country has occupied a prominent place in Spanish literature (as part of a larger Western tradition), and the “paleto” or “rústico” (hick) enjoys a rich tradition in Spanish theater that goes back to the Golden Age. This kind of character is particularly important in the works of classic authors like Lope de Vega, where the ”rústico” figures have the function of attenuating the dramatic conflict and provide a solution that minimizes social conflict or solves it. Lope de Vega’s “rústicos” have a greater claim to a noble spirit than the aristocracy in a number of his plays like Fuenteovejuna, El mejor alcalde, el rey, or Peribáñez o el comendador de Ocaña. These positive characters, solvers of conflicts and accusers of the aristocracy’s abuses of power, reappeared under very different guises in the “costumbrista” literary portraits during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Though such works portraying typical Spaniards
were usually accounts of Madrid streetlife, focused on urban types, immigrants from the north rural regions were also present. These peripheral characters usually incarnated humorous typologies that went all the way from the purely animalistic—the wet nurses from Asturias—to the brutal, as the Galician “mozos de cuerda” (or porters.) Considering that these descriptions of Spanish urban life supplied the basic themes from whence the popular theatrical gender called “género chico” drew its material, it is not difficult to see how the figure of the rústico derived into the paleto of the 20th century’s drama and film.

Both in plays and in films, the immigrant, caught between the urban and the rural, is represented as deluded by illusions of urban access to capitalism. Richardson quotes M.A. García de León (72) stating that this genre offered, much as Manolo Escobar musicals, “a kind of social therapy whereby rural immigrants recently arrived in the city could face their demons”, and impose “a traditional patriarchal order on the city while confirming traditional Francoist pro-rural and anti-rural values” (221). But Richardson also points to their role in the process of commodification that Spanish society went through, as, in his opinion, both the rural and the urban became consumables. That, of course, would expose the comedies’ inner contradictions, as their apparent defense of the rural values was in fact being undermined by their display of goods and their portrait of a generation of immigrants being transformed into pro-active consumers.

In fact, the popularity of the filmic adaptations in which paletos were prominently displayed was largely due to the actor Paco Martínez Soria. Actor and producer, he produced and starred in popular films and toured Spain with popular plays during the 40s and with his own theater and company in the 1950s and 1960s. His most successful films were versions of his most successful comedies and variety shows as El difunto es un vivo (Lladó, 1956), but the film who gave him national fame was the first paleto comedy, La ciudad no es para mí (The city is not for me) (Pedro Lazaga, 1965).

In La ciudad no es para mí, Martínez Soria plays the role of a rural patriarch who moves into the city and reaffirms his power by making right everything that modernity has made
wrong for his immigrant children. His stereotypical “paleto” found an extraordinary success among the urban audiences, who laughed but at the same time cast a nostalgic tear to this idealized Arcadian portrait of the inherent goodness of the rural in the middle of the entire country’s conversion into urban capitalism. At the same time, the authority invested in Martínez Soria’s patriarchal figure served a double purpose: to reiterate the validity of patriarchal rules in a society where women were gaining increasing visibility and where men from the working classes were reduced to industrial workforce in the repetitive labor of the new assembly lines of electrical appliances or car factories.

The figure of the patriarchal Martínez Soria finds an amplified equivalent in the younger generation with Alfredo Landa. Landa not only plays a prominent role in Martínez Soria’s *La ciudad no es para mí*, but also cemented his star persona by starring in his own ”paleto comedies.” *Jenaro, el de los catorce* (Mariano Ozores, 1974), *Vente a Alemania, Pepe* (Pedro Lazaga, 1971) *París bien vale una moza* (Pedro Lazaga, 1972) or *El Rediezcubrimiento de México* (Fernando Cortés, 1979). In all of them, Landa personifies the figure of the naive “paleto” conflicted between traditional rural values and the relaxed morals, the hard work and consumerism that the city entails. When playing these paleto roles, not only did Landa look the part with his short physique and donning the typical corduroys and beret that had been the staple in the theatrical representation of the country bumpkin. The Spanish actor also adopted other strategies, like the adoption of a regional accent, that in fact, had also been used by Martínez Soria before him. The characteristic raising intonation of the northeastern region of Aragón was used by both as a sociological marker with a comical effect. As Pierre Bourdieu has affirmed, language works a symbolic marker and its use “depends on the social position of the speaker, which governs the access he can have to the language of the institution, that is, to the official, orthodox and legitimate speech” (1994, 109). These characters’ regional accents mark their distance to a position of social power, or to what Bourdieu calls “the authority of the institution” (109) and therefore, and particularly in the case of Landa, his powerlessness and his incapacity to measure up to normative models of
masculinity.

*Vente a Alemania, Pepe* particularly exemplifies how the patriarchal characters played by Martinez Soria became a devaluated version with immigrant male characters who strived and failed to make it in the city. The film features one of the first examples of the critical masculinity that Landa came to be known for during all the decade. The plot involves Pepe, a country bumpkin who is lured by his friend Angelino’s stories of easy money and his brand-new Mercedes to immigrate to Germany much against the opinion of his fiancée Pilar. What Pepe finds in Berlin has little to do with Angelino’s tales: to make ends meet, Pepe must juggle between two different jobs, and the myth of easy foreign girls seem to also disappear, as his only conquest is a Spanish immigrant girl who does not share German girls’ more relaxed morals. But Pepe will finally find a job whose pay is worth its while: to pose, in his underwear, in a department’s store shop window, next to a tall and attractive guy, his body an exhuberant example of the hairiness that the advertised depilatory cream will help to avoid. Pepe is not inconvenienced by parading his inadequate short and hairy body, given that, as he tells his friend Angelino, nobody knows him in Berlin. Pepe’s farcical and hairy figure stands for the unsightly image of a backward, rural, inadequate Spaniard in the context of the modernized Europe that Germany represents. But his own body becomes a surface of embarrassment for Pepe when he sees his Spanish fiancée—who has traveled to Berlin—observe him in speechless horror among the crowd who laughs at him on the street. Pilar’s voyeuristic position finally makes him realize of how his dominant masculine position—as the one who should be actively watching instead of being watched—has been irremediably lost. The whole situation expresses the feelings of inferiority and uneasiness that the Spanish ”macho” experiences in his masculinity when facing the northern European model of modern sexual openness and aggressiveness (Pepe gets his job thanks to his fling with a German girl who is also having a relationship with the store’s owner). To add to Pepe’s woes, Pilar decides to stay and become a ”modernized” European girl, by getting a job as a waitress in a suggestive miniskirt and happily negotiating the costumers’ advances
as a way to get more tips. The situation obviously becomes too much for poor Pepe’s masculinity, who will finally chose to go back to his hometown, where in spite of not having access to Europe’s economic possibilities, he can safely return to the traditional masculine model. Pilar is also reduced to her former passive and traditional role, as we can see in the last sequence, where she appears pregnant, and dutifully attending her wifely chores, as she takes Pepe his lunch while he is having an easy job of grazing his cows, sitting under some trees.

Back in rural Spain, and thus back to the place and back to the roles for traditional masculinity secured outside any dangerous expression of aggressively sexual femininity, Pepe assumes Angelino’s role of experienced storyteller. Now, he is finally safe back in the little rural world of his hometown—and of rural, traditional Spain—surrounded by some younger shepherds who listen entranced to his tales, just as he used to do when Angelino visited.

2.7 Landa, the Sexy Comedy, and the Possibility of a Deviated Masculinity.

One of the comedies of the Landismo that best offers an illustration of Landa’s comical rendition of the Spanish masculinity is also one of the first to inaugurate the sexy comedy subgenre, Ramón Fernández’s No desearás al vecino del quinto (1970). The film was an extraordinary box office success whose record of admissions, at 4,371,624, was not equaled until 1984 with Almodóvar’s hit Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios (Jordan, 169.) This film has also been one of the first representatives of the sexy comedy genre whose representation of gender has deserved the attention of cultural studies specialists. Fouz-Hernández, Tatjana Pavlovic and especially Barry Jordan have worked on studies that focus on the capacity of this film to sort out the difficulties poised by official censorship and to offer what had never been seen before: an (apparently) homosexual protagonist.

Barry Jordan reminds us (quoting Bordwell and Thompson) how genre cinema only
works because “it offers the promise of something new based on something familiar” (168) and indeed No desearás... did offer something risqué and titillating in a shrewd operation to exploit the limits of censorship, orchestrated both by its director and by the producer, José Frade. Pavlóvic particularly insists on the presence of homosexuality in the film as the tie “between the figure of the homosexual with the newly emerging discourses on masculinity in Spanish popular culture of the transition” (85), and on how this presence had the power to arouse in audience and critics feelings of “attraction and discomfort” (86.) Thus, it is not strange that Spanish film audiences rushed to see what could otherwise only be seen in the more permissive European productions in the theaters of Perpignan, Biarritz, and other cities in the south of France and to where Spaniards had to travel if they wanted to see uncensored European cinema.

The plot focuses on two neighbors in the provincial town of Toledo, Pedro and Antón, both in businesses that require a female patronage. But while Pedro, a gynecologist, (played by Jean Sorel) has run out of patients because their jealous husbands will not permit their wives to be “examined” by him, Antón (played by Alfredo Landa) sports a booming business as “modisto”—or dressmaker—success that is mostly due to his feminized appearance, that includes a blonde wig, colorful clothes and the poodle Fifi as a complement. When Pedro meets by chance Antón in Madrid, he is surprised to see him display a flamboyant playboy style, surrounded by beautiful women. Antón takes Pedro to his apartment in Madrid, a bachelor’s pad where he lures French, Italian or American air hostesses that he previously observes through a telescope. While both characters start a double life that imply the double standard of living like playboys in Madrid and going back to Toledo’s repressive and traditional way of life, the gossip about the homosexuality of both begins. Neither of them seems inconvenienced by the tongue wagging. In fact, Pedro’s business starts to pick up: because of his alleged homosexuality, his customers’ husbands feel at ease now with the idea of their wives being examined by a man whose masculinity is being questioned. But this anomalous situation is finally solved by Pedro’s girlfriend Jacinta, who assaults him.
sexually to prove his virility and who finally restores him his public heterosexuality, while also manages to keep his clientele by becoming the rightful wife. By contrast, at the end of the film, Antón perseveres in keeping his gay disguise even though he is now controlled by his wife and insulted by his own five children, who call him “marica” (sissy). Business is business and if the new economical frame requires him to publicly sacrifice his masculinity, so be it. So even if the film’s closure restores the traditional heterosexual order, that order is now being gradually eroded by a new presence. Even if it is depicted as a disguise, as a false ruse with commercial ends, the visibility of homosexuality was there to stay.

Another novel element in the film that sets it apart from other Spanish comedies, in which the male protagonist rarely manages to fulfill his sexual desires, is Antón’s success as a Don Juan. His excessive masculinity is plot-related, as it is demanded to compensate the apparent homosexuality of both male protagonists. This way, the plot reassures Antón’s closeted masculinity, so that the audiences could enjoy and be properly scandalized by his display of an alternative—and flamboyantly faulty—“masculinity”, while, at the same time, they were being offered the chance to avow and to disavow, at the same time, the new possibilities of masculinity. Jordan reaches a similar conclusion when he affirms that both Pedro and Antón embody a new model of masculinity, which is duly appreciated by women. According to Jordan, “Antón’s clientele revere him for his warmth and good humor, attention to their needs, ability to offer good advice and simply for not being at all like their husbands (...)” (184), husbands who reveal their degree of castration by their repressive modes and zeal to perpetuate them. After all, the change proposed by the apparently gay Anton and the female-identified gynecologist Pedro’s softer version of masculine sexual identity is an unmistakable sign of new times for Spanish masculinities.

Fernando Merino’s Los días de Cabirio (1971) offers an interesting contrast with No desearás al vecino del quinto. This sexy comedy also stresses the importance of appearances for a new masculinity that, in its fantasized presentation of the male’s incapacity to fulfill the patriarchal model, should be interpreted as indicative of an identity in transition both from
an economical and a gender perspective. As the title suggests, the film is a farcical spoof on Fellini’s *Le notti di Cabiria* (1957), from which it borrows the motif of the poor prostitute having to deal with a number of hapless incidents and whose attitude to the tragedy in her situation is unflattering hopeful in spite of her terrible luck. This depiction of poverty and tragedy as personified in the figure of pathos of the poor prostitute, finds an ironic counterpart in Landa’s portrait of his “Cabirio,” Alfredo, who offers a masculine version of the female alienation of Fellini’s humiliated prostitute.

Alfredo’s personal tragedy also reflects larger concerns of the Spanish population as the first sequence demonstrates. The film opens with a montage of different equally drowsy characters in the middle of a siesta during a Sunday picnic. The only thing capable of catching their attention is the news on the radio about the results of the football lottery, bringing the promise of riches and the end of economic problems, thus showcasing the difficulties of the working-class population to adapt to the new capitalistic and consumerist order. But new sexual mores are also part of the picture: both conflicts are personified in the figure of Alfredo, who, with his clerical job at a bank, does not get enough money to provide for what his fiancée considers the necessary equipment, “la lavadora, la televisión, el dormitorio” (the washing machine, the television, the bedroom furniture) for their unfinished flat, thus perpetually delaying their impending marriage. This situation also includes a indefinite sexual dissatisfaction for Alfredo, as his fiancée Mari Carmen, a traditional girl, will never consent to his suggestions of pre-marital sex. The situation points to the obsession with disempowerment, both in economic and sexual aspects, repeatedly presented in the male characters of the transition period. Alfredo’s trouble to assume a traditional masculine role in the light of the new social and sexual mores seems to find a solution when he meets an old friend who claims to be making big money as a boy toy for sexually liberated foreign tourists. Seeing a chance to escape sexual repression and make money at the same time, he jumps at the chance and travels to the coast, to work as “palanquero,” a job that he defines as “lo mismo que las mujeres, pero al revés” (the same as women, but the other way round).
This contradiction will be very soon expressed through a dreamlike fantasy scene in which Alfredo sees himself in make-up and a revealing jacket, waiting for customers at a street corner. As he is chatting with a prospective lady customer, a policeman stops by and asks for his “documentación.” It is really a ”mundo al revés”, as Alfredo needs to bribe the girl and have her confirm that he is her husband. Alfredo’s dream scene uncovers its nightmarish quality in this detail: the moment that men’s identities are established by women, he is indeed facing a world ”upside down”, as traditional masculinity and its privileges regarding women’s control appear irremediably lost. This scene not only conveys for Alfredo all the vulnerability of the figure of the prostitute, but also precludes what his luck will be when he attempts his luck at the new business. In sexy comedy masculine bodies appear devaluated, as if their physical inadequacy was a bodily metaphor of their growing anachronism, and in this film, Landa’s characterization as ”Alfredo” reaches new lows in trying to convert his “inadequate” body into a commodity. If prostitution is equivalent to the use of the own body as a commodity in the absence of other merchandise or ability that can be used for their exchange value, in assuming this last resource, Alfredo is adopting the image of helplessness traditionally associated with representations of femininity.

The plot follows Alfredo as he arrives to the coastal town of Sitges, which, curiously enough, was to become some years later one of Spain’s favorite vacation spots for pink tourism. There, he will suffer a process of feminization that clearly stands as a metaphor for the loss of the privileges of the traditional masculine figure in its submission to a number of feminized men or empowered women. Alfredo’s process of feminization follows the imagery of the ”fallen woman” story: first he is asked to undress before an older, effeminate pimp who qualifies him as ”defectuoso”, ”deficiario” and ”insuficiente”. Next, his first costumer appears: she is a married woman who wants to take vengeance on her unfaithful husband, but who finally is unable to have sex with him (following the ”good” wife model, she is portrayed as sexually passive and unable to make sexual advances on a man.) His second costumer is an experienced prostitute—the first of the many women that will cross his path
and demonstrate their power over a lost, incapable Alfredo, who is trying to pick him up, and thus reveals Alfredo’s incapacity to find a suitable client and who recommends him to exploit his customers’ maternal instinct by appealing to another strategy of feminization: again the story of the fallen woman, but farcically translated to masculine terms. The call girl suggests him to invent a story about being a “single father” who needs money to raise the children he has been left to care for when the kids’ mother abandoned him. With Alfredo’s third client, things take a turn for the very worse: when finally he supposes to have found the blonde, foreign beauty ready to pay for his services, in a carnavalesque turn, and after taking off her false breasts, lashes and wig, she results to be an imposing figure of a man. She introduces herself as “Kartubatxi”, “campeón profesional de remo y carterista,” (professional rowing champion and pickpocket), and turns out to be an icon of physical masculinity ready to steal from Alfredo, and compared to which, the main character’s farcical body can display his embarrassment in all its splendor for comic effect. The last costumer in Alfredo’s unfortunate career gives the finishing blow to his masculinity: his emasculation will take place at the hands of a millionaire who invites him to her bed with the only intention of getting a divorce from her rich husband, as she has previously arranged for the compromising photographs to be taken. Los días de Cabirio is remarkable in the sense that the protagonist goes through a process of emasculation at the hands of a number of feminine—or feminised—figures whose effective claim to power not only underline the problems of masculine identity, but also preclude the existence of a feminist agenda. Before Alfredo’s excursion to “the wild side”, Mari Carmen’s timid threats of rebellion against her traditional family—when her domineering father will not even allow her to talk to her boyfriend—had already announced an impending change in gender roles that, even though conveniently denied by the happy end of Alfredo and Mari Carmen’s wedding, seemed to loom near in the future.

Even if apparently fixated on sexual innuendos, the sexy comedy kept offering nonetheless these carefully de-dramatized depictions of a masculinity in crisis and threatening feminin-
ity. The increasingly relaxed attitude of censorship towards sexuality meant a progressive explicitness in the depiction of the female body, phenomenon known as “el destape” (the uncovering) and which implied an increasing presence, in these films, of scenes focused around the presence of scantily clad young actresses in different states of undress. Alfredo Landa himself mentions this change in the genre as the reason for a turning point in his career, and makes it coincide with the political change that started with Franco’s death in 1975:

"Y en el 75 muere Franco y (el Landismo) se para... hay un año que estoy en blanco, no hago nada...Es lógico, es facilísimo: con la muerte de Franco cambia el concepto de cine comercial y viene el destape, (...) que ya había habido en el Landismo pero muy controlado... ahora viene ya, bueno, el desmadre... (...) y yo digo eso no lo hago, primero porque no me gusta, porque todo lo que me ofrecen me parece de una zafiedad absoluta”

(In 1975 Franco dies and Landismo stops... there is a year in which I didn’t get any jobs. It is logical, very easy: with Franco’s death the concept in commercial cinema changes and destape starts... There had already been some destape in Landismo, but under control...but now it is chaotic... and I decide not to take certain roles, first because I don’t like them, and then because everything I am offered is absolutely uncouth)

As Santos Zunzunegui has pointed out, “nadie ha sido capaz como él de ilustrar los desplazamientos que la fuerza de las cosas iban imponiendo paulatinamente a los españolitos de a pie” (Nobody was his equal in illustrating the displacement that the circumstances imposed on the average Spaniard) (1993, p. 210). And indeed, Landa’s comedic persona, born within the context of a popular cinematic genre that had such rich roots in the Spanish theatrical tradition of the sainete and an histrionic “casticismo”, evolved into dramatic and melodramatic roles thanks to the new possibilities that the end of the censorship, the new democratic governments’ film policies, and a cinematic industry that moved towards new paths allowed him.
2.8 Landa after Landismo

During the late 1970s and early eighties Alfredo Landa’s roles in dramas, melodramas, thrillers and even movies with political content mark Landa’s increasing change in his star persona. This evolution can be read as a continued metaphor that stands for the inability of the traditional image of Spanish masculinity to survive beyond the years of the political Transition from dictatorship to democracy, and for its need to evolve into a totally different model. His dilated filmography, that extends itself for almost half a century (from 1962 to 2007), includes not only a decisive intervention in the sexy comedies of the 1960s and 1970s, but also a number of dramatic roles in later films that can also be read in the light of his earlier impersonations of an inadequate masculinity. The ineptitude of his characters in sexy comedy gradually evolved in his works of the first Transition years into roles that summarize, as Santos Zunzunegui indicates, the impossibility of the patriarchal model of masculinity to adapt to the new social and political circumstances in new, more dramatic terms. Landa’s characters’ impossibility to measure up to that model ceased to be the butt of the joke and starts to get a melodramatic quality in this new period. The films that exemplify this tendency were El puente (José Antonio Bardem, 1977), Las verdes praderas (José Luis Garci, 1979) and El crack (José Luis Garci, 1981).

El Puente has been widely considered the worthy epitaph for the Landismo. Using the same themes, motifs and characters that made Landa a trademark, Juan Antonio Bardem directed El Puente, just after being released from prison for his political ideas. His leftist inclination found an unsuspecting victim in Landismo, as he devised the way to borrow a typically landaesque plot involving Landa’s impersonation of a sex-driven car mechanic obsessed by reaching Torremolinos, the artificial paradise of tourist coastal towns. The film is in fact a road movie, in which Juan, in his quest for easy sex with foreign tourists, undergoes a transformative journey into political awareness. His occasional meetings along the road with victims of political repression, the poverty and impotence of the farmhands, or
the representatives of a younger generation that start to enjoy, ten years later, the freedom of expression that had characterized the countercultural movements of May 1968 in Paris or the summer of love in San Francisco. Bardem’s use of the Landa film persona ensured a popular appeal to his film, and at the same time contributed to a definite change in the audiences’ perception of his image as a comical figure. In that sense, the highly ideological end of the film, in which Juan returns to his mechanic workshop, and—forgotten his infantilized quest for sex—demonstrates his newly acquired political consciousness by joining the leftist trade union “Comisiones Obreras” and the fight for the freedom and rights of workers, is a decisive movement. Landa even got to declare about *El puente* that “la evolución del personaje se corresponde con la mía,” (the character’s evolution corresponds with mine) in an interview in which he also recognized publicly his political stance. When asked about the referendum that would permit the democratisation of the country that took place in November 1976, he declared that ”No sé qué va a pensar el español medio pero creo que ese proceso vale la pena. Por supuesto estoy de acuerdo en que se legalizan todos los partidos” (I don’t know what the average Spaniard may think, but I believe that that process is worthwhile. Of course I support the legalization of all political parties.) Much as in the case of Manolo Escobar and, as we will see with José Sacristán in the next chapter, the actor’s public persona was made to share a political stance with the characters that they represent.

Spanish filmmaker José Luis Garci would assume an important part in Landa’s transformation by offering him two roles that would totally transform his public image. Garci, schooled in the producer José Luis Dibildos “tercera vía” films, successfully exploited the contradictions of the changing times in his two first works as director, *Asignatura Pendiente* (1977) and *Solos en la madrugada* (1978), melodramas in which the two main masculine characters tried to rebuild their identity by compensating their feelings of nostalgic loss with the new after-Franco political and sexual freedoms. In their late 1930s, these masculine characters mistakenly take the lack of freedom of their repressed youth as the cause for

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2Interview in film magazine *Fotogramas*, “Landa contra el Landismo”, number 1487, April 1977.
their middle-age crisis, and subsequently look onto the new sexual and political freedoms as the cureall for their problems. Garci’s films became extraordinary successes, as they found an immediate empathic reaction on the part of the urban audiences, who found plenty of ground for identification with his nostalgic and frustrated thirty-something protagonists. In any case, Garci’s narratives seem to ignore their own gender bias, as the crisis portrayed also included a gender element: it was only men who had the critical moments, and the solution came thanks to the new possibilities of political expression and to the occasional chance to redress their sexual frustration with extramarital relationships.

_Las verdes praderas_ (1979), Garci’s first work with Landa, also appeals to the new circumstances of the middle class Spaniard. The film performed a smart operation of addressing the male spectator’s mechanisms of identification with Landa to build on that basis a new masculine image beyond Landismo. Landa plays the role of an insurance company executive weighed down with the obligations that come with the apparent advantages of his high-geared job: in that sense, Garci alludes to Landa’s popular characters of the previous ten years by making this executive a self-made man of working class origins. José Rebolledo’s life displays all the accoutrements of social and economical success: right from the autographed photograph with king Juan Carlos in his sitting room to the chalet on the sierra near Madrid. Rebolledo is aware of his lower class origins, and of how he is expected to do a better job than his upper-middle class colleagues, as well as his need to fulfill a number of social as well as professional obligations. These include playing billiard, tennis and soccer with his boss and colleagues (and letting his boss win) and be civil to his uppity in-laws (who find him, as his mother in law tells his wife, ”vulgarcito” (boorish)). His efforts reach a critical moment, when he illustrates the pointlessness of his success in the post-Francoist Spain in this transparent monologue:

”yo creía que iba hacia una vida maravillosa (...) trabajaba como un negro porque iba a llegar mi vida, mi maravillosa vida (...) ¿qué me espera? tu y yo solos vegetando en esa mierda de chalet... arreglando la calefacción, cortando el césped, limpiando la piscina (...) y
un día te mueres y se te queda esa carita de gilipollas (...) porque es que te han llevado al huerto toda la vida y nunca has hecho lo que tu querías (...) te das cuenta que has vivido para Seat, para Zanussi, para Phillips, para el Corte Inglés.” (I thought I was on my way to a wonderful life... I worked as an slave because my life was about to arrive, my wonderful life... What is the future for me? You and I will vegetate in that shitty holiday house... fixing the heating, mowing the lawn, cleaning the swimming pool... and one day you die and the only thing left is that shocked face of the dead... because you have been fooled all your life and you never did what you really wanted...you realize you have lived for Seat, for Zanussi, for Phillips, for El Corte Inglés.)

This film is a clear illustration of how the socio-economical and political transformation of the country had also brought a revolution in the class system. Landa has definitely abandoned his image of working-class man to be now a part of the middle class. And his transformation stands for a similar movement in Spanish cinema towards products that were destined to a middle class, urban and savvier spectators. There is also an allusion in Rebolledo’s words to the culture of ”desencanto”. El ”desencanto” (or disenchantment) has been defined as “the disillusionment suffered by those who had fought for democracy upon realizing that their political goals were not immediately achieved” (Isabel Estrada 265). I would suggest that it also contains a more general reading, as it can be said to allude to the general feeling of disenchantment that originated on the unfulfilled expectations of an entire society that had expected an utopian and magical change for the better with the end of the dictatorship and found themselves in the middle of an economic crisis and the increasing presence of political corruption. Part of the feeling of crisis was the absence of a clear masculine identity model: once the patriarch is dead, and democracy settled in, censorship disappears, so there is no longer a valid model to follow, and the new historical circumstances deploy a void instead. This void stands at the root of the feelings of confusion and inadequacy that plague Garci’s representations of masculinity, and that, in the case of Las verdes praderas, assumes the shape of revolt against consumerist attitudes. Rebolledo
will find a drastic way to escape his fears of inadequacy at the end of the film by setting his chalet on fire, and thus, staging a kind of low-keyed rebellion: he will not abandon his family or professional obligations, but he will definitely defy social conventions.

In the midst of the disappearance of the traditional masculine figure, it is not strange that we find attempts to import models from other hegemonic cultural traditions. García’s next collaboration with Landa, *El crack* (1981), gives us an example of such an endeavor. One of the first post-Franco filmic examples of Spanish *noir*, it offers us a new image of manhood that seems to be modeled on the classic Hollywood era’s images of Humphrey Bogart in his detective roles of Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) or Phillip Marlowe in *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946). Alfredo Landa, as the detective Areta\(^3\), offers the complete opposite of the farcical roles of the Landismo: silent, still, expressionless, he represents the lonely man who fights the corruption that came to be known as “cultura del pelotazo” during the eighties, and that was perceived as running rampant once the media were liberated from any kind of censorship after the end of the dictatorship. His impassible exterior and his effectiveness to combat the debauchery and the imperviousness to justice of a number of elements from the high spheres contrast with his loneliness and his inability to manage his private life. This is poignantly shown when his attempt to form a family with his girlfriend, a single mother, and her daughter ends in tragedy as the child dies in a car bombing that was intended to provoke the detective’s death. Areta, much after the model of other literary Spanish detectives of the period, like Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s Carvalho, mistrusts the police forces for their association with corruption and political repression, and is nicknamed among his old friends in the force as “piojo” (louse) a nickname that marks the distance between his short, unassuming persona and any model of hegemonic masculinity. Areta situates himself in outcast territory: his professional dexterity has no economical or official rewards, and to make things worse, his introversion and his life’s circumstances

\(^3\)Again, another instance that relates the character with the actor: Areta is Alfredo Landa’s mother’s family name.
incapacitate him to assume a paternal and marital role. These shortcomings still deepen his feelings of crisis, as there appears to be no social or professional space that can contain Areta’s model of masculinity.

In that sense, the film’s abundant long shots of Madrid’s deserted avenues in the small hours or the busy streets full of indifferent passers-by offer an interesting visual metaphor of the solitude of Areta’s antiheroic figure. In fact, these images of the indifferent urban setting as backdrop for a model of masculinity that has no space in it, have a number of interesting aftermaths in Landa’s later career. Among the roles that he has played in the following twenty-odd years that span until his retirement in the spring of 2008, there is a number of films which cast him as a representative of a tragically outmoded model of masculinity. Even in literary adaptations like *Los Santos Inocentes* (Mario Camús, 1984) or in period movies as *El río que nos lleva* (Antonio del Real, 1989), Landa incarnates heroic images of manhood that even though rooted in an unflagging honesty, reveal themselves as totally helpless to deal with the unfairness of political and social conditions—as in *Los Santos Inocentes*—or are outrun by social, economical and generational change. Landa incarnates a masculinity that, determined by old patriarchal modes, finds itself unable to deal with the vertiginous speed of change experienced by Spanish society in the decades after the years of the transition. Marked by his previous comical incarnations of the Spaniards’ negotiations with the economic and social modernization brought by “desarrollismo”, Landa has represented the impossibility of his generation to adapt to Spanish postmodernity.

An example of these later examples of misfit masculinities would be *El río que nos lleva*, which showcases Landa as the last “ganchero”, a logger who transports tree trunks from the upper river Tagus to the mills near Madrid, and illustrates the literal disappearance of his profession as new methods of transportation render his job obsolete. In *La próxima estación* (Antonio Mercero, 1982), he incarnates a father who cannot understand the claims to a different lifestyle of his guitar-playing, dreamy son. Patriarchal structures and traditions melt to the parents’ disbelief, while the son insists on not following his father’s career ambitions
for him, and failing to recognize his efforts to conform to the social and economical model of dutiful husband, providing father and successful professional—expresses his wish of living on the road with his girlfriend.

But the film that could be considered the most tragic marker in this slow death of a model of masculinity is *Sinatra* (Francesc Betriu, 1989). The film was shot in Barcelona’s Barrio Chino, and showcases all the seediness of the district’s traditional image, represented in this case by cheap ”pensiones” (hostels), transvestite shows and street prostitution. All of these offer a more than a casual parallelism with Landa’s character Sinatra’s state of personal disintegration. We never get to know the main character’s real name, as we are introduced to him after watching his performance in a cheap live show, in which, dressed in a clownish tweed jacket, he delivers his own version of Frank Sinatra’s *Strangers in the Night*, his short characteristic figure framed by two statuesque transvestites dressed as Marlene Dietrich and Spanish folkloric star Lola Flores. His fruitless efforts to measure up to the Hollywood star’s brand of attractive masculinity and success with women are an apt metaphor for our Spanish Sinatra’s total failure when dealing with women. The film documents a colorful list of feminine figures with whom he proves himself unable to achieve any kind of positive relationship no matter how hard his efforts to measure up with an old-fashioned model of dignified masculinity. The list opens with his wife, who abandons him for the stereotypical figure of powerful manhood impersonated by a tall, strong and attractive African guy. Defeated by her abandonment, Sinatra also resigns from his staged simulacrum of masculinity, crossing out his own face in the nightclub’s posters, and finds a room and a job as a night porter in a seedy pension of el Chino. Then he resorts to posting an ad in a newspaper’s lonely hearts section with melodramatic results. His correspondents include Natalia, a crazied teenager who asks him for milk and medical attention for her baby—a doll that she carries everywhere—an homosexual, Rosita, who offers Sinatra/Landa his first on-screen joint and fellatio; Hortensia, whose punky son assaults and robs him in her own passive and resigned presence. His last, failed affair involves Isabel, an attractive high-class call-girl who gets
killed by her mafia connections as soon as she promises to leave her job for him. With this final blow, Sinatra abandons any hope of measuring up to the original Sinatra’s glamorous image of successful masculinity, as he addresses himself in the mirror and asks for the elusive secret of the original singer. Success is precisely what Landa/Sinatra will never know, as his last chance, Begoña, a dwarf he also meets through the ads, becomes the lowest point in this final fading movement of patriarchal model: when he decides to respond to her literal demands to show her what a man is, (“qué es un hombre”), Begoña gets sick because of the drinks they had together and leaves him with an elusive “tal vez otra vez” (maybe some other time). Landa composes a tragic figure in a world where his brand of masculinity, symbolized by the slick image of Frank Sinatra, seems completely at a loss when dealing with feminine figures increasingly incomprehensible and too immersed in their own problems to conform to the idea of the traditional woman. Landa/Sinatra interrogating himself in the mirror represents an image of defeated masculinity whose poignancy has been rarely equaled in Spanish film. Actually, Betriu and Landa’s Sinatra could not compose a most pathetic epitaph to an extinguishing model of manhood that was an integral part of Spanish cinema during most of the 20th century.
Figure 2.1: *Los días de Cabirio.*
(a) Cabirio’s dream scene

(b) Mrs. Ocasis and Cabirio discovered by paparazzi.

Figure 2.2: *Los días de Cabirio* screenshots.
Figure 2.3: No desearás al vecino del quinto.
Figure 2.4: *Vente a Alemania Pepe*. Pepe’s faulty Spanish masculinity versus the European hegemonic model.
Chapter 3
José Sacristán, a Man in Transition

The relative easy way in which the transition took place hides the fact that most of the Spaniards only knew where the country was going when they were already there. (“La facilidad relativa con la que se llevó a cabo la transición oculta el hecho de que la mayoría de los españoles solo supieron adónde estaba yendo el país cuando ya habían llegado allí.”) (Hopewell, 182)

3.1 The Faulty Against The Totalitarian Regime

José Sacristán started his acting career in the theater and made his break in Spanish cinema working on the same genre that made Landa a star, the comedy of the late 1960s, and, later on, the sexy comedy of the early 1970s. In these genres, Sacristán and Landa interpreted the same kind of role: the trademark of faulty masculinity that appeared to be threatened by the new economic and social circumstances of late Francoism. Landa and Sacristán played characters that responded to what Peter Lehman calls the “vulnerable, pitiable, and frequently comic collapse of the model phallic masculinity” (26), the virile stereotype that was rapidly becoming anachronistic in view of the new political and social circumstances of the
transitional period between dictatorship and democracy. Looking at Sacristán’s physique, it is not difficult to see why this is the case: extremely thin, unassuming, with a facial expression that easily reflected feelings that ranged from mild sadness to anger or surprise; he can be also read, as in the case with Landa’s short and chubby physique, as an image of “impaired” masculinity.

Sacristán’s model of a faulty, impaired man is not an isolated phenomenon. Within the context of another totalitarian regime, the Stalinist period, Liliya Kaganovsky recognizes two contradictory models of masculinity in narratives belonging to the socialist realism: the prototypically strong, healthy and virile individual, and a mutilated, wounded and weak man. Kaganovsky uses the concept of the fetishization of male lack (579) to explain this duality between what Peter Lehman calls “the phallic spectacle” and “its pitiable and/or comic collapse” (26). In her view, this weakened model of masculinity points to the incommensurability of the concepts of ‘penis’ and ‘phallus,’ that is to say, to the distance between the idealized image at the center of ideological propaganda and the actual men who were part of the audience to which such models were being addressed.

It is indeed clear that José Sacristán’s thin body and sad facial expression posit him as a model that directly contradicts the phallic signifier of patriarchal power. The stereotypical masculinity that he opposes had been impersonated in previous filmic narratives by healthier-looking, sunnier heartthrobs, or “galanes.” Even though heartthrobs in Spanish cinema have always been shy to expose their physicality (Fouz, 64), their aspect usually pointed to a body image that, even being far from athletic, aspired to a modest elegance, such as the model played by Manolo Escobar in his musicals. While the maimed models of masculinity in socialist realism owe their existence to the recognition of outside power and on their assumption of mechanisms of self-surveillance (Kaganovsky, 580), Sacristán’s physical inadequacy points to a break with the models of masculinity that were reinforced during the

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1Kaganovsky follows Kaja Silverman’s psychoanalytical approach to the presence of marginal masculinities in her study of male subjectivities in the “dominant fictions” of American culture in Male Subjectivity at the Margins, NY 1992.
dictatorship. Francisco Franco’s demise seems to run parallel to the gradual disappearance of the dominant masculine stereotype of a heterosexual *pater familias* that seemed to be model after the example of the dictator as ”Father of the Land”. Franco, as head of state and leader of the country, had reinforced the idea of a conservative, Catholic and patriarchal society in which he was not only the Head of State, but also the symbolic Father of the Land and national leader or ”Caudillo”. As such, he presided over a pyramidal social structure maintained by the sheer force of a tight cultural, political and military control. The dictatorship’s structures of power, which controlled different aspects of national life, including politics, labor relations and social organizations, also demanded a prototypical image of masculinity that coincided with the traditionally patriarchal and phallic models. This model can be exemplified in the male characters, and the actors who played them, in the epic narratives of the early dictatorship, such as Alfredo Mayo in *Raza* (José Luís Saenz de Heredia, 1942), a film whose script was signed by Franco and which was, in fact, a glorified autobiography of the dictator and an ideological justification of his military uprising. The war context and the epic tone that was a common trait of this kind of narrative provided the right atmosphere to display heroic bodies that could be associated with the ideals of the ‘new’ fascist man (Fouz, 66).

In the context of the 1970s and early 1980s —the final years of the dictatorship and its aftermath—Sacristán’s model of masculinity, with his slight body and his expression of perennial perplexity, stands for dissidence from this normative model. His films of this period are populated by men who were not only far from any normative stereotype of male handsomeness but who did not want to be identified with any type of fascist masculinity. At the same time, there is a turn towards the realistic in film narratives during the transition that offered a credible background to Sacristán’s characters. We should not forget that what appears as a realistic rendition of everyday reality in films at the time, in fact, hides a melodramatic structure. These melodramatic references constantly showcase the need to overcome the old ideological apparatus and to look for a new political order, but also a new
moral order.

Like Alfredo Landa, Sacristán’s early roles “sexy comedies” of the late 1960s and early 1970s also represented a tainted masculinity, although his personal trademark defined characters in quite a different way from Landa’s model of ineffectuality and cluelessness. In the first part of their careers, both Landa and Sacristán played, almost exclusively, two contrasting versions of what Lehman calls the comic collapse of traditional masculinity (26). Landa played the hairy, chubby, short type, whose innocence and inexperience were exploited for their comic potential. In contrast, Sacristán went for roles in which his lanky, bland physique contradicted his savvy nature when facing the challenges of emigration to Germany (as in Pepe, vente a Alemania) or when dealing with the new —and sexually active—brand of femininity, represented by the foreign tourists in the comedies of the late 1960s, as in Manolo la Nuit. Landa increasingly played a man stunned and left behind by the speed of change of Spanish society and, as time went on, a representative of an old-fashioned and increasingly obsolete model of masculinity. This was not the case for Sacristán, whose star image became increasingly defined by the changing and contested conceptions of manliness. His filmic persona began to be increasingly identified with the figure of the man who tried to navigate the social and political changes of the political transition to democracy, and also to take an active role in them.

3.2 Sacristán, The New Spaniard

Not surprisingly, there is an important class component in Sacristán’s characters. Escobar and Landa were associated with the experiences of immigration and the rural and working classes whose labor was at the core of the “desarrollismo.” By contrast, in his films Sacristán often represents the new urban bourgeois lifestyle that was made possible by the extraordinary economic growth of the 1960s and early 1970s. In his films of the period, he personifies white collar employees—lawyers, politicians, journalists, and even executives—a
whole new universe entirely apart from the stories of emigrants, rural poorness, and economic difficulties in the city that were common in the comedies and musicals of the 1960s.

An early example, of how the middle class invaded the comedies that were previously populated by yokels or immigrants, is Soltero y padre en la vida (Javier Aguirre, 1972). Sacristán, who usually played secondary characters in sexy comedies, assumed the starring role in this film, an early example of how the images of men in Spanish film had started an unstoppable evolution from the heterosexual, traditional stereotype to a more sensitive and vulnerable image. He plays the role of Alonso, a diffident and apologetic lawyer, who has to assume a womanly role. The plot follows his adventures: after having a short affair with Gunilla, a foreign beauty of “loose morals.” She has a baby and shortly thereafter leaves the child to his father’s care. The rest of the film deals with Alonso’s misadventures as he strives to care for the baby by himself and assumes a feminine mothering role that was very much in conflict with the traditional idea of Spanish masculinity. Soltero y padre en la vida is a fatherhood fable that has much in common with later Hollywood films like Kramer vs. Kramer (Robert Benton, 1979) and Three Men and a Baby (Leonard Nimoy, 1987), narratives that were part of a reaction against movements of feminine liberation. Their anti-feminism is shared by a considerable number of Spanish comedies of the early 1970s, that presented professional women as undeserving of a motherly, wifely role or simply ridiculous. As Aronson and Kimmel argue, these threatening females needed to be controlled, at least in filmic narratives:

“Women have abandoned their role as nurturing mother in their rush toward self-fulfillment professionally or sexually. If women would only leave the workplace and go back home, where they belong, they could do their job of taming men and raising children, who would not be placed at such risk that they have to transform men themselves. (Of course, women can keep working and being independent, but they’ll never get a man that way.) Women can either be powerless, long-suffering saving graces (as of old), or powerless, manless figures on
the margin —ultimately to be rescued by their children as well. Writing men in

By 1972, the growing presence in popular film of foreign liberated women made it clear that the traditional patriarchal family model was being threatened. Even if these women were often sexually objectified on the Spanish screen, in many examples they adopted the model of traditional Spanish femininity. *Soltero and padre en la vida* exemplifies this tendency. Gunilla’s unleashed femininity must be contained by the comedy’s happy end. In this case, she comes back to Alonso and marries him, internalizing the traditional role of passive femininity. If, at the beginning of the film, the foreign beauty is presented in revealing clothes and displays an openly sexual aggressiveness, by the time the film reached its happy ending, Gunilla wears a much more modest decolletage and a wedding dress. Thus, the “foreign menace” has been reduced, and the Spanish man could have his cake and eat it, too, as it were. First, Alonso was shown as the happy object of desire to the “insatiable” foreign female. By the end of the film, she is reduced to contented submission in an exemplarily traditional Spanish home and marriage. Therefore, Gunilla can only find forgiveness and redemption by coming back and assuming his wifely and motherly role. This happy ending reintegrates Alonso to his patriarchal role, with an eagerly pleasant wife and a child over whom he can exert his temporarily lost patriarchal power.

It is important to consider that, in generic terms, we are still dealing with a comedy, and that comedies dramatize what is still considered as unrepresentable or taboo in a non-threatening way. Nevertheless, Alonso’s atypical behavior for a Spanish man, taking responsibility for his child in absence of the mother, precludes the roles of sensitive, caring men that would make Sacristán the main representative of a much more nuanced Spanish masculine identity. His ”new” images of Spanish men were only possible with the progressive disappearance of censorship, which allowed a more complicated picture of new social, political and sexual alternatives in cinematic genres quite apart from comedy, such as melodramas and historical films. Sacristán’s characters in later melodramas were often presented as quite dif-
ferent from the monolithic patriarchal model of traditional heterosexual masculinity, opening further the breach that Landa and other comedians had opened in the comedies of the early 1970s with their faulty representations of the Spanish “macho”.

Comedies themselves were changing. With the end of dictatorship and the wane of censorship, popular comedies would soon become much more sexually explicit by adding racier scenes and more female nudity. In fact, this upsurge in the representation of sexuality coincided with a general wave of explicitness in European cinema, with films like *Emmanuelle* (Just Jaecking, 1974) and *Last Tango in Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972). But in Spanish cinema, sexual explicitness on screen seemed to exist as a reaction to long years of repression, further exacerbated by the dictatorship’s censorship. This way, this late “liberación sexual” was closely connected to the political in the Spanish psyche at the time. What is also central in the Spanish case is that its vernacular version of sexual liberation lacks any feminist connotation. “Liberated” women were presented on Spanish screens not as feminists but as objectified young “starlets,” sexually active and increasingly disrobed. They appeared as passive and compliant with their male counterparts, who were still central in narratives focused on masculine loss of control, and in which women were presented as objects of the male gaze.

Critic Isabel Estrada argues that, in contrast with the faulty masculinity that was common in comedies, the new masculine role models in melodramas of the late 1970 were empowered by the novelty of access to both political and sexual activities. In her words, “Man is charged with the responsibility of making the political transition succeed. And the personal and the political appear intertwined, especially in the sentimental and sexual aspects” (266). Sexuality and politics were indeed inextricably united for the protagonists of these films, who appear to offer a new view on the association between the national and the sexual that is often present when describing Spanishness. The new masculine role models were capable of taking part in political reform, but in order to do so, they would also have to redefine
their sexual mores, with the help of a compliant female. 2

The disappearance of censorship had more consequences than the increasing visibility of sexuality on screen. After the state control over sexual and political content of films ended, it was no longer necessary to disguise social critique under the guise of comedy or behind obscure references in metaphorical films. The successful result were the "tercera vía" films, melodramas that alluded to the new political circumstances and to the changes in the social scene but that, at the same time, could be read as fantasies of control that counteracted economic, social and sexual anxieties. The tercera vía films explore, in a middle class setting, the personal contradictions faced by a prototypical male in the context of a changing society as well as the ways in which those contradictions were made worse by the economic crisis. According to Monterde's detailed study, la tercera vía started as a trademark invented by a smart film producer, José Luis Dibildos, but ended up including a large number of films that were made during the post-francoist period of 1975 to 1979. The films of la tercera vía were set against the background of a national filmography divided between two entirely different kinds of products. On the one hand, subgeneric cinema, constituted by horror movies, westerns and thrillers that dominated the box office. On the other, metaphorical films, such as those by Carlos Saura or Víctor Erice, that offered cryptic critiques of the dictatorship, which were shown almost exclusively in foreign film festivals and to an audience of cognoscenti. By contrast, producer José Luis Dibildos looked for a market niche occupied by a growing urban class, that was gaining access to education and liberal professions, and that offered resistance both to popular subgenre films and the obvious limitations of Televisión Española, the one and only television channel at the time, the officialist “Primera” (Monterde 54-60).

2Among the few exceptions to this overwhelming rule, we can cite films by Pilar Miró, like La petición (1976), and by Eloy de la Iglesia, like La criatura (1977), or La otra alcoba (1976) where women were portrayed as sexually proactive when facing questionable masculine characters whose authority they defy and fight.
3.3 José Sacristán and Tercera Vía Films: Questioning the Past and Wondering About the Future

The *tercera vía* films thus addressed the flux of social change sweeping the country. They had the advantage of offering a direct reference to the sociological transformations that accompanied Spain’s political democratization, and of exploiting, to the limit, the possibilities of expression that the censorship permitted. In the new sociopolitical circumstances of the transition to democracy, these films appealed to the tastes of the new urban audiences, who expected a more open approach to sexual and political issues. Nevertheless, the films did not abandon the appeal to populism of the subgeneric films. In fact, they extended their parody of the average Spaniard’s frustrations but looked for new solutions for the quandary faced by the waning stereotypes of hegemonic, heterosexual Spanish masculinities in the realm of melodrama. These narratives searched for solutions to the new political and moral worries of the average citizen, and melodrama provided a generic background in which its protagonists could fully express their collision with their social background. The male main characters in these films were no longer the inferior, laughable protagonists of the “sexy comedies.” Types, situations, and mise-en-scène worked towards the elaboration of a filmic solution to the audiences’ desires for control over the changing social circumstances. The male protagonists of the “tercera vía” were vulnerable, and showed their ambivalence and doubts on screen. As in all of the cinema of the period, they showed their terrors once they realized that the death of Franco, the patriarch, left them orphans in a situation that they desired but also feared (Monterde, 55). These films tended to reinforce the conservative ideology inherited from the dictatorship by turning away from uncertainty and looking for solutions that, inspired by tradition, reinforced the male protagonist’s positions. The new freedoms were presented as misleading and dangerous: when they followed their sexual fantasies, they
usually had to pay for the consequences.

If Alfredo Landa personified the average Spaniard in the sexy comedies, the ever-present face of the melodramatic tercera vía films was José Sacristán’s. Two relevant examples are Los Nuevos Españoles (Roberto Bodegas, 1974) and Mi mujer es muy decente dentro de lo que cabe (Antonio Drove, 1974). Both narratives showcased the anxieties of Spanish men as they faced new “frontiers” in Spanish society that challenged the limitations of their masculine roles. The frontiers were economic in nature, with the arrival of multinational companies and the need to face change in the workplace. They were also gender frontiers, as women drifted out of their traditional representations of virgin/whore and assumed a new, slightly more active social role.

Los Nuevos Españoles deals with the space where male power had to be demonstrated and exerted outside the home: the workplace. The plot follows a group of employees of the Spanish insurance company La confianza. La confianza is bought by the North American corporation Bruster and Bruster, so we follow these men’s training and indoctrination under the orders of the new American bosses and coaches. The employees must demonstrate their dedication and capability by taking part in a contest, which will be won by the team who gets the highest number of insurance policies sold. The main characters’ success in winning the competition will come at a price, as one of them dies as a consequence of his exertion and the work rhythm imposed by the Americans. This melodramatic end summarizes the effects of the North American “colonization” of the Spanish workplace. Definitions of the nation are at stake: traditional jobs in the Spanish context are defined by the film with scarcity of means, laissez-faire methods and the “pluriempleo” (or the need to juggle more than one job at the same time). By contrast, the new American methods are depicted as more effective, but also dehumanized and aggressive. The topic of the “modernisation” of the country, that had already been present in the comedies of the early 1970s, acquires darker tones in this melodrama that points to the end of a way of life, and to the inevitability of change. The traditional Spanish brand of masculinity is measured here against foreign models that are
associated with economic success in a new capitalistic context. Clearly, the theme at stake is the conversion of the Spanish economy into a consumerist mode, and how that impacts the intersection between nation and masculinity in a new international background. The old Spanish insurance company, very aptly called *La Confianza* (Trust) disappears once it is absorbed by the multinational Bruster and Bruster: and tellingly enough, the new firm’s imposed reforms centers in making, out of the “old” model of Spaniard, a “new man.” Will the old employees of *La confianza* be able to assume the characteristics of the new “Bruster men”? The film seems divided between showcasing the need of a new brand of masculinity so that the nation can be properly modernized, and the anxiety of not being able to measure up to the challenge. The film showcases the feelings of national inadequacy and inferiority that have been often present in Spanish culture, and more particularly in moments of social change. That complex, which was usually projected towards richer European countries such as France, Germany or Great Britain, was now being transferred to the United States. Thus, we can see how the old employees of *La confianza*, who used to be short, fatty, or bespectacled, are encouraged by their new American coaches—and forced by the increasing capitalistic competence—to overcome their physical characteristics by wearing man heels, girdles or contact lenses (Rafael Utrera, 721) to conform to a different model of masculinity even physically. That physical lack was a result of concrete economic circumstances and could only be overcome aesthetically (Spaniards would need another well fed generation to become taller and healthier). In the film, “Spanishness,” seems to mean happy-go-lucky anarchy and the only way to succeed in the new economy seems to require the adoption of the new depersonalizing and dehumanizing strategies of capitalism. In the film Spaniards appear as comical in their inadequacy to join the postcapitalist forces, American aggressive marketing techniques are also questioned by the narrative. The Spanish employees become “Brustermen,” class differences and petty conflicts erased by the black and white narrative. The process entails experiences as harrowing for the Spanish males as having a woman as a supervisor and enduring a training course that will “remake” their masculinity under the
direction of a senior American employee who presents himself under the nickname of *Harry el sucio* (Dirty Harry) — in a clear reference to the ideal of masculinity that Clint Eastwood personified in the film of the same title. This intensive work means their economic success, as the group of men manage to win the annual sales competition. But their achievement also means the demise not only of their identity, but also of their lives. Spanish masculinities can not become American men without losing their identity and according to the metonymic conclusion, their lives. The last shot of the film illustrates this conclusion by jumping forward into the future, from the image of the triumphant group of employees to the image of their five widows receiving medals that commemorate their deceased husbands’ efforts for Bruster and Bruster.

In the context of the confrontation between the national and the foreign masculinity, José Sacristán plays the role of Pepe, the youngest of the group of employees, and also the one who first realizes the necessity of adapting to the new modes. His character is presented as one who is open to the new influences from the beginning of the film: as a subscriber to *Reader’s Digest* and a fan of all kinds of correspondence courses, he will be the one who best adapts himself to the Bruster’ ways. The economic advantages of his adaptation are obvious and reflect the fetishization that accompanied the new consumerist mores. From a studio in an attic of the old Madrid, that José shares with his young wife and baby daughter, the family moves to a spacious apartment in the new suburbia. The new apartment comes as a reward to José’s efforts and symbolizes a suitable background to his new work style, one that takes him out of the office to court possible customers with dinners and drinks in night clubs and flamenco “tablaos”, bars and parties, but also makes him victim of an endless work schedule. Women also fall prey to the process of transformation, and the traditional Spanish housewives are lured by the economic advantages of late capitalism. José’s wife is indoctrinated by the American company to encourage and help her husband’s success, and her ambition is showcased as overwhelming and in conflict with her familiar duties. In one of the film’s central scenes José comes back home, drunk and exhausted after trying to sell
more insurance policies to prospective clients in a party, to find his wife planning new social gatherings that help him with his sales. At the same time, she daydreams of a bigger house that includes amenities like a garden and swimming pool, something truly extraordinary in the Spain of the 1970s. She has an excuse for this fantasy of consumerism: so that their daughter can have, as she puts it, “everything she deserves”, (“todo lo que se merece”). José retorts that she should stop planning for a girl who cannot even recognize her mother, as she spends most of her time at the Bruster and Bruster’s kindergarten. María’s position reveals how masculine anxieties regarding gender worked at the time. Women are identified as the guilty party. It is when they are encouraged to leave the home and have professional ambitions, even if it is on behalf of their husbands, that the family structure collapses, and men disappear as victims of their wives’ greed, as attested by the death of the Spanish employees at the end of the film.

Another example of a tercera vía film intent on dealing with the problems associated with defining a new model of masculinity, is the film Mi mujer es muy decente dentro de lo que cabe (‘My wife is very decent as far as that is possible’) (Antonio Drove, 1975). The film’s narrative appears to denounce the double morality to which women are subjected under patriarchal law. The virgin/whore duality is developed as Paulino, bored with Margarita, his faithful and submissive wife, falls for a sexually “liberated” younger woman, Paloma. Nothing will stop his efforts to conquer her, until he has her as his lover and is able to reduce her to the traditional wifely model. He buys Paloma a house in suburbia, where she spends her days in isolation and boredom looking after her lover’s collection of songbirds in their gilded cages, in a not very subtle symbol of female entrapment. Meanwhile, Margarita becomes a nightclub singer who now enjoys the pleasures of Madrid la nuit. It does not take Paulino long to fall again for his ex-wife, who now has become a liberated, sexualized woman who dates other men. Although the film does showcase the increasing invalidity of the virgin/whore duality, it does not offer a final solution or a radical reading

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3Paloma’s name (that is, Dove) also helps to build the analogy
of the gender conflict. All the potential conflict is sealed by a *deus-ex-machina* “happy ending” in which Margarita agrees to again succumb to her traditional role of submissive housewife. José Sacristán plays the perplexed male protagonist, one who is confused when confronting the erasure of the virgin/whore duality in the categorization of Spanish women. No longer can women be divided into one or the other category, as represented by the two female protagonists who submissively change and adapt their behavior, adapting themselves to the roles of housewife or liberated woman, following the whims of the protagonist. But this fiction is, in fact, undermined by the presence of Sacristán’s emasculated physique and its inadequacy to fulfill the standards of masculine attractiveness, which points to the impossibility of maintaining the patriarchal traditional model and its subsequent feminine submission. Sacristán looks ill at ease among the new spaces and accoutrements of the urban classes: Paloma’s apartment, full of colorful and futuristic furniture is portrayed as a space of sexual freedom, and the "chalet" or suburban house in which the main protagonist cages first Margarita, and then Paloma, present a polished surface, complete with garden and swimming pool, and completely isolated from the temptations of the city. The way both spaces are set up have to do more with consumerist wish fulfillment than with any realistic pretension. The film works then in both senses. It fulfills the need to assuage two masculine anxieties: on the one side, the one that deals with economic aspects and, on the other, the need to keep at bay the gender trouble that women’s increasing independence anticipated.

One of the genres that better expressed the conflict between individuals and their changing social medium during the years of the political transition was melodrama. Melodrama as a genre is especially suitable for expressing social struggle because of its capacity to reproduce the conflict between an individual and a dominant ideology. Its power to give expression to rebellious individuals and its capacity to lend dramatic force to the expression of social conflict are probably among the most important reasons. Linda Williams regards the melodramatic mode as defining a broad category of films that move us to pathos for the protagonists, who are tormented by forces superior to their own and who are perceived as
victims (42). Another interesting trait of the genre, according to Williams, is its suitability to express conservative ideologies, by remarking how patriarchal and capitalistic discourses, often contradictory and in flux, have found expression in popular films due to their ability to solve basic contradictions on a mythic level (49).

There are other reasons that explain the success of melodrama in cinematic form during most of the 20th C. It is a genre that works hard at providing moral and ethical solutions, a trait greatly appreciated in times of change. As Thomas Elsaesser affirmed in his seminal article, *Tales of Sound and Fury*, the family melodrama derives from the bourgeois sentimental dramas that were born in another context of transcendent change, the French Revolution, and it worked hard to justify another social change: the rise of the middle class and the end of the ancien régime. Linda Williams also affirms that the same melodramatic structure inherited from the 18th century is alive and thriving in contemporary filmic narratives, and that it also still manages to turn “our sense of guilt into a testament of our virtue” (80-81). Certainly, that power to focus on the positive side would prove useful when producing narratives that can reassess the moribund brand of old fashioned, patriarchal Spanish masculinity and point to new paths of transformation for the concept of national manhood. The emotional excesses of melodrama work towards a reaffirmation of moral certainties, and that function also proved to be certainly marketable in the period that followed the end of Franco’s dictatorship. After having been marked by the dictatorship’s ideological models, it appears as if the Spanish national identity required not only to search for and adapt new models, but to get rid of the sense of guilt that originated in the complicity of a large part of the population that allowed the permanence of the dictatorship for 38 years. This same idea was made explicit by Marcia Landy regarding the relationship between melodrama and

4“Now, with the bourgeoisie triumphant, this form of drama lost its subversive charge and functioned more as a means of consolidating an as yet weak and incoherent ideological position. Whereas the prerevolutionary melodramas had often ended tragically, those of the Restoration had happy endings, they reconciled the suffering individual to his social position, by affirming an “open” society, where everything was possible. Over and over again, the victory of the “good” citizen over the “evil” aristocrats, lecherous clergymen and the even more conventional villains drawn from the lumpenproletariat, was re-enacted in sentimental spectacles full of tears and high moral tones” (71).
fascism in Italian cinema:

Since fascism could not have endured through the application of mere force alone but was also dependent on consent, the melodramas help to chart how the political was also personal, part of a network of loyalties, expectations, desires, values, and behaviors in which individuals were enmeshed. The décor of the films, their use of setting, the characters, the portrayal of personal aspirations and failures create an obsessive repetitive climate which is intimately tied to repression and oppression. (540)

Spanish melodramas of the late 1970s certainly combined the political and the personal, at the same time that they proved to be extraordinary vehicles capable of expressing the social and historical complexities of the period, and, most specifically, conflicts marked by gender. Most of the melodramas of this period focused on male characters, who became the center of narratives that showcased their masculinities and pivoted them against a society that was experiencing vertiginous change, and within which patriarchal attitudes were quickly becoming obsolete. Thus, male protagonists found themselves trapped between the old and the new: between the old, rigid models of heterosexuality and the possibilities of more nuanced gender models in the near future: a future that also had a preeminent space for the women’s liberation movement. Therefore, gender problems took a center stage in stories of men seeking for a place in the new social scene.

Linda Williams argues that melodrama has served as an expression for race, class, gender and ethnic problems in American film (82), and I would argue that, in the Spanish case, it has been profusely used to express gender and class conflicts. But, if melodrama served during Franco’s dictatorship as a vehicle to present some of the ways women were socially victimized, in the transition period, the genre took a 180 degree turn and was extensively used to portray male troubles. One reason for the successful presence of this generic form is

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5For an extended study of Spanish female melodramas of the dictatorship, see Anabel Martín’s extraordinary work, La gramática de la felicidad, Madrid: Ediciones Libertarias, 2005.
the shock value of showcasing men, who had been traditionally well-treated in this kind of narrative, as protagonists, and victims of social wrongs. As Ellen Seiter remarks, “in terms of moral judgement, family melodramas continue to be rather soft on men and extremely harsh on women, even when women no longer hold the center of the narrative interest” (536). And in view of the critical state of the patriarchal trademark of masculinity, a popular culture product portraying this kind of gender crisis demanded a high degree of permissiveness towards its male protagonists.

The transformation of the melodramatic genre and its acquisition of a masculine focus able to express the need for a new definition of masculinity is a unique phenomenon in the Spanish case. One comparable moment in popular film history can be found in the phenomenon of the feeling men melodrama,” a term that defines a subgenre which had its heyday in the Hollywood cinema in the 1990s, and can be exemplified in the Oscar winning film by Jonathan Demme, Philadelphia (1993). As Joy van Fuqua notes, these feeling men melodramas all have a male protagonist that is a humanist and is socially responsible, a man who appropriates the conventionally recognized and gendered zones of “the feminine,” thus offering visions of a more embraceable version of masculine power (29). The Spanish male melodramas of the transition period work in the same sense, offering a possibility for change to images of masculinity that are perceived as too invested in past intransigent models. In all of these films, the political and the sexual are intimately related: the first becoming the terrain where the unresolved anxieties generated by the second are transformed into action. Both aspects provide a background where the main protagonist, as Williams puts it, can become “virtuous sufferer and active hero” (59). In particular, there are two filmmakers, José Luís García and Eloy de la Iglesia, who in spite of the apparently completely opposed themes and interests in their filmographies, used the melodramatic mode to narrate stories anchored in men’s experiences. They not only coincided in making masculine angst the central theme of their melodramas, but did often chose José Sacristán as the star who personified their brooding protagonists. Sacristán played the roles of politician, lawyer or journalist, but
always a male representative of the raising middle class and their doubtful navigation in
the new waters of democracy, surrounded by its new sexual and political options, intent in
finding a high moral ground once the certainties of Franco’s patriarchal rule were gone.

José Luís Garci began his career as a scriptwriter in the early 1970s, and provided pro-
ducer José Luis Dibildos with many of the stories that would form the core of the *tercera
vía* films, like *Vida conyugal sana*, (Roberto Bodegas, 1974) the aforementioned *Mi mujer es
muy decente dentro de lo que cabe* (Alberto Drove 1975) and *Los nuevos españoles* (Roberto
Bodegas, 1974) or *La mujer es cosa de hombres* (Roberto Bodegas, 1976). When he started
directing his own films, he turned to melodramas about men who found themselves trapped
between the nostalgia of the past and the new possibilities of the post-dictatorship reality.
Audiences responded enthusiastically to his films, as he seemed to have found a niche for
the new urban audiences who identified themselves with stories that tried to make sense
of post-dictatorship confusion. The feelings of nostalgia that permeated many of his films
of the period spoke openly to the generation in their thirties, who did not have a memory
other than the dictatorship, and who looked with envy at the new, unheard of freedoms
that the younger generations were starting to enjoy in the after-dictatorship years. As the
extraordinary success of his films attests, the melodramatic function worked like magic in
Garci’s *Asignatura pendiente* (1976) and *Solos en la madrugada* (1977), both starred by José
Sacristán, who seemed to impersonate convincingly the nostalgic feelings of a whole gener-
ation that was born and grew within the dictatorship, and who, as the films’s protagonists,
felt that it was too late to recover their lost youth, disappeared in the mists of the dictatorial
past.

The first of the films, *Asignatura pendiente*[^6], focuses on José, a labor lawyer, and his
ex girlfriend Elena, who meet in Madrid on the same day that Franco gave his last speech.
In spite of both being married to other people, they start an affair that they feel will allow

[^6]: The title hides a double entendre. On the one side, it could be translated as “failed subject” and referred
to how these characters felt that their youth had been “failed” and need to be re-lived, on the other, it could
also mean an “unresolved matter”, the loss that can be compensated or not
them to recover lost time. With their romance, they hope to get back all the opportunities that they lost because of the dictatorship: mainly, the chance to be free to enjoy their sexuality without the repression of the post-war years. José, with the acquiescence of Elena, blames the political circumstances of Franco’s régime for their generational crisis and his dissatisfaction with his own life. Finally, it is José who decides to end the affair, and to focus instead on his political activity in defense of the nascent democracy. In the process, he terminates the relationship and leaves Elena aside, excluding her from any participation in the new political scene.

The film is full of references to the political. Garci includes references to Franco’s death, to the first presidente del gobierno (prime minister), Arias Navarro, after the dictator’s demise, and even, in one of the subplots, to labor lawyers and their role in the political transition, that ranged from their work to help the legalization of left-wing parties and their task to normalize labor relations. The film’s force depends on the spectator’s emotional reaction to the transition’s historical facts and the parallels between their experiences and the ones related in the film (Hopewell, 213). It was an enormous success, as the generation who grew up with Francoism identified with José and Elena’s longing for the sexual freedom they could not enjoy in their younger years under the dictatorship. This way, the film made a good use of its evocative power by making references not only to the contemporary political upheavals, but also to the spaces and the emotions of the past. In this sense, there is a particularly interesting scene in which Elena and José take a trip to the little village where they met and spent the summers when they were teenagers, away from the pressures and crowded spaces of the city, Madrid, and back into the pristine, quiet streets of their past –and also of Francoism. This nostalgia can also be seen in other visual aspects of the film, as the abundant references to Hollywood cinema of the 1940s and 1950s. During the hard times of the post-civil war period, Garci remembers taking refuge from the hardships of everyday life by watching Hollywood films, of which the filmmaker remembers the “wonderful fridges”
and “wonderful women.” This love of Hollywood films is plainly visible in Garci’s cinematic style: as Hopewell points out, his use of opening master-shots, followed by medium shots that lead us to the action are a constant in this period of his filmography. Hopewell also points to the role of women in these narratives of political (and personal) self realization as following the American film tradition: ‘He does not even ask her if she wants to be herself part of the transition. Elena is, like many Hollywood women, a mere anecdote in the biography of the history makers.’

The film’s last scene is especially significative in its depiction, Hollywood style, of the couple’s final breaking-up. José arrives at the apartment where he usually meets Elena, and finds her sitting in the dark where, also as usual, she is waiting for him. Once there, he embarks on a speech in which he accuses himself of following a model (by having an affaire being a married man) that perpetuates the stereotype of conservative men that he has always despised. The only solution for him, he argues, while Elena listens in silence, is to break up with her so that he can focus on his job as a lawyer specializing in labor law. Thus, he argues, he can help to build the freedom and the democracy that the country needs, and contribute to a better future. Apparently oblivious to her lover’s cynicism, Elena performs the role of eager supporter common for women in melodramas of the transition. “¿Y no te da miedo mirar hacia adelante?” (aren’t you afraid to look towards the future?) she asks, to which he answers in a heroic mood: “Sí, pero es por lo que hay que luchar, pero es la única solución, (...) para tí, para mí, para los dos, para todos” (Yes, but we must fight for it, it is the only solution, for you, for me, for both, for all). The camera pans back while the scene fades to black, situating the pair in the crossroad of an apparently transcendental moment of change which evokes countless other heroic moments of Hollywood cinema. Garci’s cunning story situated Spanish men at a historical crossroads in which sexual and political freedoms

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7As he affirms in an interview published in the film magazine Fotogramas, number 1533, 3rd March 1978.
8Author’s translation, in the original: “Elena es, como las muchas mujeres de Hollywood, una mera anécdota en la biografía de los forjadores de la historia” (186).
appear as the ways of the future, and in which they could assume a "heroic" position by choosing to become the defenders of democracy instead of falling for the sexual temptations that women incarnated. No wonder the film was such an astounding hit and turned Sacristán into the representative of the man of the democratic transition. Thirty years later, during a presentation of the film in a festival dedicated to the cinema of the transition, Sacristán still remembers and regrets the pompous tone of the film’s final speech: “el discurso final del tío (está) lleno de tópicos, de escapismos, para decir me gustaría follar con otra, o esto no da más de sí, toda una argumentación (...)” ⁹(translation: the guy’s final speech is full of clichés and escapisms, he means to say I’d like to fuck another woman, or this affair is not going anywhere, but, to that effect, what an argumentation!) With the distance of time, it is not difficult to see the extent to which masculine characters were allowed to have their own ways while feminine characters stoically had to step aside so patriarchy could be perpetuated: their masculine counterparts, children who had grown up with Francoist heros, became now left-wing activists, but were still the heroes of narratives that aimed to save the Motherland, and kept intact the link between the nation and its male representative. Given the overwhelming success of the movie, it is possible to infer that this masculine positioning was understood as totally realistic and acceptable. Sacristán recognizes that if his character’s patriarchal position towards women had been cut, the film would not have been as successful:

”el éxito de esta película fue el reconocimiento que la mayoría de los españoles hicieron con estas pobres gentes que estaban atrapados en un espejo, empeñados en que les fuera devuelta la imágenes que a ellos más les convenía, pero no la que era de verdad y ése fue el éxito” (translation: the success of the film was the identification that most of the Spaniards felt in relation to these poor people, who were trapped in a mirror. Invested in getting back the image that they

⁹El cinema de la transició: José Sacristán. Recorded in the Aquitania Theater, 11/01/06. Festival dedicated to the Transition cinema, organized by the Filmoteca de Catalunya.
preferred, but not the real one, and that was the reason for the success).\textsuperscript{10}

The key of the film’s success resides in its ability to explain the protagonist’s mid-life crisis in terms of the political past. José attributes his own feelings of frustration at his life to the social and sexual repression endorsed by the dictatorship. In melodrama, the past usually fulfills the role of a more complete, innocent, still-sacred world, but in these films the past appears as a space of repression, one that needs to be recovered and re-lived in order to compensate for lost chances. With this idea, Garcia’s male protagonists embark on a quest to regain the youth that was “robbed” from them by the repression identified with Franco’s dictatorship and responsible for the lack of sexual freedom he experienced during their younger years. In that sense, sexual liberation works as the catalyst that these characters believe will allow them to recover their loss. José and Elena interpret their loss in totally different terms, and if Jose misses not having enjoyed sexually his youth, while Elena regrets not having had a chance to get a university education. But the recognition of both genders’ frustrations stops here, as the film examines only José’s problems, while Elena’s are conveniently forgotten and/or dismissed. She becomes the willing lover ready to satisfy José’s sexual fantasies, and at the same time, complies with the voyeuristic desires of male audiences, as she appears topless in various occasions during the film. But the conclusion of the story is that José’s wish for redemption will find a more convenient outlet in politics, as he decides to leave Elena and focuses his efforts in the fight for political freedom. Now he will have an active role in public life, a much more empowering option than the simple demonstration of sexual prowess that was represented by his affair with Elena. It is not difficult to see how, after the impossibility of playing a part in politics during the dictatorship years, the men of the middle classes could certainly construct a new model of empowered masculinity by taking an active role in the process of democratization that ensued the end of the dictatorship. The lack of Franco’s patriarchal figure needed a replacement, and in many films of the period, this replacement would be sought in political terms. As Isabel Estrada
points out, in these male melodramas “political responsibility is tellingly placed upon men, even if their masculinity is depicted as problematically in transition.” (3)\textsuperscript{11} In this same article, Isabel Estrada also analyses the changing images of heterosexual masculinity during the transition years, including a reading of *Solos en la madrugada*, the film which was also directed by Garcí and starred by Sacristán. Its narrative also explores the nuances of a more feminized, politically responsible masculinity in the context of the transition.

### 3.4 The Political Option: From Terrorism to Militant Homosexuality

Sacristán’s physically “vulnerable” masculine figure was also cast in roles whose political partisanship justified any deviation from the traditional model of masculinity, even if the deviations were as poignant as terrorism, or, as we shall see later on, transvestism or homosexuality. The tendency is exemplified by political cinema, a sub genre that experienced an extraordinary success and was eagerly received by audiences who had been denied any allusion to political controversy in popular culture for decades. A famous example is *Operación Ogro*, (1979) directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, who had already dealt with issues of post colonialism in *La Battaglia di Algeri* in 1966. *Operación Ogro* was a detailed reconstruction of the preparation of the terrorist attack that killed the Spanish Prime Minister, Luis Carrero Blanco, in 1973. The event is presented not as a murder, but as an epic, in which the Basque terrorists who blew up Carrero's car are presented as fighters for freedom. The political plot is in fact linked to even more contemporary issues. The terrorist complot is presented in a dual temporal line, so that the attack in 1973 is seen in relation to another historical moment, six years later. In the film’s contemporary narrative thread of 1979, the Basque terrorists are being called to abandon violence and to collaborate with the democratic forces in the

reconstruction of the national political panorama in the name of democratization. To further emphasize how all political groups should collaborate in helping the nascent democracy, the film presents ETA in a positive light. The murder of Carrero, instead of being presented as a crime, is seen as an epic feat that enabled the process that lead to the first democratic government that ensued Franco’s demise. ETA is presented not as a group of killers, but as “the executive part of a generalized social feeling that wanted a political change almost desperately” (“el brazo ejecutor de un generalizado sentimiento social que quería un cambio político casi de forma desesperada”) (Vilarós, 120). In this context, and in spite of the evident differences, Sacristán’s role as one of the members of the Basque group is not so different from the one in *Asignatura Pendiente*. The political call justifies any action. Just as, in *Asignatura pendiente*, José felt justified to leave Elena behind to become the “hero” of the coming democracy, Sacristán’s character in *Operación Ogro*, Iker, feels that the terrorist attack on Franco’s prime minister Carrero Blanco, who died as a result, is equally heroic if it means the end of the dictatorship and the establishment of a more democratic regime. Both masculine figures were following a higher call: the need to rebuild the narrative of the nation, interrupted by the long years of Franco’s rule. They were lonely heroes (no women for José, no popular support for terrorists such as Iker) but heroes all the same.

The use of political action as an heroic call in popular film was to be short lived. The fast pace at which political changes occurred, and the Spaniards’ first taste of the foul play necessary for the coexistence of different political parties in the parliamentary game, dictated a change of mood of national dimensions. The first years under the new democratic rule and the many renunciations that its maintenance required the military coup of 1981, in which a group of military attempted to take the Parliament, made it clear that the nascent democ-

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12 ETA stands for Euskadi ta askatasuna, (in Basque language, Basque Country and Freedom) a terrorist organization founded in 1959 with a nationalistic ideology that advocates for the separation of the Basque Country from Spain and France. Although it enjoyed wide support from a part of the Spanish population in the last years of the dictatorship because of its opposition to Franco’s regime, it refused to abandon violence and to join the process of democratization that lead to the first free elections. Presently, its terrorist methods have been condemned by France, Spain, the U.S.A, the European Council, the United Nations, and a number of other international organizations.
racy needed to make a pact with the representatives of the old regime (Franco’s political successors, the military) and the democratic forces had as a consequence the abandonment of the unrealistic expectations of change entertained by many during the later part of the dictatorship. This phenomenon was called the culture of the “disenchantment” (el desencanto), a general feeling of disappointment that swept the Spanish population once the rosy expectations for the after-dictatorship period were dispelled both by the economical crisis and by the realization that democracy was not the magical cure to all of the country’s ills.

We should remember at this point to what extent Spanish society found itself on the brink of a change the consequences of which were totally unpredictable. We also need to take into consideration that the only sure thing was the end of an era, Franco’s brutal, totalitarian and repressive regime, which was the only known political system for any Spaniard under forty. The anxiety brought by this quantum leap between the past and the unknown future is best reflected by the contemporary writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s famous sentence, “contra Franco estábamos mejor” (we were better off against Franco) (151). Vázquez Montalbán’s remark reflects precisely the feelings of disenchantment of the Spanish population, and, according to Estrada, “captures the irony of the masculine identity crisis: after Franco, there is neither a model to defy nor a model to follow” (2). The **disenchantment** is explained by Teresa Vilarós as a consequence of the communal nostalgia felt by the absence of the “narration without fissures” (“narración sin fisuras”) (13) of the dictatorship, as its ideological and political apparatus was quickly forgotten in a movement of historical erasure. The erasure included the obliteration of the dark dictatorial past, soon to become a repressed memory imposed by the need to be a part of a global market. The end of Francoism coincides in Spain with the rise of late capitalism, and the particular circumstances of the end of the dictatorship (particularly the power of the military) meant a difficult balance that was solved with the abandonment of any utopian projects based on Marxism, much before the rest of Western Europe followed the example (Vilarós 15.) Therefore, the resort to politics that many of the transition melodramas’ main male characters showed, would soon dispel in the
context of the post-francoist post-modernity of the eighties, where political disenchantment left plenty of room for apolitical cultural movements like la movida.

La movida was a curious postscript to a turbulent period that started with the death of Franco, the dictatorial “Father.” That moment marks, according to Vilarós, the moment in which modernity becomes postmodernity, and in this particular case, one in which it was still believed that an utopian practice would be possible (and this hope is precisely the one that we see reflected at the end of Asignatura Pendiente, when José starts his political career). The Spanish democratic Left had its hopes for a project that would follow the death of the dictator; but, according to Vilarós, that project dissolved once Franco disappeared, as his demise was a prelude to the end of the time of Utopias (Vilarós 19). It was precisely the unfulfillment of such hopes that provoked the phenomenon of general disenchantment that was called el desencanto. José Sacristán’s star persona became the public face of this phenomenon. He has declared on numerous occasions his leftist political affiliation, so his identification with the left’s utopian project informs and, at the same time is amplified by his roles in a number of films, in which positive action is taken on behalf of democracy and civil rights. Therefore, it is not strange that his image became one of identification for masculine audiences, as he portrayed a figure who could resolve his past repression—sexual or otherwise—by taking political action. Thus, his characters’ penchant for politics provided a model according to which, sexual frustration could be substituted, and redeemed, with political action.

In the context of the new circumstances, Sacristán’s portrayals of middle-class men who became politically active examplify Estrada’s description of “male characters who appear disillusioned, emotionally impaired, and incapable of political commitment in films that both passively reflect and actively respond to the crisis of masculine identity” (265). Sacristán characters seem to define a new type of oedipal narrative in the context of Spain in the 1970s. Marsha Kinder describes a specific kind of oedipal narrative in Spanish culture during the dictatorship: the father is usually absent, and the son’s patricidal impulses are displaced...
towards a rival surrogate or towards the mother (Blood Cinema, 198). We could argue that in the new versions of the oedipal narrative, the father-patriarch—Francisco Franco—is no longer absent or hidden, but dead and in need of a substitute. As it is usual in the Spanish case, the oedipal conflict is used to speak about political issues and historical events repressed during the Francoist era (Kinder 197). The death of the Father would stand in for Franco’s demise, and the need for the son to rise to fill the empty space would indeed include his taking part in the new political responsibilities. As a result, the images of masculinity in political melodramas would rise to the occasion and fulfill an active role in the post-Franco process of democratization. As Estrada pointedly notes, the Spanish man is seen as charged with the responsibility of making the political transition succeed. It is not strange that, being ready for the political fight, these characters are not interested in women’s participation or equality (Estrada 266), as what is at stake is not only democracy, but also the reclamation of patriarchal power. Obviously, women cannot be considered as allies, as that would mean entitling them to a gender equality that would be equally dangerous for the preeminence of male figures. For that reason, many of the transition melodramas explore the possibility of more nuanced masculinities, and even include the representation of homosexuality, but from which women are excluded unless their role is passive and subordinate.

José Luís Garci’s films (and José Sacristán’s roles in them) do not exhaust the possibilities of melodrama as a way to express the historical anxieties of the moment, even though Asignatura pendiente was a good example of the genre’s power to represent, to a certain degree, the possibility of using political action as a way to escape emasculation. Nevertheless, the melodramatic mode can assume very different attributions, as Thomas Elsaesser remarks when he defines the existence of a double function in the genre: “melodrama would appear to function either subversively or as escapism—categories which are always relative to the given historical and social context” (169). If we can attribute to Garci’s films a certain degree of escapism, it is clear that Eloy de la Iglesia’s narratives point towards a much more subversive mode.
Eloy de la Iglesia’s style of filmmaking was highly melodramatic and with an unequivocal air of social and political critique. As he declared on many occasions, his political bias was motivated by his desire to bring into public awareness the topics that the dominant and officialist discourse avoided for being too critical to the dominant status quo. De la Iglesia’s films have been called “social fables,” and his characters assume the guise of “working class men, capitalists, policemen and criminals, all of them portrayed against a troubling background of social inequality, corruption and violence.” (Torreiro, 53)13 His films focused on controversial topics like drugs, juvenile delinquency, and issues of class and of gender, and showcased sexual and moral transgression, with marginal characters enacting their rebellion against social conventions. Nevertheless, there was also a space in his narratives for the middle classes, and their masculine representatives were often played by José Sacristán in films like El Diputado (1978) or Navajeros (1980). In them, his characters often personified a critical position towards the status quo, one that fought for new sexual and political freedoms, just as in Garci’s films, but in this case, along with representatives of the working classes. De la Iglesia’s stories often tell about outcasts and working class characters, normally excluded not only from the privileges of the middle classes, but also from mainstream cultural vehicles. As Perucha and Ponce point out, De la Iglesia was able to combine his political and social concerns with a healthy dose of commercialism:

“Sus películas huyen de las minorías, son apasionadamente comerciales, rectifican por acumulación o condensación de signos géneros tan espesos como el melodrama, en el que vierten un feísmo y una desvergonzada pizca de escándalo y folletín latino encomiables, compendian el punto de vista de las clases populares, atesoran un cierto saber filmico sobre ellas y vienen a enunciar una moral del oprimido, un orgullo de la víctima, una ética del perdedor” Pérez Perucha y Ponce, qtd. by Gubern et alia, Historia del cine español, Madrid: Cátedra, 2009)

(his (De la Iglesia) films, which avoid minorities, are passionately commercial, and rectify genres as multifaceted as melodrama with accumulation or condensation of signs. De la Iglesia fills melodrama with ugliness and an unashamed and a creditable pinch of scandal and Latin American soap opera, and they enunciate the moral of the oppressed, the pride of the victim, the ethics of the loser)

3.5 Eloy De la Iglesia’s and Other Masculine Melodramas

De la Iglesia’s underdog characters combined with the novelty of his themes and his lurid visual style collaborated in making him one of the most successful and commercial directors of the period (El Diputado was among the three most successful films of 1978). In spite of his popular success, de la Iglesia received terrible reviews because his style was considered by critics as “sensationalistic and commercial in comparison to the more artistic work of Spanish auteurs like Carlos Saura, José Luís Borau, Manuel Gutierrez Aragón and Luis García Berlanga” (Tropiano, 157). Undaunted by his films’ commercial success, the abuse he sustained from all sides of the political spectrum gravitates not only around the openness with which he treated homosexuality, but also includes references marked by anti-Basque racism (Paul J. Smith, 1992, p. 130). Even Contracampo, a Cahiers du Cinema-like film magazine which usually defended de la Iglesia’s work, qualified El diputado as “panfleto cinematográfico” (cinematic pamphlet) even though the article concludes with an ambiguous assertion: “uno acaba situándose en favor (o quizá en contra) de la película por razones éticas o políticas y no estéticas (52)” (one finishes by adopting a favorable (or unfavorable) position for ethical or political reasons, but not for its aesthetics.) But the suspiciously passive-aggressive reaction on the part of most film critics has been recently replaced by a more than enthusiastic valorization that coincides with the rise of the melodrama in Film Studies and the reconsiderations of issues of gender and class as equally central in fiction.
as they are in critical texts. As Tropiano notes, Marsha Kinder includes him in her list of “Spanish mavericks”—along with Buñuel, Almodóvar and Bigas Luna—defining the four filmmakers as capable of using melodrama to convey subversion. Kinder points to the mixture of politics and marginality as the combination that landed de la Iglesia a place in international markets (Blood Cinema, 439), while Smith’s argues that de la Iglesia’s particularity insists on subverting classical genres “in auteurist fashion while remaining within the confines of mass culture.” (134.) His success and the wide echo of his treatment of controversial themes which can easily be seen in the unprecedented attention that newspapers like the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, the New Yorker or the Village Voice devoted to his film El Diputado. The novelty of homosexuality as a theme in a melodrama is probably at the core of this attention. Paul Julian Smith mentions how Eloy de la Iglesia’s films represented “what is perhaps an unique moment during the transition to democracy when the topic of homosexuality and the mass audience coincided in Spanish cinema” (1992, p. 129). Other critics point to de la Iglesia as an early representative of the tendency for Spanish directors later on, in the 90s, to erase the differences between author and genre, or between the artistic and the popular (Lázaro-Reboll/Willis 19). In any case, de la Iglesia’s racy melodramas pointed towards a greater prominence of the images of subjects that used to be taboo, as well as a number of marginalized subjects that appear as central in the director’s sexual melodramas. In some of his films, women acquire an active sexual role and refuse to submit to men who represent the power of the middle class in films like La otra alcoba (1976), La criatura (1977) and La mujer del ministro (1981.) In later works, working class youngsters find themselves searching for an escape in drugs (El pico, 1983) or violence (Navajeros, 1980) in a society that does not provide their weakest members with protection from abusive families or economic insecurity. But an important part of De la Iglesia’s central filmography in the late 1970s deal with how masculine identities were quickly embracing a new gender perspective.

In de la Iglesia’s filmography, homosexuals become central in narratives which stress
their fight to escape marginalization in *Los placeres ocultos* (1977) or *El diputado* (1978). *El diputado* is a particularly relevant text because of the way it traces a parallelism between political and gender issues. Alberto Mira underscores the importance of the film, as the first in Spanish cinema in which a homosexual experience was presented in dramatic terms, far from the farcical portraits of homosexuality in comedies like Alfredo Landa’s vehicle, *No desearás al vecino del quinto*. Mira describes de la Iglesia’s effort as “un intento de generalización sobre la situación del ‘homosexual’ a partir de las estructuras del melodrama” (an attempt at a generalization about the situation of homosexuals explained through the structures of melodrama) (503). Hopewell describes de la Iglesia’s use of genre conventions (in relation to his film *El pico*):

“The film’s relation to the real is thus necessarily mediated by its genre, in this case melodrama. Just as in melodrama the social stability of the family is undermined by a sexual desire which reaches beyond it, so in the narrative of national history minority groups (ethnic or sexual) can be absorbed only with difficulty into the new democratic order. Critical abuse of de la Iglesia has thus been motivated by an inability to ‘read’ his use of genre: the rough texture of the film surface is taken to be neorealism, and the films criticized for failing to live up to criteria which they do not themselves recognize.” (qtd. by Paul J. Smith, 1992, p. 133)

José Sacristán played one of his homosexual heroes, Roberto Orbea, in *El diputado*. Orbea is presented as a prominent member of a leftist party who is voted senator on the first free elections of 1977. But his relationship with a young hustler is used by the extreme right party to blackmail him, just when he is on the brink of becoming secretary general of his party, a fictional version of the real PSOE, the Spanish Socialist Party. While in the micro-world of the family Roberto’s lover, Juanito, is accepted by his wife, in the greater sphere of politics, his right-wing opponents resolve to kill the young guy and accuse Roberto of the crime. Roberto is left with two alternatives: he can either take the blame for the death of Juanito, or make his homosexuality public, and face his own party’s reactionary
politics in sexual matters. Roberto’s wife’s sympathy appears shocking in the way that she effaces herself and leaves space for her husband’s outing; but, in that respect, Carmen joins the gallery of understanding wives and lovers of the films of the period. One of the publicity posters amplified the film’s shock value by showcasing an image in which Roberto, his wife, and his lover, share a triple kiss in one scene in the film in which she is happy to take part in a *menage à trois* with Roberto and his young lover (See figure 3.1.) Carmen accepts her husband’s homosexuality by making Juanito part of the family, helping to make room for him both in their bedroom but also by collaborating in “educating” the young hustler so that he can overcome the marginalization of his origins. As in previous cases, women take secondary and synergetic roles in these political fables of the transition, while men embody roles that border on the heroic, and most especially in the case of Roberto, who bravely faces not only the right-wing repressive forces but also the incomprehension of his own political party. De la Iglesia’s message is clear: *El cambio*, one of the most famous slogans of the PSOE political campaigns at the time, the long awaited change that came after the dictatorship, must go beyond the political scene.

Politics and sexuality appear together once again in the publicity slogans that promoted the film, as in the expressive phrase “La democracia le trajo la libertad política, pero no la libertad sexual” (democracy brought him political freedom, but not sexual freedom). Other slogans clearly mimicked the political turmoil with slogans such as the following Holderlin quote: “En el taller, en las casas, en las asambleas, en los templos, ¡que cambie todo en todas partes!” (translation: In the workshop, in the homes, in the assemblies, in the temples, everything should change everywhere!) or the one that makes clear allusions to the political messages that were constantly in the air at the time, “Es español. Es de izquierdas. Es homosexual... Votar por él, es votar por la libertad” (translation: He is Spanish. He is a leftist. He is an homosexual...to vote for him is to vote for freedom). Although Sacristán’s decision to impersonate an homosexual character might look like a risk, it was certainly one that was consistent with the political implications that were present in the roles that
he consistently played during the second half of the 1970s. This link between politics and sexuality was not lost for the North American reviewers when the film was distributed and released in the U.S. during the early 1980s. As Jacqi Tully affirms in his review of the film, the movie works hard to "make sex a political statement" ("Spanish Filmmaker Eloy de la Iglesia deserves watching" The Arizona Daily Star). The same connection between sexuality and politics is forwarded in B. Ruby Rich’s Review in the Village Voice (”All in the Family” Vol. XXX No. 45), who compares De la Iglesia’s work to Costa-Gavras or Francesco Rosi. Surely this political dimension was not lost to Spanish audiences, who were getting used to identifying José Sacristán with left-wing, liberal characters in films that questioned the Francoist legacy, such as Las largas vacaciones del 36 (Jaime Camino, 1976), Arriba Hazaña (José María Gutiérrez Santos, 1978), or the aforementioned Asignatura Pendiente and Solos en la madrugada. If all these films stressed the importance of assuming a political position, the allusions to changes in the masculine heteronormative gender role that were already central in Reina Zanahoria (Gonzalo Suárez, 1976) also take central stage in the portrayal of ”el Diputado” as a Spaniard who not only reclaimed political representation but also the right to an alternative model of sexuality. Thanks to the end of the government censorship in 1975, the portrait of a homosexual character in El diputado had two precedents in 1977: A un dios desconocido and Los placeres ocultos which, according to Alberto Mira (525)\textsuperscript{14}, constitute two key films in the hispanic homosexual tradition. But none of them included the political dimension of El Diputado, a message that was further reinforced by Sacristán’s star persona, which clearly added to the character a ”heroic” dimension which was reinforced by the character’s suffering (when his lover is murdered) and his final decision to come out of the closet to defend the visibility of homosexuality and to propitiate the alliance between the political left and sexual freedom. This final heroic dimension is shared by Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño, another film starred by Sacristán on the same year that El Diputado was released, and which also conjoined homosexuality and politics.

\textsuperscript{14}De Sodoma a Chueca. Una historia cultural de la homosexualidad en España en el siglo XX
Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño (Pedro Olea, 1978) based on the play Flor de Otoño written by José María Rodríguez Méndez in 1972 (although it premiered after the film, in 1980) became an immediate box office success. The story narrates a failed assassination attempt against dictator Primo de Rivera. The old dictator’s historical figure brought together memories of old and recent events. The story is based on historical facts. After a military coup in 1923, general Miguel Primo de Rivera, with the acquiescence of king Alfonso XIII, ruled the country for seven years. His eldest son, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, founded the Falange, the Spanish Fascist party which endorsed Franco’s coup in 1936 and his dictatorship. The links and parallelisms between the Primo de Rivera family and Franco were a transparent reminder of similar events of a more contemporary nature: the assassination of Franco’s prime minister, Carrero Blanco, murdered by ETA in 1973. What made this film especially resonant was the fact that the leader of the terrorist group in the film was an homosexual, and, like Roberto Orbea in El diputado, brought together political fight and gender claims side by side as incarnated in a heroic homosexual who was implicated in political issues. The anarchist Lluís de Serracant is presented as a closeted lawyer by day, but as a flamboyant transvestite by night, and in that, one who sings at the Bataclán, a nightclub in the Barcelonian Barrio Chino. The character of Flor de Otoño, Serracant’s colorful alter ego, was inspired by a real terrorist that took part in the attack to the Atarazanas military barracks in Barcelona during the 1920s, although Rodríguez Méndez transformed him into a transvestite lawyer. This conflicted character allows glimpses into the daily life of the Catalan bourgeoisie, but also of the anarchist movement and of the Barcelonian Barrio Chino’s low life. At the same time, the film offers a commentary on the contemporary situation in Spanish politics and on sexual freedoms. It is significant to note that even though the film shares themes and a main protagonist with El diputado, Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño was extolled by critics in contrast with the negative reception of de la Iglesia’s film. One

15The Barrio Chino as a marginal space also played an important role in a film studied in the second chapter, Sinatra
possible explanation is the film’s historical setting, which allows the audience to maintain a distance from the facts. Another significant detail in the contemporary reviews is how, in spite of Sacristán’s remarkable work, most of the critics praise the job of Carmen Carbonell, the actress who impersonates Serracant’s sympathetic mother. It is not difficult to see how it was easier for audiences to recognize and empathize with the figure of the selfless mother, ready to listen to her son’s outing, than with a character who appeared to have no problem reconciling the three contrasting sides of a split personality: respectable lawyer, covert anarchist and transvestite singer. When playing Serracant, José Sacristán needed to confront a difficult problem: how to play a character that presented three very different faces: the serious, bourgeois lawyer, the political hero and the camp transvestite.

The combination of the two aspects, politics and camp transvestism, is what separates this film from de la Iglesia’s more masculinized representations of homosexuality and gives it a new space of expression, that combines drag and militant action. Effeminacy is used as a political tool, and at that, one that defies the orthodoxies of the heterosexual matrix, but also the dictatorship’s manipulation of popular culture and stereotyping. The effeminated image of homosexuality offered by Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño is clearly linked to a camp sensibility, one that was central in the transition period as a space of representation for sexual dissidences. Alberto Mira relates homosexual culture during the transition period with camp (525) and links this tendency to the recovery of the popular culture of Francoism. Popular cinema, pop music, radio soap operas, or musical genres such as coplas and boleros, previously appropriated by the dictatorship’s control of dominant culture, become after Franco’s death referents suitable to be charged with new meanings, in the context of the post-dictatorship sexual liberalization of the late 1970s. Particularly musical genres such as coplas and boleros, extraordinarily successful and popular during Francoism, generate camp reinterpretations and occupy an important place in the recovery of cultural elements that had been appropriated by conservative ideologies. During the early dictatorship, in the 1940s and early 1950s, within a cultural environment tightly controlled by censorship, these musical
genres, apparently socially and politically innocuous, in fact allowed number of alternative readings. Their lyrics described impossible love stories and tragedies which, in their portrait of women who followed their passions, constituted an imaginary of freedom, particularly for feminine audiences who could easily identified with their resistance to fixed discourses of gender. Likewise, with their open allusion to passion and emotion, they also constituted a space of identification for homosexuality during the dictatorship, and most particularly during the transition, in which they were appropriated as a space of expression for alternative sexualities. Alberto Mira describes the particular case of Ocaña, a transvestite artist, whose autobiographical documentary, Ocaña, intermittent portrait (Ventura Pons, 1978) portrays his camp approach to Spanish traditional culture. One of his performances, when, dressed as a woman, he sings the copla “Yo soy esa” in a café on the Barcelonian Ramblas, is strangely parallel to Sacristán’s performances of transvestism on the stage of the seedy Bataklan—just yards from the Ramblas, in the Barrio Chino—in Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño. Both the real transvestite artist, Ocaña, and Sacristán playing Lluís Serracant, appear dressed in flowing feminine attire and make up, and sing coplas (“Loca”, “Flor del Mal”), whose lyrics foreground desire and passion. Both characters, Ocaña—in the documentary that bears his name—and Lluís Serracant assume a certain heroicity not only in the openness with which they live their sexuality, but also in the way both take up political positions. Both Ocaña and Serracant voice their otherness in cafés and stages instrumentalizing campness in the process. But Flor de Otoño also showcases homosexuality in another generic context, that of melodrama, in a scene whose narrative, light, music and mise en scène evoke classical melodrama. In the middle of his busy schedule of vengeances and bomb plantings, Serracant decides to come out to his mother. The scene takes place at night in his mother’s bedroom, while she is lying in bed and he hides behind some curtains. The camera pans on the mother, lying in the middle of an enormous bed, while it leaves Luis hiding behind the shadows at the right of the image. The cinematography, coded in blacks and whites, and the fin-de-siècle elaborate décor also make reference to the settings of classical melodramas. This deep-focus
shot leaves Luis in the shadows on the right, while the mother is framed by the white sheets and the central light of the scene. Scored by soft piano music, the scene reunites all the elements—visual, aural, narrative—of a climatic melodrama scene: the revelation of the truth, the music (the mélos) and the moment of climatic emotion, the symbolic ”reunion” between the mother and the lost child, complete with the object that symbolize their conflict. In the final image, the camera pans out of mother and son in their embrace to focus on Lluis’ feminine wig, unwilling testimony of sin and now, with their reconciliation, lying abandoned on top of the mother’s immaculate bedclothes.

Once the image of a serious, politically responsible homosexual was established by the film’s narrative, and his deviation from heterosexuality was validated through melodrama, the film’s conclusion collaborated to affirm the protagonist’s heroic stance and the validity of his identity choices. At the end of the film, with the execution of the main protagonist, divergent from the real Serracant’s liberation, also contributed, by way of transforming his threat to the stability of masculine images into martyrdom, to erase any menacing connotations from the representation of homosexuality. Even if Flor de Otoño is contained by history and finally shot, the last action of the character, putting on his lipstick before joining death row, leaves no doubt about how the image of manhood has found a radically different expression from the stereotypical images inherited by many years of a predominantly patriarchal culture.

Sacristán’s role as son, lawyer and heroic activist whose transgenderism is reserved for the night life was a first in Spanish cinema. And although it still kept its share of the stereotypical image of gays, it collaborated in creating a new image of dignity that had been absent in previous representations of homosexuality. Sacristán’s efforts did not go unrecognized. He was awarded the 1978 Festival of San Sebastián’s “premio de interpretación” (The Best Actor Prize) for his role in this film. The reasons behind this prize were not only related to his performance, but also to politics. The film’s combative validation of homosexuality through political action, as well as its representation of Barcelona, a peripheral space which was
largely absent from mainstream representation during the dictatorship (the film was dubbed into Catalan and was showed in this version in Catalonia) were probably as important as Sacristán’s acting when playing the role of Serracant. Certainly, the Catalan lawyer was a departure from Sacristán’s earlier roles in sexy comedies as Landa’s witty counterpart. *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño* and *El diputado* mark a departure from his farcical roles in sexy comedies, and that rupture undoubtedly signals the transformation that the concept of manhood went through in Spain in a relatively short period of time, from stereotypical and patriarchal heterosexuality to homosexual visibility. Sacristán’s impersonations of Roberto Orbea and Lluis de Serracant, only six years from his intervention in the “paleto” comedy, *Vente a Alemania, Pepe*, mark the extent to which the transformation in mainstream narratives, dealing with issues of gender, class, politics, Spanish audiences were ready to accept.
Figure 3.1: *El diputado.*
Figure 3.2: José Sacristán in Asignatura Pendiente.
(a) José and Elena in bed.

(b) José helps political prisoners

Figure 3.3: Asignatura Pendiente screenshots.
(a) José and his colleague pee under a spoof on Vázquez Montalbán’s famous quote “Contra Franco vivíamos mejor”.

(b) José and Elena head back to Madrid (and to the future) after revisiting their childhood memories.

Figure 3.4: Asignatura Pendiente screenshots (continuation).
Figure 3.5: Jose Sacristan in *Un Hombre Llamado Flor de Otoño*. 
Figure 3.6: Flor de Otoño performs at the Bataklan.
Chapter 4

Bibi Andersen’s Transsexuality and Transition: Transgender As Social And Political Transformation.

4.1 Historical Background, El Destape

The relaxing of censorship after the Franco dictatorship ended allowed for an eagerly-awaited double phenomenon: on the one hand, the open discussion of political matters in the popular press and on screen, and on the other, the increasing presence of sexually-revealing images, an extraordinary novelty in the context of the tight control of the media during Franco’s regime. Movies and magazines strived to offer revealing feminine figures in articles and centerfolds and thus managed, by satisfying the audience’s penchant for voyeurism, to increase their sales exponentially. This circumstance meant the increasing presence of naked female (and even a few male) bodies in the popular media in a widespread phenomenon that came to be called the “destape” (uncovering). Magazines and films became spaces especially suited to enact the feelings of “sexual liberation” that swept the country with the exhibition of bodies and the discussion of topics prohibited or censored during the dictatorship. Naked starlets and political sensationalism became signs of the times, as they appeared next to each other in new magazines such as Interviu, Nuevo Fotogramas and Papillón. This opening was not restricted to heterosexual normativity. Dissident sexualities, and among them,
transsexuality, also found a niche in this avalanche, particularly in the first “gay” magazine of the transition period, *Party*.

In view of this revolutionary change in the representation of gender and sexuality in popular media, this chapter proposes a shift in focus from the previous ones, in an attempt to follow the revision of gender models that took place during the late 1970s in Spain. To do so, I will move from the predominantly heterosexual masculine stars to a much more fluid figure, that of man-to-woman transsexual actress Bibi Andersen. This seemingly radical shift aims to showcase the generic diversity that found its way into popular/mainstream culture as a result of the end of Franco’s regime and its censorship, and how this diversity can be linked to a post-dictatorship portrait of the nation. Bibi Andersen is a relevant example of this change of attitudes because of the enormous scope of her fame and her persistent presence in Spanish media beyond the political transition period and well into the 21st century. Even though she started her career as many other forgotten starlets during the destape explosion, dancing and stripping in nightclubs and often being the subject of revealing centerfolds, she soon became part of the Spanish star system. Her initial claim to fame, appealing to audiences’ natural affinity for voyeurism, was soon rechanneled into film roles, appearances on variety shows and on national TV as a host and an anchor. Her persistent presence in Spanish media thirty years after that initial moment bears witness to the successful inclusion in popular culture of sexual deviances from the heterosexual norm, and their inexorable movement from dissidence to mainstream. Bibi Andersen has not only been extraordinarily well-known in show business, but her case has also caused quite a stir in academia. The particularity of her case and its symbolic value has been extensively studied by academics who specialize in Spanish film and cultural studies, such as Marsha Kinder, Patrick Paul Garlinger, David Garland and Alejandro Yarza.
4.2 The Spanish Transexual seen by Critics:

Symptom of Cultural Anxiety, Generic Subversion, Political Act.

Alejandro Yarza, in his study of transvestites in the cinema of Pedro Almodóvar (1999), stresses the fact that the ambiguous figure of the transvestite questions identities previously considered stable and well-known (Yarza, 193). Yarza affirms that the transvestite unchains a transformative movement: “[el travesti constituye] la figura que desmantela la oposición masculino/femenino, matriz primaria, como sugiere Sedgwick, de toda una cadena de oposiciones epistemológicas y ontológicas. Por ello, su presencia desestabilizadora sintomatiza una crisis de categorías” (Yarza, 105) ([the transvestite constitutes] the figure that dismantles the masculine-feminine opposition, primary matrix, as Eve Sedgwick suggests, of a whole chain of epistemological and ontological oppositions. For that reason, his destabilizing presence is symptomatic of a crisis of categories.)

Indeed, the figure of the transvestite can be read as one that expresses the cultural anxiety that characterized the transition period in its highest degree. At this point in Spanish cultural history, the traditional, heterosexual male-female binary seemed to arrive at a point of exhaustion, and the presence of transvestite and transsexual characters in popular media appeared to point towards a solution rooted in a radical break from traditional biological, cultural and, therefore, political limits. Social categories that once appeared immutable, like gender and class, seemed to disappear, and new configurations emerged in a cultural moment that sought to rearrange, often under the prism of camp, the familiar images that had been inherited from the dictatorship’s imaginary.

In this context, the image of Bibi Andersen represented the subversion of traditional gender categories, endorsed and politicized by Francoist propaganda. Her symbolic potential, plus the enormous scope of her popularity, explains the attractiveness of her case for
academics. Patrick Paul Garlinger stresses the link between Andersen’s image and the concept of transition, both physiological and political. Garlinger compares her transformative act to the political transformation that occurred during the “transition” period (Garlinger, 27). Garlinger further affirms that transgenderism has become symbolic of national political changes in Spain after the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, and that her own body “has come to stand as a material emblem of Spain’s own transition to democracy and postmodernity” (Garlinger, 28). In this context of fast social change, Bibi Andersen’s star persona and her sexual dissidence fit in well with contemporary cultural movements that tried to pull away from traditional ideas of Spanishness and embrace a national version of postmodernity.

Andersen, however, is not the only artist who represented generic and sexual subversion on screen in the late 1970s. Other less mainstream artists also contributed to the generic diversification of the transition years. One of the most notorious examples can be found in Ventura Pons’ Ocaña, retrat intermitent (1978), a documentary, already mentioned in chapter three, which follows the sexually-ambiguous artist Ocaña and his performances—on stage, on the streets of Barcelona or for Pons’ camera. Ocaña’s shows, whether on the street, in a café or on stage, mixed nudity, Andalusian folklore and a very clear claim to recover a voice that defined its owner’s right to a free definition of his own sexuality beyond social stigma. While Pons’ film remained limited to the art cinema circuit, Bibi Andersen’s first film, Cambio de sexo (1977), which also dealt with gender bending, involves a fictive narrative developed in melodramatic terms that appealed to a much more general audience. The film, which included the same striptease number that Bibi Andersen was performing in a Barcelona nightclub at the time, was a box office hit that made her nationally famous. It is interesting to analyze the reasons for Andersen’s success and her power to impress the public. The film and Andersen’s presence in it offered a combination of sexual titillation and an apparent invitation to a liberation from traditional gender roles that, at the same time, contained no actual threat to the patriarchal matrix and the existence of a privileged space for males. This combination is a basic element of her success, one that has determined
her permanence in the public light, along with her capacity to adapt her public persona to the evolution of mainstream culture. In a changing period like the Spanish transition, no one navigated better—or, as critics claim, better represented—the waters of change that managed to transform the country without threatening to reopen the traumas of the past.

Gordene MacKenzie underscores transsexuals' high symbolic power, and at that, one that is intimately linked with the cultural context that surrounds them, when he affirms that televised transsexuals are products of their own culture (MacKenzie, 113). No one like Bibi Andersen better exemplifies this assertion. Transsexuals carry enormous symbolic capital when showcased in popular culture. It could be argued that their mere presence is of tantamount importance. As North American transvestite artist RuPaul once told Guy Trebay from The Village Voice, “Every time I bat my eyelashes is a political act”. Transsexuals, transvestites and their bodies “in transition” are not difficult to identify as signifiers for the movement of political change that marked Spanish society during the transition period. If Manolo Escobar, Alfredo Landa and José Sacristán impersonated models of masculinity that respectively succeeded, failed and struggled to represent a nation in rapid evolution, Bibi Andersen showed once more that when ideas of gender and nation are connected, the link is formed by political, social and sexual matters in an inextricable tangle. During the transition, Andersen’s body was read as a signifier for post-Francoist Spain, and at that, one that reflected its owner’s freedom to choose his/her gender. Nevertheless, her impersonation of sexual and generic dissidence during the late 1970s pointed towards the formation of a more sexually-ambiguous Spanish star system. Curiously enough, even though its generic deviance could be considered outlandish within the narrow limits of the immediate past, it was in fact shaped by what were considered more “modern” Western European narratives. What better way to demonstrate how Spain could measure up to other Western European countries, repositories of older democracies and more culturally prestigious in the international arena, than to generate local stars capable of impersonating the local version of foreign postmodernity. With Bibi Andersen, Spain could boast a national equivalent to
other sexually- and generically-ambiguous figures in the European show business panorama, such as David Bowie or Amanda Lear. And to fulfill the part, the figure of Andersen had to be glamorized, idealized, as well as identified with preexisting stereotypes (the starlet, the femme fatale) and thus made part and parcel with mainstream culture.

In view of this complicated position in regard with gender stereotypes, it is clear that the political is not the only reading that Andersen’s multi-faceted star persona supports. Even though her public image, with all her sexual ambiguity, entered popular media as a sexual object, Bibi was also capable of subverting and problematizing that position. She was read diversely by different audiences. On the one hand, postmodern followers of the movida cultural movement idolized her, as they considered her popularity a camp challenge to old Francoist orthodoxies. On the other hand, for more traditional audiences, her ultra-feminine star persona contained the threat of feminism and challenged traditional masculine patriarchal power with her ambiguity.

We could say that Andersen follows Marjorie Garber’s description of cross-dressers as individuals that open the space of possibility at the same time that they conform a disruptive element that intervenes in the crisis of male and female categories (Garber, 17). Nevertheless, Bibi Andersen’s star persona is not exactly a disruptive element. She has been considered representative of a whole range of popular cultural events and currents that have marked Spain’s post-Francoist history. Her early destape striptease years in Barcelona’s night clubs were followed first by her period as a postmodern icon of the movida cultural movement in the early 1980s, and later by her roles in Pedro Almodóvar movies during the 1980s and early 1990s. Today, she has adopted a conservative, high class demeanor and has become the face for various beauty products (See figure 4.8), a staple in a long list of national TV talk shows (El programa de Ana Rosa, La noria) and a regular at high society events, as evidenced by her continuous presence in “prestige” glossy magazines such as Hello. The different ways in which she has negotiated her star persona attests to her power to control a metamorphosis that goes beyond gender and speaks to the mainstreaming of deviance in Spanish society.
She has not only redefined gender limits, but also broken barriers that have more to do with social transformation and the redefinition of class in Spanish society during the last quarter of the 20th century.

4.3 Bibi Creates and Commodifies her Star Persona

The enormous symbolic power of the star persona that Bibi Andersen has managed to construct for herself can be seen in the fact that she has rarely represented characters other than herself on screen. The first example is *Cambio de Sexo*, a box office success in which she played a secondary role (as herself) as a mentor of a younger boy who successfully changes his gender assignment with surgery, despite great social opposition. Her role in this film seems to point towards her power to recreate her own public persona, and to her real-life story, one that became part of the Spanish popular culture and imaginary. Her own biography can be read as the ultimate example of her own control over her sexual and social transformation, built in the same terms as a Buildungsroman and comparable to the tales of poverty and success typical of Hollywood stars during the studios era. A child of working-class parents, born and raised in Tetuán, part of the Spanish territories in Africa, her origin could not be more peripheral in terms of class and power. She graduated as a mechanic from a professional school in Málaga, and then moved to Barcelona, where she started her career as a starlet in cabarets. There she changed her birth name, Manuel Fernández Chica, to Bibi Andersen, her first artistic name, which was handpicked by her from a list that her manager gave her during her first years in show business as a stripper. Her name is a misspelled version of the Swedish actress and regular in Ingmar Bergman’s movies, Bibi Andersson. Her choice of name clearly reveals her impulse to emulate a model of femininity linked with Sweden, that has been assigned an important sexual capital in the Spanish imaginary. Sweden was the homeland of the stereotype of the scantily-clad, sexually-suggestive tourist or *sueca* in Spanish popular culture of the early 1970s. Later in her career, she officially changed her
name to Bibiana Fernández, a performative act that reconciles both her artistic name and her birth family name. In a clear effort to redefine her identity in terms closer to her origins, she chose a more Spanish version of her first name (Bibiana) and recovered her original family name (Fernández). This successive change of denominations attests to the actress’ power to determine her own identity in accordance with her own terms and exemplifies how identity has become a question of appropriation, once gender’s biological barriers seem to have been definitively broken. The chain of transformations that Bibi has put herself through is truly remarkable: Manuel becomes Bibiana, man becomes woman, male mechanic becomes female stripper, stripper becomes singer and show woman, show woman becomes actress and TV anchor and finally, actress doubles as socialite. Her capacity for transformation represents her power to read and cater to audiences’ desires, offering a spectacle that is seen by different viewers as a mirror for disparate social phenomena: a phallic woman for men, an empowered woman for women, a symbol of the transformed nation for critics, the camp impersonator who masters the performance of femininity for the movida followers (or, even more specifically, Almodóvar followers.)

Bibi’s first taste of fame, however, was a result of the sexualized images she offered for general consumption. David Garland, following Stephen Heath in *The Sexual Fix*, suggests that the sexual liberation being showcased in popular media at the time contained a generous share of commodification (Garland, 67). Garland agrees with Heath in that sexuality, as it is perceived in contemporary Western society, has been constructed in a way so that it helps perpetuate consumer capitalism. Bibi Andersen could successfully market her transsexuality as a harbinger of new possibilities, but her ability to use such possibilities included having to cater to audiences’ voyeuristic desires, and at the same time, to contain such possibilities inside the image of a highly-sexualized and objectified femininity complete with statuesque body, long hair and hourglass figure. The way she used the traditional limits of erotic femininity as her public façade contributed to her success by implicitly rejecting images that could evoke the dissolution of traditional gender roles, such as militant feminists or
feminized men. This last example can be seen in the art-house contemporary documentary *Ocaña, retrat intermitent*, where the artist flashes his male genitalia under his skirts to people walking down Las Ramblas. Obviously, gender transgression cannot be part of mainstream culture if it constitutes a complete rupture with mainstream positions.

A good example of how Bibi commodified her own image to suit non-threatening images of a sexualized femininity is an article in the Spanish periodical *El Mundo*, published on July 23, 1977, and in which Bibi is interviewed but also photographed in quite explicit images that construct her as an impeccable reproduction of the “perfect woman,” complete in her appearance and non-menacing in her words. The article is accompanied by a number of one-page photographs in which Bibi poses topless, and which are similar to the numerous exploitative destape articles at the time in which, under the more relaxed condition of post-censorship, actresses, singers and starlets appeared in erotized—and objectified—semi-naked pictures under the pretext of a new “sexual liberation”.

The article uses vocabulary associated with sexual intercourse as if the transsexual could be possessed vicariously by deciphering both her words and her naked image. The reader is promised an experience similar to a sexual “possession” of Bibi Andersen by means of revealing her “secret:” “rompemos la intimidad de su pequeño camerino, para abrir el velo de lo dudoso y lo desconocido del tema de la mano de ‘el-la’ Bibi Andersen” (we break the intimacy of her small changing room to push aside the veil of the doubtful and the unknown surrounding “him/her”).

Bibi complies by explaining her sex change in a light tone that goes hand in hand with the sexual innuendoes of the text and its photographs, managing to retell a story of discrimination as if it were a slightly comedic adventure, thus minimizing the political angle and constructing an amiable public persona. She relates how transvestites and transsexuals were considered outlaws during the 1970s due to the Ley de Peligrosidad Social: “Si eras hombre y vestías como mujer te encerraban.” (If you were a man and dressed like a woman they put you in jail.) By contrast, she calls her experience at the police station to get an identity card
“muy divertido” (real fun) because she had to explain that she needed the forms for men, but they were not for her husband. This tone, along with the images from the top to the bottom of the page, presents her as an unequivocally-feminine object of desire and eroticizes her image in order to reproduce for the reader the voyeuristic experience of her striptease audience, described by the journalist as follows: “un lento striptease que finalizará con un breve desnudo integral, lo que provoca la sorpresa del público, que ha estado imaginando a una mujer total” (a slow striptease that will end with a short exposure of her naked body, which provokes the audience’s surprise, as they have been imagining a total woman).

Any threat of social disruption is thus erased to leave space for her self-assigned role—“soy la mujer actriz que baila” (I am the actress woman who dances)—, but at the same time caters to the audience’s voyeuristic desires against her will, as her difference is what makes her marketable: “Pero me molesta que me hagan hacer el desnudo integral, porque es ponerme como un bicho de feria, como una anécdota curiosa de la naturaleza. Quiero que el público me valore por mi actuación, porque soy artista” (It bothers me to be obliged to get totally naked, because it is to show me as a freak, as a curious anecdote from nature. I want to be valued for my acting, because I am an artist). She foregrounds professional values in place of gender considerations, although she knows very well that it is the voyeuristic thrill of the final uncovering of her genitalia that attracts audiences. In summary, Bibi manages to market her sexual ambiguity as a non-threatening disruption of the previous sexual order by carefully avoiding any political claims and by converting her origins and her presence in an amiable narrative that works well in combination with her titillating and revealing photographs.

Beyond the “masquerade,” Bibi embodies the Lacanian fantasy of both having and being a phallus. Her perfect feminine body—and years later, her sexual reassignment, which made front-page news in the Spanish press—seems to be the impeccable product of the medical and technological advances embedded in the discourse of progress. Her defused and light narration of “becoming” a woman complies with her “fantasy” image of a man-made, perfect
woman and collaborates to create and elaborate her star discourse.

Bibi’s glamorized image as a femme fatale is one that unveils itself and discovers the constructiveness of gender. According to Mary Ann Doane, “the seductive power of the figure of the femme fatale in film noir exemplifies the disparity between seeming and being, the deception, instability, and unpredictability associated with the woman” (Doane, 46). The femme fatale’s capacity of seduction also points to the presence of power in gender representations. Doane theorizes about the femme fatale’s use of the veil as a tool that helps to “visualize (and hence stabilize) the instability, the precariousness of sexuality” (Doane, 46). That is precisely what Andersen demonstrates through her enactment of veiling and unveiling in her early career. Bibi constantly challenges and at the same time satisfies audiences’ expectations by her control over the veil, considering that the veil in her case would be her feminized appearance, in contrast with the masculine penis that her body “veils.”

Considering iconic figures of femmes fatales, we could compare Bibi’s body with Barthes’ reading of the face of Greta Garbo, which, in his words, “represented a kind of absolute state of the flesh” (Barthes, 56). Bibi’s body stands for the relativity of gender and its dependence on performance and appearance, and on her control over her flesh and its power to become a complete identity. Bibi’s feminine body becomes the “being-for-the-gaze-of-the-other” (Doane, 47), the audience’s property and the object of their voyeurism. Bibi as a star exists thanks to the audience’s becoming her Lacanian mirror, but her existence as a “glance-object” not only offers the image of a glamorous woman, but also suggests the possibility of “coming out” after the years of Francoist repression. If the political transition was increasingly compromised—and became a process that would never be a radical break, but a trade-off between the old political forms of Francoism and the progressive forces that supported the democratic transition—at least Bibi was there to demonstrate that the sexual transition had indeed taken place and could, at some level, disavow the possibility of the political transition having failed, thus carrying out the Spaniards’ wish fulfillment.
4.4 Unveiling the Phallus: Bibi in *Cambio de sexo*

The first example of Bibi’s capacity to embody difference and modernity in the form of sexual innuendos is her first film, and the one that made her a national celebrity, Vicente Aranda’s *Cambio de sexo* (1977). *Cambio de sexo* focuses on the young character José María, a boy from the provinces who undergoes a man-to-woman transformation. According to director Aranda, the narrative was based on a real story that appeared in Dutch newspapers (Kinder 1997, 130) about a boy who, after a similar process, died on the operating table during the sex-reassignment procedure. The director avoided this tragic ending in his rendition of the story that exploits the limits that the recent permissiveness in the Spanish public arena allowed after the disappearance of censorship. He also included titillating elements specifically for the Spanish audience, such as the use of an underage female actress nationally famous at the time for her work on national TV (Victoria Abril, who was just 16 years old) and the intervention in the film of Bibi Andersen playing herself. As Alejandro Yarza points out, Bibi is capable of diluting the barriers not only between gender and class, but also between reality and fiction (Yarza, 107) and generates her own discourse, which, in *Cambio de Sexo*, becomes particularly central.

In spite of the centrality of Bibi’s figure in the film, she appears late in the narrative, which is mainly focused on provincial José María and his transformation into a starlet in a club whose number includes stripteases and erotic dances. José María’s journey to become María José depicts not only a sex change, but also a cultural change to a more cosmopolitan view of gender relations and class uprooting that, nevertheless, manages to respect traditional gender roles. José María immigrates from the provinces to the city, from innocence to knowledge and from the control of a patriarchal family and a tyrannical father to a life in which she can make her own decisions in the anonymity of the city. But the end of the film somehow challenges this progressive discourse by making the new María José fall in love with the owner of the nightclub where she works and having her become a compliant
and obedient wife, following the traditional model of femininity. This happy ending that resonates with traditional heteronormativity seems to disavow all the transformative power of transgenderism and, as Marsha Kinder remarks, points towards “a wariness about Spain’s new libertarian identity” (Kinder, 133), a certain sense that this new libertarian identity would not last and was destined to revert into traditional heteronormativity.

Throughout José María’s process of transformation, Bibi occupies the role of mentor. In this first example of confusion between reality and fiction, Bibi Andersen plays herself, a transsexual who performs a striptease number at a nightclub and has an ongoing affair with the club’s owner. It is only when José María arrives in the city, free from his father’s control, that he can dress as a woman and start a feminine career as a hairdresser. While working as one, she gets to meet Bibi Andersen, who, with her advice and composed presence, becomes an example of the transformation she wishes to undergo. Bibi thus becomes a role model, an icon that represents the possibility of freedom and the possibility to choose gender assignment. This possibility is, of course, thwarted by the final result that conforms to the traditional representations of women in patriarchal society, either forced to earn their living as a sexual object (Bibi, as a stripteaser) or be limited to a heterosexual relationship (María José and her boyfriend). In fact, when the club’s owner leaves Bibi for María José and establishes a heterosexual, marriage-like relationship with her, it is clear that the film’s moral conclusion is still being informed by the traditional virgin/whore dichotomy: Bibi is still an incomplete woman (as the sight of her penis in her striptease number shows) whose impeccable façade makes her fit for the scene but not to “pass” for the real thing. Meanwhile, María José, by way of medical technology, has become a “real woman” (as the gender of the actress also confirms) and thus has “more” of a right to win the man and affirm the film’s final adhesion to heterosexuality. Marsha Kinder expresses a similar concern in her study of the film, when she asserts that the film’s “happy ending” works as a restoration of the heterosexual norm, once one tyrannical patriarch (María José’s father) is replaced by another (María José’s boss and boyfriend, and the one who has “trained” her
into womanhood) (Kinder, 142).

There are two other aspects of the film that also reflect sociological realities: the main protagonist’s movement from the provinces to the city, mirroring the immigration movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the representation of the city as a space that permits the freedom to reinterpret gender roles and sexuality. Indeed, the city is presented as an urban center undergoing a process of cultural transformation, as it had appeared in a previous film about transsexuality, *Mi querida señorita* (Jaime de Armiñán, 1972). The film’s narrative is focused on Adela, a spinster who discovers she is really a man, but can only rebuild her life as such by leaving the provinces and their means of social control—gossip—for a freer life in Madrid. Another interesting aspect of both *Cambio de sexo* and *Mi querida señorita* is the way that the actors’ gender informs their images of transsexuality. Both Victoria Abril (playing the role of José María) and Bibi Andersen contribute to the deconstruction of any threat to heteronormativity by way of their glamorous renditions of their transsexual roles. The same result is rendered by the star persona of José Luís López Vázquez, a widely-known Spanish actor who plays Adela in *Mi querida señorita*, a masculinized woman during the first half of the film and a realistic average looking guy—his usual screen persona—after sex-reassignment surgery. Thus, López Vázquez’s star discourse, as the quintessential average Spanish guy, helps to infuse normalcy into the film’s message of sexual transformation. In the same way, Abril’s and Andersen’s star personas, with their feminine good looks, offer an idealized version of transsexuality. It is not strange that transsexuality in the film has been read once again, this time by Kinder, “as a trope for cultural transformation” (Kinder, 128), because the stars’ transformations are depicted more in a symbolic way than in a realistic way. As such, their images of flawless femininity, in addition to the conformist happy ending, also contribute to these dissident characters’ realignment with a traditional image of femininity (dresses, high heels, manicured nails, styled hair, etc.). Nevertheless, it is Bibi’s presence and the titillation that her striptease number provokes that makes *Cambio de sexo* especially relevant in the context of the period. The film documents Bibi’s
striptease, including her final uncovering of her penis, and it is clear that the scene caters to the audience’s voyeuristic desires, even though Bibi claimed that it was shot and edited without her approval. The film’s critical reception was well-aware of its opportunistic appeal. The review of the film in the daily newspaper La Vanguardia underscores “lo escabroso del tema y la candente actualización que han adquirido en España los estudios sexológicos, le prestan, en efecto, un interés muy vivo” (the thorny issue and the contemporary relevance that sexology studies have acquired in Spain) and “la curiosidad morbosa que despierta la cinta” (the morbid curiosity that the film awakens). The review in another national daily newspaper, El País, stresses the commercial value of sex: “el cine comercial español ha descubierto el filón inagotable del sexo como motor de la taquilla” (Spanish commercial cinema has discovered the never-ending gold mine of sex as a box office attraction)—and how director Aranda “parece haber aprovechado este cómodo filón con esta última obra” (seems to have taken advantage of this comfortable gold mine with this last work). It is clear that Aranda, as he would do in other films (Amantes, Si te dicen que caí, Juana la loca), showcases sexuality for its commercial effect, focusing on kinkiness and shock value.

Obviously, the most provocative moment of the film, the one the reviews refer to, is Bibi Andersen’s striptease act, that is, in fact, the same that she had performed for two years in the Barcelona nightclub Starlette. Before her performance, Bibi is introduced in freak-show style as “a mystery of nature” and “the biological enigma of the century.” This introduction is followed by a sensual dance that ends with the final display of her penis. The characters’ reactions to her display offer a mise-en-abîme of the real audience’s titillation. While José María’s father asks, obviously threatened by the display of a penis on a performer who has aroused his desire, “Is it stuck on?”, Fanny, the prostitute that accompanies him, reveals her jealousy in answering that “las tetas no son de verdad, el resto sí” (the tits are stuck on, the rest is his own.) The characters’ reactions produced curious commentaries in two contemporary articles in which Bibi is discussed respectively from a masculine and a feminist point of view. Francisco Umbral, famous columnist and writer of the transition
years, dedicated an article to Bibi Andersen that was afterwards included in his book *Los cuerpos gloriosos*, a compilation of his work on representative protagonists of the transition years. In his poetic description of the transsexual artist, he alludes to issues of gender in animalistic terms, by describing Bibi as “mujer/unicornio, el unicornio que ahora se ha operado el cuerno, se ha castrado el cuerno y ya es hembra total” (woman/unicorn, the unicorn that now has had her horn removed and has become a total female) (Umbral, 177).

This allusion to castration seems to work for Umbral (and his male readers) as a way to maintain the illusion of his own heterosexism and to disavow any trace of homoerotic desire. Alluding to Bibi’s new “feminine” status after her sex-reassignment surgery, he affirms that now, all Spanish men “tienen el derecho a tener sexo con ella” (have the right to have sex with her) (Umbral, 177), in a move that describes the possibility that she offers men to succumb to their scopophilic desire at the same time that any possibility of sexual ambiguity is disavowed and erased. Thus, the public evolution of Bibi’s star persona from “mystery of nature” to “full womanhood” seems to have responded to a need to reassure masculine audiences of their heterosexual roles, once the gender “freak” has assumed the role of the objectivized, sexualized woman. Umbral goes on with a description that seems to illustrate the Lacanian view of the “phallic” woman: “Todas las mujeres me saben a poco desde que Bibí Andersen es mujer. A todas les falta ese toque de unicornio, esa ambigüedad resuelta y esa sensación de estarse tirando al águila bicéfala” (All women are insufficient since Bibi Andersen is a woman. All of them lack that unicorn’s touch, that determinate ambiguity and that feeling of having sex with the two-headed eagle)(Umbral, 177). Bibi not only is the Lacanian phallic woman who has lost her phallus, but also evokes for Umbral, in his allusion to the two-headed eagle (one of the emblems of Francoism) the link between Bibi’s image of transgression and the break with the dictatorial past. Bibi thus seems to guarantee, with her sex reassignment surgery, the superation of any feelings of inadequacy or insecurity on the part of Spanish masculinities in the wake of the dictatorship.

Bibi Andersen’s star persona and the implications for audiences are also discussed in a
text by feminist writer Monserrat Roig, originally published in the magazine *Penthouse* and included in her collection *Tiempo de mujer*. The article, entitled “Bella con pene” (Beauty with a penis), describes the same striptease number in *Cambio de sexo* and alludes, more specifically, to its reenactment on the night of the opening of the film. Her description of the reactions of the masculine audience also adds an interesting reflection on Bibi’s phenomenon.

Todos mis genios locales, casaditos, grandes padres de familia, fieles firmantes de cartas izquierdosas, se hallaban atrapados en la telaraña de Bibi, la hermosa promesa. Todos conocían el final del acto. Pero daba igual. Preferían pensar que no sabían nada. Estaban admirando a una bella hembra, síntesis de siglos de cultura “femenina”, estaban bebiendo años y años de arduos trabajos para estilizar el ejercicio de la provocación, de la insinuación.

(All of my local geniuses, married, great family fathers, faithful signers of progressive letters, were trapped in Bibi’s spider web, in her beautiful promise. All of them knew the end of the act. But they did not care. They preferred to think they did not know anything. They were admiring a beautiful female, synthesis of centuries of “feminine” culture, drinking years and years of hard labor to stylize the exercise of provocation, of insinuation.) (Roig, 124)

By way of the insightful analysis contained in this passage, as well as in her description of Bibi’s performance of femininity, Roig seems to predate queer theory at the same time that she marks the entrance into postmodernism. Her description of the masculine audience is careful in focusing on the smugness with which the new political freedoms have not included a revision of patriarchal privilege. Men are still husbands and patres familias, and women still constitute an object of desire, dancing while they undress on top of a stage. Roig describes the final stages of Bibi’s striptease:

Desafiante, mostró su trofeo: un pene rosalado, largo y hermoso como un badajo de campana mayor de catedral. Los intelectuales contemplaron en silencio la octava maravilla, el sexo completo. La perfección. La mujer, pues, no era mujer y, por lo tanto, no era sexo puro. La mujer era como ellos. La mujer era el falo. Ellos eran la mujer. ¡Excitante simbiosis!

(Defiant, she showed her trophy: a rosy, long and beautiful penis, like the clapper of a large
cathedral bell. The intellectuals contemplated in silence the eighth wonder of the world, the complete sex. Perfection. The woman, then, was not a woman, and therefore, wasn’t pure sex. The woman was like them. The woman was the phallus. They were the woman. Exciting symbiosis!) (Roig, 124)

Roig’s text makes clear that Bibi’s transgression owes its success to her enactment of a hyperfeminized, sexually-objectified performance. As long as her appearance conforms to the flawless image of a statuesque, glamorous femme fatale, her masculine audiences will dutifully mirror that image and conform to the idea of her penis as an extra perk, the unicorn’s touch that is kept under control by her performance and whose suggestions of homosexuality can be contained by her perfect performance of femininity.

4.5 Camp and Postmodernity, Bibi and La Movida

Bibi’s ability to perfectly mimic a performance of femininity also guaranteed her success in very diverse cultural arenas. Garlinger notes how one of the main uses of the rhetoric of transgenderism in Spain has been to mark the entrance of the country into postmodernity, which overlaps with post-Francoism because of its temporal simultaneity (Garlinger, 33). In that respect, he reads Bibi’s ambiguity as a fantasy of postmodernity (Garlinger, 37). In an interview in the most famous magazine of the Movida movement, La Luna de Madrid, Bibi is described as the most notorious example of the end of Francoist repression and the start of a new time: “Ella es la fiesta. El tiempo alegre de la violación del tabú” (She is the party. The happy time of the violation of taboos.)

The word “movida” originated from the marginalized drug culture in Madrid and the movida movement was heavily influenced by the British trends of punk and new wave, taking elements from its music but also from its fashion. Pop groups, designers, painters and photographers participated actively in a movement that favored aesthetics and shunned the political participation that had been commonplace in previous cultural movements of
the 1970s (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas 2000, 269). Given that the political transition allowed many of the old Francoist political players to remain in power, the movida represented a social catharsis that was focused on the younger generation, who had not been given much space or occasion to participate in political play. The movida represented a countercultural movement whose main motivation was to break radically from the Francoist past and the mainstream, dominant culture that was reinforced by the dictatorship’s censorship. Any mention of politics and Francoism was avoided. As Pedro Almodóvar, one of the movement’s most famous survivors, has repeated again and again in numerous interviews: “Franco no me interesa, no lo reconozco de ninguna manera” (I am not interested in Franco, I do not recognize him in any way) (Interview with David Lida, 82).

As Teresa Vilaró notes, there is an unmistakable air of repression in this voluntary era-fire. Indeed, the movida’s artists seemed to be intent on entering European postmodernity by way of creating an artistic movement totally invested in the superficial (Vilaró, 176). Their main investment was keeping up with international cultural movements like English punk and creating a viable Spanish version of postmodernity with an artful combination of elements that could be qualified as modern and artistic (punk, comics, photography) with camp and kitsch readings of other national components, such as Andalusian folklore or traditional gender stereotypes.

One of the most notorious figures, and one of the few survivors, of this artistic movement is Pedro Almodóvar. The filmmaker’s career, which started with a number of cheap and edgy short films, has spanned into a global affair. Thirty years after the Movida, Almodóvar’s films are distributed internationally, after receiving worldwide recognition in the form of awards from the American, French and English film academies. If his films have always presented a challenge to traditional gender roles and dominant heterosexuality, this tendency started with his portrayal of alternative femininities and masculinities in his early films. It was precisely in these films that Bibi Andersen constantly appeared. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the director insistently cast her in roles that showcased a performance of ironically-
exaggerated femininity. Using a widely-known transsexual actress in these roles had the
effect of deconstructing her performances of the feminine. If anyone can play a woman in
the Lacanian sense, Almodóvar seems to suggest, that only Bibi Andersen can do it for her
expertise and experience in constructing her own public and private persona constitutes the
very irony in the act of portraying traditional female roles. These roles include a palm-reader
gypsy with a baby in tow in *Matador* (1986), a jail dyke in *Tacones Lejanos* (1991), a femme
fatale in *Trailer para amantes de lo prohibido*, a lesbian mother in *La ley del deseo* (1987),
and a serial killer’s victim in *Kika* (1993).

In many of Almodóvar’s films, the performances that construct gender are exposed, and
gender stereotyping is satirized, something which he accomplishes through camp theatri-
cality (Yarza, 73, Allinson, 89). As Mark Allinson remarks, the director often parodies
gender through transvestite and transsexual characters who typify Judith Butler’s assertion
in *Gender Trouble* that all gender is “performatively constituted” (quoted in Allinson, 25).
However, critic Alejandro Yarza sees the transvestite as a metaphor for the “restructuring
of traditional binary gender opposition” (Yarza, 89) that characterizes all of Almodóvar’s
films. Even though transsexual and transvestite characters have been played in his films by
other actors and actresses (*Carmen Maura* in *La ley del deseo*, Antonia San Juan in *Todo
sobre mi madre*, Gael García Bernal in *La mala educación*, Miguel Bosé in *Tacones lejanos*),
Almodóvar has only cast Bibi Andersen in feminine roles, a move that can be read as a
wink to Spanish audiences, well-aware of the actress’ transsexuality, and a fact that further
emphasizes the constructedness of gender roles.

The transsexual body in Almodóvar’s films has also been read as a signifier for the
moment of cultural anxiety derived from the Spanish transition’s national identity crisis
(Acevedo-Muñoz 2007, 160). In Acevedo-Muñoz’s view, transsexuality embodies the claim
to a new, hybrid identity in the context of Almodóvar’s new model of the family, a model
resulting from the deconstruction of the traditional, sacrosanct family structure. I would ar-
gue that Bibi’s roles reconstruct the feminine, erasing its traditional passivity but reinforcing
it with investments of power borrowed from other, transnational, popular cultural products. That is precisely the main function of Bibi Andersen’s role in Trailer para amantes de lo prohibido (1985), a short film produced by the Spanish national television company (Radio television española). This was the result of an initiative from TV anchor Paloma Chamorro, who gave Almodóvar the freedom to shoot a short film to promote his feature-length film ¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto? in the context of La edad de oro (1983-1985), a variety show that showcased musicians and artistic acts related to the movida and which became an icon of the most groundbreaking trends of the moment.

In the context of Almodóvar’s internationally-successful filmography, Trailer para amantes de lo prohibido is a little-known 17-minute musical short that oozes camp sensibility through its use of music, mise-en-scène and costume design as well as through its dialogues. Its nameless characters enact a typical adultery story, in which the toreador-clad husband, who, lured by a femme fatale played by Bibi Andersen, abandons his dutiful wife and children. The story centers on the abandoned wife, who has to resort to robbery and prostitution in a campy, Spanish version of Hollywood women’s melodramas of the 1950s. The film is ripe with signs that point to the ways in which the definition of the Spanish nation is still in flux nine years after the end of the dictatorship. This short film exposes how gender performances are symbolic of competing ideas of nation, ideas which contrast the “old” with the “new” and are either reinforced or repressed through the perspective of camp. The story begins with an unnamed wife watching her husband pack his bags, a very camp packing indeed, for he includes a pair of chicken feet and a string of garlic in his suitcase. Her desolation is underscored by her lip-synching of Olga Guillot’s bolero La maleta (The suitcase) whose lyrics reinforce the dramatic quality of the scene. Her husband, dressed in toreador garb, is marked by both his clothes and his suitcase’s contents as a model of outdated Spanishness. His image, in all its kitsch glory, both discovers the generic workings of melodrama and points

\[1\] boleros are soulful songs of Cuban origin on the universal theme of love in all its variations: eternal love, unrequited love, love lost, and separation. Olga Guillot is a Cuban singer internationally known as the "Queen of Bolero."
to the idea of the traditional, outdated Spain that his trademark of masculinity represents. His camp heterosexuality alienates him from other male characters in Almodóvar films who also impersonate what the director considers an outdated take on Spanish masculinity, such as Antonio Banderas’ Ricky in Átame (1990) or the policeman Sancho in Carne Trémula (1998). The next scene centers on the husband’s statuesque lover, played by Bibi Andersen, who, standing next to her impressive American convertible, is waiting for him in the middle of a suburban landscape of abandoned lots and highways. While she waits, she chats nonchalantly with her lover’s children, to whom she introduces herself as Lily Put, an obvious pun on her being six feet tall. Her appearance—elegant and spotless and totally out of place in the dismal surroundings—and self-sufficient attitude offer an obvious parallelism with the femmes fatales associated with stars from the classical Hollywood era, such as Marlene Dietrich or Barbara Stanwick. Bibi Andersen’s femme fatale appears poised and sophisticated while the main protagonist, the housewife abandoned by her husband, looks disheveled in curlers and with an apron on and incapable of earning her own living once her husband leaves. Andersen, by contrast, plays the true phallic woman, who not only drives her imposing ride instead of the man (who sits in the passenger seat), but also carries a pistol in her handbag. Her presence reads as a image of femininity free from patriarchal limitations, but also confirms an ironic comment that points towards issues of postmodernity in the middle of the kitsch mise-en-scène of toreador suits, chicken feet and strings of garlic.

Lily Put’s worldliness and modernity is further stressed when she offers the children some money so that, as she affirms, they can pay the psychoanalysis they will need to recover from the trauma of their father’s abandonment. If the character’s name is an obvious pun on her height, it is also read by the children as similar to “puta” (whore), a detail that the children are quick to add and which marks their entrance into the symbolic order of the patriarchal ideologies. She reprimands them for their lack of worldliness: “Put, no puta, niño, que no tienes paladar inglés” (Put, not puta, kid; you are totally unable to pronounce English words). With this correction, Lily Put situates herself in a cosmopolitan context
that distances her from the kitschy, campy version of Spanishness that the traditional nuclear family represents. Alluding both to their words and to the desolate suburban landscape, Lily Put adds, “¡Cuánta miseria hay en este país!” (So much misery in this country!). Her comment is an obvious reference to the widespread national desire to erase the Francoist past and to identify with the postmodernity attributed to more developed European countries (from the Spanish point of view). Hence Bibi’s impersonation of new femininity is expressed through the glamour and cosmopolitanism of other cinematic femmes fatales. “Es que soy extranjera” (It’s because I’m a foreigner) is her answer, in perfect, unaccented Spanish, when the kids ask her about her height and her funny name. This statement reflects the Spanish feelings of inferiority already present in the face-offs with bikinied foreign tourists in Alfredo Landa’s sexy comedies. The distance that her two comments and her glamorous image mark in relation to her degraded surroundings and the abandoned wife’s shabby appearance are an exact equivalence of the feelings of Spaniards seen in comedies of the 1970s. Just emerged from the dictatorship, the idea of the Spanish nation reinforced by Francoism still informed and problematized the image that Spaniards had of themselves. Therefore, the images of Andalusian lore (the toreador suit, the garlic string) that were once part of the Francoist image of the nation were now given a second layer of meaning through camp and kitsch, which worked hard at keeping a distance from an image of the nation that was rapidly becoming outmoded and part of an unrepresentable past.

By contrast, Bibi Andersen impersonates a character that could be related to a more international stereotype, that of the femme fatale. When, after leaving with her lover, he interrogates her about the gun he has seen in her purse, she affirms she needs her gun to defend herself, as she is a “businesswoman.” To this humorous assertion of power and independence, the man tries to reinstate himself into the traditional, privileged masculine role by answering, “Ahora me tienes a mí” (Now you’ve got me). Conversely, her answer demolishes all the previous gender and social assumptions of patriarchy: “No te creas. Tú, para mí, sólo eres una perversion” (You’re wrong. For me, you are just a perversion.) This
assertion means a qualitative quantum leap from the patriarchal to the postmodern. And the shift is one provoked by women. For instance, the gun that Bibi had in her purse, and throws away, is found and used by the wronged housewife to earn a living as a mugger, and even to kill her ex-husband when he comes back to her after being abandoned by Lily Put. The use of the gun is not the only common trait of the two feminine characters. Both the abandoned wife and the lover undergo a transition. Far from personifying complementary whore/virgin models of femininity, both characters converge towards a new model of a woman who, free from patriarchal control, can make her own decisions. After her abandonment, the wife uses the gun to earn her living, which includes stealing a bag of groceries from a housewife. But her transformation goes even further. In the next scene, the formerly disheveled wife is totally transformed, dressed in golden lamé and dancing among prostitutes in the street while lip-synching Eartha Kitt’s song *Where is my man?* Soon after, she meets an American hunk, who speaks with an accent and wears a Stetson, and he helps her escape from the aforementioned robbed housewife. After a sketchy scene of seduction between the two, she explains her new job to him by lip-synching Olga Guillot’s traditional bolero *Soy lo prohibido* (I am forbidden). The lyrics, describing the secret affair of a woman whose existence is negated by her married lover, and the voice of Olga Guillot, connect three characters singing the same song: the housewife addressing her new lover, her daughter singing to the camera from the abandoned home and Lily Put singing to two young and chunky lovers at a bar in the presence of her old lover, as if, by way of camp, women could now voice, and at the same time disavow, the patriarchal stereotype of the bad woman. No longer interested in the married guy dressed as a toreador, Lily Put courts younger sailors, shifting from the traditional image of the Spanish “macho” to a gay stereotype of male attractiveness. Abandoned and threatened by Lily’s sexuality, the husband tries to go back to his wife but, finding her with another man, starts a fight. The traditional scenario of patriarchy, in which the wronged man kills the adulterous wife, is reversed here, and Almodóvar gives us his usual happy ending for wronged, feminine victims of the patriarchal heterosexual matrix.
It is the wife who, with Lily’s gun, kills him and, to her lover’s observation “Debes estar muy impresionada” (You must be very impressed), answers, “Pues la verdad, no, no me puedo quejar” (Well, I really can’t complain), a strange assertion whose meaning becomes clear when it is connected to her lip-synching a Spanish version of Edith Piaf’s Non, je ne regrette rien (No, I don’t regret anything). She ends her song in a triumphant “Ya pagué y por fin hoy empiezo a vivir” (I have already paid and finally today I can start to live). The scene, which is a typical example of Almodóvar’s use of popular music to reinforce his films’ themes, is charged with both feminist claims and a campy rereading of genre and gender stereotypes.

Bibi Andersen’s role in Trailer... is a key element in redefining the limits of femininity in the Almodovarian universe. The short film works hard at destroying the old stereotype of the passive, obedient woman in patriarchal culture and, by using narrative and genre, reverses this stereotype and appeals to other typical figures of Hollywood narratives, such as the vengeful woman, the femme fatale or the cowboy. Other elements of popular culture such as music (Olga Guillot’s boleros, Eartha Kitt’s pop music, Edith Piaf’s ballads) or gender stereotypes (toreros, sailors, femmes fatales, prostitutes, cowboys) also help to conform and, at the same time, deconstruct the traditional heterosexual matrix. Almodóvar thus sheds the traditional Spanish gender stereotypes and, with the help of a camp reading, a reworking of genres and the stunning image of Bibi Andersen, appeals to a vision of gender roles deeply informed by foreign models that correspond to a more globalized scene that incorporates elements of popular culture that come from such diverse origins as the French chanson, North American disco music or Hollywood women’s melodramas.

If Bibi Andersen’s roles in Almodóvar’s movies point towards the performativity of gender roles as much as to the changing roles of women in Spanish society, her presence in La noche más hermosa (Manuel Gutiérrez Aragon, 1984) juxtaposes them with a third component of the equation, and that is the way how heterosexual masculinities face the changing landscape of gender representation. As we saw before in Francisco Umbral’s article on Bibi, one
interesting aspect of her image is the way her sexual ambiguity challenges heterosexual masculinity and dismantles its performative aspects. The story told by *La noche más hermosa* reads as a war of the sexes moderated, and finally settled, by Bibi Andersen, again playing herself in another instance of her power to erase the limits between fiction and reality. The film has been described as a postmodern pastiche of literary classics. While the title alludes to the mystical writer of the Spanish Golden Age San Juan de la Cruz and his famous poem “Noche oscura” (Dark night), the movie in fact narrates the recording of a TV version of *Don Juan Tenorio*, a movie within a movie, a rare occurrence in Spanish cinema. The plot is constructed around a story of jealousy and infidelities that has been linked to the narrative developments in two of Miguel de Cervantes’ *Novelas ejemplares* (Exemplary Novels): *El curioso impertinente* and *El celoso extremeño* (The Impertinent Curious and The Jealous Old Man from Extremadura) (Kercher, 26). The film’s convoluted mise-en-abîme (a film about a TV film about a play) seems to work as a Chinese box, a reflection on the changing modes in Spanish fiction, in Spanish society and, in a parallel way, in gender models in the early 1980s. Nevertheless, its use of plot devices similar to the ones used by Cervantes in his novellas, as Donna Kercher (Kercher, 67) notes, also seems to point in the opposite direction, in the sense that the more things seem to change the more they remain the same.

The story, centered on the erstwhile monopolistic public Spanish television company, Televisión Española, brings together the personal and the national, as TVE is depicted as an allegory of a corrupt state, controlled by CEOs and producers, indifferent to audiences’ and workers’ demands, and where love affairs and adulteries stem from embezzlement and nepotism. Given the direct control that the government has had over the media conglomerate since its foundation, it is clear that the plot, ripe with infidelities and castings motivated by the producer’s whims, refers directly to national politics. It also offers a reflection on shady policies, manipulation and lack of transparency in the control of public expenses, which was also a general preoccupation in Spain during the first years of the democracy, reflected in what was at the time called the “desencanto” (disenchantment). This disconnect between
government and citizens has a direct correlative in the confrontation that the film’s main characters, TV producer Federico and TVE’s CEO Luis, have with the technicians, who are on strike for better work conditions. Their final success in the negotiations is celebrated with the CEO’s ironic words: “¡Televisión es una gran familia¡ ¡El país funciona¡” (Television is one big family! Our country works!), which, in its allusion to the “gran familia,” a metaphor widely used by Francoist propaganda to refer to the entire country, clearly points to the disconnect between government politics and the Spanish population.

Nation and gender are at the very core of the film’s narrative, as its intertextuality attests. The story focuses on the TV producer Federico, who faces a problematic TV production. A number of personal and professional conflicts arise while he is in the middle of a project that involves a TV version of José de Zorrilla’s Don Juan Tenorio, the most popular Spanish-language interpretation of the myth of Don Juan. Don Juan Tenorio has been invested with enormous symbolic power for more than two centuries, as he has been considered the stereotypical representation of the Spanish masculine heteronormative performance. But this figure does not arise from a Spanish imaginary. The widely-recognized Spanish lover is in fact a creation of French Romanticism (based on Molière’s Dom Juan or the Festin de Pierre), which constitutes a clear take on Spanish exoticism and its imperial past from the point of view of an “enlightened” and hegemonic French vision. According to critic Joseba Gabilondo, Zorrilla, the author of its Spanish version, is “the first romantic Spanish writer to articulate the modern trace of Spanish masculinity as a position that is both other to European Modernity, and, yet, historically unavoidable to any Spanish cultural project” (Gabilondo, 43). Gabilondo also praises “Zorrilla’s ability to bring together Spanish masculinity’s double position: as non modern other and as modern trauma” (Gabilondo, 43). Both concepts can be put at the base of the conflictive space formed by the intersection between masculinity and the Spanish nation. La noche más hermosa documents

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2 and also the title of an extraordinarily successful film (Fernando Palacios, 1962) which defends the francoist vision of the patriarchal traditional family
how the images of Spanish masculinity during the transition were dominated by their links with the traditional image of outdated machismo and by their traumatic association with the nation. Both Don Juan Tenorio and La noche más hermosa focus then on the same theme: a tale about (inadequate) performances of masculinity. If, by the end of Zorrilla’s version, Don Juan Tenorio has repented for his bragging and renounced the power of his position for his beloved Inés, The masculine characters in this film continue to keep their privileged positions at the cost of recognizing the superior capacity of women to determine how masculine power will be exerted.

If Don Juan interrogates masculinity, La noche más hermosa has at its center the question of gender roles but also a clear intention to showcase Bibi Andersen’s ambiguity and titillation. The opening scene begins with a traveling shot that follows the TV play’s director’s walk across the set. The camera stops and refocuses when he walks by a high figure completely covered in white. Forgetting the director, the camera’s voyeuristic eye stops and focuses now on the person totally covered in what appears as a white shroud. We see how she gets rid of the white robe, and then sheds camisole and petticoat, to show her almost-naked body in just a slip. Only when a meticulous panorama of Bibi Andersen’s body is shown, does the traveling start again to offer a view of the rest of the workers preparing the set. Clearly, the film is catering to the audience’s voyeuristic desire by offering the spectacle of Bibi’s impeccably feminine surface as a lure.

The next scene explains the intriguing casting of the statuesque Bibi as the naive Doña Inés, as we see her in her apartment making love—again, semi-naked—with the company’s director and producer of the show, Federico. It is significant to what extent this reading of the film is corroborated by the film’s masculine main character, Federico. The character of Federico is played by José Sacristán, in a performance that could be related to Landa’s clueless comedic characters. Federico arrives at a point of crisis when trying to combine his power job in the corporate world and his personal life. Sacristán, as Federico, represents the figure of a man whose life could not be more complicated than it already is. He faces various
problems on a number of fronts. At work, the unions threaten with a strike. At home, he worries about how his wife, an actress, played by the protagonist of Cambio de sexo, Victoria Abril, who left her job to raise her family, appears increasingly distracted. Subsequently, he starts to believe she is having an affair. His antiquated patriarchal point of view prevents him from seeing that her distraction is not due to infidelity, but motivated by her wish to return to the workforce. To make things worse, he faces more problems at work. He has cast his lover, Bibi Andersen, in the role of the innocent Doña Inés. Indeed Federico, privately, defies the heteronormative matrix by having a transsexual lover. No actor will risk doing so in public by playing Don Juan opposite her. With a long list of the names of some of the most popular actors at the time (Imanol Arias and Eusebio Poncela), the director of the play briefs Federico: “Imanol dice que no tiene fechas. Eusebio se lo está pensando. No se atreven. Si el papel principal femenino lo hace una señora que es un señor, bueno un señor que es una señora, lo que sea, no lo sé, tienen miedo a hacer el ridículo, es lógico” (Imanol says he is booked. Eusebio is thinking about it. They don’t dare. If the main feminine role is played by a lady who is a gentleman, well, a gentleman who is a lady, whatever, I don’t know, they are afraid of being ridiculed, it is logical.) A Don Juan that would be probably shorter and less impressive than Bibi would indefectibly project a faulty masculinity. Bibi, as a transsexual and an actress, knows perfectly well the codes of gender performance. She has learned them and used them at multiple levels, be it in her own life or in her job on screen or on stage. Nevertheless, the film is ripe with suggestions of Bibi’s incapacity to “impersonate” a perfect woman. When she embraces Federico, he complains that she is crushing him (“¡Que me espachurras!”), and when she is rehearsing her intimate love scene with the director, he complains about Bibi’s difficulty to voice Inés’ amorous feeling: “Me gustaría que lo hicieras con voz más suave, como susurrando al oído” (I would like it if you did it with a softer voice, as if whispering in an ear )—. But then rectifies his own words: “En un tono alto pero al mismo tiempo respetando el tono íntimo” (In a loud tone, but at the same time respecting the intimate tone). Bibi gets tired of his contradictions: “¿En qué
quedamos, alto o bajo?” (So, what do you want, high or low?). But the director cannot convey the idea of femininity that Bibi, in his opinion, does not fulfill: “Lo ideal para mí sería un semitono. En fin, tú misma” (The ideal for me would be a semitone. Anyway, it is up to you.) Clearly, both men, the director and the producer, are the ones who have a problem with Bibi. The narrative seems to suggest that even though men are happy to have a private affair with Bibi, they will never recognize publicly their weakness for being seduced by her masquerade of femininity for fear of being questioned in their adherence to heterosexuality.

Federico is not the only man in love with the ambiguous Bibi. Luis, the CEO of the Spanish National Radio and Television and Federico’s direct boss also falls under her spell. Luis’ speech is a transcription of the male anxieties of heterosexual performance: “Ella me hizo temblar cuando la ví. Pero no sé porque. Porque ella es dulce. Estuvo amable conmigo. Es tan femenina, delicada. Sonríe tan bien que debería tranquilizarme. Pero cuanto más me sonríe, más me intranquilizo. Yo siempre fui un hombre sin sospecha de desviaciones sexuales. Pero la que me gusta ahora es... la que realmente me gusta... la que me gusta de verdad, de verdad, de verdad es...” (She made me tremble when I saw her. But I don’t know why. Because she is so sweet. She was kind to me. She is so feminine, delicate. She smiles so well that it should calm me down. But the more she smiles, the more I worry. I was always a man free of suspicious sexual deviations. But whom I like now is... the one I really like... the one I really, really, really like is....) Luis is not able to finish his own sentence, as if the name of the transsexual were unpronounceable. “Es Bibi,” affirms Elena (Federico’s wife), as if only a woman could name things by their name and as if heterosexual men needed to operate under a state of self-delusion, unable to accept any hint of homosexuality.

The film showcases not only men’s and women’s reactions to Bibi, but also, as pointed out before, her inadequacy to fit into the traditional model of passive femininity represented by Doña Inés. Zorrilla’s traditional depiction of an aggressive masculinity in Don Juan and passive, virginal femininity in Doña Inés are exposed as outdated models given the
complicated game that the characters play, according to which, Luis and Federico’s control over lovers and actors is only ostensible, as their decisions are—in actuality—controlled and manipulated by Bibi and Elena. Both actresses, Victoria Abril and Bibi Andersen, and their similar positions as cunning, intelligent women can be read as an evolution from their submission to traditional feminine role-playing in Aranda’s film to a much more empowered position in La noche más hermosa. Both come up at the end of the story as the ones in control and capable of manipulating the masculine characters who appear plagued by insecurities and in a permanent state of self-delusion. In a final conversation between both women, they reveal how they both had planned to plant the suspicion of Elena’s infidelity on Federico. Their inclusion in the final casting was also their own idea, cunningly achieved by manipulating Luis and Federico. Ironically, their desire for Bibi and their need to have Bibi and Elena under their control became the weakness that both women manipulated for their own benefit. However, Elena and Bibi’s power is one exerted on the shadow. The ones who sustain the real positions of power remain the men.

It is interesting to note that even though the film centers on a play dominated by the powerful figure of Don Juan, there is no actual man capable to play the part. In fact, one of the most important subplots deals with the impossibility of finding one. Federico’s main anxiety, added to the many insecurities that place him in the exact opposite of Don Juan’s performance of power and bragging sexuality, is to find an actor capable of playing a masculinity that can measure itself against Bibi’s powerful femininity and who won’t be threatened by her transsexuality. Likewise, when Bibi is substituted by Elena as Doña Inés, the only reason for Federico to cast different actors is to make them enact love scenes with Elena, so that he can determine if any of them is her lover. This double coincidence seems to suggest that the dominant brand of heterosexual masculinity that Don Juan represents has disappeared, more so when the final decision of its casting is manipulated by Elena and Bibi. The end of the film reveals how it was Bibi who planted the idea of Elena’s infidelity and provoked Federico’s jealousy, and how that manipulation succeeded, as it fulfilled Elena’s
wish to return to the screen in the role of Inés. The final casting decision is made by Elena and Bibi. The result is that the latter agrees to Elena’s suggestion to play Don Juan, and thus the traditional heterosexual pairing of an active man and passive woman is substituted by a couple formed by an active woman—Elena, working hard to recover her professional life—and a man-to-woman transsexual—Bibi, playing the sexually-powerful Don Juan. With this final flourish, what Gabilondo calls the “excessive, masculinistic myth of Don Juan” (Gabilondo, 42) is stripped of his Spanish exoticized “otherness” and becomes an empty signifier ready to be played by anyone capable to put out a good gender performance. And who could be a better candidate than, as Elena affirms, the “sensual” Bibi? With this act, the evolution from the traditional brand of Spanish masculinity into gender seen as a performance is now complete. Oscar and Federico, in a comic conclusion, try to come to terms with the displacement of heterosexual masculinity in this unorthodox casting: “Pues verás, en realidad ya lo dijo Freud, Don Juan es un personaje con un carácter femenino” “Eso lo dijo Marañón” “¿Marañón? Pues si lo dijo un español, mejor todavía” (Well, in fact Freud already said it: Don Juan is a feminine character. Marañón said it. Marañón? Well, if it was a Spaniard who said it, much better”). As long as a Spanish man thinks he is right, his delusion will keep him happily unaware of the winds of change that have swept away the old masculine model. The film’s narrative seems to suggest that once men’s access to power is questioned, heterosexual men are totally erased from any decisive course of action. That affirmation is somehow denied by an uncontroversial fact. The ones who still have the real power and occupy powerful jobs, fooled or not, are still men. As such, the film is basically describing the works of a society that, in spite of a disavowal of its gender stereotypes, still remains patriarchal at its core.
4.6 Bibi Andersen, Transexuality and Mainstreaming.

Bibi Andersen’s trademark hyper-femininity and attractiveness have ultimately contributed to reinforce heterosexual bipolarism and sexism rather than encourage the possibility of a more open position than the socially-sanctioned heteronormativity. Her efforts to be part of mainstream culture, first by her submission to the sexually-objectified feminine images of the destape years and henceforth as a camp icon, femme fatale, TV anchor and personality and socialite, have not only made her immensely popular, but also assuaged masculine anxieties. If heterosexual masculinities could feel threatened by this phallic woman, Bibi has always been read nonetheless by attending to her impeccable surface, which was always carefully constructed to conform to the ideal image of highly-sexualized femininity.

In spite of its apparent transgressive nature, transsexualism is sometimes presented as a phenomenon that reinforces patriarchal structures. Janice Raymond, in *The Transsexual Empire*, affirms that transsexualism is “a very mythic phenomenon, unfolding a worldview of patriarchy that explains its origins, beliefs and practices” (qtd. in Garland, 99). Indeed, Bibi’s star discourse illuminates the constructedness of gender roles and the tendency to perpetuate traditional gender models in 1970s and 1980s Spain, as a counter-reaction to the uncertainties of social and political change. Her ambiguity allows both a claim to modernity and tolerance, as well as an extension (to a certain extent) of the traditional images of femininity that helps sustain the heterosexual matrix, defined by Patricia Soley-Bertrán as “a corpus of categories of knowledge and practices defined collectively, practices that have a circular and self referential structure that validate them” (author’s translation) ³

The idea that transsexuality ultimately recovers patriarchal ideas of heterosexism is always already present in other studies of Spanish popular culture, such as Marsha Kinder’s article about Antonio Giménez Rico’s film *Vestida de azul* (Dressed in blue), a documentary that portrays the lives of six transvestites. In her words, “most of these ‘queens’ use

³“es un corpus de categorías de conocimiento y prácticas definidas colectivamente; que esas prácticas tienen una estructura circular y autorreferencial que se autovalida” (Soley-Bertrán, 20).
cross-dressing as an important step in a long, complex process of sexual inversion that ultimately leads back to heterosexuality” (Kinder, 75). Kinder remarks how, in their meetings, these women chat about their dreams of “normalcy, love and consumerism” (Kinder, 76) and class is a constant preoccupation with them (Kinder, 76). Kinder’s observations about these transsexuals’ process of mainstreaming coincide with Bibi Andersen’s (or shall we say, Bibiana Fernández’s?) long process of normalization. In a certain way, the parallelism that critics drew between her transformation and Spain’s political transition still rings true. Bibi’s transsexuality became the new cultural stereotype of a liberated post-Francoist Spain and the country’s wish to join what were perceived as Western European standards of progress and postmodernity. But those standards turned out to be much more conservative than they appeared, and just as invested in traditional socioeconomic factors as the Spanish ones had been. Bibi was needed as an icon of postmodernity and tolerance, but in fact served as one that reinforced the traditional heterosexual matrix.
Figure 4.1: Cambio de sexo.
Figure 4.2: Bibi Andersen’s striptease in *Cambio de sexo*. 
Figure 4.3: Bibi sex reassignment surgery makes national news.
Figure 4.4: Bibi Andersen’s pop records.
Figure 4.5: *La noche más hermosa* screenshots.

(a) Bibi Andersen as Doña Inés

(b) Bibi and her lover Luis
(a) Bibi seduces the Spanish television CEO.

(b) Bibi’s performance of femininity does not convince the director.

Figure 4.6: *La noche más hermosa* screenshots.
Figure 4.7: Bibi as a movida icon.
Figure 4.8: Bibi advertises skin care products.
Conclusions

The May 2010 Spanish number of Vanity Fair contains an article entitled Hazte la sueca⁴ the expression, which would roughly translate as “Don’t pay any attention”, contains a word play with Sueca, the 1970s signifier of the sexualized foreign girl, and therefore alludes to Spanish women’s sexual liberation (the literal translation would be “Behave as a Swedish girl”). The 12 pages’ long article revises the phenomenon of “destape”. The main premise of the article is to emphasize how the female body’s disrobing created a new space of freedom after many years of sexual repression and Catholic morality. But the piece’s revisionist intentions do not give any different interpretation from previous readings of one of the most fascinating phenomena in the story of Spain’s sexuality. Berlanga’s reading of women’s objectification as sexual freedom does not go beyond previous interpretations of the destape. Berlanga’s reading of destape as liberation from moral restraint seems to consider the sexual objectification of women a natural consequence of the process of modernization. He does not question why sexualization was the only political space that women could occupy during the period. Women’s contribution to the social and political transformation of the transition period appears then to have been limited to the display of their naked bodies. In the same article, María Luisa San José, one of the most famous actresses at the time, declares: “Se notaba el espíritu de apertura y la necesidad de una reconversión política y social, y a ello nos entregamos en cuerpo y alma, o alma y cuerpo” (We could feel the spirit of openness and the need of a social and political transformation, and we worked for it body and soul, or soul and

⁴:
body) (Berlanga, 193). Excluded from political action the only remarkable contribution of women to the Transición period consisted on displaying their bodies in a “sexual liberation” that, enjoyable as it was for its male audiences, seems to have been considered by some of the protagonists their only chance to participate in a political crusade.

It is precisely a revision of this politized interpretations of the persistence of sexist attitudes, and its role in the interaction between social change and popular culture that stand at the root of this work. Gender and sexuality became the catalysts and signifiers for a whole society’s wish to enter into modernity. I was interested in analyzing the different elements that were part of the Spanish “gender” revolution that took place during the late 1970s, and how that revolution was presented in popular media. If women were sexually objectified on screens and centerfolds, men were still impersonating roles which were charged with political implications and high symbolic value, much as the fascist heroes of the politized films of the postwar period, as Saenz de Heredia’s Raza (1942). The focus on masculinity responds to its historical importance in its representation of the nation. I wanted to analyze the evolution of masculine figures in genre films during the transition period, and how these men conformed with or digressed from the brand of masculinity that had been implemented and supported by the dictatorship’s propaganda machinery of patriotism. The points of contact and of digression between state-sanctioned figures such as José de Churruca in Raza and the men who populated the Spanish screens at the end of the dictatorship and its aftermath suggested that the traditional definition of the nation was being questioned. While women provided metaphoric images of sexual freedom, men became the repositories of the changing concept of Spanishness.

Homi Bhabha has emphasized the importance of masculinity as a defining part of culture, as well as the many implications of its definition. Masculinity determines hegemony, but also the way that social, historical and psychological spaces are mapped. In his words,

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5 There was not a single woman among the "Fathers of the Constitution" or the group of politicians in charge of writing Spain’s new democratic constitution.
“masculinity is the taking up of an enunciative position, the making up of a psychic complex, the assumption of a social gender, the supplementation of a historic sexuality, the apparatus of a cultural difference.” (Bhabha, 58). Along these same lines, my intention for this study has been to map the period that includes the late and post Francoism (1964-1984) with the aid of some very well-known artists and their public personas situating them in the context of genre analysis. Folkloric films, comedies, melodramas or kitsch, post-modern films have also revealed themselves to be central when we attempt to determine how the public perception of gender roles changed in a comparatively short period of time.

By studying the many instances, and the diversity of the masculine figures that can be read as symbols of the Spanish nation in these filmic narratives, I have been able to establish a critical perspective that utilizes gender, politics and class as markers of distinct versions of masculinity, as well as the role they played in the Spanish “transition” from a dictatorship to democracy. In a country that was labeled by its own government as “different,” the insights that the study of the interaction between the ideas of the nation and gender have generated have been really surprising.

The process of the reconstitution of national identity that took place during the late Francoism and transition periods seems to have been driven by Spain’s desire to escape from the exoticized “difference” showcased in the slogan “Spain is different” in order to replicate more liberal and democratic northern European cultural trends. Within this context, masculinities in popular film illustrate the different ways in which Spanish identities resisted against or complied with different hegemonic models in a globalized context. This fascinating path guided me through the study of twenty years of popular films (1963-1984) and four Spanish film stars, Manolo Escobar, Alfredo Landa, José Sacristán and Bibi Andersen, whose public personas became symbols of the relationship between gender and the Spanish nation. I have strived to analyze the particular images of masculinity (or transexuality, in the case of Bibi) that they embodied as cultural phenomena.

My chapters follow a rough chronological order, even though some of the films do overlap
each other, particularly around the year 1975, when the death of Franco and the end of censorship meant an explosion of all types of cultural productions. I begin my study with Manolo Escobar’s rags to riches folkloric films, which in most cases include his conversion from laborer or factory worker to a successful entertainer. This narrative trajectory fits well in the context of the late Francoism, which was a time when the regime supported massive tourism as the most viable economic solution to revitalize the weakened economy that Franco’s government had failed to repair following the civil war. Manolo’s heteronormative masculinity was showcased in his folkloric films as the epitome of Spanishness. He is always ready to integrate tradition and modernity, able to survive the threatening changes brought by tourism and emigration and ready to convert modern Spanish or foreign beauties into traditional housewives. A conversion that was justified by these female characters’ experience of the wonders of Escobar’s particular brand of Spanish masculinity, a curiously folkloric, “developmental” version of the traditional Don Juan. Manolo Escobar’s image of successful masculinity can be tied to the idea of the nation as a commercial product or “brand”. Indeed, by defining himself using the exoticized erotic myth of Don Juan, Escobar, and by extension, Spain, become commodities ready to be pitched for the sake of tourism.

Both Manolo Escobar and Alfredo Landa’s male images are related to the stereotypes of the dark-skinned, sexualized Mediterranean natives present in English, French and American travel narratives that were popularized by the rise of mass tourism (Littlewood 208.) But if Escobar still portrayed a triumphant image of conservative, traditional maleness that was humorously identified at the time as the stereotype of the “macho ibérico”, Landa and his eponymous trademark, “Landismo” subverted the stereotype by offering its carnivalesque version. Short, bow-legged, his physical characteristics complementing well his comic persona, cast innumerable times in the 1970’s sexy comedies as a farcical, capitalist version of the figure of Don Juan, one always ready for—and often left out of—sexy adventures and consumerist binges. Through slapstick and parody, these comedies narrate stories in which Landa appears as a beach Don Juan ready to take advantage of the sexualized bikini-clad
tourists and their foreign currency. Even though by the end of each film the male characters played by Landa restore traditional social order, the films’ conservative endings can not erase the depiction of material and sexual pleasures that their narratives evoked. In them, Spanish masculinities found their validation by way of Spanish men’s capacity to become successful consumers of both sex and marketable goods. Landa’s sexy comedies mark the impossibility to maintain iconic national male models, such as Don Juan, while ushering in a new economic and social order, one where such outlandish characters could only be mocked as a faulty, inefficient “macho ibérico”. Landa’s characters’ evolution reflects the scarce possibilities for survival of the traditional image of the Spanish heterosexual man. His characters in sexy or paleto comedies mock mercilessly the stereotype of the “macho ibérico.” Nevertheless, both the happy endings of the comedies, according to which men recover their traditional, hegemonic position, and the genre conventions, which allow for the representation of harsh critiques of traditional masculinity, disavow the transgression that Landa’s faulty characters seems to suggest.

The disappearance of censorship in 1975 marked a point of inflection that opened the way for the representation of deviation beyond ideological and political control, as well as the moment in which parody could no longer contain the rhythm of social change. After almost forty years of strict vigilance, its disappearance allowed for the representation of new sexual and political options in a diversity of cinematic genres, which included historical dramas, melodramas and political films.

The third chapter describes how melodramas and political films contain a new model of politicized, more nuanced masculinity. These new Spanish men appeared in different subgeneric forms of melodramas (“tercera vía,” political films, Eloy de la Iglesia’s dramas of sex and social class). Melodrama has always been a suitable genre to depict the quest for a voice on the part of rebelling individuals in a conservative, unsympathetic social space. Melodramas thus allow the exploration of social and sexual problems by remaking masculine identity after the death of the “patriarch” and by commenting on how this new identity
would often include the assumption of a masculine responsibility in the political transition to
democracy (Estrada, 1). The actor José Sacristán was the face for a number of characters—
politicians, journalists, lawyers, or even terrorists—who belonged to the middle class and
who expressed their angst and their need to regain their hegemonic position through the
assumption of political responsibilities. Sacristán’s protagonists were politically engaged
men, men who channeled their efforts towards achieving an active role in the new post-
Francoist political and social order, by getting involved in the political struggle for the
nascent democracy. Although their stance often included a more flexible definition of gender
roles, any suggestion of sexual or generic deviance from the patriarchal model is always linked
to political activism, as if this kind of engagement was necessary to justify any divergence
from previous heterosexual norms.

The final chapter investigates how the gender roles derived from the traditional heterosex-
ual norm were put into question. To that effect, its focus is the man-to-woman transsexual
artist Bibi Andersen. My analysis of a transsexual figure exposes how her public display
of gender performativity affected the reevaluation of gender values in the post-dictatorship
context. Bibi Andersen’s ambiguity has been repeatedly considered a symbol of the social
evolution of the country. It is my contention that she in fact fulfilled a national need: the
need to reconstruct the idea of the Spanish nation in a postmodern space, redefined by kitsch
and camp, by modernity and the assumption of more progressive mores imported from for-
eign cultural movements. But in fact, Andersen’s gender performance ended up reinforcing
traditional patriarchal interpretations of gender stereotyping. By positioning the social over
the biological, Bibi Andersen’s gender performance (and her roles in which she mostly imper-
sonates herself) has often validated and reaffirmed the traditional categories of the masculine
and the feminine, a classification that seemed in danger of disappearing after the death of
the “patriarch” and the advent of feminism. Andersen presents an evolution in her star per-
sona that spans thirty years, and positions her in a variety of traditionally feminine images.
She has had many public personas throughout her career: first as an objectified, sexualized
starlet during the “destape” period, a fixed staple of kitsch femininity in Pedro Almodóvar movies (as gypsy fortune teller, femme fatale, lesbian mother or adulterous woman) during the 1980s and a regular on Spanish national TV talk shows in the 1990s and 2000. All of these different performances do in fact reaffirm Spanish patriarchal, sexist gender structures. Even though her performance of gender seems to suggest freedom from biology, it is in fact a freedom limited to the reenactment of traditional stereotypes. Bibi Andersen’s case seems to convey the idea that Spaniards are freer, more urban and cosmopolitan, but also that the dominant images of men and women—at least in mainstream, popular film—remain very much attached to patriarchal stereotypes of dominant masculinity and dominated femininity.

Hanke suggests that hegemonic masculinity is “a particular version or model of masculinity that defines what it means to be a man,” thus securing “the dominance of some men (and the subordination of women) within the sex/gender system” (190). The present work thus has aimed to include what Hanke also suggests as basic elements of its analysis: “how oppositional gender ideologies (such as liberal feminist or gay/lesbian politics) [became] absorbed, contained and rearticulated” (190). My fourth chapter works in that same sense. Even though it focuses on a transsexual artist, Bibi Andersen, her apparent digression from the gender norm does in fact corroborate Hanke’s position. In my study, I try to demonstrate how the apparent liberation from traditional masculine stereotypes that took place after the end of the dictatorship was in fact a repositioning, never a disappearance, of hegemonic patriarchal gender models. My conclusion is that the apparent gender revolution that took place during the late and post Francoist periods did mean a partial redefinition of traditional gender roles. Hegemonic masculinity, thirty years later, has remained well in place in Spanish society. A man is still a man, and still occupies a hegemonic position. Hence, the traditional patriarchal dichotomy of powerful men and powerless women, far from being erased by post dictatorship’s social and political change, seems to be still very much in place thirty years after the end of Franco’s regime.

Popular entertainment in Spain is a wonderfully rich field where to investigate social
gender hierarchies and their evolution, but we must not forget that although my field of study, popular comedies, españoladas, subgeneric films and melodramas were extraordinarily successful box office hits, they were not the only filmic products of the period. Political unrest at the end of the dictatorship was at the roots of what Casimiro Torreiro calls “cine de oposición” (353), a filmography of liberal ideas, highly critical with the dictatorship, that had its origins on a marginal production of underground films that started in the 1960s with directors such as Pere Portabella, Jordi Cadena and Ricardo Franco. This movement was closely related with other European New Cinemas of the 1960s, and was greatly indebted to Elías Querejeta, who produced a large part of these metaphorical films. Among its most famous directors are Carlos Saura, Víctor Erice and Jaime Chavarrí. Saura directed during this period some of his most memorable explorations of the effects of Francoism in the middle class, with films such as El jardín de las delicias (1970), Ana y los lobos (1972), La prima Angélica (1973) and Cría Cuervos (1976). Víctor Erice’s El espíritu de la colmena (1973) and Jaime Chávarri’s El desencanto (1976) also chronicled the dissolution of the social and political structures sustained by the dictatorship. All of them have in common their metaphorical structure, as they included narratives which could be read in symbolic terms as a critique of the social constrains and cultural paralysis that the long dictatorship had meant for the whole nation.

At the same time, it is interesting to wonder about the female presence in Spanish cinema at the period. Although during my study I have focused on masculinities, but the study of the evolution of feminine images on screen is an area that has remained unexplored in my dissertation and that deserves its own study. A study of such dimensions should not only include the way women have been represented in popular film, their general sexualization and objectification during the “destape period”, but also the scarce presence of female characters outside the virgin/whore dichotomy. Another aspect worth studying would be the presence of women behind the camera, more specifically, the work of the only three women filmmakers of the period: Cecilia Bartolomé, Josefina Molina and Pilar Miró.
Similarly, another area of study that remains unexplored is the representation of peripheral masculinities from the Basque country and Catalonia in the transition period. The masculinities presented in filmic narratives occurring in the Basque country are often very politicized (as in Imanol Urbié’s 1981 film La fuga de Segovia.) Director Imanol Urbié’s films have often focused on the limited space for sexual transgression for Basque men in La muerte de Mikel (1984) and Días Contados (1994) (Davis, 121).

In the case of Catalan films, they could be said to present a more liberal view of sexuality and of gender models with characters that defy heterosexual limits, particularly in the films of Ventura Pons (Ocaña, Intermittent Portrait (1978) and El Vicari d’Olot (1981) or denounce the hypocrisy of traditional stereotypes, as in Francesc Bellmunt’s films L’orgia (1978), or Salut i Força al Canut (1979). In any case, these are areas that merit further investigation.

As for hegemonic masculinities, it can be argued that “Machos ibéricos” never really left the Spanish screen. Even if treated satirically, they have still occupied an important space in the national imagination, in films that satirized the reconstitution of national stereotypes as Bigas Luna’s trilogy, formed by Jamón, jamón (1992), Huevos de Oro (1993) and La teta i la lluna (1994). Comedies seem to still constitute the most favored (and still safer than any other genre) territory to mock the traditional brand of the Spanish “macho ibérico” as in the extraordinarily successful spoof Torrente el brazo tonto de la ley (Santiago Segura, 1998), or in the later black comedy Crimen Ferpecto (Alex de la Iglesia, 2004), where the attractive successful male protagonist’s masculinity is still defined by consumerism and sexual success but easily humiliated and emasculated by the only woman he is not interested in romancing, one that is intelligent and ugly. The moral of the story is simple: to defeat a Spanish “macho” man, a woman needs to be an ugly feminist.

If the figure of the Iberian “macho” can only find a space in comedy, it is unavoidable to ask if any positive figures of Spanish masculinities can be found in contemporary Spanish film. An interesting related question should inquire about the existence of heroic men. Curiously enough, there is a conspicuous absence of these figures in popular cinema, although
there are some historical films of the 1980s and 1990s that register a tendency to recover the memory of the men and women who were repressed by Franco’s regime, and can be argued to contain masculine heroic figures. A number of biographical or semibiographical films portray figures of the dictatorship’s outsiders under a heroic light, such as *El Lute, camina o revienta* (Vicente Aranda, 1987), which is the biography of the petty thief Eleuterio Sánchez, whose repression by Franco’s regime served the double purpose of distracting the public opinion from other political and economic matters. Eleuterio Sánchez’s narrative of personal superation (he became a lawyer and wrote his memoirs during this long stay in the regime’s prisons) can still be read as a metaphor for the evolution of the Spanish nation from dictatorship to democracy. Another interesting example of non hegemonic hero would be the main character in *Las cosas del querer* (Jaime Chávarri, 1989), a hardly disguised biography of Miguel de Molina, a celebrated homosexual folkloric singer during the Republic. Molina certainly constitutes an atypical hero, a successful copla and flamenco singer who had to exile himself during Francoism due to the beatings and threats that he received from the regime’s police. Both of these films seem to suggest that the only possibility for post-Francoist heroism lies in the opposition to the dictatorship, as José Sacristán’s political melodramas of the transition suggested. Those are only two examples of the contemporary presence of masculinity on Spanish film, among many others that would never have existed if, during the Transición years, Escobar, Landa, Sacristán or Andersen had not opened the possibility of representation for new images of masculinity, nuanced by issues of class, politics or sexuality.
Epilogue

The reader might wonder what happened with Manolo Escobar, Alfredo Landa, José Sacristán and Bibiana Fernández, the four main “stars” in this dissertation after 1984. Even if they have been studied as cultural products of the transition period, their relevance in the Spanish popular media is still important. After twenty six years, three of them remain professionally active—with the exception of Alfredo Landa, who retired last year. Manolo Escobar relation with film ended in 1982 with one last folkloric musical, Todo es posible en Granada (Rafael Romero Marchent.) The españaolada musical genre has offered scarce examples after Escobar’s successes. Only two films have been nationally renowned, and in both cases, they showcased younger, female folkloric stars such as Rocío Jurado (La Lola se va a los puertos, Josefina Molina, 1993) and Isabel Pantoja (El día que nací yo, Pedro Olea, 1991.) Nevertheless, Manolo Escobar’s career as a singer has remained very much alive after his extraordinarily successful cinematic parenthesis. Even though he is not only actively performing, he still appears in TV shows, and his unofficial webpage attests to his continued popularity.

It was also in 2007 that Alfredo Landa publicly announced his retirement from the screen, after 45 years of professional career. On the occasion of his retirement, the Spanish Film Academy awarded him an honorary prize for his contribution to Spanish Cinema. After his Landismo years, he worked both in film comedies such as La vaquilla(Luis García Berlanga, 1985), La marrana (José Luis Cuerda, 1992), El oro de Moscú(Jesús Bonilla, 2003) and dramas such as Los santos inocentesMario Camus, 1984) Sinatra (Francesc Betriu, 1988) or
Apart from his numerous film parts, he has also been a regular in Spanish Television. He played Sancho Panza in the national TV adaptation of El Quijote directed by Manuel Gutierrez Aragón in 1991 and also had leading roles in other TV shows such as Tristeza de Amor (1986), En plena forma (1997) and Los Serrano (2003). Curiously enough, the characters he played in this last stretch of his career tend to portray men who appear as unable to adapt to the modernizations of contemporary Spain, and somehow remain fixed in the past. A good example is Teo, the childish bachelor in Tata mía (José Luís Borau, 1986) and Don Pepe Gil Cebollada, the nostalgic Franco’s supporter gas station owner in the TV show Lleno, por favor (1996).

As for José Sacristán, his progressive, politized characters are not limited to his Spanish filmography. He also became very well known in Argentinian cinema for similar roles in the films made during the period after Colonel Videla’s dictatorship. He has starred in Adolfo Arístarain’s Un lugar en el mundo (1992) and Roma (2004) and later on, in Carlos Galettini’s (1993) Convivencia. It is especially remarkable how in Un lugar en el mundo, Sacristán plays the role of a Spaniard who, living in Argentina in the wake of Videla’s dictatorship, assumes a paternalistic, almost post-colonial position. He plays the role of Hans, a Spanish engineer of German origin (which situates him in an European hegemonic position doubly removed from Argentina) whose liberal views enlighten the Argentinian couple formed by Mario and Nelda (played by Federico Luppi and Cecilia Roth) on the ways to construct a post-dictatorship democratic space.

Finally, the clearest example of social, sexual and gender “mainstreaming” in Spanish popular media would be Bibi Andersen, or as she has been known since she officially changed her name and her gender, Bibiana Fernández. She is no longer a regular in Almodóvar’s filmography. In his last two films, Volver (2006) and Los abrazos rotos (2009), melodramas focused on troubled women, Almodóvar seems to have abandoned the liminal portrayals of gender of his early career. Not surprisingly, most of the plot of his last attempt to deal with non mainstream sexualities, La mala educación (2004), was conveniently situated in
the past. Controversy for Bibi Andersen also seems to lie in the past. Although she has only had occasional roles in films in the last decade, she has become a daily staple on national television. In 2004 she began working on the show Channel número 4. Since last year, she has become a daily, and very opinionated, participant on one of the most well known talk shows of the national private channel Tele Cinco: *El programa de Ana Rosa*. If there is an example of how gender deviance can be absorbed by popular media and become mainstream, undoubtedly, that is Bibiana Fernández.
Works Cited


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