

SPANISH TRANSITIONS: REPRESENTATION OF TRANSGENDER CHARACTERS IN SPANISH FILM

BY

ARNAU ROIG-MORA

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Angharad Valdivia, Chair, Director of Research
Professor Gerard Coll-Planas, Universitat de Vic
Professor Paula Treichler
Professor Richard Rodriguez, University of California, Riverside

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the different representations of transgender characters in Spanish cinema since their appearance in the 1970s up until today. The history of Spain in the last forty years, with its radical political changes, yields extremely fertile transgender case studies, especially in Spanish films, which become sites of struggle and negotiation of meaning, definition and understanding of gender, sex and sexuality. The cases in which transgender characters have been protagonists of Spanish movies –and thus explored and portrayed in more depth- give us first-hand information on the different ways of thinking about gender, and the different ways of thinking and picturing a topic that was previously hidden from the public arena. Furthermore, the systems of codes and analogies that a culture uses and reproduces in its media are a perfect site to further investigate the sets of beliefs that a society holds true or privileges over others as defining traits.

In order to do such investigation, this dissertation develops three archetypes of representation that classify and make sense of all the movies and their representations, highlighting the recurring tropes, narrative tools or privileged ideological discourses embedded in them. By organizing the titles in archetypes, but also paying attention to their temporality and social changes around transgender issues, this dissertation investigates the codification and representation of transgenderism in Spanish film as a site for discursive formation of the transgender identity, but also as a space of social struggle for the meaning of sex, gender and sexuality.

The two first archetypes (the Criminal and the Patient) correspond to representations with a heavy reliance on the legal or medical situation of the character respectively, whereas the third one (the Empowered) lets us see how representation can transcend medical and legal definitions and give autonomy and a voice to the character that the previous two somehow negate. Furthermore, the three of them overlap in some of the movies, negating the possibility of fixed and monolithic categories, and highlighting the limits of these archetypes, which are used as a tool to understand the different discourses rather than classify and label each of the characters.

This dissertation, then, explores the different representations or archetypes that are used to portray transgender people through the case studies found in contemporary Spanish cinema, with the goal of unpacking the continuities and ruptures of sex and gender politics in the last 40 years of political change in Spain.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In 1977, Maria del Carmen G.D. was legally recognized as a woman by a Spanish court in Malaga after coming back from London, where she underwent gender confirmation surgery (Gradillas, 2003). It was the first case of its kind, and a precedent that established the beginning of a slow change towards legal recognition of transsexuality in the country, leading 30 years later to the Spanish Gender Identity Law in 2007, for example. Maria del Carmen's recognition came during an important decade in Spain, a country transitioning from a fascist dictatorship that lasted almost forty years (1939-1975) into a new democracy. With the arrival of a new regime and politics, some previously outlawed and outcast sex and gender expressions and identities found a new place in Spanish society and, subsequently, in Spanish media as well. The case of transgender characters in Spanish film is one example of the emergence of these minorities onto the public sphere, and the central point of this dissertation.

By looking at the representation and presence of certain identities on screen, we can assess their visibility and the ways in which such identities are portrayed, defining their politics of representation and the subjacent ideologies at play. In this regard, the history of Spain in the last forty years yields extremely fertile transgender case studies, especially in Spanish films, which become sites of struggle and negotiation of meaning, definition and understanding of gender, sex and sexuality. The cases in which transgender characters have been protagonists of Spanish movies –and thus explored and portrayed in more depth- give us first-hand information

on the different ways of thinking about gender, and the different ways of thinking and picturing a topic that was previously hidden from the public arena.

The apparition of such characters cannot be disassociated from Spain's situation with censorship: there was no freedom of press until 1977, after Franco's death, and despite the control over the media waning gradually since the repressive early years of the dictatorship, the regime maintained a firm grip to control public opinion. Spanish censorship lasted until the final days of fascism, and the regime treated cinema and other media as influential 'state apparatuses' (Althusser, 1971). As such, media become powerful tools for regulation and conforming of the self and function like subtle tools to enforce normalcy and separate 'abnormal' minorities.

While this 'normality' becomes the hegemonic view (and was celebrated by the regime), Spanish censorship worked hard to remove all mention of abnormal sexual minorities. Minorities are "defined by their deviation from a norm that is white, male, Christian and heterosexual [...] [they] share a common fate of relative invisibility and demeaning stereotypes" (Gross, 2001, p.12). Constructing minorities as 'abnormal' -by not including them in the 'normal' public space media representation- media participate in a process of othering and denial of such minorities. Minoritized communities, then, find no voice to their identities and lives in public culture in general, and mainstream media in particular.

Due to the importance of the media for the ideology of a community, the (prevalent) types of representations of a certain group –or absence thereof– help defining and conveying the value that the group is believed to have in society –'value' here understood as the ability to function as a proper citizen, valuable for his/her contribution to the production systems of

society. Not surprisingly, the most represented individuals in the media tend to be white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle age, middle-class men. These types of characters are prevalent in their importance for the plot and in their agency (in fiction), and in the positive depiction that they have embedded as proper citizens (in non-fiction). Since mass media will mostly try to cater to the tastes of large audiences, media producers create a representation that speaks to the understanding and perception of the 'majority.' How this majority is constructed and reinforced, and what ideas of hegemony and privilege are embedded within, force us to think about communications in depth, from a scholarly perspective, in order to discern the different articulations at play. Erasures of representation thus endorse a silencing of non-normative voices in the symbolic world of media and, in the cases when minorities get represented, this will constitute a disciplining message of how to be (or how not to be) a proper citizen with right to a presence in the public sphere.

Nevertheless, the ideological work of media goes far beyond a visible/invisible dichotomy, and many subtleties and underlying discourses are at play every time. The fact that a transgender person is put onscreen does not mean such depiction is empowering, and casting them as deviant, criminals or ill can do more harm than invisibility itself –for some of those concepts might remain ideologically attached to transsexuality. Stuart Hall (1974) analyzed the construction of deviance and the role of media in perpetuating and enforcing it through the emergence of new political movements and their classification between “[being] legitimized publicly within the ‘political’ category, or de-legitimized by being assigned to the ‘deviant’ category” (Hall, 1993, p.66). Notwithstanding, Hall also noted that “[u]nder certain circumstances, legitimate political minorities are subjected to severe ‘status degradation’

ceremonies, and are lumped with the more marginal groups. They are then subject to quite different forms of public opprobrium, stigmatization, and exclusion. They have been symbolically *de-legitimized*" (p.66).

Under the media control of Spanish fascism, not only were all mentions of other political views like communism and socialism obliterated (or in some cases presented as the evil conspiracy endangering the country), but also all sorts of topics like divorce, gender discrimination or resistance to authority were banned from the screen. Foreign films had to undergo a severe process of censorship until they were found suitable for Spanish audiences – even when it meant changing the script, the ending of the movie, or cutting entire scenes. We never saw Janet Leigh in the shower scene of *Psycho*; *Some Like it Hot* never made it to the screens for inducing homosexuality, and even *Breakfast at Tiffany's* was considered "pornographic" (Gil, 2009). All in all, Spanish audiences were thus 'protected' from pernicious ideas that could go against the regime, which was firmly based in Catholicism and labeled 'dangerous' any expression of non-heterosexual, reproductive love or sex.

Included amongst forbidden topics such as divorce, sex out of wedlock and homosexuality, the dissonance between sex and gender was an off-limits subject as well. By controlling what was said in the media, and using media outlets to reinforce propagandistic messages, the regime was able to have a direct voice on public opinion. Although there are some examples of waning censorship in the late years of dictatorship, it is mainly during –and right after– the Spanish transition to democracy (1975-1982) that the first openly transgender characters appear on the big screen.

Despite its great importance in the time of emergence of such characters, censorship was not the only force that shaped their representation on screen. Ideologies are never a simple discourse crafted by a few and forced onto the masses –not even by a group of censors in a fascist regime– but rather multi-layered discourses that depend on social and common beliefs crafted by many of society’s institutions. In the case of transgender people –and their representation– both legal and medical institutions have historically had a vast impact on their definition: the former, as it has dictated what is permitted or not by law (such as sex reassignment surgery) and what the law recognizes (such as a change of one’s biological sex or what gender one can have/be); the latter has worked to define scientifically and categorize different types of gender non-conformity (as shown for example in psychiatric manuals), approach transgender people as patients, pathologizing certain identities but at the same time making them recognizable by the law¹. Both fields –the law and medicine– have shaped the definition of transgenderism and all its branches, and thus the possible ways of representing them on screen.

Finally, activism and the work of LGBT communities have also had an impact on the way society perceives this phenomenon, both making visible and redefining transgenderism and transsexuality, giving voice to the people affected by it and reclaiming autonomy in their treatments, access to labor and health, better and more comprehensive laws and fighting against discrimination. These three pillars (the law, medicine/psychiatry and activism) shape the divisions of the different archetypes found in transgender representation in film, and are the cornerstones of this dissertation’s analysis.

¹ The standard process of legally changing one’s sex category in Spain has long required a psychiatric evaluation, a period of

For the analysis, I first explore the political, legal and medical contexts where the movies were produced and released in order to understand the articulation of the different discourses around transgenderism, and then analyze an archive of movies that feature a transgender protagonist in order to locate such discourses and find their prevalence, continuities and ruptures. Such a project is deemed important not only for the light it can shed over social constructs of sex, gender and sexuality in Spain, but also because it is the only project of its kind that compiles and makes visible this type of movies and characters, and is devoted to them in particular –and not tangentially as part of a bigger LGBT project.

In order to frame the research theoretically, I have used the work of Michel Foucault, cultural studies of media and transgender studies. Foucault helps understand the relationship between the law, medicine, identity and social control. Cultural studies of media, especially those coming from feminism, gay and lesbian studies and semiotics, offer the tools to understand and locate ideological discourses behind these movies, and make visible the connections of media and politics. The two are developed in conjunction with the field of transgender studies, which helps understand how these diverse (but intersectional) theories work in supporting and defining transgender studies – and thus, this project.

Statement of the Problem

This dissertation examines the different representations of transgender characters in Spanish cinema since their appearance in the 1970s up until today. Particularly in the case of transgender people, occupying a space in the media has proven difficult, and their representation is, when not invisible, highly stereotyped. New generations of transgender people still suffer from a scarcity of representation in the media, and when representation does happen, it is often a comic side character and/or as a reiteration of the prostitute/drug-addict trope. One of the reasons behind this oversimplification of transgender characters in mainstream media is linked to the fact that any medium needs to solidify meaning into codes that can be recognizable, readable and decodable, thus losing depth and nuance in its depictions. The systems of codes and analogies that a culture uses and reproduces in its media are a perfect site to further investigate the sets of beliefs that a society holds true or privileges over others as defining traits.

In order to do such investigation, this dissertation develops three archetypes of representation that classify and make sense of all the movies and their representations, highlighting the recurring tropes, narrative tools or privileged ideological discourses embedded in them. By organizing the titles in archetypes, but also paying attention to their temporality and social changes around transgender issues, this dissertation investigates the codification and representation of transgenderism in Spanish film as a site for discursive formation of the transgender identity, but also as a space of social struggle for the meaning of sex, gender and sexuality.

The two first archetypes (the Criminal and the Patient) correspond to representations with a heavy reliance on the legal or medical situation of the character respectively, whereas the third one (the Empowered) lets us see how representation can transcend medical and legal definitions and give autonomy and a voice to the character that the previous two somehow negate. Furthermore, the three of them overlap in some of the movies, negating the possibility of fixed and monolithic categories, and highlighting the limits of these archetypes, which are used as a tool to understand the different discourses rather than classify and label each of the characters.

Research Questions

Through the creation of the archetypes and the classification of the movies, this dissertation is concerned with answering the following questions:

- **Is there a chronological correspondence among the archetypes?** Do all the movies of one archetype occur in a certain period of time? And does that period correspond to any change in the legal, medical or social paradigms of the moment?
- **Are the movies participating of hegemonic discourses or opening up audiences to new ones?** Do the medical/legal tropes get repeated over and over, or do they present ruptures in their iterations? Are there discourses and characters presented outside the medical/legal paradigms? Is there one of the archetypes that dominates and is more prevalent than the others? Do films repeat the present discourses or do they add something unique by themselves?
- **What's the cultural work that these Spanish films are doing regarding the understanding, acceptance and interpellation of transgender people as well as new ways of understanding sex, gender and sexuality?** Are the characters portrayed under a sympathetic light? Are the characters worthy, easy to empathize with, understandable, etc.? Are they stereotypical or do they cross boundaries?

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions and uses are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the dissertation, especially because they have heterogeneous meanings in different contexts and languages (Valentine, 2007; Misse & Coll-Planas, 2010). The terms are sometimes applied anachronistically but they are used in that way to convey other meanings not possible at the time: for example, 'transgender' is used in movies previous to the inception of the term in the 1990s in order to highlight several gender non-conforming identities that go beyond 'transsexual'. These identities existed, but there was not an umbrella term to gather them together at the time. In order to clarify the usages of those terms, I have defined them here below:

- *Transgender (person)*: the use of this term refers to people that identify as another gender than that matching their biological sex. It is used as an umbrella term to include any of such discordances between identity and biology, within or outside the gender binary, with or without sex reassignment surgery and/or medical diagnosis, permanent or temporary. 'Transgenderism' is the noun form relating to the phenomenon of gender discordances described above.
- *Transsexual (person)*: Included within the previous term, the word transsexual refers to a person whose identity does not match their biological sex and intends to change it and be recognized as the other gender, often using medical and legal procedures to attain such recognition. I use transsexual "woman" to indicate a person born male but identifying as female, and "man" for the opposite situation, always respecting the person's identification (not their biology). 'Transsexuality' is the noun form relating to this phenomenon.

- *Drag queen*: A person who dresses up and performs using an exaggerated femininity in order to entertain an audience temporarily. 'Drag king' would be the term for exaggerated masculinity performers. Their performances do not imply identification with the other gender outside the stage.
- *Transvestite*: Clinical term for a person who likes to dress as the other gender, privately or publicly, often temporarily. In medicine it is related to sexual arousal and for this reason it has a pathologizing connotation.
- *Cross-dresser*: A person who likes to dress as the other gender.

Contextual Background

Fascist Censorship

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) saw an uprising of the military legitimizing the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. After the war, General Francisco Franco established a fascist dictatorship in Spain that would last until his death in 1975, a regime in which national cultural production was limited by institutionalized fascist ideology. Aware of the influence of media, Franco created a censorship institution –Junta Superior de Censura– in 1937 through which he enforced the *Ley de Prensa/Press Law* (Spain, 1938) from 1938 to 1966 that required all publications to be reviewed and approved by officials at the Secretary of Information and Tourism.

Already during the war, the fascist bloc had started to take control over radio and press, but cinema was disregarded for its frivolity (Cabrerizo, 2007 p.122). However, in the last years of the war, the Department of Propaganda created the National Department of Cinematography (1938) dedicated to the production of audiovisual material, control of foreign production on the war, and control of national distribution of the movies (Cabrerizo, p.131). Indeed, Franco understood the power of media in influencing ideology and, drawing on Mussolini and Hitler’s approach, created the longest lasting censorship institution in Western Europe (Higginbotham, 1988 p.X).

The State controlled many media outlets such as *Radio Nacional de España* and had official newspapers like *El Alcazar* and *Diario Arriba*. As for *Radiotelevision Española* (Spanish public radio and TV), Spain had only one state-owned TV channel inspired by the 3rd Reich since 1956, and a second one from 1966 (Palacio, 2012). Franco used his media and information

control to weed out revolutionary ideas and foment a project of exaltation of Spanish folklore; an ideological return to a pre-war country, and exalted nationalism exemplified by the motto “*España, una, grande y libre*” (*Spain: united, great and free*). State-controlled cinema newsreels called “*Noticiarios y Documentales*” or “*NO-DO*” (*News and Documentaries*) from 1943-1981 ‘explained’ to Spaniards what was going on in the world from the regime’s point of view. These informative pieces embedded all the characteristics of fascist propaganda and were periodically broadcasted on public television (the only two channels that existed) and shown before every film at movie theaters.

Outlaws under the Fascist Regime

Right before the Spanish Civil War, and in a conscious effort by the Spanish Republic to separate citizen regulation from religious influence, the *Ley de Vagos y Maleantes*² (Spain, 1933) was passed in 1933. In that law, the Republic tried to regulate ‘dangerousness’ in society, targeting minor offenses and misbehaviors such as vagrancy, homelessness, begging, gaming, alcohol abuse, etc. Then the Civil War exploded (1936-1939) and after many years of tough repression by General Francisco Franco’s government against republicans, the fascist dictator decided to add, in 1954, homosexuality as an offense in the same category as ‘thieves and pimps’.

Transgender people in Spain, completely deprived of the Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) option at that time, were conflated with homosexuals and prosecuted under that same law. The framework to think of them as separate identities did not exist at the time. Queerness became a label that anyone could use as a weapon to target other people for political or

² Literally translated as the *Law for Slackers and Scoundrels* or, more formally, the *Vagrancy Act*.

personal reasons. Franco's dictatorship lasted 36 years and, unable to keep the nation under the strong iron fist that is characteristic of the first period of repression, while the rest of the world –and especially the European neighbors– were undergoing civil rights movements and political change, Franco loosened his grip on the population and tried to 'clean' Spain's international image and reputation in order to welcome European tourists. According to this change in politics within the dictatorship, the law's name was changed to *Ley de Rehabilitacion Social /Social Rehabilitation Law* (Spain, 1970) stating that the former law was relying on anachronistic concepts –which not surprisingly were not those relating to sexual deviance but formerly illegal gaming and alcohol consumption.

Despite homosexuality not disappearing from the law, there is a very interesting twist in the wording of that law: “those performing homosexual acts” replace “homosexuals”. This shift is paradoxically made, as stated in the introduction of the law, to avoid ambiguity in detecting the offenders. It looks as if, by having actively chased the ‘homosexual’, Franco's officers realized how difficult it was to pin down the embodiment of queerness, to effectively locate ‘the homosexual subject’ and decided to criminalize the act rather than the identity. The embedding of Catholic morals onto concepts like ‘sin’ and ‘sinner’, requiring an act or an action to deserve punishment, are visibly related in this shift, especially if we look at the strong bonds that Franco had with the Catholic church, without which he would have had a hard time keeping the citizens under control.

There is also a change in the way different offenders were punished in this 1970's law. Homosexuals were not the only group to be treated differently and confined to “special institutions”. Special treatment was given to other groups as well, such as prostitutes,

“perverted minors” and the mentally ill. In short, queerness was still conflated with minor theft and vagrancy in this law, but it was actually separated in terms of punishment, focusing more on their rehabilitation than in their threat. Through this overview over the early laws on homosexuality, we find a basic legal understanding of the homosexual as a criminal and sinner, to which subsequent changes in law had to react.

The Birth of Transsexuality

Outside of Spain, the issue of transsexuality (and the possibility of SRS) started having a huge media presence through the case of Christine Jorgensen, the first American transsexual woman who had SRS in Denmark, in the 1950s. Scandinavian countries were, from the beginning, at the forefront of such procedures, and Jorgensen got permission to undergo surgery in Denmark during her trip to Europe.³ Salient in the media, Jorgensen was covered in the US press, and was the first media example of what transsexuality looked like. In fact, the Jorgensen phenomenon gave relevance and public appeal to all the research and scientific knowledge on the topic.

The mediatization of the Jorgensen case introduced transsexuality into the homes of many US citizens, and gave visibility to an issue that was very unknown and silenced throughout the world. Indeed, in a time when gender confirmation surgery was not even possible in the US, through the mediatized broadcasting of the phenomenon, the United States became aware of the possibility (as well as the dangers) that such procedures entail, both to the subjects undergoing it and to society, that needs to re-think the classification of such a person. The

³ *Paradiset er ikke til salg* (*Paradise is not for Sale*, Teit Ritzau, 1985), is the Danish documentary on the topic of transsexuality, and has interesting interviews with Christine Jorgensen.

Christine Jorgensen case was mostly reported in North American and Scandinavian media, and was received differently in other contexts (Stryker, 2013). However, it did not appear in Spanish media during the dictatorship, and the country did not see a proliferation of such representations until the late 1970s and 1980s.

Around a decade later than the Jorgensen media presence, specialized texts on the matter were becoming popular amongst scientists and doctors. In an effort to legitimize transsexuality and transsexual people, endocrinologist Harry Benjamin provoked a vast change in the way the issue is understood with the authoring of *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966). In the same way that Magnus Hirschfeld's *The Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress* (1910) defined cross-dressing, was the basis for its inclusion as a paraphilia in psychiatry, and separated it from other gender non-conforming people, Benjamin's work was pivotal for creating a diagnosis –and scientific cataloging– of transsexuality. He defined the 'true transsexual' through three axes: hatred of genitalia, early onset of gender identity and heterosexual desire, which were included years later in the Diagnostic Statistic Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), and have shaped the understanding of transsexuality in contemporary psychiatry. Moreover, the laws regarding legal recognition of gender confirmation are also based on his research, and the foundations of Transgender Studies⁴ emerge through these seminal texts as well.

Benjamin explains his motivation behind his thorough description and differentiation of transsexuality and intersexuality as an effort to legitimize both transsexual and intersex patients and provide tools for medical practitioners to better understand the issue and 'protect'

⁴ Both Hirschfeld and Benjamin's texts are the opening excerpts in Susan Stryker's *Transgender Studies Reader* (Stryker & Whittle, 2006) since, despite the numerous critiques that come in subsequent years, both texts started the hegemonic medical paradigm for contemporary transsexuality.

such patients. For example, talking about the approach that medical institutions have on the topic, he writes:

To the detriment if not to the desperation of the respective patients, the medical profession would most likely still be ignorant of the subject and still be ignoring its manifestations. Even at present, any attempts to treat these patients with some permissiveness in the direction of their wishes - that is to say, 'change of sex' - is often met with raised medical eyebrows, and sometimes even with arrogant rejection and/or condemnation. And so, without Christine Jorgensen and the unsought publicity of her 'conversion', this book could hardly have been conceived. (1966, p.4)

This preface, which locates some of the precedents of his book in scientific studies made in Denmark by physicians, is both a justification of the project –through the needs of both medical practitioners and patients for more concrete tools to identify transsexuality and intersexuality– and a critique to the current situation, in which 'change of sex' is difficult and met with suspicion. However, Benjamin also highlights two other points in his preface that are fundamental to this project: the importance of Christine Jorgensen's case (and its media coverage) pushing further the debate on transsexuality, both in the institutional and the social spheres; and the importance of having a scientific categorization and definition of an issue to encourage its acceptance and normalization. More than in a transsexual 'identity', Benjamin is interested in defining the transsexual patient so it cannot be discriminated against in the medical institution.

Benjamin was actually giving name to a phenomenon –gender non-conformity– that had already been present for a long time in our society. It is not to say, however, that the 'naming' has only a negative connotation: the naming of transsexuality also created a space for recognition and exculpation. What was up until then considered a deviant and criminal act, conflated with homosexuality, was granted through its very naming by the medical institution a pathologic status, together with the 'sympathy' towards the ill person –that who cannot help

and has not searched to contract the illness, the narrative of 'it could have happened to you'. Benjamin's ideas created, by putting boundaries and defining symptoms, a closed definition around which one could create an identity, earning transsexual people coherence and homogeneity to fight as a community.

Spanish Transition: Democracy and Medicine

"The regulatory dimension of identity-based rights emerges to the extent that rights are never deployed 'freely', but always within a discursive, hence normative context, precisely the context in which 'woman' (and any other identity category) is iterated and reiterated." (Halley 2006, p.422-23)

Homosexuality was de-criminalized in 1979 during the Spanish Transition to democracy, through an amendment to the *Ley de Rehabilitacion Social* (Spain, 1970) that finally removed the term from the list of minor offenses. This change came within the context of newly recovered democratic values and sense of social justice, but the 1970s also were a decade of Civil Rights movements in the Western world, and that the APA removed homosexuality from their manual in 1973. Indeed, it is difficult to ignore that the most influential of medical institutions for mental health in the world, and the manual that is widely used by psychiatrists, both recognized 'the homosexual' as a legitimate full citizen, no longer an ill person.

The process, however, was not that easy to fulfill. In 1973 "Homosexuality" was removed from the DSM-II (American Psychiatry Association, 1968) classification of mental disorders and replaced by the category "Sexual Orientation Disturbance", which started the shift towards the final version of the DSM-III (American Psychiatry Association, 1980). The effects of that change resonated in a public arena undergoing major changes on the rights of

minorities. Public awareness, and activists pushing to be heard throughout the APA's decision, resulted in the 1973 DSM controversy becoming highly publicized, and needing a vote to ratify the decision in 1974 (Cabaj, 2009). Despite the success in removing "Homosexuality", a new category ("Ego-dystonic Homosexuality") was created for the edition of the DSM-III in 1980.

"Ego-Dystonic Homosexuality" included: (1) a persistent lack of heterosexual arousal, which the patient experienced as interfering with initiation or maintenance of wanted heterosexual relationships, and (2) persistent distress from a sustained pattern of unwanted homosexual arousal. By changing to this new terminology, the APA focused on distress and interference in the life of the subject, rather than homosexuality itself, while invisibilizing both the structural and internalized homophobia that was the reason behind most of these distresses and interferences. Some researchers in the field of psychology and psychiatry expressed several concerns about the issue already in the 1980s.

For example, Hetrick and Martin (1984) noted that when the effects of homophobia are parsed out, few differences remained between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Journals of the time published contestations of the term "Ego-dystonic homosexuality", such as Michael W. Ross (1988) whose case study of "Ego-dystonic Heterosexuality" argued that hetero-centered conceptions of sexuality were embedded in the diagnosis. Others, meanwhile, were not so happy about the removal of homosexuality from the manual, as thoroughly described by several authors (Cabaj 2009; Rubinstein 1995). As Robert Cabaj states, "Ego-dystonic homosexuality was admittedly a political compromise made to satisfy the forces that were unhappy with the removal of homosexuality" (2009, p.88). Although "Ego-dystonic Homosexuality" was finally removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental

Disorders (DSM) in 1980, it is revealing to look at the process and the controversies around it, since it provides a better understanding of the current pathologization of transsexuality. Furthermore, we could argue that the appearance of “Transsexualism” in the DSM was also “a political compromise made to satisfy the forces that were unhappy with the removal of homosexuality” (Cabaj, 2009, p.88).

The removal of homosexuality brought the inclusion of diagnosis for transgender people. For them, the fight was only starting. In 1980 as well, the APA included in the DSM-III (APA, 1980) the terms “Transsexualism” and “Gender Identity Disorder”, generating a medical framework over which the transsexual identity was being legitimized as an illness. As Eskridge (2002) notes, identity-based movements navigate through four stages: 1. politics of protection, 2. politics of recognition, 3. politics of remediation and 4. politics of preservation. While homosexuality was obtaining recognition, despite the preservation backlash from conservative parts of Western society, transsexuality –and not other transgender identities- began a process of recognition through considering the transsexual person as mentally ill, thus removing the blame of ‘a chosen lifestyle’ and making it ‘unavoidable’.

The work of the ‘fathers’ of transsexuality, Magnus Hirschfield and Harry Benjamin, especially the latter and his book *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966), informed the decision of the DSM and helped sublimate transsexuality as an identity. Unsurprisingly only three years after the appearance in the DSM, the Spanish law reflected this phenomenon and “transsexual” appeared in the Spanish Penal Code for the first time in 1983: mirroring the words of Foucault in his *History of Sexuality* (1976), the transsexual “was now a species”. Once the road for a medical regulation of the transgender body was paved, pathologization –as it did for gays and

lesbians– afforded transgender people a basic improvement on conditions that had been long denied while at the same time putting them in a vulnerable position of ‘ill’ people, carrying the stigma of the disorder and forced to obey the ‘medical law’. However, at that time, pathologization was seen as a great step forward (Perez Fernandez-Figares, 2010)

Thus the Spanish Transition becomes the temporal site in which the transsexual identity was born both in the legal and medical contexts. Transsexual people were able to access for the first time SRS, paying the price of the stigma attached to illness. It was the beginning of a long road towards equality that is paralleled, although later in time, with the gay and lesbian liberation movement. The transsexual person became an ill subject, and thus, needed to be regulated through medical institutions rather than the law –or rather the law became informed by science, instead of Catholic morals. This shift from the total prohibition in Franco’s has remained until recently, with a gap of 25 years between these two moments.

Other changes in activism, law and medicine happen during that gap: the first transgender activist groups also appear in Spain in 1978: “Colectivo de Transexuales y Travestis” in Barcelona and “Transexualia” in the mid 1980s; the European Union publishes the Recommendation 1117 on the condition of transsexuals (Europe, 1989); the onset of the fight for recognition of the transgender situation starts and develops in a climate pervaded by the AIDS crisis and the backlash against queers; following the APA, the World Health Organization (WHO) also added “Transsexualism” to their manual.

Amidst those changes, in 1999, there is another milestone in the Spanish context: reinforcing the privilege of the medical discourse in regulating the transgender body, the first of many *Unidad para el Transtorno de Identidad de Genero* or UTIG (*Gender Identity Disorder Unit*)

is created in the country. It arrived after years of activist battles to get specialized medical attention to transgender people's needs, including demands for assistance by trained health personnel. The political movement behind the needs of transgender people, and their growing visibility build up until 2007, when a new law regulating gender identity was passed by the Socialist government.

The Gender Identity Law (2007)

In 2007 the Socialist Party government of Rodriguez Zapatero –the same government that created the *Ministerio de Igualdad (Equality Secretary)*, chose a 50%-50% representation of men and women in official Secretaries, and passed the same-sex marriage law in 2005– passed what became known as the 'Gender Identity Law', in which surgery no longer is a requirement for a legal recognition of gender change in all the official papers. As in the British *Gender Recognition Act* (United Kingdom, 2004), however, diagnosis, medical surveillance and therapy to “accommodate the physical characteristics corresponding to the claimed sex” remain a condition for the recognition of the new gender (Spain, 2007) during at least two years for such legal recognition. The text of the Spanish law makes explicit the links with the medical institution and psychology in its wording of the 'true gender identity':

“The present law has the goal of regulating the necessary requirements to access the change of the sex mention in the Civil Register, when such mention does not correspond to the true gender identity. It also contemplates the change of the first name so it is not discordant with the claimed sex. Transsexuality, considered as a change in the gender identity, has been already widely studied by *medicine and psychology*.” (Spain, 2007)⁵

⁵ Unless indicated otherwise, translations of Spanish texts are mine.

Medicine and psychology (my emphasis) are invoked since they will act as gatekeepers for the State to provide proof –and grant/deny access– to recognition. The law, a bit further down, also states its interest in “guaranteeing juridical safety and the demands of the *general interest*” (my emphasis), which never gets explicitly defined. What is, I ask, the “general interest” that the law talks about? If we base our answer on the requirements within the text, it seems the general interest is basically maintaining the gender binary (both in the bodies and names of transgender people) by requiring a Gender Dysphoria diagnosis, dissonance between “morphological sex and gender identity”, and two years of hormone treatment.

The transsexual identity-based movement that started in the 1980s achieves a change in the legal paradigm, but with a law that excludes transsexual immigrants, minors or transgender people critical of pathologization. Despite being defined as revolutionary by mainstream media, the ‘revolutionary’ part of the law is contained in the last paragraph, by which no SRS is required to access the change of sex in the Civil Register. While it represents a break with Benjamin’s “true transsexual”, the medical requirements are still contemplated and pervasive throughout the text. The new law was widely celebrated by mainstream LGBT associations, liberal politicians and media alike. Major newspapers in Spain forgot the medical connotations of the law in their celebration and the medically driven regulation of trans people –in continuation rather than dissonance of the first appearance of transsexuals in the law, in the Penal Code in 1983, and the protection of medical practitioners that it entailed.

The law also relates its own existence to “countries around us that have a specific legislation” on transgender issues but doesn’t fully comply with the Yogyakarta principles that were issued that same year, which explicitly stated “No one shall be forced to undergo medical

procedures, including sex reassignment surgery, sterilization or hormonal therapy, as a requirement for legal recognition of their gender identity.” (Spain, 2007, p.11) Although the recent Spanish and British laws seem to abide by the first part of the recommendation – disregarding the SRS requisite- a closer look reveals how one cannot get the diagnosis without at least stating an interest for SRS, despite being able to change sex recognition without undergoing it. Sharpe explains that “the absence of surgery must be explained by medical report and it may serve to cast doubt on a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and therefore block the avenue to legal recognition.” (2010, p.108) The lingering of SRS in both laws is a clear marker of the embedding of the medical discourse into the law. At the same time, it is common to become sterile as a result of hormonal therapy, still highly prevalent due to the requirement of being medically treated for at least two years.

In summary, transsexuality is the privileged form of transgenderism, sanctioned by both medical and legal institutions. However, different definitions and activism have emerged from different conceptions of the issue (Coll-Planas & Misse, 2015), and recent research shows some transgender people use the narrative as strategic essentialism to access the necessary treatment to live up to their gender identity, as well as reviewing different strategies used by activists in Spain to resist the normative understanding of transsexuality (Misse & Coll-Planas 2010).

We cannot ignore those acts of resistance to, for example, the social pressure to conform to the “true transsexual” that the medical institution promotes. Some of these movements have actively participated (and are still doing so) to achieve the removal of surgery as a requisite for sex identity recognition, re-shaping once again the definition of what is the

'right way' of transitioning, and to extend the access to quality health care and protect from transphobia different gender and sex expressions and identities.

Positionality of the Author

The public negotiation of meaning over gender and sex of this research interpellates me as a researcher to approach this topic. As a biological male that identifies as a man, my interest on transgender issues does not come from a first person experience. Despite having known people who identify as transgender for a long time, I cannot include myself in the community that is central to my topic. As such, I acknowledge my positionality in addressing a very serious and real matter from the 'safe' and privileged perspective of a cisgendered person. However, if transgenderism and gender non-conformity seem so important and close to my personal experience, it is because they represent extreme cases of transgression of the categories of sex and gender, which regulate the daily lives of both trans- and cis-gender people. Indeed, the fact that ideas like 'sex change' can be even thought of represents a break in the assumed nature of the division between male/female and masculine/feminine. What implications does the mere existence of transgender people have in the ways in which we understand such binary oppositions? And, furthermore, what are the mechanisms that allow and coerce the transition between sexes, between genders? I use transgenderism as a perfect starting point to unpack the complexity of oversimplified concepts like sex and gender, driven by a sense of social justice that my belonging to the LGBTQ community has imbued in me. I approach the topic both in awe for the radical transformation that it allows in our understanding of sex and gender, and in solidarity for a minority within a minority that oftentimes finds itself erased from mainstream gay and lesbian discourses.

I find necessary to explore –even from an outsider perspective– a phenomenon that has been highly mediatized and debated in recent years in Spain in order to make sense of our

current investment on allegedly fixed categories. Such categories, despite looking too fragile to be sustained, are still used to oppress and divide people. These simplified and apparently monolithic categories share many commonalities with other heatedly debated topics like the right to abortion (and the limits of 'personhood'), same-sex marriage (and the precise meaning of 'marriage'), homophobia/genderphobia, etc. I intend to use my critical abilities at their best, while checking myself for oppressive or discriminatory assumptions, in order to pursue the scholarly understanding of the situation of sex and gender in modern Spanish society, and start a much needed debate on a topic that, despite seemingly affecting a very small population, has direct and real consequences in the regulation of all of our gender and sexual identities.

Furthermore my training as a translator justifies and personalizes the translations present in this dissertation for the movies' dialogues. I have translated all the texts from the Spanish original version and explained, when necessary, the terms that had a difficult equivalence. Since the wording is pivotal for the issue at stake, I have supplemented with footnotes any discordance that the movies' vocabulary had with my usage of the English concepts for this dissertation. This last problem is also visible in the theoretical framework and my exploration of the field of transgender studies in Spain.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has presented the introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, definition of terms, a contextual background and the positionality of the author. Chapters 2 and 3 contain the methodological framework for this dissertation, reviewing theoretical paradigms and related literature to the problem being investigated. Chapter 2 focuses on the work of Michel Foucault and his take on 'biopower', medicine and the law, together with the interactions his theories have with transgender studies. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the texts and authors within Cultural Studies that have shaped this research, in particular feminist and gender studies, and cultural studies of science. Chapter 3 is centered on the field of transgender studies and reviews important texts for this project as well as literature on the field's take on film and representation.

The methodology and procedures used to gather data for the study are presented in Chapter 4, as well as an explanation of the instrumentation and operationalization of the research questions and theoretical concepts for this research. I present in that chapter the ways in which I analyze the data, which include the creation of archetypes, levels of analysis and the use of discourse analysis. The analyses of the movies are contained in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, divided according to the three archetypes that this dissertation proposes, and exploring each of the movies in the sample. Chapter 5 includes a Prologue to the analysis with two movies that escape the sample for interesting reasons, and that chronologically precede the rest of the corpus. Chapter 8 starts with the Epilogue to the analysis section, closing the circle with another of those movies that have finally escaped my criteria. It also contains the conclusions drawn

from the findings, a discussion, and the limitations of the project as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAME

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature and research related to this dissertation, shaping its theoretical frame. It is divided in sections that include the theories of Michel Foucault and the field of Cultural Studies. In Foucault, I explore ideas of biopower and subjectivation, as well as the confluences of his work with the law and science. For Cultural Studies, a vast and multifarious field, I focus on feminist readings of media, the concept of queering from sexuality studies, and semiotics through the concepts of stereotyping and the myth.

This chapter is the first of two parts of the theoretical frame, which is continued in Chapter 3. This part serves as an exploration of the theories that inform my research and my gaze, and compose the approach with which I face the movies in the sample. Both Foucault's preoccupation with locating knowledges and resistances, and disavowing a-temporal truths, and Cultural Studies' aim of politicizing the texts and reading against the grain to reveal hidden ideologies are a big influence on the way I approach my research, and their contributions are noted in this chapter.

Michel Foucault: A Genealogy

Often placed within the French school of deconstruction and postmodern thought, Foucault has managed to go beyond such identification and become in recent years one of the most cited authors in the humanities according to the Institute of Scientific Information Web of Science⁶, and a prevalent author in many other fields. This is due to Foucault's flexibility through his corpus of work, which explores a wide range of issues, and yet is open-ended enough to apply its contributions to other authors' work. In his own words, "I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area... I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers." (1994, p.523) Foucault's toolbox is, precisely, the cornerstone of this theoretical framework, in particular his ideas on medicine and the law as organizing tools for our modern societies. His work highlights how such institutions shape and categorize entire groups of population, and is pivotal to understand my analysis of transgender representation.

Towards the end of his life, Foucault pens an introduction in *Herculine Barbin, dite Alexina B* (Foucault, 1978; Barbin & Foucault, 1980). Foucault found Barbin's memoirs, a first-person recollection of the life of an intersex person in the 19th century, and decided to bring them to the light for their exceptional witness of the medical and regulatory systems of the period. Barbin lived as a woman for the first part of her life, until after consulting with religious and medical experts, he was found to be an intersex man, and continued his life as Abel Barbin until he tragically took his life, away in a miserable situation in Paris. Through this example, Foucault emphasizes the lasting interest of science (and society) over a unique 'true sex' that

⁶ He was the most cited author in 2007, according to the Thomson Reuter's ISI Web of Science and has occupied high places in it since.

each of us has by virtue of nature. Comparing older laws about 'hermaphroditism', he finds that, while in the past the coexistence of the two sexes was tolerated and sanctioned by law, this flexibility exists no longer.

Before modernity, Foucault argues, when in one of these dubious situations, the father or godfather would choose the sex of the baby, but the person would decide –or confirm– again when adulthood was reached. This second chance was to be final (the person could not change back), but still it gave the power of deciding to the 'hermaphrodite' person. In modern society, science and the law must determine the 'real' sex that hides behind such confusion, and it is no longer the subject's authority to decide their own social and juridical sex: instead, an expert determines what is the 'natural' sex of such person (Foucault, 1978, p.20).

This comparison highlights the growing scientific knowledge that manages our lives, the way scientific truths growingly override personal agency and the concept of a 'true sex', which is as current as always for Foucault. He sees in Barbin's judicial process the force and power of science in bestowing –and taking away– identities and lives. This 'true sex' (unique, personal, immutable) is but a piece in the machinery that organizes us as subjects, classifies our existence, and gives power to such categories by an implicit social acceptance of them. Science is, for him, a mechanism of knowledge and power (Foucault, 1969), one that creates such categories and complies with society's 'regime of truth', by defining a truth that in itself reinforces and induces effects of power.

This 'scientific truth' or knowledge shapes our lives, our institutions, the law, etc. It forces an understanding of reality, a 'truth' that we need to abide by. In the presented case, and despite Barbin's doubts, wishes and desires, science and religion determined that she was

in fact a man. Taking her own gender away from her, science was making her legible, categorizable, subdued to a binary gender divide, forced onto the other side totally and at loss with her feminine identity, which in time caused Barbin's death. Foucault also names other institutions that had an effect on how Barbin was educated and told to abide by the gender binary: the orphanage, the convent, boarding school, etc. She was a victim of the thirst for new knowledge of science, and the fascination of the doctors with her case made her famous and changed her life.

Foucault operates in this manner in most of his work, by recovering historical moments or issues and finding the cracks and the limits of monolithic truths. As some have noted

his purpose is to write a critique of our historical era, which problematizes modern forms of knowledge, rationality, social institutions, and subjectivity that seem given and natural, but in fact are contingent socio-historical constructs of power and domination (Paneerselvam, 2000, p.14).

Foucault, considered by many pivotal to the postmodern shift in gender studies, was also an influential author for LGBTQ activism (Halperin, 1997), and his work clearly permeates onto the arguments of the big names in gender studies like Judith Butler, Gayle Rubin or Teresa de Lauretis. In particular, for transgender studies, the Foucaultian toolbox is overflowing with useful terms and ideas such as 'biopolitics', the control of bodies, the performative power/knowledge of the medical institution or the interwoven natures of medicine and the law. All of them are big clusters of thought within Foucault's vast work, and all of them can be directly applied to understand transgender studies.

We can see his presence in the *Transgender Studies Reader* (Stryker & Whittle, 2006), where we encounter many of the authors therein included to be under the direct influence of the French philosopher: Susan Stryker in her introduction, Dean Spade or Andrew Sharpe and

their take on the law, activist Riki Anne Wilchins answering to the objectification of transgender bodies, Nan Alamilla Boyd on the body's relationship to the state or Heather K. Love and the discussion of history. All of them use Foucault's ideas to make sense of the transgender phenomenon. The reason why Foucault is so pervasive in such a volume exceeds the simple fame of the author, and is due to the coincidence in the subjects and topics under exploration of the philosopher and those pertaining to the transgender studies community. But in order to start making a list of sorts of Foucault's influence in transgender studies, it is just accurate to use one of his most well known tools: a genealogy.

Foucault's understanding of the concept genealogy echoes the work of Nietzsche and his philosophical use of the term. A genealogy, in both Foucault and Nietzsche's approach, is a search for the origins refusing to use a metaphysical unique truth that enacts a rational origin, but rather gathering the different and problematic pieces of the origins, the multiplicities that complicate monolithic and assumed commonsensical beliefs over a matter: "Genealogy is 'effective history' because it avoids the traditional historian's metaphysical prejudices and relocates everything traditionally considered eternal into a process of becoming" (Mahon, 1992, p.8). A genealogy, then, opens possibilities by shattering solid and fixed meanings or truths. Famously, Foucault used a genealogy in *History of Sexuality* (1976), contradicting previous thinking on the repressed sexuality of Victorians, by unveiling some other factors that end up inclining the balance to the opposite side of our preconceived notions.

His genealogies are based on a historicization or re-contextualization of preconceived 'truths' that are given for granted. *History of Sexuality* is one of the best examples in a vast genealogical journey in which Foucault explores the creation and instauration as eternal and

unavoidable of penal systems (*Discipline and Punish*, 1975), hospitals (*The Birth of the Clinic*, 1963), or asylums and madhouses (*Madness and Civilization*, 1961). In all those, Foucault takes historical examples and texts to re-contextualize the birth of certain institutions in French society, thus changing as well the importance and role of ideas such as ‘sexuality’, ‘criminality’, ‘madness’ or ‘illness’.

Weaving the emergence of institutions with that of sciences and meanings – “knowledges” – Foucault de-naturalizes the assimilation of social divisions and critically analyzes fluctuations of power that put certain practices in the center, while locating non-normative practices in the periphery. In a similar manner, Foucault’s tools can help perform a genealogy of transgenderism by questioning the medical definition as the reality –the ‘truth’– of gender non-conformity, and dismantle psychological traits –like in Harry Benjamin’s “true transsexual” (Benjamin, 1966)– or legal definitions based in such truths.

Transgender studies’ authors that rely on Foucault go also deeper in exploring the roots of their own denomination and questioning the immutability of sex and gender by adding a third space, the ‘trans’ space: a space in movement where non-conforming sexes and genders can locate themselves out of the stiffness of the binaries. This dissertation, as well, aims to perform a genealogy of transgenderism in Spanish cinema, by de-centering hegemonic discourses that present transsexuality as a homogeneous and definite truth, and bringing to the analysis alternative voices and events that have shaped the legitimation of scientific discourse to define what is and is not (and may or may not be) a person in relation to their sex.

Foucauldian genealogies are not, however, the only useful tool that we can find in the toolbox, especially for transgender studies. It is very pertinent and necessary to deal with other

concepts like Foucault's definition of power and biopower –and their participation in forming and disciplining the self–, or his interrogation of the boundaries of normality/abnormality through the limits of the law, illness and madness. Through these ideas I create my own genealogy of Foucaultian thought, while searching for the enabling or limiting of Foucault's work in the analysis of transgender identities.

Biopower and Subjects

Foucault's work has a prevalent interest on the concept of power, as demonstrated by the concept's ubiquity. Throughout all his books, the notion of power is always central in explaining different phenomena such as madness, criminality, sexuality and language. He focuses mainly, through genealogies, on the different shifts in the way of applying power from a historical perspective in order to understand the functioning of modern society and how power is embedded in the network of relations conforming it.

This idea of modern power emerges in Foucault as a contraposition of a more top-bottom structure of power like that of feudal societies. Indeed, in the Middle Ages, power was personified in the figure of the king, embodied as a superior authority in the name of God. However, modern societies needed another way to control populations. After a dramatic rise in population in a few centuries, the Middle Ages evolve into more democratic political systems requiring a higher control of its citizens, which in Foucault's view is enacted through a web of relations rather than the more traditional understanding of power working unidirectionally. Power is "a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than ... a negative instance whose function is repression" (Rabinow & Rogers, 1984, p.61).

For Foucault, power is not something that is applied in a vertical, top to bottom direction but rather something that circulates diffusely, horizontally and also from within. Modern power is not located in one institution/person or group of people who directly exert their power onto others, as would dictate a well-spread assumption of power's mechanism, but it rather circulates in the interactions between persons, institutions, objects, knowledges, etc. This way of understanding power is akin to that of many articles belonging to the field of transgender studies, especially in the way that gender is learnt, categorized, performed and reinforced.

Indeed, the power of gender –or the power put to work to conform to one gender– does not come from a force above us: our experience of gender is formed in a complex web of interactions in which one can include medical and legal institutions but also educational institutions, the media, people around us and ourselves. By questioning and reading each other's sex and gender, by reading everyone around us to conform or identify to a gender, by labeling, inquiring, judging, etc. we all are exerting the power of normative gender. In Foucaultian terms, our gaze imposes our knowledges onto other people's bodies.

In his dissertation *Spectacles in Transit* (Franklin, 2011), Americanist Michael Franklin analyzes the relationship of transgender representations and biopower. According to Franklin, after World War II medical technologies allowed for more and more modification of the body, while the emergence of communication technologies were giving middle-class consumers more expressive autonomy. The two are linked in the role of biopower, “the power to induce and administrate all aspects of human life by state and corporate entities” (p.34), which through these two developements has been made more present in our daily lives. The former gives

science more control in shaping and controlling bodies, while the latter participates of the spectacularization of the body.

Franklin stresses the importance of the public displays of capital punishment analyzed by Foucault and the connection between biopower and the spectacle: “biopower comes to thrive through the bodies of populations modulated, managed, and accounted for by institutions of the state and the market” (p.11). These bodies-as-spectacles in *Discipline and Punish* are disciplined and rendered docile through the spectacle, and as scholars Silvia Federici (2004) and Ann Laura Stoler (1995) suggest in their work, historically contemporaneous projects of colonialism, slavery, and witch hunts have taken over the same mechanisms of control. In Franklin’s words:

“certain bodies in negative relation to capital as well as to the structures and ideologies of the state continued to be punished, disciplined, and gazed at in popular arenas with particular respect to their difference, that far from becoming incorporated as citizens into the modern nation-states of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these groups’ violent subjugation and the very spectacularity of their non-belonging constituted the conditions of possibility for the creation of docile subjects, and thus the operation of liberal democracy.”(2011, p.13)

The public ‘outcasting’ of non-normal bodies paradoxically excluded, with their display, such abnormalities from the public life, rendering those bodies (the slaves, the witches) the public embodiment of the punishment that those not abiding by the norm would receive, rendering the community as a whole more docile:

life is to inclusion what death is to exclusion in that social death, symbolic death, and physical death have been linked with those groups excluded and subjugated from the state and the imagined national community, whose basic social unit was the white heteropatriarchal family. (p.14)

Franklin is not the only author to link biopolitics and biopower to transgender studies. Snorton and Haritaworn (2013), for example, take Achille Mbembe's idea of necropolitics (2003) –a revision of Foucault's postulates to address contemporary instances of massive deaths and entire populations 'condemned' to not live like in some African countries or in scenarios of global wars– and talk about the usage of LGBT-phobia and hate crimes to discard certain populations as unfit citizens. They address the internal exclusions of the LGBT community, utilizing the abnormality of 'others' within the community to legitimize their own: woman's liberation and gay's liberation become admissible and respectable by making gender non-conformity an abjection (Namaste 2006; Rivera 2002; Spade 2003), and "trans women of color act as resources –both literally and metaphorically- for the articulation and visibility of a more privileged transgender subject" (Franklin, 2011, p.69). He is also concerned with the unified narrative producing a transnormative subject, following the universalized trajectory of coming out/transition, visibility, recognition, protection, and self-actualization. That trajectory "remains uninterrogated in its complicities and convergences with biomedical, neoliberal, racist, and imperialist projects" (p.67) and since hate crime legislation is firmly invested in such narratives, they contribute "to a broader biopolitical imperative to manage poor people and people of color by channeling them into a massive carceral project, the 'prison industrial complex'" (p.68).

Biopolitics and biopower are then central to understand how different institutions and narratives ascertain divisions of population and manage the right to live and die of people according to such classifications. These are never the product of an only institution that dictates

the future of populations, but rather enmesh different paradigms and powers, and evolve for a maximum control through the minimum use of force since our entrance in modern times:

Rationalities, strategies and technologies of biopower changed across the twentieth century, as the management of collective life and health became a key objective of governmentalized states, and novel configurations of truth, power and subjectivity emerged to underpin the rationalities of welfare and security as well as those of health and hygiene. (Rabinow & Rose, 2006, p.204).

Some works within transgender studies also use Foucaultian power to unmask the articulations with class, race or nationality that laws protecting LGBT people have, making biopolitical decisions about minority populations without taking into account their agency, which remains silenced by scientific knowledge (Spade, 2006).

One of the well-known examples that Foucault uses to explain that circulation of power in the modern society is the figure of the panopticon. The panopticon was a prison conceived by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century in which a central tower has visual access to all the cells, while the prisoners in the cells do not know if they are being observed. In this example the existence or absence of a guard in the central tower becomes less and less important, since the regulation of the inmates behavior is also enacted through the belief or thought that one is being watched. Foucault uses the example of the panopticon to point at different ways of circulating power, as well as an economization of repressive power. Activating the sense of discipline 'within' the inmates, less proportion of guards per inmate are necessary to keep the prison working. Foucault tackles several issues of power in his metaphor of the panopticon, not only those of the functioning of the modern prison and criminality, but also crucial to understand the emergence of asylums or the treatment of madness.

Foucault highlights the functioning of the prison as a metaphor of our society when he asks:

“How could the prison not be immediately accepted when, by locking up, retraining, and rendering docile, it merely reproduces, with a little more emphasis, all the mechanisms that are to be found in the social body?” (Rabinow & Rogers, 1984, p.216).

We can see his preoccupation in the training and rendering docile of the bodies, which he sees happening in our society at large –and explicitly links to capitalism in many of his books– as well as to the prison. The panopticon metaphor, then, helps us understand in the case of gender, how important our display and performance of gender can be. It reminds us of the power of the gaze (real or not) that works as a coercive tool forcing us to conform to some well-internalized norm or go against it facing the consequences, in a modern society in which gender-, homo- and transphobia are the prevailing ideologies sustaining heterocentrality.

Foucault’s ideas of power and biopower also speak to an effective economization of punitive power, as well as to the diffuseness of power around us in which we ourselves participate. This idea is also useful when analyzing the internal debates within transgender studies, in which a number of activists and theorists defend the medical regulation and the privileged discourse of the ‘true-transsexual’, reinforcing classical notions of sex and gender in pro of legal and medical achievements of the community. Furthermore, such debates also focus on the words and definitions for different understandings of gender non-conformity within the transgender community. Transgender theory, especially of those authors relying on Foucault, sees the importance and the power of words.

Touching on the most French deconstructive side of Foucault, the power of words is largely explored by seminal names in the French school (Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous) as well

as the biggest names in queer theory, like Judith Butler or Teresa de Lauretis. The performative power of words is highlighted by Foucault in many of his works, and largely explored in *The Order of Things* (1971), but is again famously renowned in his *History of Sexuality* (1976) through his vastly cited phrase: “the homosexual was now a species”. In that quote the philosopher summarizes the argument he is been making on homosexuality and sexuality as a whole, contradicting the Victorian repressive hypothesis. His argument is that the continuous talk about sex, the medical and scientific gaze bestowed onto sex and especially its labeling, classification and naming gives birth to the homosexual identity. Indeed, he argues, before it was given a name there were only certain activities that might have been perceived as deviant depending on the time. It is in the moment of naming a particular set of activities as belonging to a type of person when that person/identity is created.

Following that same argument, it seems that transsexuality has undergone a very similar process, and the fathers of transsexuality like Hirschfeld or Benjamin, are actually baptizing and creating a phenomenon –categorizing different aspects of gender non-conformity under the names of “transvestites” or “transsexuals” respectively– that has been present for a long time before its naming. The consequences of being labeled, then, are twofold. If on the one hand the power in numbers and a larger social recognition can be gained through identity politics, it is also true that, under a label, individuals and groups are more affected by disciplining and control, which enacts the social and political control over life of Foucault’s biopower. As Revel and Pons (2009) argue in their ‘dictionary’ of Foucault’s work, biopower divides subjects and imposes identities. The classification of biopower, distinguishing subjects and deciding their right to life, is part of what Foucault calls the processes of subjectivation, which at the same

time are processes inherent to the formation of identity. Judith Butler also links Foucault's biopower and psychoanalysis in her book *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) to explain such process of identification. As in any field of studies in which identity is a pillar, Foucault's work is an effective tool for questioning the concept of the subject, as subjectivation is, according to Rabinow and Rogers (1984), one of the main questions in his corpus of literature.

Rabinow and Rogers distinguish three levels of objectification of the subject: 1) "dividing practices"; 2) "scientific classification"; and 3) "subjectification". On the first level "the subject is objectified by a process of division either within himself or from others" (1984, p.8). In an approach that echoes Lacanian ideas about the self, Foucault explores these "modes of manipulation that combine the mediation of a science (or pseudo-science) and the practice of exclusion –usually in a spatial sense, but always in a social one." (p.8). Thus, labelling and typification reinforce and privilege some subjects while excluding others, or rather 'by' excluding others. Taxonomies are created through what 'is not' and normality is attained through the definition of the abnormal. These ideas are cornerstones of *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), and *Discipline and Punish* (1975).

The second level arises in *The Order of Things* (1971) and is preoccupied with "the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences" (Rabinow & Rogers, 1984, p.11). Here one can see Foucault's claim of historicization as the tool to de-naturalize definitions and ideas that are turned into commonsensical knowledge or beliefs through scientific 'objectivity'.

The third level, more related to the topic under discussion here and present in *History of Sexuality* (1976) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975), is about a "self-formation... through a process

of self-understanding... mediated by an external authority figure, be the confessor or the psychoanalyst” (Rabinow & Rogers, 1984, p.11). So, in short, there are three modes of subjectivation: “those that categorize, distribute and manipulate; those through which we have come to understand ourselves scientifically; those that we have used to form ourselves into meaning-giving selves” (Rabinow & Rogers, 1984, p.12) According to Revel and Pons (2009):

“The radical critique of identities needs to recognize the effects of power on subjectivation, with the implication that solipsistic projects are open to be re-inscribed within the stratagems of knowledge/power.” (p.46)

If radical critique has been useful for queer theorists to deconstruct our ideas on gender, they just need to be pushed one step further to be applied relevantly to biological sex (thus tackling the subject of transsexuality and transgenderism).

This connection of power and subjectivation, and power over the body stems as well from two notable currents in Foucault’s thought, which will be explored more in depth hereunder: law and medicine. As Rabinow comments, according to *Discipline and Punish*, and *History of Sexuality*, “The advance of bio-power in the nineteenth century is in fact contemporary with the appearance and proliferation of the modern categories of anomaly –the delinquent, the pervert– which the technologies of discipline and confession are supposedly designed to eliminate, but never do.” (Rabinow & Rogers, 1984, p.21) Again, the abnormal emerges as a confirmation of normality. Normality, at the same time, is constructed as an unattainable perfection which one can always get closer to but never really fit into, and can be defined through what it is not rather than by what it actually is.

Knowledges: Law and Science

The comparison and articulation of abnormality, monstrosity and the law is visible in Sharpe's work *Foucault's Monsters and the Challenge of the Law* (2010). Moreover, law and medicine become also intertwined in his analysis of the British gender identity law and his denounce of the pathologization of the transgender person. Sharpe's work is informed by Foucault's concepts of 'abnormality' and 'monstrosity' and his analytical framework is useful to look at the dovetailing of body and mind in the regulation of transsexuality and gender recognition.

For Foucault, the monster is to be understood through a law/nature nexus and, more specifically, as the effect of a double breach, of law and nature (Foucault, 2004). Although Foucault was more concerned in his argument with the hermaphrodite, Sharpe uses the transsexual body to illustrate the same point, the double breach, and how the transsexual is constituted as an abnormal monster that breaks the law –trying to get legal recognition as a person of the opposite sex– and the biological component of his/her body (nature). In Sharpe's words, "The transsexual offers an example of Foucault's figure of the abnormal individual ... the emergence of the abnormal individual is to be comprehended in term of a shift from the body to the soul as an object of legal concern." (2010, p.87)

By this process, the transsexual is then explicitly regulated (for his/her own double-breach) by the legal and medical institution and, while it seems almost too good for our purpose, perfectly matches Foucault's work and the field and preoccupations of transgender studies. Especially if we pay attention to recent developments of the legal and medical situations in the world, a few countries (UK, Spain, Argentina) are already stepping away from sex reassignment surgery; the American Psychiatric Association in its last revision of the DSM-V

(2013), is moving away from a “disorder” towards a “dysphoria” when referring to gender identity, which according to their statements on the matter is a move away from pathologization but still acknowledges the need of many transgender people for a diagnosis in accessing health care. Medical institutions are then giving voice to the different legalities of each state to make the final decision on their ways of regulating sex and gender –and their access to health care.

Since the first appearance of transsexuality, the official discourse has relied on medical expertise to make decisions on the future of transgender people, positing medical institutions as the ultimate gatekeeper able to sweep individual rights if necessary. This is not a new thing in psychiatry, which is historically linked to law regulations and can, in some instances, use its power over the legal system –like, for example, the confining of criminals that acted out of some mental incapacity. Now, in a moment when psychiatry seems to back off its historical regulation of sex and sexuality, it is more up than ever to the states in deciding what are the legal requirements for such transitions, outside the medical paradigm. Sharpe notes that, most likely, the attention will return to the body, the material and physical aspect, to regulate such phenomena: despite the break between mind and body in the transsexual narrative, “law returns to the body and, more particularly, to biological ‘truth’ as the ultimate arbiter of what it means to be male or female and therefore human.” (2010, p.109)

Foucault already envisioned the overlapping of medicine and the law through his genealogies. In the inception of modernity, he explains, law started measuring more and more what was normal in a given population, what was right and what was wrong. The French philosopher, analyzing those changes, added: “One sees penal discourse and psychiatric

discourse crossing each other's frontiers; and there, at the point of junction, is formed the notion of "dangerous individual." (Rabinow & Rogers, 1984, p.220) Not only medicine and psychiatry started receiving a legal recognition and were sanctioned by state powers, but as well "the supervision of normality was firmly encased in a medicine or a psychiatry that provided it with a sort of 'scientificity'; it was supported by a judicial apparatus which, directly or indirectly, gave it legal justification." (p.237)

In this bidirectional circulation of power, legality and science give validity and naturalize each other, establishing what is off limits and what is normal or acceptable, and relying on a false ahistorical objectivity that Foucault does try to re-historicize in his genealogy. In a similar way, contemporary transgender studies try to engage with the current medical and legal situation for transgender people to de-naturalize some of the privileged discourses while searching for the origins of concepts like the 'true transsexual' and the assumptions and naturalizations contained therein. In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), Foucault points to the interaction of medicine and institutional powers by noting that good medicine needs to get witness of validity and legal protection from the State. He is exploring the institutional specialization of the illness, emerging from supposedly objective empiricism that takes the body as a site to locate said illness, and speaks to a phenomenon in the birth of modernity that transgender scholars know very well.

Another text in Spanish scholarship that sheds light onto the relationship of medico-legal paradigms, their institutions and the regulation of sex and gender of entire populations is *Sobre el derecho de los hermafroditas (On the Rights of Hermaphrodites, Garcia, 2015)*. It consists on a study on Pierre François Monet's "De iure circa hermaphroditos," an original text

from 1788 about regulation of 'hermaphroditism', that questions current and historical medical interventions to intersex people (Garcia, 2015).

In the book, Garcia also explores the case of Dr. Money, author of the *Optimum Gender of Rearing* protocol at the John Hopkins University, which presupposes an entirely social construction of gender, which means that gender confirmation surgery in babies is the most convenient transition. Garcia explains how Money's theories are flawed and many errors and aggressive surgeries were (and are) applied following Money's protocol, considered by some a cruel and degrading treatment. This is the same doctor that Judith Butler also explored in her book (Butler, 2004), the same that treated John/Joan and had to reverse the surgery that he imposed on him/her. Garcia uses Foucault's precepts to foreground a genealogy of hermaphroditism (intersexuality), and the answers that science has given to such a community. Garcia is interested in the ways that medico-legal institutions constitute the main force of subjectivation in 'modern' society.

In his critique of medico-legal knowledges regulating our bodies and desires, Garcia thinks that "the great victory" of the medico-legal discourse has been to make us believe that heterosexuality and heterosexual love date back to the origins of the human being, since they are present in human's nature" (2015, p.56). Together with this consideration of heterosexuality as the 'natural' framework to understand humanity, those institutions need an alignment of anatomical, legal and social gender, in order to be classified in the gender binary system, something that Foucault explores and Monique Wittig calls compulsory heterosexuality and Butler names the 'heterosexual matrix'. Garcia locates a change in medico-legal institutions, responsible for disciplining and conceiving the modern subject, during the 19th

century: “what had mainly been the object of the law, becomes now part of medical knowledge” (p.52). This shift from a legal to a medical paradigm that Garcia notes for intersexuality is the basis for my assertion that there is such shift in Spain regarding transsexuality during the 1970s and beginning of 1980s, which marks the debut of this dissertation and the emergence of filmic texts approaching the issue. Garcia’s work is more comparable to Foucault’s genealogies than to other intersex studies authors, but it is worth mentioning that he shares an influence and similar goals and rhetoric with other well recognized scholars such as Ann Fausto-Sterling and her *Sexing the Body* (2000) or activist and writer Hida Vilorio. However, Garcia is a precursor of intersex theory in Spain.

One of the main fights for transgender studies and activism alike is the recuperation of the voice to describe transgender experience. Contrasting the actual situation, in which the medical voice is the ultimate gatekeeper and scientific taxonomy is the one used to pass laws regarding the control of our gender identities, transgender activist movements aim to complicate scientific truth. Simplistic scientific claims, aimed to describe in one definition a complex issue, are being added the nuances of first person experiences and the voices of ‘patients’ that try to resist the medical gaze upon them. A part of transgender studies and activism are focused too on repealing laws that rely on monolithic and heterocentric conceptions of sex/gender to give access to medical care or recognize one’s gender legally.

In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), Foucault pinpoints these issues with medical practitioners comparing doctors to “priests of the body”: the medical profession was initially conceived as a liberation from the tyranny of illness, claiming that once we are freed from illness through disciplining our bodies and lifestyles, we will no longer need doctors. However,

and looking at the examples we have examined, the reality of transgender people seems to prove otherwise: instead of getting closer to not needing the figure of the doctor, it is more and more necessary to have that figure mediate transsexuality in our societies, at risk of blurring the gender/sex binaries.

As Foucault writes, medicine is not only the corpus of healing techniques but also the knowledge of the “healthy man [sic]”, “not sick” or “model” person: again, medicine and science rely on a division between normal and pathological in order to function. In a similar way, law looks to discipline citizens belonging to a society by establishing rights and duties of such “model” citizen, but also by prohibiting certain attitudes and actions, leaving those outside legality (thus normality). If for medicine the interest in sex, gender and sexuality is important because it is constructed as natural, biological and, most importantly, decisive for the status of humanhood, why is, then, sex so important for law? In his interview with Rabinow, Foucault answers the question: “I believe that the political significance of the problem of sex is due to the fact that sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population” (Rabinow & Rogers, 1984, p.67). Again we can see the collapsing of interests between political, legal and medical powers, especially invested in maintaining the status quo. The control of the body, population, and reproduction –another heated debate nowadays. Looking at the issue this way it is easier to understand why transgender studies have become so popular nowadays, and conform a field of its own: it is not about the study of a minority, exceptional group but rather through that group we can see how pervasive and extended the practice of disciplining and controlling our bodies, sexes, genders and sexualities is in society.

I do not wish to end my genealogy without addressing some of the shortcomings or limitations that Foucaultian theory can and does have for transgender studies. Although as I explained the French philosopher's theories seem tailored to the detail for transgender studies, his tools can also fall short of the task at stake. To start with, and it is something that has been noted by other authors and addressed by Halperin (1997), Foucault is bounded by his own geographical and historical situation. The fact that he bases all his analysis on the French context limits the scope of his genealogies and their temporality. Indeed, can we claim that the changes in power and governability that happened in France are equivalent or transposable to other states, even non-Western countries?

However, he never claims universality for his ideas –which would be a faux pas by somebody who is basing his work in countering universal truths and commonsensical beliefs. Furthermore, Foucault's work should be understood as a toolbox that one can use, not as a text or theory that 'explains' the truth to the reader. It is precisely in the ways that Foucault complicates and explores the French context for issues of power, medicine or criminality where we can find an example of how to apply his theory, not in the details particularly bound to France.

As I explored throughout this section, Foucault's work and transgender studies have coincidences with deconstructive theories, post-structuralism and queer studies. These coincidences, despite generating a fertile base for opposing and challenging universal truths or allegedly a-historical ideas, can also hinder the researcher's analysis. In this regard, Foucault's work shares as well some of the limitations of post-structuralism, such as challenging structures so much that there are no structures left to build up something from. Underscoring the fluidity

of definitions, the constant changing of categories, the blurring of the limits –which, as we have seen is a necessary task to resist monolithic truths– can also lead to basing your argument on something else’s critique or not giving any type of solution to the problem highlighted. Despite the attractiveness of ideas such as ‘generative power’, Foucault’s work seems at times non-generative, just preoccupied in pointing out the cracks in discourses without even trying to generate a new discourse from his critique.

This generates a possible limitation in Foucault’s idea of power being everywhere: he describes power as non-hierarchical, making it difficult to pinpoint the responsible parties, thus entering a difficult relativism. By putting us all ‘within’ power, Foucault leaves us with no ‘bad guys’ to fight against. However, this is not a shortcoming per se, and is part of his important work to let us see how intricate the functioning of power is countering reductive analysis of power that are based on a unidirectional functioning of power. Nevertheless, Foucault also says that it is impossible to step out of power, and compares the way revolutions work as a simple reorganizing of the status quo. With such views, it can be limiting to try to think of strategies to resist power and to practically engage in actions of resistance and change. Again, the shortcoming here is not only Foucaultian but rather one of the aspects of the gap between theory and practice, and the difficulties of applying academia to activism: Foucault offers a clever and enlightening critique that falls short of explaining how to change the mistakes of the object under criticism. For that, and in a field that needs so urgently a translation of its theories and studies onto activism and action, I believe that this is a shortcoming and a characteristic of Foucault’s work that can lead to frustration by many of the most pragmatic and practical scholars in the field.

Cultural Studies of Media

As much as Foucault was interested by the idea of 'modernity' and the shifts that this new age entailed, the field of communication is practically a consequence of such 'modernity', and its basic tenets have strongly impacted the field of communications. The 'Enlightenment' or 'Age of Reason' seems to be one of the most influential shifts in the way of thinking about humanity, escaping from old medieval superstitions and positing reason and individuality as the pivotal tools for human progress. The Enlightenment allowed for a space in which to think of modern communication: the creation of human order and morals, disentangling those ideas from religion, biology and essentialist conceptions of ethics, were pivotal in its inception. Indeed, when the focus of knowledge became the self, the individual, communication studies theoretically emerged as a means to analyze its function in bridging heterogeneous subjects and creating a 'community'. The study of communication became, then, central to the understanding human interaction.

This theoretical framework is influenced by critical approaches to communication that consider media central not only to the processes through which individuals and groups communicate with each other, but also a key space where ideology is being reproduced and reinforced (Hall 1973; 1980; 1985). Hall nuanced in his seminal work "Encoding/Decoding" (1973) the perceived direct effects that the media are supposed to have onto individuals. The influence of such essay in the field of cultural studies was massive and it is still one of the reference readings to understand the implications and fluxes of ideology between the media and society. Audiences are less and less seen as passive receptors who are easily manipulated, and more as an active part of the communicative process, being able to read in opposition to

the privileged discourse in the text (Hebdige, 1979), re-appropriating the texts to generate new meaning for a certain group (Dyer 2002) or even participating of the manipulation and creation of such texts, transcending the barriers of producer and consumer (Jenkins, 2006).

This evolution in the field, rather than invalidating the argument that posits media as a space of struggle for meaning, are proof of the importance of the media in society. Have the media an ordering function that reinforces the status quo or are they facilitating democracy and dialogue? Is there space for opposition and resistance or the media are rather silencing any exchange of ideas in pro of a unique and privileged homogeneous discourse? Those tensions are constantly enacted, and highlight the importance of thinking of media as a complex web of articulations, in which no simple answer can be given to issues like mainstreamization, visibility or ideology/ies.

Lynn Spigel adds in the introduction to Raymond Williams foundational book *Television* (1974), that media texts are seen “as contributing to the *construction* of social reality, as a part of the material forces that help to produce and to reproduce our world” (p.xiv). Thus, from a Foucauldian standpoint, the media are producing and reproducing discourses (knowledge) about our world that are also being produced and reproduced in society and with their very existence, they categorize and construct our social realities. Sturken and Catwright, in their book *Practices of Looking* (2001), emphasize this idea, and exemplify it with some discourses that we can often see embedded in the media:

Film and television are media through which we see reinforced ideological constructions such as the value of romantic love, the norm of heterosexuality, nationalism or traditional concepts of good and evil (p.21).

Their book, among many others of a very extended bibliography, like the ones just mentioned, are part of the field of Cultural Studies. Cultural Studies is defined by Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler in their seminal compilation *Cultural Studies Now and in the Future* (1992):

is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field that operates in the tension between its tendencies to embrace both a broad anthropological and more narrowly humanistic conception of culture [...] unlike traditional humanism it rejects the exclusive equation of culture with high culture and argues that all forms of cultural production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historical structures. Cultural studies is thus committed to the study of the entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices. (p.4)

Cultural studies, then, are preoccupied with culture but opposed to elitist definitions of it. They emphasize the importance of the context in theorizing, adding a new layer to their analysis and avoiding thinking of culture in isolation to its conditions of production or historical moment. This contextualization, or "radical contextualism" (Grossberg, 1997, p.378), allows cultural studies to travel around the world and problematize universal assumptions of rules, making them contingent of each context. In order to contextualize, Cultural Studies uses all its tools available, and crosses disciplines offering the possibility to make a very wide range of work.

Despite its roots being the foundation of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies of Birmingham, preceded by seminal essays like Raymond William's *Culture and Society* (1958) or Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1958), Cultural Studies have greatly evolved since their inception. Nowadays, the corpus of the field encompasses many diverse theories in several disciplines as literary studies, media studies, philosophy, sociology or even science and technology. As such, it is difficult to find a sole definition for Cultural Studies, and whole books

have been dedicated to the task, like *What is Cultural Studies?* (Storey, 1996), a compilation of articles a great range of articles trying to make sense of the question.

For this theoretical framework, however, I have dedicated my literary review of Cultural Studies to those authors who have explored gender and sex (like feminist, gay and lesbian and transgender Cultural Studies), as well as to those who make sense of science and medicine, and the law, especially in their media representations. With this review I do not aim to make an extensive list of works on the topic –an indeed challenging task for such a vast field- but rather make explicit the authors and ideas that have shaped my research and to whose research this project intends to add.

Feminist Media Studies: Reading Against the Grain

as with all types of feminist studies, feminist media scholarship draws upon a broad range of diverse and sometimes contradicting methodological and theoretical paradigms (Valdivia & Projansky, 2006, p.273).

One of the big influences in Cultural Studies nowadays, feminism fought its way into the field during the 1970s in a male dominated panorama –as can be seen by the lists of authors of the time. However, feminist approaches to media and culture start earlier than that. Valdivia and Projansky point Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) as a seminal text in the history of feminist research within media mainstream studies for its analysis on women's magazines, but at the same time question its US-centrism and the erasure of other (and previous) feminist research that has not gotten Friedan's recognition (2006, p.275). Furthermore, their genealogy of feminist media studies shows the field's movements and evolutions, from an early concern for frequency of coverage of women in content analysis, to research on production and

producers of media, audience research, and newer approaches like postfeminism or globalization of media discourses.

Within their extensive classification and theoretical mapping of the field, this project is rooted in content/discourse analysis, and specifically in the medium of film. In fact, feminist media studies are seen by Valdivia and Projansky as intertwined in their inception with film studies: “feminist film studies took root nearly simultaneously with film studies as a field” (p.280). Although their mapping offers a vast array of recommendations, covering the confluences with Marxism, semiotics, representation and authorship, it is the work of authors that were “reading against the grain” to reveal invisibilized ideologies in women’s representation that have influenced my analysis of the representation of transgender people.

Indeed, these texts and authors allow us to use critical feminist studies as a lens to find embedded preconceptions and discourses, and also generate cultural work and participate of the debate through our readings and analyses. For example, Gledhill in *Pleasurable Negotiations* (1988) rereads mainstream texts where the feminine is represented as the ‘other,’ sublimated by the plot and camera placement, and analyzes the ideological role they play in maintaining and contesting women’s situation. By engaging in critical activity, she sees herself participating in the social negotiation of meaning, definition and identity (p.74). Elizabeth Cowie also states that evaluation and critique of films add to the discourse in *The Film as a Progressive Text* (1988). Furthermore, in her analysis of the movie *Coma* (dir. Crichton, 1978), she brings forth connections of sexism and science that have influenced my perspective for this dissertation (and which are further explored below in the section *Cultural Studies of the Law and Science*).

Another of the pieces that have been important in the configuration of this theoretical frame is Constance Penley's introduction to *The Lady Doesn't Vanish: Feminism and Film Theory* (1988). In it, Penley elaborates on the tensions between feminism and essentialism, reflecting on the difficult positionality of feminist media studies to use, for example, biased tools such as psychoanalysis or to consider womanhood/feminity as a solid and delineated concept (p.2).

These same tensions are present in the analysis of transgender people in film, trying to avoid the essentialization of the phenomenon, and to nuance the differences and converging understandings about the topic. Penley also conveys the importance of "reading against the grain of classical film and its theory... not only to thwart the conventional representation of women in film, but to convey the interests and concerns of women" (p.6). By doing so, actively and politically reading the films, the author brings forth the political engagement –and social change- that such analyses entail. If, like another of the texts called *Practices of Looking* affirms, "images are an important means through which ideologies are produced and onto which ideologies are projected" (Sturken & Catwright, 2001, p.21), feminist readings are a way to unpack such ideologies and by making them visible, participate of their cultural work and politicize their discourses.

Symbolic Annihilation and 'Queering'

The field of sexuality studies inherited and developed, among other concerns, feminism's fight against invisibility in the media, and the preoccupation with representation. A concept that brings together feminism and sexuality, with cultural studies' interest in finding and resisting hegemonic discourses and fight for visibility is "symbolic annihilation" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976;

Tuchman, 1978). Symbolic annihilation defines a lack of representation in mass media affecting minority populations, and it can also refer not just to a total absence, but also to an underrepresentation of certain groups or populations. This is when minorities are marginally, and stereotypically, represented in a lower proportion than what is present in society. “Representation in the fictional world signifies existence; absence means symbolic annihilation” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p.182).

Expanding Gerbner and Gross’ approach to television, it is notable the usage of the term by Gayle Tuchman (1978) who broadened the gamut of media analyzed, ranging from TV to newspapers. Tuchman contextualized symbolic annihilation in mass media especially through the underrepresentation of women. Tuchman defines symbolic annihilation as “a process by which the mass media omit, trivialize, or condemn certain groups that are not socially valued” (Klein & Shiffman, 2009).

The need of minorities to be represented in the public sphere, given that the media are a pivotal space for social debate and negotiation, is also addressed later on in Gross’ work. He sees the mainstream “as the embodiment of a dominant ideology, cultivated through the repetition of stable patterns across the illusory boundaries of media and genre, and absorbed by otherwise diverse segments of the population” (1991, p.23). In our modern society, where sources of information are more and more centralized, broadcasters search for large common-denominator audiences to address their message, thus codifying their messages in a way that it appeals the ‘majority’. How this majority is constructed and its relationship with issues of privilege and hegemony is something that feminists, gender and race scholars have been concerned with for several decades now.

Queer studies have also participated of this confluence between cultural studies, media and representation and visibility of minorities. For example, queer activists rapidly became aware of the importance of media in shaping identities, and thus re-appropriated media and communication to convey their own messages during the AIDS crisis in the 1990s, as Crimp and Bersani (1988) note. Due to the social changes and the different ways of approaching politics, filmmakers, writers, musicians and visual artists used queer strategies to participate in the fight, re-shaping ideologies and creating new queer discourses. The feedback among the three unavoidably linked them in what can be thought of the queer project. Politics and theory continue to shape media, while media portrays and fosters both theoretical and political action.

Furthermore, the act of 'queering' avowedly straight representations as an act of resistance was another of the tools for gay and lesbian people to manage their absence or stereotyping in the media. This act of resistance has been approached by various queer theorists under different names such as "disidentification" (Muñoz, 1999) or "camp" (Dyer, 1986; 2002). Linked to a higher dependence on media for self-identification, and confronted with the scarcity of any such images, gays and lesbians have re-appropriated texts that were not intended, or at least not apparently, to be representing queer subjects. Audiences and critics alike, in an attempt to both establish a gay and lesbian subculture and find a space in pre-gay-liberation Hollywood and film industry, have queered films like Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) or Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940). Alexander Doty (1993; 2000), Richard Dyer (1990), and Vito Russo (1987) contribute to our understanding of gay or lesbian encodings or decodings of filmic texts.

Dyer and Doty are precursors of this act of 'queering', a deviant way of reading normative texts. As Michael Warner puts it,

'queer' is used to describe the non-straight work, positions, pleasures, and readings of people who either don't share the same 'sexual orientation' as that articulated in the texts they are producing or responding to (1993, p.xviii).

The emphasis on the reading, on the queering of the text, becomes a powerful tool for analysis on supposedly heteronormative texts (most of the text being produced by mass media), but it is also useful to deconstruct homonormative gay and lesbian films. Since 'queer' not only works in deconstructing heterosexuality, but rather focuses on the constructedness of all categories and opposes normativity, it then becomes a useful resource for dismantling any set of norms in representation.

In the Spanish context, we can find the work of Alberto Mira that queers cultural production in both his tomes (2004; 2008). On *De Sodoma a Chueca* (2004), Mira traces a geneology of homosexuality and its representations in the 20th century in Spain. Despite focusing on homosexuality, Mira's divisions and categories of analysis have been the most influential in my research, and I explore them in the Methodology section. Furthermore, Mira 'queers' a range of cultural productions, from literature to cinema, and finds the subversion within intellectual movements, dandies and activism. He also explores cross-dressing in some of the movies of this dissertation from the late 1970s and early 1980s, and argues that their treatment on-screen is sensationalist and serves to victimize and make a spectacle of the phenomenon, while symbolizing the purported "open-mindedness" of the period after the transition (p.435).

Miradas insumisas (2008) would seem much more relevant for this research as it is dedicated to gay and lesbian representation on film. However, his international scope –with the gaze focused mostly on Hollywood– becomes less useful to look at the particularities of Spanish cinema. The parts where Mira deals with ‘normalcy’ and assimilation of gay and lesbian representations, as well as their ideological work, or their uses of stereotyping fall within the reach of this theoretical frame and deserve to be mentioned in this section. Furthermore, these two books link the concept of ‘queering’ with our reading, and the concept of stereotyping, which Mira uses in his work in the same ways that Richard Dyer does, signaling a confluence of thought within sexuality studies in different national contexts.

Stereotyping and the Myth

Richard Dyer addresses the issue of stereotyping in his work (1984; 1993), focusing on the important role in representation of the external or visible signs that we choose. Dyer uses the work of Walter Lippmann (1922), and expresses an absolute necessity for stereotypes in the act of communication, in order to compress great amounts of information into any code. However, Dyer is concerned with the usage of those stereotypes: “it is not stereotypes, as an aspect of human thought and representation, that are wrong, but who controls and defines them, what interests they serve” (1993, p.246).

Stereotypes, according to Lippmann, serve four purposes, namely: (i) ordering process, (ii) a ‘short cut’, (iii) referring to ‘the world’, and (iv) expressing ‘our’ values and beliefs. (Dyer 1993, p.207) We can see how stereotypes are not reduced to the referential function of signs (iii) –basic Saussurean communication- but they also carry an intention of order or taxonomy

(i), an economization of meaning by drawing on popular knowledge and commonsensical beliefs (ii) and also, as Stuart Hall famously explored, carry an ideological framework (iv). Despite the fact that we need “generalities, patternings and ‘typifications’” (Dyer 1993, p.207) to make sense of ourselves as a society, in the choice of stereotypes we can see how a particular society establishes what is normal or common sense and what falls outside the norm. Stereotypes express a consensus, an agreement, and Dyer says that they reinforce and might even ‘create’ the agreement.

Although difficult to disentangle the stereotype from the mainstream view –which one was first? Which one effects which?– it seems that they are related and feeding on each other: “stereotypes express particular definitions of reality, with concomitant evaluations, which in turn relate to the disposition of power within society” (Dyer 1993, p.209). Dyer connects stereotyping to processes of power, and allows us to see how the analysis of the stereotype can help us understand better the concerns and values of a particular society:

The role of stereotypes is to make visible the invisible, so that there is no danger of it creeping up on us unawares; and to make fast, firm and separate what is in reality fluid and much closer to the norm than the dominant value system cares to admit” (1993, p.211).

Dyer’s position on stereotypes also enables my analysis to go from the lack of representation (symbolic annihilation) to the ‘issue’ of representation, and allows this theoretical frame to bring to the table some tools of the field of semiotics, and acknowledge that Dyer’s stereotypes have a substantial theoretical debt to Barthes and his ‘myth’.

To introduce better Barthes’ myth, I start by looking into Fiske’s account of Levi-Strauss’ “anomalous categories” in his *Introduction to Communication Studies* (1982). Fiske places the initial emphasis on the binary oppositions through which language -and thus communication

and society- works. Fiske highlights the use of Levi-Strauss' "anomalous categories," those categories that escape the binary opposition and have an excess of meaning that needs to be controlled. In his example, Fiske explains how homosexuality becomes one such "anomalous category" challenging the naturalized understanding of gender, and needs to be controlled or dealt with differently, since it escapes the binaries in our thinking process. These anomalous categories are "constructed by the culture itself to mediate between two opposed categories when the boundary appears too stark, too terrifying." (p.118)

If, as in the example, homosexuality challenges the norm of gender through sexual preferences, similarly so transsexuality or transgenderism challenge and overflow the meaning and binary opposition of sex (male/female) and gender (man/woman or masculine/feminine). The trans person, then, ruptures the boundaries of sex and gender that our culture has naturalized, and exceeds the signification of each side of the opposition, containing the two in a sole body or person. Before entering into the discussion of how transsexuality in particular becomes a myth to manage these contradictions, I want to briefly stay within this idea of transgressing the boundaries.

Levi-Strauss explains how we deal with anomalous categories by using a "boundary ritual", a ritual designed to make the transition between categories easier and comprehensible. The ritual is, in itself, marked by an anomalous period in which the person or the object finds itself between categories. Levi-Strauss locates these transitions and their rituals in the examples of birth (pregnancy) and death (funeral), but the rite of passage strongly resonates with the current demands for transgender people. Indeed, in order to transition from one sex to the

other, most legislations –including the Spanish one- still require a period of two years under medical surveillance and treatment in order to achieve the recognition.

The boundary ritual is observed in what medical institutions call the test of the real life, in which, before getting the sex-change recognition or surgery, the person needs to start living as the other sex, inhabiting this anomalous period betwixt the binary. In this process is made clear that, not only transsexuality is contesting the fixed meaning of gender/sex, but rather that gender and sex in themselves are anomalous categories that can be transcended, and they overlap more than the naturalization of both allows us to think at first.

Paying attention to the ritual is key for Fiske in locating the relevant tensions in a given culture: “The choice of which boundary crossings to mark by rituals and which to ignore can and tell us quite a lot about the priorities of a society.” (1982, p.120) Being the gender or sex crossing ritual enforced by medical and legal institutions in most of the world, we can confirm how pivotal the binaries of sex and gender are to the organization of our societies. It is significant to see how much our societies, including some parts of feminism, are historically invested in keeping and enforcing binaries that are supposed to be “natural,” but whose definition and means of enforcement have changed throughout history –thus pointing towards some kind of historical construction rather than a natural essence.

If sex and gender are anomalous categories sensible to be transgressed, thereby protected by rituals, and how those notions can articulate around the trans person or identity. How, as a culture, do we deal with the fact that these essentialized binaries can be navigated from one side to the other, and even inhabited in their between? Levi-Strauss answer to that question is the ‘myth’. Fiske thinks that those contradictions are not rare in our language and

culture. He talks about a double contradictory movement that is reenacted again and again, and it is precisely contradictions that create the specificities of each culture:

cultures differentiate themselves from nature in order to establish their own identity, and then legitimate that identity by comparing it back to nature, and establishing it as 'natural' rather than cultural. (p.121)

When this logic of essentialization is threatened, and the meaning of something being 'natural' is contested, then culture needs the 'myth', " a story that is a specific and local transformation of a deep structure of binarily opposed concepts that are important to the culture within which the myth circulates." (p.122) The myth is, then, the way that culture negotiates the anxieties produced by the transgression of foundational binaries.

For Barthes (1957), a myth is a mode of signification containing the triad signifier/ signified/ sign but operating on what he calls a second order semiological system. In this case, myth, like ideology, does not work as true/false or bad/good, but rather it naturalizes its meaning. Despite the similarities with Levi-Strauss' myth, Barthes is more concerned with a historical approach taking into account social specificity. In fact, one of the major differences in their approach is that Barthes calls the myth a "depoliticized speech" because it simplifies the complexity of humanity and organizes the world without contradictions. In Barthes' view the myth becomes a tool to maintain the status quo and essentialize –and simplify- much more complex realities. Following this example, transsexuality becomes a myth that permits to negotiate the fact that one can 'change' his/her sex and gender, while reifying and naturalizing the (anomalous) categories of sex and gender.

For Barthes in that the importance (and danger) of the myth belies its invisibility and the naturalization of the mythic character. In the same way as Stuart Hall's 'ideology', the myth

works precisely because the meanings seem ‘natural’ and the process of naturalization is rendered ‘common sense.’ However, with this I do not intend here to argue that transsexuality, transgenderism, sex and/or gender are false, or that they do not have real and embodied consequences on people. Transgender studies, like race or gender studies, need to account for the realities of their communities when theorizing, and realize that, despite the metaphoric and theoretical questionings of such issues, the complexity of individual experiences cannot fully be described in such theorizations. Rather, by using the myth, I want to unpack the ways in which sex and gender are being naturalized and transsexual people are located in the aberrant in-between, in the anomalous category exceeding the meaning, from which they can only escape if the myth is accepted, naturalized and its processes invisibilized –thus becoming to the eyes of society a ‘real’ man or woman.

The role of media in broadcasting iterations of the medical and legal discourse of the “true transsexual”, as well as their constant work on establishing inviolable differences between sexes and genders, becomes important to understand the myth that is been generated around transgenderism and the ideological erasures of minority discourses in pro of the dominant class and the status quo. As important as the myth itself, we need to look also at the ways it is being represented. Like in Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination* (2001), the media participate of this silent naturalization of gender inequality by naturalizing privileged discourses and presenting them as normal, inescapable, sensible, logical, scientific and objective. All these adjectives subtly attached to the same tropes end up inscribing in the collective mind a chain of relationships that favors and oppresses different groups at the same time.

According to Will Wright in *Six Guns and Society*: “the social concepts and attitudes determined by the history and institutions of a society are communicated to its members through its myths.”(1975, p.15) The media is the perfect place to start unraveling the hidden meanings of the myth. By unpacking the myth that is being presented as naturalized, we can then question the legal and medical limitations imposed on trans people, both in terms of pathologizing and criminalizing their bodies and identities, as well as interrogate the means of representation as part of the problem, but also possibly, part of the solution. A good way to start doing so is to look at the texts within their contexts, and account for the political, economical, cultural and national ideas framing the discourse. In this way, we can locate the meanings that are being negotiated and, more importantly, those that are given as ‘common sense.’ The parts that act as common sense, and thus are out of the negotiation, are the ones that a thorough analysis will try to address and put in the forefront, since those are precisely the discourses where we can find ideology working at its best.

Cultural Studies of the Law and Science

This ‘mythical’ character of the media, with the ability to depoliticize and naturalize certain ‘truths’ is crucial in our social understanding of complicated phenomena like science or the law and their media representations. The complexity of those fields –so central to this dissertation- requires the use of stereotyping, shortcutting and vulgarization of their knowledges in order to be codified in the media. There are numerous TV series about lawyers and doctors, justice and hospitals. However, the supposed ‘objectivity’ of both science and the law hide much more profound meanings and ideologies that, precisely for their thoroughness in classifying (crimes,

bodies, diseases, amendments) can reveal much information on the construction and cracks of such categories.

For example, we can find Kimmel's work on *The Gendered Society* (2000) and his interrogation of science as a site for naturalizing sexism, collapsing together 'gender difference' and 'gender inequality' (I). For Kimmel, science has been historically used to reinforce male dominance and gender difference, from physicians advising women to stay home and deeming them unfit to public life in the XIX century (p.22) to Darwinism and evolutionism paving the way for liberal individualism that ignores structural forces and blames the individual for their own fate. This issue also conflicts with the search for the gay gene (p.35) or the conflation of a scientific and a biological explanation to homosexuality. Finally, Kimmel approaches hormonal levels as gender defining and the interest on hermaphrodites –inhabiting the borderlands of gender- to find a clear border. Kimmel states that, even if hermaphroditism (or more appropriately intersexuality) is a rare condition, it is “less rare, however [...] those whose biological sex is ambiguous” (p.41).

Kimmel, as many others have explored, highlights cross-cultural differences of gender and gender construction. What rituals, what processes in each society define one's gender? Under this same question, several authors of the field of Cultural Studies have questioned mediatized scientific constructions of race (Brandt, 1978), the body and sex through genitalia (Moore & Clarke, 1995), the hybridity of body and machine (Haraway, 1991), or more recently the construction of race in videogames and the internet (Nakamura, 2002; 2007) and the representation of identities through surveillance technology (Gates, 2010).

Other scholars have explored the relationship between communication and the law, as compiled in the work of Machura and Robson (2001). They put together a syllabus of articles from Germany, Britain and the US that analyze law films from a Cultural Studies perspective. It is not the only monograph dedicated to the topic (Black, 1999; Sherwin, 2002; Kamir, 2001, 2006; Chase, 2002; Lenz, 2003), but it does a commendable job of mapping the field of “law-and-film” (Kamir, 2005).

Similarly, under the belief that “popular culture reflects popular legal culture” (Greenfield et al., 2001, p.6), their edited volume *Film and the Law* focuses on the mediatization of the law from a variety of perspectives. Much like the theories I have been using in this chapter, Greenfield (et al.) think that the interrogation of the media as a site of production of knowledges that cultural studies propose, need to be applied to the representations of the law. Not only can we gain access to a system of beliefs and specialized knowledge in law that are reproduced, but we can also highlight the misconceptions and myths that circulate in a certain time and place, which will reveal the cracks in a monolithic understanding of the law, *and* we can prevent the law from being naturalized, essentialized or even simplified.

However, the most influential approach to science and the law is the part of Cultural Studies dedicated to ideas of illness and health. This subset of texts is the field’s approach to illness and its representations as sites of (re)production of ideologies. In this line of work it is worth noting the writings by Treichler and Crimp on AIDS (Treichler, 1999; Crimp & Bersani, 1988), as well as Sontag’s take on cancer and tuberculosis (Sontag, 1978). Their work focuses in the discursive practices around illness, and the importance of their representation and explanation in the media when thinking of ideology: “the very nature of AIDS is constructed

through language and in particular through the discourses of medicine and science” (Treichler, 1987, p.263).

This Foucauldian ‘discursive formation’ of the disease, in which popular and scientific discourses cohabit and overlap in configuring our understanding of it, embeds the concept of AIDS with other discourses of ambiguity and homophobia: “another appeal of thinking of AIDS as a ‘gay disease’ is that it protects not only the sexual practices of heterosexuality but also its ideological superiority” (Treichler, 1987, p.278). Racism (and the representation and reproduction of AIDS clichés regarding African Americans and Haitians), sexism (the double moral of women not transmitting the disease but prostitutes do) and other oppressive articulations are linked in portrayals and media treatments of AIDS, even if not in an explicit way.

Treichler is an expert in this area, and has explored different representations of AIDS, from magazines to TV series like *General Hospital*. She is also very critical of the supposed ‘objectivity’ of medicine, and critiques scientific discourse as a vehicle to stealthily attach cultural beliefs to the scientific project. For this questioning of science, she uses the approaches to medicine of Brandt (1987) and Latour and Woolgar (1986), and she also highlights the importance of not relinquishing authority to medicine and the agency of the patient. Treichler’s analysis shows us how ideology, science and media are intertwined in creating ‘knowledges’ that are taken for granted and immutable, while at the same time evidencing the work of metaphors and implicit meanings in constructing the meaning of AIDS.

Crimp and Bersani in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* (1988) add that “AIDS does not exist apart from the practices that contextualize it, represent it and respond to it”

(p.3), evoking the role of media in the production of AIDS and counter-balancing this with a review of ACT UP's strategies to re-appropriate the media and the hegemonic discourses in the public space. In a similar way to Sontag already did with tuberculosis and cancer (the paradigm illnesses from the 19th and 20th respectively, Crimp and Treichler intertwine the 'meaning' and the 'metaphor' in the creation of scientific discourses on illness. However, whereas Sontag saw a way of avoiding the metaphor, Treichler states the impossibility of completely disentangling one from the other and Crimp focuses more on the ways of resisting this conflation (rather than making a separation between 'true' meaning and implicit ideology).

Summary

In this chapter, the first of two that set the theoretical framework of this dissertation, I have explored the main theoretical paradigms that inform this dissertation, without exploring in depth the field of transgender studies –which takes place in Chapter 3. This dissertation is preoccupied with using the main concepts that theory provides, and the possibilities that similar or likeminded research can open, to interrogate the representation and discursive formation of transgender people in Spanish film. For this task, Michel Foucault's work gives me the tools and vocabulary to examine discursive formations of identities, modern circulations of power and biopower, the possibility to re-historicize science and law and any of the institutional 'knowledges' that regulate our bodies and desires. On the other hand, cultural studies allow me to work on highlighting ideologies in the films thanks to their feminist legacy, and also address issues of symbolic annihilation, stereotyping, visibility and the myth. Through

this ideas, I am able to unpack the various layers of meaning included in a seemingly unique audiovisual text in my analysis chapters.

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE FIELD

In this chapter, I briefly explore the birth of the field of transgender studies and their inherent relationship with scientific discourses, which frames (or positions against) many of its authors. I also offer a literary review of transgender studies in the Spanish context, analyzing the main works of the field, and highlighting their coincidences and approaches to science and the law, as well as their differences in categorization and naming of the phenomenon. This section serves to locate the US reader in the specificity of the field in Spain, and brings forth local tensions to better understand some of the representations that I analyze in subsequent chapters. Finally, I add a section called *Transgender Studies and Media* in which I review the authors in the field that have shaped my analyses, as well as those authors that have explicitly analyzed transgender representation in Spanish film, in order to account for the state of the question theoretically.

This chapter completes the framework that Chapter 2 started, and offers a review on the research that informs this dissertation located in the field of transgender studies.

Transgender Studies

The Birth(s) of Transgender Studies

Transgender studies appear in the early nineties, as a reaction to normative ‘transsexuality’ and the exclusions that it generated to some who didn’t fit in the medical (hegemonic) paradigm, as well as questioning the investment of transgender people and regulating institutions on the issue on the gender binary (which transgender studies, as well as queer studies oppose). Sandy

Stone's manifesto *The "Empire" Strikes Back* (1993) is considered to be the germinal text for this field, but the 'birth' of transgender studies is not without other influences that shape the movement. For example, Valentine in his book *Imagining Transgender* (2007) locates the inception of transgender studies also in the nineties, but offers other examples and complicates the notion of Stone's manifesto as the only germinal work for the field. Valentine holds that 'transgender' gained a meaning as the "radical edge" (Ekins & King, 1999) of gender variance by people who identified as an in-between, a 'crossgender' (Valentine, 2007, p.32). He also pinpoints the first usages of 'transgenderist', a proto-usage of the category to include other gender non-conformities, in the 1970s.

Valentine is also critical with the relationship of transgender and gay and lesbian/queer studies. He states that, whereas these paradigms believe in sexuality as an entirely different category of analysis, the bald assertion of the ontological separateness of gender and sexuality ignores the complexity of lived experience, the historical constructedness of the categories themselves, the racial and class locations of different experiences and theorizations of gender and sexuality, feminist understandings of gender and sexuality as systemic and power-laden, and transforms an analytic distinction into a naturalized, transhistorical, transcultural fact (Valentine, 2007, p.62).

Although he is explicit in his opposition to return to a conflation of homosexuality and transgenderism, he argues that "the construction of gender as a public concern, and that of sexuality in the realm of the private, places 'transgender' as a category of difference and 'gay' as the category of similarity and sameness" (p.64). Again we can see how the position of transgender studies can be co-opted to legitimize gay and lesbian movements, positing

transgender people as an extreme that helps normalize less in-your-face non-normative sexualities. For this reason, Valentine argues, we need to be careful in the conflation of categories, as much as we should be for the creation of separation of categories, which do in themselves generate exclusion.

Another critique to the supposedly smooth 'birth' of transgender studies from Stone's piece is Jay Prosser's "Second Skin Skins" (2006). Prosser sees the inception of transgender studies from a different position: instead of linking transgender studies to queer studies, he recuperates the influence that the former had on the latter: "The transgendered presence lies just below the surface of most lesbian and gay studies' foundational texts" (p.259). He identifies attention to transgender themes in the work of varied thinkers and activists, and the ubiquity of transgenderism within early queer theory. In his claim, the figure of transgender people are used by queer scholars to trouble identity categories since the early days of queer theory.

Although he claims that the text that "yoked transgender most fully to queer sexuality is Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*" (p.259), he questions the way Butler uses drag queens as a tokenistic inclusion of a case of performance that serves to disarticulate the gender binary without taking into account the embodied consequences of this 'constructed' gender for other transgender people whose lives depend on this performance. The 'trouble' with *Gender Trouble* (1990) for Prosser, is then that in centering the debate of gender on performance, it ignores the sufferance of trans people and their gender/sex embodiment, as well as the oppression that gender non-conforming people receive from the rest of society –which she later addresses in *Bodies that Matter* (1993). French theorist Baudrillard also arrives at this diagnosis, highlighting the critiques of other scholars and activists to appropriating transsexuality itself as a sign, and in

doing so, erasing the material complexity of everyday life for transsexual and transgender people (2009).

All in all, what seems relevant is that in the 1990s, and more or less simultaneously to the emergence of queer theory, an oppositional movement and scholarship was born to address specific issues for transgender communities. The coming-of-age of the field in the US, was in 2006 when Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle edited the volume *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Stryker also edited its second volume in 2013 (Stryker & Aizura, 2013), adding 50 more chapters to the compilation, and focusing on more current scholarship as well as with different ramifications of transgender studies. Stryker has also founded the journal *Transgender Studies Quarterly* in 2014, and has become one of the referenced names as this field is established. The two volumes of the reader compile different intersections with other fields from which transgender studies have academically profited, and lay out the various approaches to a polymorphous phenomenon that seems to refuse a solid definition.

The first reader is structured in sections such as feminism, queer theory, the 'self', masculinity, embodiment and intersectionality, all of which are appropriate and diverse entry points to the phenomenon. However, as it happens with this dissertation, the reader starts with the crossings of the field with science, in a bloc where the main texts defining transgender issues in psychology are laid out to create a genealogy of its emergence. Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892) links homosexuality to gender variance, arguing that within homosexuality there is a divergence with the person's gender that can be presented at a low degree (feminization of the man, for example) or at an extreme –and deemed psychotic– level, like the wish to change one's sex. It is followed by the work of Hirschfeld, who created the first

sexology institute in Germany, *The Transvestites* (1910), which argues for a separation of homosexuality and transsexuality, opposes fetishistic readings of the phenomenon and even explains it in a four stage (not binary) gradation: the dissonance of genitals (hermaphrodite), dissonance of minor body features like facial hair (atypical manifestations), dissonance of sexual impulses (homosexuality and other sexual deviances/fetishisms) and psychological dissonance (transsexuals and transvestites). Through this categorizing, Hirschfeld paves the way for future research on definition and separation of different paradigms of gender non-conformity. Hirschfeld's work was very influential for thinking of the divisions of sex, gender and sexuality, as well as developing early sex reassignment surgery.

We can also find in the reader Cauldwell's *Psychopathia Transexualis* (Cauldwell, 2006) and his conflation of the social/biological factors that lead to transsexuality around mid-20th century, followed by the article Dr. Harry Benjamin authored in 1953, "Transvestism and Transsexualism" in the *International Journal of Sexology* (Benjamin, 1953), which precedes his famous 1966 *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. Dr. Benjamin had begun to treat transsexuals with hormone therapy in 1949 and he is thought to be the most influential scientist in shaping the current transgender movement by establishing his category of 'true transsexual' that separated such patients from other types of transgenderism. Whereas Cauldwell thought that surgery was only important for intersex people, and that a good family and role models could prevent transsexuality, Benjamin argued that 'true transsexuals' are in need and deserving of gender confirmation surgery. After them, the articles on the science of sex and gender follow up to Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) a much more contemporary piece that symbolizes the long and wide evolution of transgender studies and their views on science.

These early debates in science help us understand the complexity of the issue for the scientific community, as well as the evident link between transgender identities and science. Indeed, the importance of science for the field and the weight of scientific definitions in our understanding of the issue, be it as a guidance or constructed as an opposition, cannot be ignored. The reader further explores science and biologicism in its second volume, through original entry points like the animal world, using examples in nature –widely present in essentialist explanations of monogamy, heterosexuality or masculine supremacy– to reverse heterosexist readings of what is ‘natural’ and provide counter-examples of ‘unnatural’ behaviors, sexes and sexualities in the animal world. This relationship between scientific discourses and the formation of transgender identities is related to Michel Foucault already in the first reader –and explicitly quoted in Stryker’s introduction. Both readers discuss scientific discourses and knowledges that have created and shaped the transgender identity as much as the field of transgender studies.

Judith Butler pens an article very influential for this dissertation in the reader, “Doing Justice to Someone” (Butler, 2001), which brings together science, media and Foucauldian theories. After apologizing for how *Gender Trouble* was read on its take on transgender people, Butler has continued in using transgender examples to theorize about sex and gender, but in this piece she takes the case of a particular person into account to talk about the interventions of medicine onto the bodies of transgender people (thus taking into account the embodied realities rather than a ‘performance of gender’). In it she reviews Foucault’s premises on intelligibility to question the apparatuses of knowledge that are acting on the body of a patient (case study) making him “the limit of intelligibility” (p.193). These limits of intelligibility, for

Butler, are also those of the definition of person, which we find through an interrogation of “what social norms must be honored and expressed for personhood to become allocated” (p.184).

For this process of validating or legitimizing certain ways of *being*, Butler again uses a media example and talks about how the case of Joan/John gained recognition through, for example, the British Broadcasting Corporation in the 1990s. The Joan/John case, a young boy who suffered a surgical accident resulting in the burning of his genitalia, highlights the intervention of doctor Money in the today unthinkable solution that he offered: opposing biologicism and advocating for gender as something that is learned in a person’s baby years, he counseled John’s parents to raise him as a woman, using surgery and hormones, because at such a young age he could be ‘persuaded’ or educated onto being one. Butler shows how complex it is to locate John/Joan (who in a later age demanded to get reassigned as a man again) in the limits of what we know: John/Joan was not intersex –although the critique to the surgery applied serves as a general critique on invasive medical interventions on children- nor was John/Joan transsexual –since the ‘will’ or the identity of the patient is never taken into account.

Overall, the take on point of the piece is the importance in science of different factors to determine gender, for it is difficult to base it on a single measurement. Butler signals the constructedness of gender through the different (and historical) variables used to determine gender: chromosomes, genitalia, socialization, parental role models, malformations in genetics, etc. (a debate that can be clearly seen in gender testing for sports). Firmly based on transgender theory this time, Butler denounces the position of both biologist and

constructivist approaches to medicine and surgery, exemplified by the two doctors in the story of John/Joan, which in order to fix some kind of scientific ‘unnaturalness’ in their patients, think that an unnatural intervention is what is mandated by nature. This conflation of ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ for legitimizing a scientific position is one of the many paradoxes that transgender studies aim to address.

Finally, Butler mentions other theorists like Kate Borstein as reclaiming ‘trans’ –those who are in transition, in movement- as a third gender, like “carr[ying] the legacy of Simone de Beauvoir: if one is not born a woman, but becomes one, then becoming is the vehicle of gender itself” (p.188). It is this position, one that tries to unite people ‘in transition’ rather than label the different ways of being in transition, what can reconcile the heterogeneity of the transgender community without demonizing or excluding parts of it for having a different understanding, position or explanation for their own experiences and lives. By acknowledging and trying to understand the myriad of possibilities that coexist under the same paradigm, paying attention to each case’s particularities, transgender studies can be inclusive and work towards a better understanding and legitimation of transgender lives and experiences, whether one identifies as a gender-bender in transition or as described precisely by Harry Benjamin’s ‘true transsexual’.

Transgender Studies in the Spanish Context: A Literary Review

There is no compilation that puts together all the different approaches to Transgender studies in Spain in a single reader. Also, the different language makes for different tensions over the vocabulary to define and understand the phenomenon (such as the divisions between

transsexual/transgender in English), and it is still an important debate for the burgeoning field. In the same way that we can find US authors reclaiming and problematizing the history of different terms for different issues, like heterosexual cross-dressers using ‘transgender’ (Hill, 2013) or transgender people using different words to mean the same in different contexts (Valentine, 2007), I must account for the complexities that exist in Spain, although this topic alone could be enough for a dissertation project in itself. This section explores the different authors in Spain that have analyzed the topic in their work, constructing a literary review of transgender scholarship in the country, which overlaps, but also breaks from, US-centric perspectives and authors.

As I said, the word transgender with its current meaning is ‘born’ in the 1990 in the US, in conjunction with queer theory, at the hands of activists that were trying to debunk essentialization of transsexuality as well as opposing the privileging of one homogeneous narrative to explain the phenomenon, namely Harry Benjamin’s definition of the “true transsexual”. There has been (and there is) a debate in Spain about the use of the word ‘queer’, ranging from a reinvention/ recontextualization with a Spanish term to oppose English language imperialism/colonialism –some are searching for options like *teoria torcida* (*twisted theory*) (Llamas, 1998) or *trans-marika-bollo* (*trans-faggot-dyke*) a literal translation and appropriation of insults within activist contexts- or simply adopting the English word to continue with its legacy (Cordoba et al., 2005). In the same way, the usages of transsexual or transgender range widely in the different milieus: *trans*, *transexual*, *transgenero*, *travesti*, *travelo*⁷, etc.

⁷ For the purpose of this dissertation, the words in Spanish will be presented in italics to differentiate them from typos in English.

A good point to start, following the connections between queer theory and transgender studies in Spain is the work of Grupo de Trabajo Queer (Romero Bachiller et al., 2005), in which several authors in and out academia write “against heterosexuality”. It is a collective book project defending and exploring queer theory and activism in Spain, with important and emergent names in the queer panorama, in which authors describe themselves as “faggots”, “ex-commies” or “weirdos”. It deals with a wide range of topics, from AIDS activism to “femmenism”, and has a big percentage dedicated to trans and intersex issues. It is also published under a Creative Commons license by an independent publishing house, which speaks to the anticapitalist positionality that the authors explicitly have.

Chapter seven is written by Moises Martinez, trans activist and protagonist of one of the most recent and nuanced documentaries on transsexuality. Moises calls himself a man and a transsexual but highlights the constructedness of gender:

Being a woman or a man, and thus also transsexuality, is a social reality that medicine protocolizes and the laws delimit; the State creates this medico-legal frame which promotes and perpetuates this situation.”(Martinez, 2005, p.114)

He cleverly opposes the narrative of a man/woman trapped in a wrong body, by stating that maybe they are “people trapped in the wrong society” (p.115). Martinez has a very interesting style, in first person, exploring the construction of gender from a radical constructivist positionality and disentangling biology from gender completely.

He explores intimacies such as performance of hypermasculinity to socialize FtM’s and demands from his fellow transgender men to acknowledge hypermasculinity as a strategy to socialize as well as a learning process (not a biological given personal feature). He emphasizes that the objective should not be to “look like the others” but to look like one wants to, and

offers and encourages other possibilities to 'have' a penis that do not require surgery, because SRS still feels incomplete and is very aggressive to health -especially in phalloplasties. Martinez is for me a very refreshing voice for trans people that need other ways and examples of negotiating their own gender. The chapter is illustrated by a photograph, "Falosinplastia", and reclaims a higher visibility of other types of sexualities and genitalia, taking the public space of representation.

Another of such works, from the same year, is *Teoria Queer. Politicas bolleras, maricas, trans, mestizas* (Cordoba et al., 2005). It is one of the most comprehensive compilations on queer theory in Spain to date, featuring renowned authors in gender studies and counting amongst them with the presence of Preciado, a notable name for Spanish thought domestically and abroad. I want to stress as well, before I start with Preciado's work, that in the subtitle of the book there is a reference to the different groups included under the queer umbrella: "dyke, faggot, trans and mix raced politics", with the explicit inclusion of transgender politics through the word *trans*. However, there is only a very little part of the text occupied by *trans* issues. The book starts a genealogy of "queer" in Spain and decides to use the English word before other options, as well as using *trans* as an umbrella term for all sex and/or gender non-conformity. In this context, *trans* is used as the English umbrella term transgender.

Preciado's chapter in the book is the only section openly devoted (although not exclusively) to reflections on transgender studies. Preciado starts her chapter by relating the actual situation between *trans-bolleras* (*trans-dykes*) and feminism with the critiques done to lesbian feminism in the 1980s by Audre Lorde, Cherry Moraga and Women of Color Feminism. If in the 1980s the inclusion of race was questioned in the lesbian-feminism politics, Preciado

questions women-only policies that discriminate against trans women, and posits trans-dykes as a disruption of the heterosexual matrix.

Building up this debate, Preciado creates a space of fictitious conversation between Monique Wittig and Michel Foucault –with interventions by Deleuze and Guattari– that link Preciado’s writing to deconstructive narratives of the French school of post-structuralism. This feature is also supplemented by the usage of dashes and other visual linguistic tricks that remind us that Preciado is one of Jacques Derrida’s acolytes. She presents the lesbian body as radical, a radical materialism opposing the conception of ‘nature’, and thus the trans-dyke is radically opposing the differentiation between biological and trans person/sex/gender. I want to note here how Preciado uses the adjective “dyke” rather than “lesbian”, as she has done throughout her work in a radical and provocative way to re-appropriate insults and highlight the performativity of the usage of such adjectives to define identities.

The inclusion of Preciado in this compilation is not accidental, as the author has become one of the few scholars from Spain that are globally recognized in gender studies. She has a philosophy background and since her early thirties holds the chair in Political History of the Body and Gender Theory in La Sorbonne, Paris VIII. More well known by two of her other books, *Manifiesto Contrasexual* (2002) and *Testo Yonqui* (2008), Preciado deals with trans issues in a similar way as Judith Butler did in *Gender Trouble* (1990), namely the highlighting of the limits of sex and gender through a radical exception like the trans/gender/sexual body. However, Preciado takes the ideas of performativity one step further and queries those limits from a philosophical and almost playful space. In *Manifiesto Contrasexual* she approaches in the form of a manifesto –so recurrent from an activist perspective- the overcoming of body limitations

and sex and gender through the dildo, comparing the sexual toys to prosthetic additions to the body. Citing the work of Donna Haraway in her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), Preciado draws parallelisms between the cyborg and the trans person, conceptualizing transgender bodies and lives to transcend the limits of their own bodies and lives. The manifesto also invokes Foucauldian thesis on subjectivation and identity that let the author explore the discursive formation of sexual identity.

Testo Yonqui, on the other hand, retakes some of the same topics she explored in the manifesto but is crafted more artfully and provocatively. In it, Preciado combines narrative chapters of a self-reflective journey in the form of an autobiographic –and very erotic– story with essays about regulation and showcasing of sex supporting modern capitalism. She describes our existence in the “pharmaco-pornographic” regime that emerges with synthetic hormones, birth-control pills and Viagra, prosthetics, technologies of body modification (aesthetic and genital surgery) and pornography. Disciplines of the body are now swallowed, and they work from within our bodies, at a micro-level, modifying our organism. We are no longer only consumers of this pharmaco-pornographic industry: the industry is now part of us. This idea opens new spaces to think about the issue of transsexuality without blaming individuals for their choices and instead critique the capitalist interest in the regulation of sex and gender.

Like Michelle O’Brien in her piece “Tracing this Body” (2013), Preciado sees an inescapability of the system we are all immersed and that medically and technologically regulates our bodies. O’Brien highlights the inequalities between the position of patient/consumer of certain approved drugs, and that of the provider that ignores any

recognition of transgender people, and camouflages in accordance with the FDA “a long history of coercive neocolonial economic exploitation” (2013, p.59) while allowing to purchase more and more affordable drugs ignoring the geographical, economical and social implications of the pharmaceutical companies at a global level. O’Brien coincides with Preciado in her description of the pharmaceutical system, in her Foucauldian analysis of the technologies of the body and her links with cyborg theory.

Through this Foucaultian reflection sprinkled with a mix of reality and fiction in Preciado’s self-applying testosterone gel (hence the title “testo-junkie”) and narrating the transformations and experiences deriving thereof, the philosopher addresses the question of transsexuality. She argues against medical and legal control of our sexes and genders, which base their gatekeeping decision on old-fashioned stereotypes of gender and a fake narrative of transsexuality, which has become recurrent due to the network of information within transsexual people that want to get access to gender confirmation surgery, rather than because of their own experiences. Following this thought, Preciado is very aggressive against transsexual people too in her work, harshly dismissing all narratives of transsexuality that summon biology or “an error of nature,” and she doesn’t acknowledge the real suffering of transsexual people and the strategic essentialism that some of them use in order to survive in the heterosexual matrix.

In fact, it is precisely her privileged position as a person in French academia experimenting in her own room with testosterone, and her lack of empathy for people who – might need or might decide to– cling to the narrative of the ‘true transsexual’ in their lives that has been most criticized about her work. Indeed, many transgender people are not in a position

of choice to go against the gender establishment in many cases, situation that is aggravated by the terrible social exclusion some face. Not unlike the work of other French post-structuralists, and as refreshing and mind-opening their intricate reflections are, the difficulty/impossibility of applying such elaborate theories and put them to practice is not a rare comment to make about this type of work. Amongst open critiques to the work of Preciado we can find activists like Javier Saez, editor of *Teoría Queer* (Cordoba et al., 2005) and author of one of the best online sites for queer theory in Spain (www.hartza.com) or the work of Gerard Coll-Planas, whom I will discuss later on. Despite the critiques, Preciado is still an exciting entry onto high theory –mixed with a fresh and even ‘pop’ approach– and start debates that are more than necessary in the field of gender and transgender studies.

In a different way, the work of Jose Antonio Nieto (2008) and Patricia Soley-Beltran (2009) explore the topic from a more grounded perspective, balancing their outsider point of view with qualitative analysis and discourse analysis of trans people’s interviews. Not surprisingly, both come from a social sciences environment (anthropology and sociology) and their work shows a very different approach than the more humanistic/philosophical style of Preciado. Nieto’s work on the topic, *Transexualidad, intersexualidad y dualidad de genero* (2008) is an interesting take on medicalization of transsexuality and intersexuality by addressing four main topics: the Gender Identity Law (passed in Spain in 2007, thus in the final stages of the book), the gender and sex binary, psychiatrization of transsexuality and the articulation with sexuality.

Nieto’s critiques are focused on the medical institution, as he sees it behind legal and cultural perceptions of trans/intersex people. He argues that the medical institution does not

de-pathologize transsexuality but never acknowledges its own deficits in addressing the “problem”. The author goes against scientific objectivity and demystifies the binary nature/culture and biologist arguments by using transsexuality and intersexuality. He claims, for example, that intersex self-consciousness is given through medical or scientific knowledge, not by itself and, at the same time, that medical knowledge is based in cultural beliefs and reinforced with allegedly ‘natural’ arguments. As such, surgery done to intersex babies is more about medical discomfort than about intersexuality per se –or the intersex person’s own discomfort (p.56). In a similar way, he rejects the search of biological answers to transsexuality as a need for an embodiment (a chromosome for example) to validate medical theories and furnish them with the required scientific objectivity.

Psychoanalysis and surgery do also receive critiques from Nieto, pointing out the misogynistic basis of medicine and psychiatry, and comparing gender confirmation surgery to other genital manipulation elsewhere in the world. By linking the over-medicalization of women to the institutionalized control of trans people, and the much denounced clitoris ablation in some Islamic regions with gender confirmation surgery, Nieto is pointing out the historical and geographical contingency of sex and gender as we think of it. He compares Western surgery with other manipulation of genitals in the world like castration, the “hijra” or the “skoptsy” and the underlying reasons behind them, be them punitive, religious or even caused by the acceptance of a “third sex” –accepting it in society rather than fixing it through medicine. Nieto urges the reader to think of a gender identity outside its medical, technocratic and essentialist representation inherited from the 19th century and builds up conceptually the results he gets from the interviews with *trans* people.

The author adds transgender voices to his chapters, explaining each of the main four topics under scrutiny. The new Gender Identity law is seen as a huge progress allowing people with no money and/or no desire for surgery to still be recognized as the sex and gender they identify with. Nieto is anti-essentialist and advocates for a plurality of opinions within the community. The book is a great treaty of trans and intersex issues, exploring their multiple aspects and adding testimonials from trans people in each chapter. It feels a little bit forced at points –most of the *trans* people interviewed use advanced knowledge of gender theory and almost too adequate vocabulary that reminisces academic training– but it is still is a great book to understand the issues at stake and interrogate institutions, even if it feels a bit too much optimistic with the Gender Identity law’s outcomes.

Soley-Beltran, on the other hand, comes from a history background and a PhD in Sociology of Gender and, despite of adding the voices of trans people to her reflections on the heterosexual matrix, her work seems more problematic to me. Her book *Transexualidad y la matriz heterosexual* (2009) is subtitled “a Critical Study of Judith Butler”. Of course, the heritage of Butlerian gender theory and queer theory is huge in her approach and the book is divided on a first part on Butler, and a second part on empirical research through interviews, juxtaposing transsexuality and the heterosexual matrix. She defines her categories of analysis as *transexuales* and *travestis*, in a very similar way to the classical medical division by Harry Benjamin (1966). Her focus is on people that have started transition somehow (surgery or hormones) and she divides them in *Hombre a Mujer* or *HaM* and *Mujer a Hombre* or *MaF*⁸, pre-

⁸ Which are equivalent to Male to Female (MtF) and Female to Male (FtM) in the English context, but using “man” and “woman” instead of male/female.

and post-operation. For the scope of her book, only transsexuals are considered, thus giving us very little space to interrogate about the choice of concepts (always *transsexual*).

Soley-Beltran chose *transexuales* based on Butler's interest on what is outside the limits or weird. However, in her choice she conforms to one of the most fixed definitions of transsexuality that is the one used by the medical institution in determining SRS as a pivotal feature (despite the book being post-Gender Identity Law in which the SRS requirement is removed to obtain legal sex recognition). But this is not the most problematic part of the book, because it can be argued that gives her more methodological weight for the rest of the scientific community. Instead it is the lack of self-reflexivity and acknowledgement of privilege that I found disturbing. At some point she talks about herself during the interviews: "I was an insider in that I didn't have preconceived ideas or prejudices towards transsexuality, and my sympathy and respect were sincere" (p.278). That, together with her saying that she felt uncomfortable for being held as a high standard of femininity by female *transexuales*, are some moments where we can see emerging biological and scientific privilege. In the first quote, the author seems convinced that she can be objective and have no "preconceived ideas or prejudices" towards transsexuality, which is in itself problematic and brings to the table the oftentimes debated issue of anthropologists and sociologists' objectivity. Especially if one is arguing against medical objectivity you should be first in checking yourself for traces of such scientific fallacy. However, the analysis of the author is interesting, especially in her tackling of the media and medical discourse as primary points of subjectivation for *transexuales* –and specifically not *transgenero*, which she specifies are not interested in surgery (p.388).

The crossings of scientific and legal fields to popular knowledge are illustrated through the works of Becerra-Fernandez (ed. 2003) and Esteva and Gomez Gil (2006) within the field of medicine, and those of Lopez-Galiacho Perona (1998) and Bustos Moreno (2008) from a legal background. By adding those books considered specialized in their own fields of work, I want to inspect also the opinions and concepts that are being used in the two most important institutions in defining and regulating sex and gender. There are also individual articles like Martinez-Guzman and Iñiguez-Rueda's look into the 'creation' of the Gender Identity Disorder by the medical institution (2010) or Katrina Belsue's ethnography (2011) pointing out the inconsistencies and incoherences of the current legal situation -especially in the incoherence between the 2007 law and the requisites of the official register to change one's sex recognition- which add to this critical corpus of the medical and legal institutions regarding transgenderism and transsexuality.

Becerra-Fernandez is the editor of a volume on transsexuality (2003) in which he reunites several psychologists, psychiatrists, endocrinologists, urologists, gynecologists and other medical specialties to describe and theorize around the phenomenon. It is not a surprise, then, that the definition and usage of *mujer/hombre transexual* is very monolithical, and that Harry Benjamin's definition of transsexuality is prevalent throughout the book. The volume also reifies sex through chromosomes, hormones and gonads, and is a compendium of biologist arguments. So much so that the very first sentence in its prologue reads as follows: "There are several theories about the origin of this phenomenon [transsexuality], but the most acceptable of them says that transsexuality originates during the fetal phase. An alteration impregnates the brain hormonally with a different sexuality than the genital one." (p.IX)

Amongst all the exploration of hormones, different surgical procedures and scientific categorization of identity, two chapters are notably apart from the rest: the historical revision of transsexual associations by Juana Ramos Canto (p.125-142) and the critique to the “real life test”⁹ by Olga Cambasani (p.85-96). Both are written by activists and part of the trans establishment in Spain (COGAM), and represent a different take than the rest of the book in that they are not medical practitioners and they are transgender people. In both those chapters, but especially in Cambasani’s, we can find the only mention of *transgenerismo* (transgenderism) as a non-surgical option to identify with another gender and the only critiques to the procedures of the medical establishment, oversimplifying through Benjamin’s “true transsexual” the lives and experiences of trans people (Becerra-Fernandez, 2003, p.92). However, it feels like very little space for trans voices in a book with 21 chapters and almost 30 authors.

Together with Becerra-Fernandez, we find Gomez Gil and Esteva’s *Ser Transexual* (2006), is an edited volume that according to its own description in the cover, “reflects on gender identity and its problems in an enjoyable, clear and practical way, with a great scientific rigor”. In its subtitle “directed to the patients, their families, and their health, legal and social environment” the book promises a wide coverage of the transsexual phenomenon and already categorizes its readers as “patients”.

Despite the book citing psychologists, specialist doctors, philosophers, jurists and representatives of patients and associations, the last two are only present in a small part of one of the eight chapters. The others are based on medical knowledge and explain the concepts of

⁹ According to medicine and sanctioned by several laws in the world, transsexuals need to start living as the sex they identify with in order to access surgery and confirm that the person has real intentions of “becoming” a man/woman.

sex and gender, presenting transsexuality as an “anomaly” (chapter 1), diagnostic and physiology (chapter 2), treatments and surgery for male to female and female to male (chapter 3 and 4), health care and post op care (chapters 5 and 6), legal aspects (chapter 7) and then a final chapter where transsexual people and associations get their space among bioethics, transsexuality and media or a part dedicated to “society in general” (chapter 8). The proportions of the information in the book position clearly the authors in the medical paradigm and explain the whole phenomenon from this perspective, using words like ‘patient’ to refer to transsexual people throughout the book and focusing on scientific definitions and procedures rather than experiences of transsexual people.

Similarly, but from a legal perspective, we can read cisgender privilege in Lopez-Galiacho’s legal analysis of transsexuality (1998). He has a very essentialist take on male/female and man/woman, and compares their different statuses in several law frameworks and historical moments. For Lopez-Galiacho “law is interested in sex’s identifying and qualifying function” (p.38) and it is fundamental as “without it legal practice would not be easy” (p.39). However, as the author notes, there is no definition of sex in law, because it corresponds to other sciences and since they do not agree on one single definition, law leaves it undefined. He proceeds to de-stabilize the gender binary through examples of intersex people -as one of the reasons that sex remains undefined in the law- but explains why sex is useful for the military, prisons, birth, non-discrimination, adoption or marriage (p.42). For him,

the problem emerges when the subject with normal [sic] genitalia, and a legal sex according to them, does not identify with the registered sex with which the person was educated, but evolves to the intimate feeling of belonging to the opposite sex. (p.98)

He calls these cases *transexualidad* or *cambio de sexo* (p.82), without acknowledging the controversy around this last term in the field. He also talks about the “transsexual syndrome” or “gender dysphoria” (p.99) and, whenever he gets closer to the medical definition, Benjamin’s “true transsexual” emerges. In general, the author borrows from psychiatry all concepts and definitions to explain the phenomenon and then analyzes laws against (those more prone to consider biology the essential piece) and in favor of (more concerned with the psychology of the person) recognizing the possibility of changing the sex mention legally.

To compare the different legal frameworks, he constructs this binary biology/culture or body/mind and makes an interesting case against considering transsexuality a “third sex”, which in his eyes would be used to prevent transgender people from having the same rights as their bio-counterparts (as the Spanish Tribunal Supremo has determined in some cases, he explores). However he defends that the register of the old sex should be available to, for example, people who want to marry the person (they have the right to know) and most of the problems of the legal sex change that the author explains are outdated, and pre-date both the Gender Identity Law and the recognition of same-sex marriage –a big preoccupation regarding marriage and adoption for transgender people.

Bustos Moreno writes on a similar topic but many years later (2008), after the Gender Identity Law, and actually focuses the whole book in the analysis of the law. Unlike Lopez-Galiacho, she acknowledges the great variety of denominations for the phenomenon and explains how it is not clear in the scientific community nor in the transgender community. Concepts like *transexualismo*, *persona transexualizada*, *síndrome de Harry Benjamin*, *diforia de género*, *trastorno de identidad sexual*, *trastorno de identidad de género*, *transgénero*,

transgenerismo and *transgeneridad* are listed (p.29) without really explaining their difference but rather as a prove of how heterogeneous the phenomenon is. The only differentiation that we can find of transsexual/transgender, corresponding to an interest/lack of interest in surgery is present in a little footnote of a book with more than 250 pages. Still, the author does a great analysis of the situations for transsexual people according to medicine and the law of the moment. It is surprising, though, to see how the possibility of not having SRS is relegated to a footnote and just because the word ‘transgender’ has been mentioned previously in the text.

The law clearly privileges the understanding of the “true transsexual” since its definition is the only way of working with a fixed meaning like law usually does. The analysis mainly focuses on the non-requirement for SRS, but also brings others forward like no test of the real life or no sterilization in the new law. It still seems an optimist vision of the law, failing to acknowledge the (still remaining) pathologization of trans people –the law requires a psychiatric diagnosis– and the fact that sterilization is given automatically after some time of hormones, even if its not required by the law.

To close this section, and to my understanding a lot more nuanced and complete than previous authors, we can find the edited volume *El Genero desordenado* (Misse & Coll-Planas, 2010). This book is the best compilation yet on transgender studies in Spain, including chapters that deal with medical and legal aspects, philosophical questions, first-person experiences and trans authors, as well as activist approaches. Its polymorphic composition makes of it a very useful text, which could be compared to the US transgender studies readers –albeit much shorter. The book has an approach that opposes biologicist arguments while at the same time leaving some space for trans people to identify and use whatever discourses they find useful,

even Benjamin's true transsexual. Indeed, the book challenges ideas, and despite being very critical of the medical and legal institutions it carefully addresses and respects first-hand experiences.

Both editors have also contributed to the field of LGBT studies in Spain beyond that edited volume. Philosophically challenging as well as practical in its activism, the volume follows the line of work of Gerard Coll-Planas, one of the editors and a young author who is interested in social construction of gender and sexuality (Misse & Coll-Planas, 2010), as well as in the possibilities that queer theory opens for thinking about issues of embodiment (Coll-Planas, 2012). Whereas Coll-Planas has been more prolific in his publications, and has dealt with a variety of topics within gender studies, Misse's work is more focused on his own experience as a transgender sociologist and activist, and he has recently published a book that serves as a background reading material to locate transsexuality within the Spanish territory (Misse, 2013).

Misse is very concerned with the articulation of the medical discourse on transsexuality as the hegemonic paradigm, forcing a certain understanding on the issue. Misse, who is very critical of the current role of doctors, says that last century "Doctors stopped being doctors and became guardians of the gender binary man/woman." (p.49) Furthermore, he complicates the assertion that Spain has a comprehensive legal frame for transsexual people by bringing to the discussion about transgender rights the Civil Register Law and its 54th article, which states that in giving name to babies, the name cannot be one that "induces to error in terms of sex" (Spain, 1957). It is legal ramifications like this one –outside the 2007 Gender Identity Law- what, together with the psychiatric requirements for transsexual people, leave transgender persons outside of the law if they do not belong in the medical paradigm.

To illustrate this prevalence of medicine in understanding transsexuality, he uses the example of the already mentioned manual *Ser Transexual* (Gomez Gil & Esteva, 2006), the first compilation of articles regarding the issue and that proposes that “in Spain, like in the US, the first to define and put words to the trans issue are physicians” (Misse, 2013, p.38). Indeed, he continues, transsexuality “is the only *mental disorder* that is *cured* through surgical procedures” (his emphasis, p. 64). While some criticize the attachment of criminality or poverty to transgender people, Misse wonders how surgery represents the central point for the definition of the issue in popular culture dealing with it, (p.63) and by making explicit some of the questions in the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) –a test applied to transgender people to determine their pertinence in accessing gender confirmation surgery– he evidences how this supposed scientific knowledge is actually based on sexist cultural beliefs (p.82)¹⁰.

All in all, the thing that is most interesting about Misse for this dissertation is the fact that he links each of his postulates about normative medical definitions of transsexuality to images of popular culture and media, actresses, movies and even Big Brother contestants. For Misse, the influence and reach of mass media to vulgarize medical knowledge and make it commonsensical knowledge –disciplining the bodies and minds through mechanisms of knowledge and truths– is pivotal to the ways in which the country understands the issue of transsexuality. For these representations, and as a conclusion/solution, he offers some examples of international film that will occupy part of my final discussion, since we share some views on possible alternative representations that do not reproduce the medical paradigm. In

¹⁰ Questions like “do you like mechanics magazines?” or “do you like romance novels?” are still being asked nowadays to help determine the gender of patients in their diagnosis for Gender Dysphoria/Identity Disorder.

that section, he explores other paradigms or representations that break with the monolithic 'true transsexual', and contributes with his examples to further the current ideological framework.

I specifically left these two authors for last, since they confirm and compile most of the different usages of vocabulary and definitions we have seen throughout this literary review of the field. Despite the differences between the US and the Spanish context, what seems evident after a thorough analysis is that transgender realities are multiple and heterogeneous, that context changes radically the meaning and power of the interactions and that, despite the insistence of law and medicine to fix definitions and solidify transgender identities and bodies, sex and gender are a polymorphous continuum that relentlessly resists binary simplifications.

Transgender Studies and Media

Transgender studies have also participated of communications scholarship and, despite its infrequent inclusion in canonical analysis of communication, have worked together with Foucauldian ideas and from a cultural studies positionality in creating divergent readings of texts and highlighting hidden ideologies in them. For example, Shaksari (2013) critiques 'pinkwashing' of nations (making judgements on a society according to their tolerance for LGBT people, without taking into account other axis of oppression like race or ethnicity) and demonizing of others by their perceived intolerance through documentaries on transsexuality in Iran. We can also find the critique of transsexuality as a metaphor on *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (dir. Cameron Mitchell, 2001) that bypasses transgender issues in the work of Jones (2013). But most importantly for this dissertation, the classification of representations that Julia

Serrano (2013) puts forth in her work has been a template against which to build my classification of the movies into archetypes. However, as I explain in the methodology chapter, it is the work of Alberto Mira (not related to transgender representation) what has given me the template to create my archetypes.

Serrano separates the representation of transgender people in two archetypes: the “deceptive” and the “pathetic”. Deceivers are transgender characters good at ‘passing’, and the movies they appear in are often based in a final plot twist (in which the transgender character is revealed as such to other characters and/or the audience) or portray such characters as sexual predators that use their deceptiveness to captivate ‘innocent’ heterosexuals. They are portrayed as fake women, revealing at the end their ‘true’ biological masculinity, which of course enacts discourses of homophobia and heterosexist innocence. The pathetic transgender, on the contrary, has no ability to ‘pass’ despite being trapped in a body that cannot ever do so. Normally used for laughs, their unavoidable manliness in their femininity, and the lack of genitalia or wish to remove them is always played up in this type of movies. Through this classification, Serrano critiques ‘transmisogyny’, the intersection of transphobia and misogyny in the representation of such characters. First, she says, popular media “tend to assume that all transsexuals are male-to-female and that all trans women want to achieve stereotypical femininity” (2013, p.226). Furthermore, “the images and experiences of trans people are presented in the media in a way that reaffirms, rather than challenges, gender stereotypes” (p.227).

For Serrano, the pivotal moment of such movies is the moment in which the character 'puts the mask on', signaling this moment as unavoidable in representations of transgender characters:

when audiences watch scenes of trans women putting on skirts and makeup, they are not necessarily seeing a reflection of the values of those trans women; they are witnessing TV, film, and news producer's obsessions with all objects commonly associated with female sexuality. In other words, the media's and audience's fascination with the feminization of trans women is a by-product of the sexualization of all women (p.230)

While transgender men are invisibilized because they are more difficult to make spectacular (p.231), transgender women are presented in a sexualized/humoristic way (depending on the archetype) and reproduce social misogyny, sexism and homophobia in their presentation. Serrano's critiques to intersectional oppression over the figure of transgender characters are seriously taken in my analysis, and they provide a framework to deal with Spanish representations. However, in this project I intent to complicate Serrano's binary separation by using three different discursive representations of transgender people that are not exclusive and often overlap, as I explain in the methodology chapter.

As for texts dealing with Spanish cinema, the representation of gender and sexuality has been explored in specialized literature both nationally and abroad. Alberto Mira's comprehensive volume *Miradas Insumisas* (2008) deserves a mention for being one of the most complete books published in Spain about LGBT cinema, despite its focus on Western cinema. Mira explores the representation of gays and lesbians through stereotypes, archetypes of gay and lesbian representation and issues of visibility and normalcy. Mira's deep analysis of the history of cinema concerning such issues is not unlike other volumes by US authors such as

Hadleigh (2001) or Davies (2010). It is telling, however, that in a volume of more than 500 pages, less than 10 of them are dedicated to the presence of cross-dressers and transsexuals on screen. This proportion is repeated throughout the literature on LGBT representation in cinema, which tends to forget the 'T' in the acronym, or relegate it to a marginal presence –or tokenistic inclusion. The same happens in Perriam's *Spanish Queer Cinema* (2014) or in most of the articles devoted to the topic (Marshall, 2000; Martinez Exposito 1999; 2000; 2008; Fouz-Hernandez & Martinez Exposito, 2007). Attention to homosexuality is very present, in monographic volumes (Ellis, 1997) whereas transgender issues are still vastly unexplored. There is another 'abundance' –if one might say so given the still marginal position in academia that gender studies represent– of analyses of gender performance in Spanish cinema, some of them coming from a 'performative' aspect of gender, together with sexuality (Martinez Exposito, 2008), focused on masculinity (Martinez Exposito, 2007), or concerned with other non-transgender displays of gender and femininity (Marsh & Nair, 2004; Pastor, 2006).

On the other hand, there is also a lot of attention devoted to the work of internationally famous filmographer Pedro Almodovar and his queer characters (Epps & Kakoudaki, 2009; Edwards, 2001; Smith, 1994; Goss, 2009)). His characteristic *auteur* style and his particular relationship with gender and the body are also investigated by Martinez Exposito (1999; 2000), who explores media and literature interacting with gender, sex and sexuality. Rivera Cordero et al. (2012) analyze the psychological aspect of the filmmaker, and others focus on particular movies. However there is only one recent book that focuses explicitly on transsexuality in Almodovar's film (Poyato Sanchez, 2014). Poyato is a specialist in the work of Almodovar, and dedicates his book to the 'poetics of trans' in his cinema. Although his approach is a textual

analysis and deals with metaphors, it has influenced my research in giving shape and thought to Almodovar's transgender discourse.

As for transgender in cinema, the work among which my dissertation is located includes Garlinger (2003) whose research on transsexual actress Bibiana Fernandez explores the relationship between the icon, postmodernity and the Spanish democratic transition; Estrada-Lopez (2012), who analyzes the gender-sexual dichotomy in *Mi Querida Señorita* (Armiñan, 1972) and *Cambio de Sexo* (Aranda 1977), and which my research engages directly. In a similar fashion, Waldron and Murray's analysis of *The Skin I Live In* and its reception (2011), and Pastor's work (2006) on otherness in *Law of Desire* inform the analysis in Chapter 5, which deals with the more contemporary representations of transgender in cinema.

Finally, there is no archival work¹¹ done in compiling the legacy of transsexuality in cinema, and much less an entire book dedicated to the topic. This dissertation wants to fill the existing gap in the field, working as an archive of transgender cinema in Spain, as well as putting together an analysis of the discursive formation of transsexuality and transgenderism *in* such archive. Furthermore, transgender representation is analyzed here as the central topic of the dissertation: as the characters under scrutiny, their representation is the protagonist –and not just an addendum or a part of a chapter in a larger LGBT compilation. If visibility of the transgender community is important in the media, it is also pivotal that we have research and critical readings about it that reflect on the particularities of this group.

¹¹ In the Foucauldian sense of “the collection of all material traces left behind by a particular historical period and culture”, which has been used by feminism or LGBT studies to recuperate forgotten legacies of the communities.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the field of transgender studies by locating their inception first, look at the particularities and state of the question in the Spanish context, and then concretize in the authors and work that makes transgender studies and media/film studies converge.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter offers an overview of the methodological details of this dissertation and how its qualitative research will be conducted. It presents the sample under analysis as well as the inclusion criteria, and it explains the parameters that will be relevant for finding the discourses on the topic at stake. Here, I organize the different ideas explored in the Theoretical Framework (Chapters 2 and 3) into three archetypes of analysis and a range of questions and procedures to address the issue. I retake as well the research questions that I exposed in Chapter 1 and instrumentalize them to analyze the data in search of answers. By exploring representational archetypes of transgender characters, this dissertation categorizes different discourses present in Spanish film regarding transgender people, and makes sense of them mapping the breaks and continuities of transgender representation in Spanish film.

Sample and Inclusion Criteria

The movies included in this dissertation are fiction feature films that have been produced and released in Spain¹². The conscious choice to focus on transgender characters in Spain, not represented or 'othered' as some people living far away, wants to limit the scope of this project to national production, more akin to use the tropes and narratives that pervade Spanish popular culture than their international counterparts. The chosen movies feature at least one protagonist or main character that experiences a wish or need to live –temporarily or permanently– as a person with a gender not matching their biological sex.

Firstly, a 'protagonist' or a 'main character' is a central character in the story that pursues a goal, such as personal growth or something more tangible, and that is present in a meaningful way throughout the movie. Secondly, a main character or protagonist is not a marginal character that seldom appears in the movie, or who has no influence or say in the main plot. It is important to weed out secondary characters, much less present and/or important to the script, because the analysis of this dissertation needs a character with complexity and interaction, which generates a certain array of discourses around them, in order to be meaningful. Furthermore, because the symbolic annihilation of the characters is visible in the size of the sample for this research, I want to focus on the discourses attached to them when they are part of the story, and thus need more time and effort to develop. In my final chapter I offer some possibilities of future research that deal more closely with issues of stereotyping and devaluing discourses in all types of transgender characters.

¹² This does not imply that foreign films have not participated in the way Spanish audiences understand transgender people, or that the influence of international cinema has not changed the ways in which Spanish directors construct their work.

The second criterion for inclusion of the movie was that the character ‘experiences a wish or need to live –temporarily or permanently– as a person with a gender not matching their biological sex’. For this to happen, the movie needs to be explicit about such desire or need. Because one cannot identify what character *is* transgender by their looks, this criterion focuses the attention of the research on, not only the character, but also on the way the movie ‘explains’ their transgender identity. It avoids a subjective interpretation of who is or is not transgender in a given movie as well as the use of ‘external knowledge’¹³.

The sources of information for applying the criteria were extracted from different online and private databases, as well as specialized literature, in order to be as thorough as possible in the final list of movies. For this project I consulted Filmoteca Nacional and Filmoteca de Catalunya’s databases using the keywords ‘trans’, ‘transgender’, ‘transsexual’, ‘cross-dressing’, ‘genderqueer’ and ‘transvestite’ for the search. They are the two biggest and most important government funded cinema institutions in the country and they preserve cinema’s cultural heritage in their extended databases. Furthermore, other online databases were consulted: general in scope such as IMDB’s LGBT Spanish cinema, Cinegay.org’s main page or Wikipedia’s page devoted to the topic; more specialized databases like Casal Lambda’s library, the biggest association in Barcelona with the more complete catalogue of movies dealing with LGBT topics, including separated and categorized archival topics (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans). I also consulted books dealing with queer or LGBT themes in movies, specifically those presented as anthologies such as Perriam (2014), Lema-Hincapie (2015) or Armengol (2012) or Mira (2008).

¹³ For example, knowing that the actor behind the character is transgender does not imply that the character they are playing has to be.

Finally other anthologies in queer art and culture, especially Alberto Mira's *De Sodoma a Chueca* (2012), influenced the shaping of categories in this chapter.

Based on above search, I watched all the films to determine if they fulfilled my inclusion criteria, ending with a list of 17 titles (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. List of movies.

TITLE	YEAR	DIRECTOR
<i>Mi querida señorita</i>	1972	Jaime de Armiñan
<i>Odio Mi Cuerpo</i>	1974	Leon Klimovsky
<i>Cambio de Sexo</i>	1977	Vicente Aranda
<i>El transexual</i>	1977	Jose Jara
<i>Un hombre llamado flor de otoño</i>	1978	Pedro Olea
<i>La basura esta en el atico</i>	1979	Ignacio Iquino
<i>Manderley</i>	1981	Jesus Garay
<i>Inclinacion sexual al desnudo</i>	1982	Ignacio Iquino
<i>Los sueños humedos de Patrizia</i>	1982	Ignacio Iquino
<i>Vestida de Azul</i>	1983	Antonio Gimenez Rico
<i>La Tercera Luna</i>	1984	Gregorio Almendros
<i>La Ley del Deseo</i>	1987	Pedro Almodovar
<i>Tacones lejanos</i>	1991	Pedro Almodovar
<i>Todo sobre mi madre</i>	1999	Pedro Almodovar
<i>La mala educacion</i>	2004	Pedro Almodovar
<i>20 centímetros</i>	2005	Ramon Salazar
<i>La piel que habito</i>	2011	Pedro Almodovar

Instrumentation

Archetypes

The movies were organized, after a first viewing to see if they fulfilled the inclusion criteria, in three archetypes to group them into smaller groups and facilitate their analysis. Such archetypes are adapted from Alberto Mira's archetypes for homosexuality (2004). Mira is a Spanish author who has written around LGBT representation in film, as I explained in the previous chapter. However, the archetypes used in this dissertation come from a broader research in his book subtitled "a cultural history of homosexuality in Spain in the 20th century". Despite not dealing directly with film, as other of his books and articles do, it provides the most fitting division of archetypes for this project. I am specifically interested in the interactions between legal and medical discourses around transgender representation, as I have developed in the theoretical frame positing their 'knowledges' as central in the formation of transgender identities. Alberto Mira's archetypes are also based on those two pillars and, despite a few changes that I will mention hereunder, his categories shape this research.

Mira, not unlike Michel Foucault, signals the birth of homosexuality among "doctors, criminologists, judges and philosophers" (p.38). He highlights three stages in the evolution of homosexuality in Spain: the first one, based on the pillars of perversion, criminality and effeminacy; the second one is called the "homophile", and its goal is the integration of homosexuality in society reclaiming their "normality"; the third one is one that uses and reclaims 'camp' and '*la pluma*' (a slang word for effeminacy) as a means of wrecking the binary opposition of abnormal/normal that the two first options defend.

The first of the models, the Criminal, is easily translated onto transgender representation. Indeed, some of the movies viewed linked the transgender character with perversion and criminality –illegal drugs, prostitution, blackmailing- in their way of presenting his or her motivations. Secondly, and due to the different role that medicine has played in the normalization of transsexuality, I consider it the reason behind the second model, the Patient. Transsexuality is still a medical definition that is daily diagnosed by the medical institution, required by the law and also used by transgender people to claim their rights and acceptance. In this archetype, the plot and interests of the character evolve around medicalization (surgery, hormones, achieving recognition through medical procedures). For this reason, this second archetype diverges from Mira's, who places medicine in the first stage (under perversion), whereas here we see medicine as a step towards normalization (the second stage).

The third of Mira's archetype is supposed to wreck the binary of normal/abnormal, by offering an alternative to the previous two (the deviant and the normalizing representations). In a same move, the third archetype for this dissertation is the Empowered: main characters that do not depend of medical or legal institutions to define them, nor do they seek that validation. It is not characters that are punished or taken pity on, but rather well rounded people who, like other cisgender characters, have their own motivations and goals beyond being or becoming a man, a woman or a transgender person. Being transgender is just an aspect of their character, not the central feature of their stories, and as such their stories evolve around other people, feelings, and a personal evolution, among other things.

Furthermore, as my archetypes, Mira's three models are not chronological; they "coexist in the history of Spanish homosexual culture" (2004, p.27). Mira suggests that they are

produced simultaneously and in opposition to the three homophobic models: the pervert reacts to a moral condemnation, the homophile to a pathological paradigm, and the effeminate to scorn of one's identity. (p.24) In this dissertation's archetypes, I follow the tensions between non-normative gender expressions in all three cases. The first one is the tension between transgenderism and criminality. Heirs to repressive and heterosexist fascist laws, transgender people were proscribed as perverts and degenerates and, up until the first democratic government and the derogation of Franco's laws, criminals. We are talking in this case about institutionalized transphobia and the association of being transgender to depravity, criminality and linked to other illegal activities such as prostitution or drug consumption. Those illegal activities are a common trope for transgender people, and as such are very present in Spanish film. It is not possible to establish a causal relation between the two: neither representing those tropes together 'makes' everyone associate those ideas –although it certainly can help– nor is cinema 'just' being truthful in its representation –although there certainly is a segment of transgender people who practice sex work or consume drugs. I intend to map the movies to explore this link between transgender and criminality and find the commonplaces that such audiovisual texts visit and revisit, as well as the justification in the movie for putting together such ideas.

The second archetype, which for Mira is a reaction to pathologization that consists in normalizing homosexuality, will explore precisely how medicine is constructed in the case of transgender people as the normalizing agent. It is precisely a medical work, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* by Harry Benjamin (1966), that sets the parameters for the "true transsexual", a medical diagnosis that Benjamin himself created to stop the stigmatization of people feeling a

dissonance between their biological sex and their gender identity. Rather than advocating for a rupture of the gender binary, normalization of transgender people comes in form of psychiatric diagnoses of certain people.

Shifting the agency from the person's choice or perversion to a medical condition, Benjamin posited transsexuality as an inevitable situation that creates a huge discomfort in the person and, thus, needs to be medically addressed. Nevertheless, transsexuality is not the only 'condition' used to classify non-normative gender identities (and control and reinforce gender binarism), and amongst the paraphilias listed in the DSM we can see how gender fluidity or what was considered deviance is catalogued and described under the labels of "transvestite fetishism" for example. It is interesting to note here that homosexuality was considered one such paraphilia in both DSM-I (APA, 1952) and DSM-II (APA, 1968).

As with the media, we cannot disentangle the diagnosis from the birth of the transsexual identity, but it is clear through international organisms' declarations (WHO, APA, UNESCO) that the appearance of transsexuality amongst mental disorders fostered a wider acceptance of the issue and the birth of laws protecting such populations. For this reason, the second archetype of analysis will focus its attention on the medical paradigm that shaped the understanding of transgender people and shaped as well their representation on screen. Belonging to this category will be included those films where medicine and Benjamin's description of transsexuality shape the presentation of the character, and where the narrative highlights the different points of the diagnosis.

Finally, the third category deals with a resistance to the previous two models. Julia Serrano's 'deceptive' and 'pathetic' transgender (2013) also serve as models to oppose against:

if the deceptive tries to cheat and trick other characters –not unlike the illegal means of the criminal– and the ‘pathetic’ attempts unsuccessfully to pass as the other gender –similarly to the patient trying to get recognized or ‘cured’ through medicine and surgery–, the empowered is constructed as a character by him/herself and thus breaks the binary division that Serrano exposes. The representation of the character is positive although it lets the character’s defaults shine too; it is not compassionate but empathetic, not condemning but well rounded. Belonging to this third archetype is also defined by the absence of the other two: those movies that do not follow the classic Benjaminian narrative, nor present the character as criminal and amoral.

By exploring these three archetypes and discerning when and why they appear, I will make a genealogy of Spanish transgender cinema and map the emergence and reinforcement (or disavowal) of the different discourses at play. These archetypes also help answer the research questions (and subquestions) I exposed in the introduction, and will address them in different ways:

Is there a chronological correspondence among the archetypes?

This question will be answered through the classification of the movies into archetypes and seeing if any patterns emerge from that categorization

Are the movies participating of hegemonic discourses or opening up audiences to new ones?

This question will be answered through the belonging to the third archetype (not based on legal or medical paradigms), and also by those movies that cross from one category to the other, or have traits belonging to both.

What's the cultural work that these Spanish films are doing regarding the understanding, acceptance and interpellation of transgender people as well as new ways of understanding sex, gender and sexuality?

This question, which is concerned with the sympathy that the characters are presented, as well as the possible derogative means of representation, will be assessed more generally through the analysis of each movie, but also looking at correlations of sympathy towards the character's representation and each of the archetypes.

Levels of Analysis

In order to make operational the analysis of each movie belonging to each archetype, a set of questions will be asked for collecting the data. The different parts of the questionnaire were mainly divided in two main categories: the character and the character's socialization-surroundings. The first one focuses on the way the character is presented, how they experience being transgender, their approach to sex, gender and sexuality and their goals in the movie. In the second level, I analyze the character's relationships with others: friends, family, love interests, work and colleagues and institutions, which will mostly be legal and medical in order to address the research questions.

Furthermore, the context is also present through my analysis of legal and medical regulations and changes in the country throughout the period under scrutiny (the *Contextual Background* in the introduction). The final step is to look at the similarities and differences of such discourses, and locating chronological ruptures and continuities, or any relationship between legal and medical advances with the treatment of such characters in the movies.

Data Collection

After the first viewing to determine the sample and the creation of archetypes and levels of analysis, the movies were viewed again applying the *following questionnaire* and searching for the information required to answer the research questions. All movies were viewed a minimum of two times, although some of them had to be reviewed many times due to their complexity. The analysis was performed through a close reading and discourse analysis.

Questionnaire

The Transgender Character

These questions deal with the analysis at an individual level. They are all focused on the transgender character and the discourses around him/her.

How is the movie indicating that the character is transgender? This question addresses the presentation of the character as a transgender person. Attention is paid to visual cues that lead the spectator to identify the character as transgender (clothing, appearance, prosthetics) or sound bites (dialogues, voice-over), as well as other more implicit signals as the acting, the soundtrack or the *mise en scène*. It is about detecting how the character is *doing* gender in the movie and if there is a display of the character 'becoming' a man/woman what is relevant for this question.

How does the transgender character define him/herself? A sub-question to the previous one, here we are concerned on the character him/herself rather than the movie in general: how does the character express his/her transgender identity, how do the characters

explain the particularities of their identities and transitions, and what is their agency in choosing/living/enacting them.

Is the sex/gender of the character being 'performed' and/or is it linked to his/her biology (essentialization)? How can we see that in the movies? Not exactly an either/or question, I am interested in detecting issues of essentialism/biologism, social constructivism or performativity of one's gender. This question looks for cues that situate the character (and the discourse of the movie) as being closer to one or more of those definitions. It addresses the transsexual/transgender divide, and situates the movie towards one or more of these approaches.

What other intersections are given to the character in the movie, apart from sex/gender/sexuality (i.e. race, ethnicity, class)? Cultural Studies and transgender studies, are preoccupied with intersectionality. In fact, interrogating issues related to sexuality or gender identity often obscures/conflates other features like race or class. This question intends to acknowledge those intersections or signal the lack of intersectionality in the character, providing a better understanding of the marginalization/oppression that is being presented in the movie.

Is there any negative stereotyping (i.e. drug use, prostitution)? How is it presented? Tackling issues of stereotyping (as explored in Dyer) and legitimization (Stuart Hall, Michael Warner), this question addresses the conflation of transgenderism with marginalizing situations in life, in order to better understand the tropes that are created and have been linked with transgender people in cinema.

Socialization of the Character

This second level of analysis is concerned with the relationship of the transgender character with other people around him/her. As in Foucault's ideas of power, the fluxes of power circulate also horizontally. How do other characters shape the discourse on transgender characters? How can we understand the character's identity, sexuality or belonging to a group through the personal relationships with others?

Do others perceive the character as male, female, other? If the character is visibly identified as transgender or not, and who identifies him (and how) are central to this question, that will help us understand how and when are these characters able to pass as cisgender (or not), and what type of characters categorize them as man/woman/other in which situations. Again, ideas of biopower and knowledge are explored here through the context and characters that produce such interpellations to the womanliness/manliness of the character.

What is/are the love or sexual relationship(s) of the character, and what do they tell about the character's sexuality? This question addresses the sexuality of the character, as represented in the movie. What type of love interests the character has, and what his/her relationship with them is becomes central to determine if and which sexualities are attached/problematised onto the character.

Who are considered friends and/or enemies of the character? What types of character defend/empathize with him/her and what others oppose/disapprove of them? The portrayal of the friends/enemies of the character is pivotal to understanding his/her representation as belonging/being excluded from certain groups. This question helps locate the character in his/her social context and also highlights the oppositions from other characters in the movie.

What is the character's relationship with his/her family? Although this question could be included in the third level of analysis, the proximity of some of the characters with some family members brings their relationship closer to 'friendship' than to family 'as an institution'. Regardless of its inclusion in this level or the next, analyzing the relationship of the character with his/her family provides excellent information about the character's socialization, support and the ideas behind familiar acceptance of a transgender member. Also, this helps us uncover if the family is present or not, and if it's normally presented as a conflict with the previous generation (parents) or focuses on the particularities of dealing with a transgender parent (the character's children).

Are there other transgender characters in the movie? How is the relationship between the two/among them? This question might overlap with previous questions, since other transgender characters can be friends, family or lovers. However, it is important to trace any similarities or differences that the movie emphasizes between characters. Through this question, we can also see the internal divides in the transgender community, as well as different definitions or approaches to the same topic.

Institutional Socialization

As explored in the theoretical frame through Michel Foucault, but also Warner or Hall, the relationship of the character with the different institutions is pivotal to understand his/her position in society. This is not to imply that institutions exert a kind of "higher power" that circulates top-down, but rather wants to emphasize the effects of belonging/not-fitting within

modern institutions in our society. This section is also concerned with the categorization of the character *through* these institutions and how they perceive/treat the character.

How do the institutions classify the character? This question is concerned with the different institutions that appear in the movie (legal, medical, religious, etc.) and the way that they classify the characters, regarding their sex and gender, but also as persons/citizens. It searches for instances in the movie in which the character interacts with such institutions and focuses in the way the institutions perceive and categorize the character.

What is the relationship of the character with the medical institution? Since the medical institution is a pivotal agent in the discursive formation of transgender identities, as has been explored in the theoretical frame, this question highlights the role of medicine, psychology and medical practitioners in the character's transition. The presence/absence of the medical institution in this process informs us as to the type of discourse that is being developed in the movie. Furthermore, this question is central in the understanding of the medical role in the lives of transgender people, as well as directly related to the research goals.

What 'symptoms' of the DSM diagnosis, or Harry Benjamin's definition of 'true transsexual' are made explicit in the movies? In order to see the correspondence between the medical paradigm (especially Harry Benjamin's definition of the 'true transsexual') and the representation of transgender characters in the movies, this question focuses on the exact diagnosis and medical definitions of transsexuality, transvestism and fetishistic transvestism that appear in the movie.

What is the relationship of the character with the legal institution? Is the character portrayed as a criminal, an outlaw? Is the character's gender and sex legally recognized? This

question addresses the second of the most important institutions for this dissertation, and analyzes the characters regarding their legal status.

Data Analysis: Discourse Analysis

Discourse refers to ways of thinking and speaking about aspects of reality. Discourses operate to order reality in certain ways. At any point in time, there are a number of possible discursive frames for thinking, writing, and speaking about aspects of reality. However, as a consequence of the effect of power relations, not all discourses are afforded equal presence or equal authority (Cheek, 2008, p.356)

Discourse analysis is a methodological approach to language and texts that presupposes that there is more meaning in those words/images than the literal sense. By focusing on 'discourses' rather than words, discourse analysis goes beyond literality or grammaticality to find ruptures, absences and implicit ideas. Due to the great variety of texts and formats, and the myriad of techniques to approach them, discourse analysis "is best seen as a cluster of related methods for studying language use and its role in social life" (Potter, 2008, p.217). There have been several attempts to unify 'discourse analysis' onto a well-defined and structured method (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Fairclough, 1989; Parker, 1992), however it is difficult to understand discourse analyses as a unified and unique process, even if they share some commonalities:

All involve an attention to the ways in which language (as with other representational systems) does more than reflect what it represents, with the corresponding implication that meanings are multiple and shifting, rather than unitary and fixed. (Burman & Parker, 1993, p.3)

This methodology is very useful within the field of cultural studies: "Discourse analysis is a tool that cultural studies have used frequently, although not exclusively" (Grossberg et al., 1992).

My theoretical framework highlights some examples of discourse analysis that are central to my

project. Treichler's reading of scientific and popular discourses around AIDS (1999) and Sharpe's analysis of legal texts and its relationship to transsexuality (2010) are two of the most important authors to shape my investigation of transgender in Spanish film. Despite using discourse analysis in both cases, Sharpe has an explicit debt to Foucauldian theories, while Treichler uses a vast array of critical tools from cultural studies. Two approaches to *doing* discourse analysis inform my dissertation: 'critical discourse analysis' and 'Foucauldian discourse analysis'.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

According to the *Qualitative Methodology Encyclopedia*, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is "a theoretical approach to studying the role of language in society that originated within linguistics" (Weninger, 2008, p.145). The intellectual origins of CDA reach back to British and Australian critical linguistics of the 1970s that researched the intersection of discourse, ideology, and power, and its most recognizable authors are Fairclough (1995; 2003), Gee (1996) and Wodak and Meyer (2001). However, the "critical" part of CDA is also linked ideologically to the Frankfurt School of critical theory: it denies a 'neutral' view of the world, and focuses in unpack the hidden power relations constructed through language, especially those reinforced and reproduced through the discourse.

The term *discourse* in this context is generally understood to refer to any instance of signification, or meaning-making, whether through oral or written language or nonverbal means. (Weninger, 2008, p.145) Discourse, for CDA, is basically "language in use". These discourses participate at many levels of social life, and although CDA targeted mostly the

political domain in its beginnings it has been used to analyze a range of social structures and mediation of social practices. As such, discourse “constitutes an important arena because beliefs and norms are largely disseminated and reproduced through public means of communication” (Weninger, 2008, p.146), shaping public opinion and reproducing biased beliefs and ideologies. In these discourses there also exist hierarchies, as some are more prominent or have more value and visibility. In order to deal with such inequalities among discourses, and elaborating on CDA’s methodology, Ruth Wodak and her colleagues developed the discourse-historical approach, which is concerned with social critique through the in-depth analysis of hegemonic discursive practices within particular social domains (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

In *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis*, CDA is positioned as “a means of coping with two potential problems for the analysis of talk within cultural studies. The first is the problem of the positionality (...) The second is the question of evidence” (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p.22). CDA, then, addresses the issue of unattainable objectivity and also issues of verifiability/repeatability. By systematizing its analytical tools, CDA aims to solve such common problems in the field of cultural studies. However, these are also used against CDA by its critics, raising the point that the political engagement of analysts make them prone to find what they’re looking for in a text and pointing to the lack of methodological rigor in selection and researcher bias (Weninger, 2008, p.147). The most concerning critique from my point of view is that CDA, and its ideological critique approach, “has precluded analyses that highlight the creative power of language that enables people to resist or subvert powerful discourses.” (p.147). When facing such critique Michel Foucault arises as an author who is immediately

recognized for his emphasis on the productive aspect of power (rather than just the coercive side of it), and who has described points of resistance to power from within.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA)

In this type of discourse analysis, the concept of 'discourse' focuses on hegemony and power establishing dominant and/or counter-hegemonic representations (Gutierrez Rodriguez, 1999).

For Foucault, 'discourses' are:

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. (In Weedon, 1987, p.108)

Interested in how some discourses have shaped and created meaning systems that have gained the status of 'truth', while other discourses are marginalized but offer sites of resistance, this approach is close to social constructivism, as it tries to understand how our society is being shaped by language, which in turn represents existing power relationships. Furthermore, Foucault argues in *The Order of Things* (1971), that the 'will to truth' is the major system of exclusion that forges discourse and which 'tends to exert a sort of pressure and something like a power of constraint on other discourses' (Shapiro, 1984, p. 113).

This idea of 'truth' generated by discourse as a system of exclusion is powerful, and especially interesting if we think of science or the law. In this regard, Foucault talked about 'discursive fields' in his analysis of psychiatry, which "contain a number of competing and contradictory discourses with varying degrees of power to give meaning to and organize social institutions and processes" (Weedon, 1987, p. 35). Treating this amalgamation of discourses as discursive fields is important for understanding the relationship between certain relationships

of power between individuals and institutions, for example “that discourse works to produce the identities of doctors and patients, each with their own distinct knowledge and authority” (Potter, 2008, p.218). To address such discursive fields, “Foucauldian discourse analysis offers the potential to challenge ways of thinking about aspects of reality that have come to be viewed as being natural or normal and therefore tend to be taken for granted.” (Cheek, 2008, p.355)

Apart from showing how discourses have an ‘impact’ on individuals and their discursive construction and constitution, Foucauldian discourse analysis is also preoccupied with the conditions of construction, order and shaping of texts, as well as their social and historical situatedness. As Cheek argues,

Researchers [in Foucauldian discourse analysis] will find that they are confronted by an ongoing tension between the text and its context in terms of how much consideration needs to be given to the contexts in which the written or visual texts are generated or from which they emanate. (2008, p.357)

For this reason, the analysis of the texts cannot be made in a ‘void’ space, in which only the textual information is taken into account, and should be contextualized (as I explored in the section dealing with cultural studies, and “radical contextualization”). Furthermore, the context is treated as part of the text and helps us extract some implicit meanings of the text, or give a different view of the assertions being made.

Foucauldian discourse analysis shares some of the critiques to CDA, like the influence of the researcher in imposing meanings on another text. In *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology* (Parker, 1992), the author reviews this problem with relativism, and reminds us that researchers are also producers of discourse. For this reason, an explicit statement of the researcher’s positionality is one of the solutions to address the

problem (Cheek, 2008, p.357). Furthermore, other critics of FDA accuse the method of not being sufficiently rigorous to provide the only possible reading, or a reading that is generalizable, to which Creek answers with a questioning of the discursive construct of 'generalizability', which goes against absolute 'truths' that FDA tries to avoid (2008, p.357). Finally, and as a solution to this last problem, Creek argues that the texts should be accompanied by a "detail about which texts were analyzed, why they were chosen, and how they were generated (...) there must be a rationale given for the choice of texts, and it must stand up to scrutiny." (p.357).

As in Foucault's resistance to hegemonic discourses and 'truths', this dissertation will also examine in the final chapter the limitations and future research that the methodology used creates in the field. This dissertation, then, does not aim to generalize but rather to locate and map the different discourse fields at play in the discursive formation of transgender identities.

Discourse Analysis: My Method

To sum up, this dissertation will use discourse analysis as a tool to analyze selected movies, and will draw on CDA and FDA in doing so. CDA brings a critical and political spirit to the method, which focuses on hidden meanings that can be revealed through a deep and contextualized analysis. Both are concerned with issues of hegemony and debunking absolute 'truths', but the Foucauldian approach is more dedicated to see different power relations and accounting for marginalized discourses as sites of resistance. By uniting the two branches of discourse analysis, or rather by positioning myself in between the two currents, I want to add the tools of both approaches to analyze the issue of transgender representation in Spanish film. A *bricolage* of

critical and Foucauldian discourse analysis, concerned with hegemonic discourses and ‘truths’, but also with the opportunities of resistance that they offer, the context in which such discursive fields are created and established, and the power relations of all the agents within -at micro, meso and macro-levels, individually, collectively and institutionally.

In order to apply these authors and their concerns to my analysis, I have also created several levels of analysis that respond to the concerns of my methodology, as well as the already mentioned questionnaire that tackles each of these levels in depth, asking the relevant questions that address each of these levels.

Summary

Chapter 4 has reviewed the methodology used for this dissertation. In it, I explain the inclusion criteria used to find the sample of movies under analysis. The three archetypes and levels of analysis that make the theoretical framework and the research questions operational are explained in the Instrumentation segment. Finally, the process of data collection and the methodology used for the data analysis are also made explicit, reviewing and defining Discourse Analysis in some of its branches (CDA and FDA).

CHAPTER 5: THE CRIMINAL ARCHETYPE

Prologue

Before entering the analysis of the three archetypes of transgender representation in Spanish cinema, I want to visit two texts that could potentially be included amongst the rest, because they share most of the characteristics, but do not comply with one of them: the character has no desire of living as the other gender. This makes the two movies *Mi querida señorita / My Dear Lady* (dir. Jaime de Armiñan, 1972) and *Odio mi cuerpo / I Hate My Body* (dir. Leon Klimovsky, 1974), susceptible to a separate analysis. Adela, the character of *Mi querida señorita*, is told by her doctor that he is a man, and Ernesto, the protagonist of *Odio mi cuerpo*, is given a woman's body while in a coma. In both cases the transition does not come from a personal desire or identification, and thus they fall outside the inclusion criteria. However, the fact that there is an involuntary or unwanted transition (and that it is *at all* possible) exposes on-screen the definition of sex and gender of the period and, to a critical eye, shows the limits of the gender binary and transgresses its immutability.

Furthermore, both of them were released before Franco's death, which in itself is a major accomplishment if we take into account the impediments that censorship put for certain types of movies. Probably for this same reason, and because changing from one sex to another was a topic off-limits, both approach their protagonists' transition by focusing on how this change interacts with the possibility –and fear– of homosexuality. Indeed, while *Mi querida señorita* uses the change of sex of Adela as a solution to her (lesbian) love for Isabelita, her maid, *Odio mi cuerpo* explores precisely the conflict of Ernesto being desired by other men after he is turned into a woman. The sex change or inversion that these movies propose is far from

depicting any reality of transgender people –the former presents an immediate and perfect transition from woman to man that is impossible even for today’s standards, and the latter belongs to the genre of science-fiction– and the change of sex is used as a conflict around which building the plot.

As such, I analyze these two movies in a manner of a Prologue to the three archetypes, looking at the metaphorical work that they do before censorship was abolished in Spain. As I will explain, all movies that come after 1975 have a more explicit approach to the subject, and explore it in many different ways and depths. Moreover, these two movies, and especially *Odio mi cuerpo* will help me close the three chapters of analysis in the Epilogue, tracing the similarities with the last movie that closes this dissertation, *La piel que habito / The Skin I Live In* (dir. Pedro Almodovar, 2011).

Mi Querida Señorita: a Rare Product of the Regime

Mi Querida Señorita was released in 1972, some years before the dictatorship ended and censorship was abolished. It features famous actor Jose Luis Lopez Vazquez in the role of Adela, the “dear lady” of the title, who lives in a small town and starts to feel jealous of her maid’s flirtations with guys and in discomfort about her abundant facial hair, which she needs to shave (Image 1). After Isabelita (the maid) leaves her due to her jealousy and mood swings, Adela decides to go to the doctor and ask about her problems: “I’m a brave and strong woman, doctor; tell me what I have.” “You are brave and strong, indeed, but not a woman”, answers the doctor. From that scene, we cut to Juan—Adela’s name after transitioning to a man—arriving in Madrid and trying to look for a job. In Madrid, he meets Isabelita again, but she does not seem to recognize him. They start a romance while Juan faces the hardships of finding a job without any training—just like Adela, he only knows how to sew. When he gets thrown out of the *pension* where he’s staying, he returns to the village as Adela, but starts coming out to some people as a man. He finally returns to Madrid, and he and Isabelita end up together in a happy ending that had one last sentence censored: the one where Isabelita implies that she had known the whole time that Juan was also her “dear lady.”

Character

In the credits sequence of *Mi querida señorita*, we can see actor Jose Luis Lopez Vazquez’s face in some vintage pictures, as a baby, a girl, and a woman. The credits establish the femininity of the main character, which is necessary given that Lopez Vazquez, as a successful actor, was already a well-known face for Spanish audiences. The movie actually improved the actor’s

reputation for his versatile acting and elegant way of treating the “issue” and earned him transnational recognition in Chicago (Comas, 1996; Galan, 2003). Lopez Vazquez plays the role of Adela, a middle-aged, conservative rural lady who is integrated and respected in her small-town community. We see her interacting with different people in town, even kicking off the local football game. Her main problems are, on the one hand, her growing “lesbian” attraction to her maid, which leads to jealousy, and on the other hand the growing hair she has in her face and body— she shaves in one of the first scenes, hidden in the toilet but as a habitual thing. She does not look concerned about her gender identity, but the feelings for Isabelita trouble her to the point of seeking first spiritual guide –confessing to the priest– and then medical advice following the priest’s guidance. It was precisely Adela’s homosexual desire that bothered censors at the time¹⁴, not the fact that she becomes a man in the movie. In fact, turning Adela into Juan was the way that homosexuality was kept out of the plot. Censors only asked for the removal of the last sentence in the movie –“You don’t have to tell me, *señorita*”– which implies that Isabelita knew who Juan was, thus validating the earlier lesbian attraction.

After her transition, Adela becomes Juan, a middle-age man finding it difficult to fit in society due to his lack of manly expertise and talents. He has the experience of a middle-aged bourgeois rural woman, so he needs to find a job that suits his abilities, leading him to lie about a sick sister at home in order to get some sewing work. He never really identifies with the other gender –not once do we see Juan missing being a woman, nor Adela longing to become a man. There seems to be no big issue in transitioning –apart from some hardship in finding a job– and Juan has no problem in ‘passing’ as a man. It is also worth noticing that this is the only story

¹⁴ In the censorship document of *Mi querida señorita*, preserved in the National Archives in Alcala de Henares, “lesbianism” is the main concern for all the agents involved in the “censorship dossier” of the movie. Once the last sentence (in which Isabelita acknowledges that she knew Juan was Adela) was removed, censors granted the permission for the movie to be released.

focused on a female-to-male transition in Spanish cinema, which speaks to the invisibility of trans men (Kellaway, 2014). However, we cannot be certain that this is a case of transsexuality, since the details of the medical intervention and Juan's biological body are not revealed to us. This has led some authors to group *Mi querida señorita* among movies about intersex people (Estrada-Lopez, 2012), which would explain the facial hair, the socialization as a woman, and a new gender diagnosis as an adult. Nevertheless, the fact that there is indeed a medical "change of sex" that is not entirely explained, nor shown, allows us to reflect on the importance of the body and biology to validate a medical diagnosis, which we as the audience cannot fully make. For this reason, then, I consider Adela/Juan within the "transgender" category, assuming that in its (re)presentation of the main character, *Mi querida señorita* speaks more to the fragile binary separation of the sexes and the performativity of gender than it does to the fact of *being* a transsexual.

The character of Juan/Adela reflects metaphorically on gender differences and the correlation (or lack thereof) between sex, gender *and* sexuality. This signals the fact that Franco's censorship allowed a non-explicit transgression of gender (which, as I explain, helps avoid homosexuality in the film): a gender transition did not bring for the censors a subversive message but was the cure to homosexuality.

Socialization

Since Adela has no adaptation problems in her community, her transition is not an escape or the result of internal discomfort with her sex/gender correspondence, but rather in accordance with her homosexual desire. The first part of the movie shows Adela as an important member

of the town where she lives (as opposed to the trope of the marginalized transsexual that so often populated films in the following years, and still does in Hollywood film).

There are two main characters with whom she maintains a relationship in the movie. She is courted by wealthy Santiago (Antonio Ferrandis), the town's bank manager, a representative of the rural bourgeoisie that surrounds Adela. However, the true love story in the film is that between Adela and her maid, Isabelita (Julieta Serrano). Isabelita dates the young town florist, and he brings Isabelita and Adela carnations, and compares the two ladies to the flowers, which both of them like. Later on, we see Adela being less and less comfortable with having him around, throwing the carnation away when she sees Isabelita flirting with him. After the boy leaves, Isabelita notices Adela's irritation, apologizes, and promises she "will never marry." The audience can already see here that there is something going on between the two—which is precisely what bothered the censors about the film. After a big argument, Isabelita tells Adela she's leaving the house. While Isabelita packs, we can see Adela's lusty gaze observing Isabelita while dressing to go, which prompts the "dear lady" to go see her priest.

Adela keeps pushing Santiago away, using her problems with facial hair as a justification for her fear, while she also complains about "never having been loved". Although Santiago, a widower, doesn't seem to care—and tells her that he has "always been attracted to her" and that "beauty is not everything" in response to her excuses—it is precisely Adela's rejection of 'heterosexual' love in the first part of the movie that protected the whole project from being censored (as one of the censor notes in the dossier). Indeed, her lesbian desire, turned into heterosexual love after the transition, was tolerated. But what if Adela, whom we later discover is a man, falls in love with another man? Could Juan be at risk of falling in love again with

another man? Most probably—and considering that just a sentence from Isabelita acknowledging Juan’s past as a woman was enough to set off the alarms for the censors—the idea of having actor Jose Luis Lopez Vazquez play the part of a protagonist having had homosexual desires would have been too much.

In the second half of the movie, we encounter Juan’s difficulties in socializing with others: he has problems at the unemployment office for not being able to show his ID card; he needs to lie about a handicapped sister at home so he can get some sewing work; and he needs to hide his past to the landladies at the *pension*, who eventually discover Adela’s clothes in his suitcase and end up kicking him out. Problems in the job market and in housing do resonate heavily with the lives of many transgender people, and Juan’s socialization is cleverly used as well as a critique of gender discrimination and the difficulties women face in the job market. Precisely because of the lack of interest in the process of transition, *Mi querida señorita’s* cultural work is done at the level of sex and gender, denouncing unfair inequalities with which many minorities can identify. However, *Mi querida señorita* still complies with narratives of compulsory heterosexuality (Wittig, 1978) that align sex and gender with sexuality and, in turn, pleased the censors.

Institutions

In *Mi querida señorita*, Adela is connected with the most important institutions in Franco’s Spain. She is an active member of the local church (the bells toll for a funeral in the opening scene; she confesses to the priest, looking to stop her lesbian desires) and the economic establishment (the bank manager is courting her). She even participates in the public leisure

sphere, and she is invited to start the local soccer game as an integrated and respected member of the community. We cannot forget how powerful soccer is as an institution in Spain, as well as the importance it had for the regime:

Franco had seen the positive effects of football through the exploitation of the sport by Mussolini and Hitler, and saw it as a perfect way for Spain to regain some positive global attention and also help him consolidate his rule at home. He also wanted to use it as something which could divert people's attention from his regime. (Mehrotra, 2014)

However, medicine has a shockingly minor role. The presence of medicine is anecdotic and appears only as working in consonance with the church to regulate citizens' sex and gender. It is the doctor who tells Adela that she is actually Juan, and it is through the doctor that the movie establishes a bifurcated division of body and mind that together conform identity, much as Harry Benjamin (1966) did in his book. As the doctor in the movie says: "One cannot have a sick mind without the body being sick, too. It is not a dependence or interrelation, is about a total and complete identity."

In conclusion, in *Mi querida señorita* the change of sex and gender of the protagonist satisfied the censors as a solution to the lesbianism present at the beginning of the movie, which made the text less about *being* transgender and more about the difference of men and women. The movie continually explores the difficulties for women in the job market (as opposed to men) and, to a lesser extent, the romantic implications of transitioning to another sex. That transsexuality was still not separated from homosexuality in Spain, and that both were illegal, speak to the conflation of all sexual dissidence during the dictatorship. *Mi querida señorita* shows us the anxieties of the period about those two topics, while managing to make a sympathetic portrait of a person who transitions and to expose the situation of women in the workplace.

***Odio mi cuerpo*: transgender science fiction**

Odio mi cuerpo is a Spanish-Swiss co-production released in 1974 that also explores how the protagonist feels living as a person of another sex. In the first scene, we see a party, with many people dancing in their 1970s style. Ernesto (Luis Ciges) is dancing with a girl and jokingly asks another couple to exchange girlfriends for the rest of the night, to which all four laugh and end up switching.

After some slower music, Ernesto wants to leave with the girl. They say goodbye to the rest, and we learn that it is a work party through comments like: "I'll be late to the office tomorrow" or "Don't worry, as your boss you have my permission". We will later learn that they are the secretaries of both men, not their girlfriends, and that it is a common practice to be sexually involved with one's (or one friend's) secretary in Ernesto's workplace. Drunk and playful as they are, the car can't be kept straight in the road, and both Ernesto and the girl have a fatal accident that makes the car explode.

After this, we cut to a hospital, where the nurses bring a body to a surgery station and we switch to the POV of someone laying on a stretcher (the ceiling, the lights, medical personnel looking down, etc.). The body is at all times covered, so we never really know whose it is. Even when the doctor is looking at it, they only show us a blue eye. The doctor looks like a cartoon character of the 'evil genius'. Through his conversation with the nurse we know that the girl died instantly in the car accident and that Ernesto's diagnosis looks very bleak since his liver was injured by the steering wheel and he has three hours, at most, to live. However, when the doctor says that Ernesto's brain is perfectly irrigated, his assistant changes her look:

Nurse: You could do it now, why don't you try? Adolfo, you did it many times in the concentration camps.

Doctor: Better not mentioning that...

N: Try it please

D: It is the opportunity... I have been waiting for. Maybe we won't have another one.

Yes, I'll do it.

N: I'll bring the other body

They bring the second body, and we get the first clue for what is about to happen: Ernesto's feet are big and hairy, and the other body's are petite and hairless. In this way, the movie is set to start: a Nazi doctor and his assistant are going to transplant Ernesto's brain into another body, a female body.

Character

Ernesto is briefly presented as a philanderer engineer and irresponsible driver in the first scenes. After the surgery we hear Ernesto's voiceover, wondering what has happened to him. He is convalescent, and he can only see people he doesn't know working around him. It is an anxious process of recuperation, regaining consciousness little by little, remembering the accident. Adolfo, the doctor, starts removing the bandages and explaining the surgery to Ernesto, who is still confused, and tells him that only one little detail is missing, to then ask him to look at himself in the mirror. When Ernesto sees himself in a woman's body, he screams with his voice, which is faded with a new, feminine scream that will be Ernesto's new voice for the rest of the movie.

From then on, we see Ernesto's process in accepting his new body. Once he is freed from the clinic where he's held prisoner (and kills doctor Berger in the process), Ernesto goes through different phases of acceptance of changes: first, he is in denial of being a woman. The first instance of this is when he is getting away from the hospital. Ernesto hitchhikes with a man

who is talking all the time (and surprised that, as a woman, Ernesto is not listening to him).

Before Ernesto gets off the car, the man asks him if he wants to meet when he comes to town, although minutes ago he was talking about his wife. When the man tries to kiss him, Ernesto gets out of the car in a hurry and reacts with a forearm jerk to the complaints about not receiving any compensation for the trip. A similar situation, although with a much calmer reaction, happens in a bar. Ernesto does not seem to remember that being a woman alone in a bar draws the attention of all the men, especially if she sits with open legs and the skirt almost rolled up.

Ernesto continues in denial, thinking that he will get a similar job than the one he had just by saying that she, Leda Smith the woman he impersonates, was friends with Ernesto. At that moment he realizes that not even being qualified, knowing all the bosses by name, and even their secrets, is enough for a woman to get a higher position than secretary in the company. Here, we see how Ernesto goes into the phases of resistance and exploration, trying to go back to Leda's old job, working at a factory and finally as an escort. In all of them the problem is the total lack of respect that women receive from their male employers/customers, so Ernesto finally enters the acceptance phase, where he realizes that in order to take control of his life back, he needs to use -as her friend Mika says- "women's weapons". Those weapons are, according to the film and the misogyny in it, seduction, deception and treason.

Only when Ernesto uses her feminine attractiveness to get Pedro to help him and deception to blackmail his wife, he is able to get 200,000 Swiss marks (or \$500,000 in the English version) and forget about the marketplace altogether. Of course this unladylike move – nor gentlemanlike for that matter– leads to Ernesto's accidental murder after being raped by a

gang of sailors. I will explore these types of final punishments further down in this chapter about *The Criminal*, but in this case the penance seems to be for being a woman, rather than transgender.

Socialization

Ernesto's socialization as a man is easy and privileged: chief of programming at a big firm, handsome blue-eyed white man, married but with as many affairs and orgies as he wants, Ernesto seems to be at the prime of his life. This is truncated when he becomes a woman –or rather when he inhabits a female body and is thus perceived and treated as a woman. Beyond the hitchhiking and bar scenes there is a third one where Ernesto needs to confront the awful treatment women receive in the public sphere. When he takes the bus, he hears a lady complaining about a man who is grabbing her rather nonchalantly. Obviously, Ernesto gets groped too but he reacts yelling and swearing (“dirty son of a bitch!”), and also hitting him, which causes hysterical laughter in the bus. It looks like nobody is used to a woman standing up for herself against being touched in public, and after Ernesto gets off, while the bus goes away, everyone (men and women) keep laughing at her.

Other men in the movie, like Ernesto's best friend Arturo, Leda's old boss Mr. Gordon, the club manager, the factory manager, and even Leda's father are depicted as awfully misogynist, something that was not uncommon in Franco's Spain, where women had a special division (*Seccion Femenina*, a branch of the Falange Española, the fascist party in Spain) that encouraged them to obey their fathers/husbands, stay at home and never speak back. However, the film seems to miss the opportunity of making a sound critique of the misogyny of

the period, since most of these views exist within Ernesto's character and even within women around him.

Not only are women shown as complicit in reproducing and perpetuating the same patterns as men (the laughing girls of the bus, the other secretaries and their scornful gazes in the office), some of them are depicted as mean and cruel even as they are the most wronged by the situation. The clearest example is Ernesto's wife, who has been coping with Ernesto's infidelities for years and has to learn through the press that his husband has died in a car accident, drunk and with a secretary, but who is given the villain treatment instead of the victim of Ernesto's bad decisions.

During the first visit to his wife in Leda's body, Ernesto pretends to be his own university colleague, and tells his own wife that Ernesto was a philanderer. The wife confirms it and is angry about Ernesto's death "coming back from an orgy" and everything she has had to endure with this information on the press. But instead of understanding his wife's suffering, Ernesto (and the film) focus on how close she has gotten to Pedro, Ernesto's best friend. Not only is she not allowed to suffer, but also she is judged for moving on with her life after six months of Ernesto's death.

In order to portray her further in the villain's role, Ernesto brings up his life insurance policy about which she neglected to tell Pedro. The money she is entitled to for losing her husband in a car accident is played against her for not telling her lover, who she is also not supposed to have. After accusing her, Ernesto's wife reacts yelling at him, and goes hysterical, especially after he calls her Bubi, a nickname only he used. The wife looks at the camera in despair and seems to recognize him, and exclaims: "it is not possible... she speaks like Ernesto!"

The only other two times we see her, she is being blackmailed: first receiving the letter with Ernesto's handwriting asking her for half the money; and second in the train station when she leaves the money. After the movie, we are left wondering if Ernesto could have achieved the same outcome without killing or blackmailing anyone, just sharing his disgrace with his wife and asking for half the money to live in peace. But of course this is not part of the movie.

The other important woman in the movie is Leda's friend Mika, who Ernesto knows through an address he finds in Leda's purse. Mika thought Leda had died and kept her apartment, and also started a relationship with Leda's boyfriend. Of course, when she sees Leda, she is nervous and surprised, but soon realizes she's not the Leda she knew. Mika tries to make Ernesto aware of the unwritten rules that women have to follow. When Ernesto complains about not getting the jobs, she responds "Each one in their place, the man in his place, the woman in her place." Throughout her appearances, Mika reminds Ernesto that Leda had always put up with handsy bosses and men in general, and is a constant and verbal reminder of the situation of women in the film.

In one of her speeches, Mika makes a good summary of the situation:

Don't be silly Leda, you always say that this is a men's world, and that we can only fight them with our weapons. And you are right, they are the masters even if they say they aren't. They talk about sex equality, equal opportunities... bah! It is all a lie! The world is theirs... calm down girl, it's not a big deal

Of course, Ernesto and the movie don't seem to think it is a big deal either, since right after this speech, Ernesto opens Mika's shirt and, fading Leda's face into Ernesto's face, they kiss, although he feels suddenly repulsed and walks away. For the first time in the film, Ernesto kisses a woman, but even if Mika wants Leda to continue, he stops. This situation is fairly

different from the one we see in *Mi querida señorita*, where such kisses were not visible or even suggested until Adela becomes Juan.

However, not all women in the movie are so accepting of the situation, nor mean to Ernesto/Leda: the workers of the factory share the same problems they have with men, and one of them is even seen as some kind of feminist liberation leader; the other escorts help Ernesto adapt to the job, teach him how to do it and protect him from insistent customers, and one of them even gets him the passage to escape from the country; finally, Ernesto's landlady is presented as very sympathetic to Leda, helping her in at least two occasions to find a job. Despite all those characters, the movie is clear: with or without women solidarity, they are very weak and vulnerable in a world of men.

Institutions

As it is made obvious from the beginning, medical institutions are at the center of the plot, and Ernesto is presented as the victim to a deluded Nazi. Doctor Adolfo Berger uses all types of excuses and threats (need of "constant medical surveillance", possible "mental problems, paralysis, alterations of some functions and death") to keep Ernesto alive because he needs him healthy for living proof of his achievement: Ernesto is the first completely successful brain transplant and a miracle of science and medicine.

However, despite the bioethical problems that this type of procedure entails, the doctor and his wife are never mean to Ernesto. As the doctor explains: "both deaths were inevitable, and from both deaths I created a life. Do you understand? A life. Live it and enjoy it!". They seem to care for convalescent Ernesto, treating him with respect and dignity, other than not

allowing him to leave. But of course, they have put Ernesto's brain in a female body without his consent, so Ernesto wants revenge. Ernesto kills the doctor in a fire and later whips the back of Lydia Berger in vengeance, and both disappear from the rest of the plot.

Still, there is another doctor in the movie that has a very interesting conversation with Ernesto. When he is frustrated about being a woman and not getting any chances in the marketplace, Ernesto visits the psychiatrist as Leda, and both exchange a conversation that interrogates the limits of sex and gender through the mind/body divide, something that becomes commonplace for modern psychiatry, which considers Gender Identity Disphoria a disorder of the mind that is treated with a bodily procedure:

Ernesto: I will try to be clear. It is difficult to explain. I underwent surgery, on my brain and now... I am different... I feel like a man

Doctor: Very interesting. Please, continue, and express yourself in all liberty.

E: Do you understand, doctor? It is like if I were a man in a woman's body.

D: It is difficult to be precise here. What is your name? How does it appear on your passport, on your ID? I imagine it says Leda Smith, single, female sex, thus you *are* Leda Smith.

E: Doctor, if I were to be the recipient of a transplant of a man's brain... of a man dead in an accident, what would be my true personality? Would I still be the woman, Leda Smith, or on the contrary Ernesto Knoll?

D: Interesting approach... interesting. Who would you be in your fantasy? Who, really?

E: But it is not my fantasy, doctor.

D: Who would you be? What would your true personality be? Which one should prevail? I guess we'll remain doubtful...

As we can see, the doctor doesn't directly dismiss Leda/Ernesto's questions, and he tries to think out loud about his/her identity: that of the brain, that of the body, or that of the passport? However, he is just suspecting Leda's lesbianism, and when Ernesto accuses doctor Berger and the doctor realizes that his colleague died in a fire at hands of an insane patient, the psychiatrist suspects Ernesto to be the killer and calls the police while he escapes. Only one

more conversation questions the limits of sex for Ernesto, and it is made with the other big institution of the time: the Catholic church. Ernesto decides to go for a confession after everything that is happening to him, and we finally hear the sentence that gives name to the movie "I Hate My Body":

Ernesto: I think like a man. I react to everything like a man, father. It is like I had a man's brain. The desires of a man in a woman's body. And I hate my body.

Priest: You should not worry more than you need. We all carry inside a man and a woman part, like we carry the good and the bad. You need to get over it, my child. Rest and meditate, and don't abandon yourself to your primary impulses. You are a woman. Women feel envious of the world of men, but remember, Jesus was born from a woman's belly. Live as such. We all suffer moments of carnal weakness. We lower ourselves. We feel desires against our own nature. But that's not the goal, there's always a way out. You need to get over it with the help of God. Try it.

The priest is much more explicit in his answer than the psychiatrist, and he doesn't question philosophically Ernesto's situation. Seeing Ernesto in the body of Leda is enough for the priest to declare that "she" suffers from penis envy, like all women, but "she" has to know her place, live as such and, by the last sentences on carnality, avoid lesbian desires. In fact, it seems like the priest understands Ernesto's confession focusing in a woman who has "male desires" rather than a male brain, and thus asks her to avoid homosexuality and impure weaknesses. While psychiatry wonders about the limits of identity, the church establishes a firm verdict.

Prologue Discussion

The difficulties that women suffer in society, especially finding a job and a pronounced anxiety towards homosexuality, are the two main common points between *Mi querida señorita* and *Odio mi cuerpo*. They both use the transition of sex to highlight the differences in society for men and women while trying to avoid the inherent complications in the field of sexuality when there is a sex transition. In the case of *Mi querida señorita*, Adela turns into Juan through the advice of a priest -to avoid her lesbian desires- and a doctor -who declares she is not a woman, but also to justify the heterosexual happy ending and please the censors, as we learned from the censorship report for the movie. In *Odio mi cuerpo*, the topic of homosexuality is dealt with a little differently.

One of the early scenes shows Lydia Berger putting bandages on Ernesto's head, before he is fully recovered. We are aware of Ernesto's gaze thanks to the POV shot showing her breasts, and in his voiceover, he comments how beautiful she is. Later on, she is set to remove the bandages, but when she is doing so, Ernesto puts his head between her breasts and kisses her skin, to which she responds in horror and leaves the room screaming for Adolfo. Indeed, the paranoia of the censorship around lesbianism needed the nurse to be repulsed by such a homosexual scene, since Ernesto is in a woman's body. We know that she is an intelligent scientist, and she knows that it is actually the brain of a man in there, but she needs to act surprised and disgusted to make clear that such behaviors will not be permitted in the movie, at least not in 1974.

Adolfo reacts laughing and saying, "Perfect!" For him, surgery has been a success and his theories have finally been proven in reality. He is ecstatic as he just learned by that 'lesbian'

kiss that despite being in a woman's body, Ernesto's brain is still that of a man, a heterosexual man. For the rest of the movie, whenever there is a kiss between Ernesto and another person, the movie fades Leda's face with Ernesto's: in the case of the driver of the car when he hitchhikes, or the factory manager, Ernesto's face is shown in disgust and agony, avoiding the kiss that is given to Leda's face; in the case of Leda's friend Mika, to show that it is in fact a wanted kiss for Ernesto (although he still reacts screaming and in pain, hands over his head, probably as a reaction to the surgery, although it is never explained). This kiss however, is different in that Mika is willing to continue kissing and having sex with Leda, which is a rare scene in a movie of the time.

Despite coping differently with homosexuality, and having a very opposite ending for their protagonists (happily ever after heterosexual love versus gang rape and murder in a dark dock at night), both movies deal with sex transitions, albeit almost metaphorically, and show how it was possible to talk about it even before it was legal to do so. After this introductory analysis, which highlights some of the crucial issues about transgender representation, I will begin to explore the three archetypes: The Criminal, The Patient, and The Empowered, each in their chapter, with movies released after Franco's death up until 2011, when the last transgender protagonist is seen in Spanish cinema.

The Criminal Archetype

Carla shoots her lover and gleefully offers to drown a soldier in a public fountain. Lola is an extortionist home-wrecker whom some people hate just for appearing on a VHS cassette. Ana becomes the head of a criminal empire only to learn that she has been sharing bed with her own son. Zahara and Ignacio are drug-users who try to blackmail the priest that molested them as children. Flor de Otoño is a traitor to her country and sends an innocent man to prison. All of them are transgender, and all of them are somehow involved in criminal activities that portray them as unlawful, foregrounded as dark and deceptive and a danger to those around them. These transgender women, framed as criminals, are the protagonists of this chapter's stories.

Furthermore, all of their movies deny them a happy ending: three of them die, one of them is on the verge of suicide and the other two get probably arrested for their crimes right after the film ends. This treatment of transgender characters marginalizes and criminalizes the very idea of being transgender, by presenting its protagonists breaking the law, and as dangerous or untrustworthy. This is not an isolated phenomenon. In the US, the anxiety over homosexuality and criminality –and its links– was a well spread social concern of the 1950s (Kimmel, 1996) and the insurgence of New Queer Cinema in the 1990s precisely contested those links that were present in many movies like *Cruising* (dir. Friedkin, 1980) or *The Silence of the Lambs* (dir. Demme, 1990) and conflated homosexuality and criminality (Wahlert, 2013).

This chapter explores transgender characters that have been criminalized and associated to marginality in their representation. While connections to sex work and drug use are fairly obvious to spot among the movies here included, these films also work in more

insidious ways to associate their transgender characters to that idea of criminality. It is precisely those 'hidden' details that I want to locate through close analysis of the films, since it is precisely when those connections are made invisible that ideological discourses in film work at their best.

The Criminal, then, is the first of three categories that help us make sense of the different discourses at play in Spanish cinema related to the representation of transgender people in recent decades. In this case, the most important levels of analysis from those proposed in the Methodology chapter will be the character's connections to institutions (especially legal) and their consideration, as well as their connections to tropes that point towards criminality. Attention will be paid to punishment in the plot for such characters, as the representation as a criminal often brings some moral aspect and chastises criminal transgressions with some sort of violence exerted onto the character, as a way of placing guilt and blame onto the transgender character (which is not so for other characters). Each of the movies will follow the three levels of analysis exposed in the methodological section: Character, Socialization and Institutions.

Ignacio Iquino: a filmmaker of “el destape”

Few directors in Spanish cinema are more underappreciated than Ignacio F. Iquino. Despite his very prolific career, “exceptional chronological extension” (Gubern, 2003, p.11) covering the Republic, the Civil War, Franco’s dictatorship and the years of democratic transition and the creation of his own studio, IFI, which lasted for 34 years (Comas, 2003), Iquino is still a widely unknown name in Spain. Iquino touched all types of genres during his career, from documentary cinema to western. But for this dissertation, Iquino’s work becomes relevant precisely in its last years, after seeing Spanish censorship disappear.

Iquino was a participant of the cultural wave called “*el destape*”, which roughly translates as “the uncovering” or “the unveiling”. *El destape* basically brought (mostly female) nudity and previously forbidden topics to Spanish screens and magazines, and served as an explosion of the erotic during the first years of democracy that were a reaction to decades of depression. Coined by Angel Casas, a musical journalist who reached notable success at the end of the 1980s with the TV program “Un dia es un dia”, which included a strip-tease as a closing performance (Ponce, 2004, p.14), *el destape* is defined by Ponce as:

a need. After forty neverending years of social, political and moral repression, we needed a way out [...]with all its kitsch and camp flair, [el destape] contributed, a lot, in the recuperation of liberties; at least, individual. (p.11)

El destape began during the last years of dictatorship, crawling little by little in the grey spaces of censorship and always under the excuse of social criticism of sordid topics, but with Franco’s death the process speeds up until November 11th 1977, when a decree published in the official bulletin (BOE), suppressed censorship and changed it for a rating institution (Ponce, 2004, p.61). This institution created the rating “S”, only for adult consumption, that lasted from 1977-

1983 and comprised more than a hundred movies, and it is precisely Iquino's "S" movies that occupy this section of the dissertation.

Iquino's *La basura esta en el atico / The Garbage is in the Penthouse* (1977) and *Los sueños humedos de Patrizia / Patrizia's Wet Dreams* (1981) were made in that period and feature a transgender main character. Both fall under the Criminal archetype, probably due to Iquino's catholic and fascist past, and his goal of creating moralizing cinema that showed all sorts of deviations but punished them at the end of the movie. Precisely because these films show a clear moralizing intention, and the Criminal archetype is so apparent in them, I open this chapter of the dissertation closely looking at them. However, Iquino's work will be re-taken in the third archetype, the Empowered, because he offers a quite different representation of the transgender character.

La basura esta en el atico: the Sins of the Bourgeoisie

*“A real story?
Could be, but neither its characters
nor what happens to them
correspond to the truth:
They are a product of the inspiration
Of this film’s director
Any similarity is pure coincidence...”*

After these words, which preface the movie, we can see a group of men coming back from hunting. We meet Alberto (Jose Martin), the protagonist and an aristocrat in a small town, as he salutes his wife Liliana (Raquel Evans), who is a bit disgusted by the dead animals and seems very bored with her husband’s life. He makes a biblical reference to Adam having to hunt for Eve, but she doesn’t want more “sacred stories”. The first couple of scenes introduce the protagonists who will be the center of the story: a selfish millionaire in a castle and his blasé wife, who detests all the etiquette and formality of her husband’s life and wants to go and live in Barcelona, in what was his bachelor pad. This is the setup for a plot in which the couple will go to the city to cater to Liliana’s desires, and will encounter many types of lovers during the way.

The adventure starts in Barcelona, where Alberto shows naked pictures of Liliana to every one of his friends at the hall of the opera. Then, they go to a park where they see a stranger sitting on a bench, wearing a hat, scarf, long sleeves and jeans:

Arturo: What do you think? Is it a man or a woman?

Liliana: Do we care? It will be fun to find out, won’t it?

A: Do you prefer it to be a man?

L: I don’t know, you see...

They are talking about Carla, whom we later meet as a transgender woman. But this time, although they invite her home to spend the night together, Carla finally leaves them with the intrigue and desire, and promises to meet them the following day.

The three of them become lovers, because Liliana is infatuated with Carla and Arturo doesn't seem to mind anything as long as Liliana is satisfied, but the number of lovers will keep escalating and Carla will become jealous of the numerous adventures of Liliana and will end up killing them. The sordid story, the insistence of Carla being a creature of the night, who does drugs, deceives straight couples and ends up being a murderer (and dying) make this movie the perfect example to analyze the Criminal archetype.

Character

The first time we meet Carla, she is described by the couple as an ambiguous person. Liliana feels attracted by this, and refers constantly to Carla's "penetrating" and "impressive gaze", "bright eyes", "aggressive lips", and "perfect teeth". But we start to really know more about her once she meets with Liliana and they go home together, through their conversation:

Liliana: There's something unsettling in your gaze. Who are you? What mystery is hiding behind your eyes?

Carla: Now it's my time to confess.

L: I want to know. I don't know what brings me close to you, nor why I desire your friendship...

C: Everything started in boarding school. I never was a happy girl, like I was having a foreboding of my problem. When I turned eighteen, I hadn't yet had my period.

L: I am delighted by your story

C: I liked women a lot. I was lucky with many. But others, chaster or more hypocritical, rejected me. Although most of them would fall at some point later. But I wasn't entirely satisfied with my tongue and my lesbian kisses. It was all the fault of that dark biological mystery of nature, which denied me the masculine sex, which is the one that corresponded me. I have never explained this to anybody, because it bores me. In Santo

Domingo el Real¹⁵ in Madrid, a nun, after living some years in community, she developed and suddenly sprouted the members of generation [sic]...

L: Don't stop now, continue.

C: I have suffered the same experience. It happened to me in France.

L: So you are... (Carla shows her penis) I am passionate about your life Carla.

C: Me, not so much. From that moment on, my problems started, my frustrations. And a thousand complexes. That's why I run away from everyone, and I avoided all possibility that anyone discovered my sex. You don't have any idea of what I have suffered. If it wasn't for you... so different, with that amazing gaze that comforted me, today I'd be at the bottom of a precipice where I would have jumped.

This conversation in which Carla reveals her particular story, gives us first hand information about Carla's character, and most importantly, her own self-identification. We learn about her teenage years as a lesbian girl, and also about that mysterious "sprouting" of her genitals ("miembros de generacion" in the original). Carla's story of transitioning is very different from others in this chapter, but they have in common that rather than following exactly a medical paradigm or definition, they focus on the marginality of the character, their suffering, their feeling of loneliness and, in this case, proximity to suicide.

Furthermore, Carla was socialized as a girl and still retains the feminine identity (in her name, in the adjectives she uses to describe herself), but she declares that the masculine sex was the one that corresponded her. Here we see again the conflation of sex and sexuality, and this correspondence of sex that nature denies her seems to come more from loving women than from her own gender expression. After all, Carla has a penis now, and still refuses to socialize as a man, or call herself a man. These sexual contradictions do not play a much more important role in the plot, and Carla is soon accepted by the couple Arturo/Liliana and her sex/gender is no longer questioned during the rest of the movie.

¹⁵ A convent.

Socialization

Carla meets the couple at a park at night, where she needs to make clear that she is not a prostitute. She also asks them for marihuana, while the couple tries to figure out if she's a man or a woman. This presentation, linked to darkness and unlawful activities, is a notable way of introducing her as a Criminal. After their first encounter, Liliana expresses her desire to meet Carla again and "be drugged and drunk, so right and wrong become blurry" and they can descend "to Dante's Hell". Liliana, who is portrayed as a *belle de jour* (Comas, 2003, p.306), immediately links Carla with sin, depravity and what's wrong. To top her comments, Arturo adds that they should be cautious with "that kind of people".

However, the film doesn't cast Carla aside, but rather her criminality makes her one of the gang. The couple, Arturo and Liliana, is also tainted with criminality, a product of the "moral critique" that such movies pretended to offer. In this case, this is a story of the dark side of aristocracy and their sins, and Carla is one of them.

The three of them are constantly talking or murder (and sometimes murdering). When the soldier lover of Liliana appears, Carla offers to drown him in the fountains of Plaza Cataluña. Alberto warns Liliana that he will kill anyone whom she falls in love with (and does so with Silvio the soldier). When Carla and Liliana find out about the murder, they threaten to kill themselves taking lots of drugs. Later on, when Liliana starts to fall for Mario, Carla threatens to kill him too (although Liliana convinces her that their lesbian affair is something else). Later on, Mario kills Arturo and becomes the man of the couple (thus leaving Carla without her place at Liliana's side), which prompts Carla to finally kill him and also Liliana while she kisses her.

Carla is, thus, not only portrayed as belonging to the criminal world, but also her socialization leads her to commit the final crime in the movie. Their scandal is echoed in the press, with a heading on the newspaper to report about their murders that gives the title to the film: “The garbage is in the penthouse: Vice and depravity. Three people dead shot. The jet set has no scruples”, framing the whole bunch as criminals in the media, precisely like the movie does for the audience.

Institutions

Unlike many of the other movies in this chapter, the common institutions like police and state law enforcement, the church, medical institutions, etc. are barely. At the beginning -and later on when Arturo goes back to the village- we see a representation of the church (the priest), politics (the mayor) and medicine (the town doctor) hunting and socializing with Arturo. This leads us to think that the authorities and institutions are complicit with what is going on, since Arturo is an aristocrat and he seems to have overall impunity for his crimes and moral sins. It is for the audience, and finally the press, to judge our main characters’ actions, since they belong to the upper class (that inhabits penthouses) but that is as rotten as the lower classes. The movie is then constructed as a social critique of the depravity of the bourgeoisie (Comas, 2003, p.306). That said, the appearance of a soldier is anecdotic (the military has no big role in all this), and no other institutions seem to participate of the plot, and much less of the classification of Carla as a man, woman or transgender.

Los sueños húmedos de Patrizia: the Homewrecker

Los sueños húmedos de Patrizia (dir. Ignacio Iquino, 1982) revolves around the life of Patrizia (Concha Valero), a young woman who is married to Javier (Jaime Basco) and is very prone to trying new sexual experiences. There is one in particular that she loves to repeat over and over, with or without her husband, and it is to look at a VHS where Lola (Christine), a transgender woman, looks at the camera and shows her body erotically. Patrizia has several other affairs during the movie (with Eva the store clerk working for her, with her lesbian friend Laura and Laura's girlfriend, and with Julio). Patrizia's many adventures are an excuse to show and sell sex, one of the specialties of filmmaker Ignacio Iquino. If Patrizia is portrayed as the epitome of a liberated woman, sexually but also personally, who does as she pleases and has the money and power to do so, Lola, the transgender character, is portrayed as the dark side of the coin.

Character

We meet Lola through the VHS that Patrizia and Javier look at (which are the opening images of the film). She is insulted by them (different iterations of "whore" and "disgusting"), and they seem to enjoy her being present while having sex, sometimes even speaking to the screen as if she could answer. However, in the video we cannot see her genitals, nor have we any other clue that she is a transgender woman. Only when we finally see her meeting with Javier, behind Patrizia's back, do we learn more about her. The film portrays her under a very harsh light: she is a thief and has seduced Javier to constantly blackmail him to ask Patrizia for money. She is cruel with Javier throughout, and with Patrizia before even meeting her, expressing how she likes to think about torturing her with her presence, and delighting in the possibility of showing

her that she is a trans woman (or what she calls “my real personality”), which doesn’t show in the video.

To top that off, the movie ends by punishing Lola with death, as her transgressive body and criminal activities deserve a punishment on-screen. This fulfills the Criminal archetype of the movie, which casts the transgender character as a villain, deceiver and a criminal who wants to break the heterosexual couple and profit from *femme fatale* abilities. Lola is a creature of the night who hides, who deceives and who finally needs to disappear in order for our “good” protagonist to have her way and be free.

Socialization

The main relationships of Lola in the movie are Patrizia and Javier. While the couple explores and meets many other people, Lola is portrayed as Javier’s partner in crime, and we don’t learn much more about her life. The couple has a complicated relationship with Lola. Patrizia expresses “hatred to her troubled gaze” and insults her constantly by talking to the screen. Later in the movie, when Patrizia’s lesbian friends see the video, they call her pejoratively a lesbian (which seems paradoxical), and a transvestite. It seems as if Lola is the perfect aim for all the jokes of the characters.

As for Javier, she diminishes him during most of their first scene together. She tells him how she likes him angry, and provokes him to be so. Javier, on the other hand, is unable to avoid thinking of Lola while he has sex with his wife. Lola is the “bad influence” that steers Javier out of his marriage into blackmailing Patrizia, and is presented as the mastermind behind their plan. However, when he is with Patrizia, he participates in insulting Lola and hides his true

relationship with her. This tension is constructed to emasculate Javier through Lola's "secret" in the end: when Patrizia and her lesbian friends finally find the second video of Lola, one that shows her penis and Javier enjoying being penetrated, the girls start to laugh at Patrizia's husband, and insult Lola by yelling at the screen. This is the turning point when Patrizia decides to leave him, and leads to the final scene when all is discovered, with Javier and Lola scorned for being "maricones" (faggots).

Apart from Javier and Patrizia, we also get a glimpse of Lola's family when Patrizia calls her after discovering Lola's phone number in her husband's diary. The family is portrayed as pathetic, poor and uneducated, thinking Patrizia calls from some magazine belonging to the yellow press:

Father: What the hell do you care? If this is for one of those scandal magazines, I won't say a word you scroungers, sons of a whore...

Mother: (takes the phone from the father's hands): He couldn't even see him, he hated him. One day, he gave him a huge beating and literally kicked him out of the house. We haven't had any news about him for a long while, he's probably found a guy with money... (to the father who tries to take the phone back) Leave me alone you faggot, you should be ashamed!

F: I'm going to hit you... (pushes her down to sit on the chair) Go away, you already said too much stupid bitch, and you just compromised me. Because I have no money, but I have dignity!

M: You don't have shit!

F: (to the phone) Go away, leave us in peace! To me, he's dead.

Even Lola's family reviles her, showing an abusive father and a mother that thinks she's probably ripping off some guy with money. Furthermore, the family is used in a humoristic way to lower Lola even more, when they share Lola's birth name "Juan Pedro Torcuato Teofilo Leoncio", a fictitious and over-elongated name that is Lola's shame and, again, used to ridicule her.

In this movie, there is no use of institutions anywhere, they are not present nor mentioned, and not important to the plot. The relationships among the characters and their socialization are the central part of the movie. The criminality of the characters is determined more by what they do to each other (in terms of blackmailing for example) than by the decision of an institution or the presence of the police.

La tercera luna: a Sympathetic but Incestuous Criminal

Two drunk men are singing in the street, arms united behind their necks. They cross paths with Angel, an elegant man dressed in white suit, scarf and hair smoothed back. The drunks ask each other: “what is this? Is this a man or a woman?” Angel pushes them apart to walk between them and says: “I am the third moon” to the camera. The movie cuts to a cliff where a woman standing on top. As we are getting closer, she removes her wig and throws it away: “Why am I going to death, when I love life so much? Whoever goes to death content not only finds freedom, but also peace... and to think that everything started here... I was almost a boy”. This scene cuts again, this time to a couple dancing a waltz in the field, while the song in the background sings “which one of the three, man or woman or third moon?”

These three first scenes of *La tercera luna / The Third Moon* (dir. Gregorio Almendros, 1984) are rather symbolic and have little to do with the style of the rest of the movie, apart from being the only ones that give any information about its title. The first one confirms that the main character is ambiguously classified between a man and a woman, or what he calls “the third moon”. He won’t use that expression again, but we will see the evolution of Angel, a countryman that leaves wife and son to go to Barcelona, falls in love and gets the sex transition he always wanted to become Ana, the wife of one of the gangster bosses in the city.

The second scene, as we can understand at the end of the movie, is Ana thinking of committing suicide. After getting her husband Javier killed, she meets a young man whom she falls in love with and has intimate relations before finding out that he is in fact the son she abandoned as Angel in the village, making them become some sort of transgender Oedipus, and thus pushing Ana to wanting to jump over the cliff and die. The third scene is not clear, and

it seems the presentation of Angel and the mother of his son before she gets pregnant since after that we see Angel's grandfather telling him he needs to marry the girl and be a decent man.

Through these three scenes, the movie sets up the important topics that will be explored: the uniqueness of its protagonist, and the remorse and consequences of one's actions. As many of the movies in the Criminal archetype, the issues of guilt and atonement play a big part.

Character

As a man, Angel is characterized as irresponsible of his actions in the village, and then as a shy, naive and beautiful young country boy, unknowing of the city's idiosyncrasies. But he soon confesses to Don Javier that he wants a transformation "that would be my real me. I have always wanted to be a woman, to feel like a woman." We never see the transformation. All we know about it is what two of the drag queens say in the bar about Ana being now "the queen of Paralelo¹⁶", and expressing confusion about her gender ("a woman, what a mess!"). Right after, Ana goes on stage as she sings of accomplishing her life dream.

The only piece of conversation in which Ana talks about her transformation, apart from the moment when she tells Don Javier about her "real me", is a conversation in front of the mirror, speaking to her masculine physique:

Nothing has vanquished me in life, let alone you, yes you, a ridiculous beard. Javier has given me everything, and you are not going to impede our happiness. Not only am I going to finish you, I will pull you out by the roots!

¹⁶ Paralelo is a street in Barcelona, but also the neighborhood where most of the cabarets and nightclubs of the city used to be.

Ana does not explain more about her gender identity, just this hatred towards her beard and her desire to become her “true self”. Of course, the transformation is preceded by her miserable life as a man and a failed marriage and paternity. However after she says she wants to become a woman, the process is straightforward and does not present any big concern for the movie.

Socialization

Ana’s socialization occurs mostly in Lubiela’s bar, with Lubiela the owner, the waiter Cari and most importantly Don Javier, the gang boss. Other transgender clients and workers of the bar serve as counterpoint to the protagonist and shed light onto the positionality that the movie adopts.

La Lubiela is constantly referred to as feminine, yet is an old gay man constantly shown as kind and compassionate to everyone: he offers a job to Juanito, free food to Angel on his first day; takes care of la Canela and la Cari (the two waiters); constantly thanks his customers and welcomes local stars; protects the prostitutes of the neighborhood when they are attacked, etc. He is the “mother” figure in the movie. When Ana tells Don Javier that she wants to transition, he trusts Lubiela to guide her.

Don Javier, the boss of the local gang, is not your typical gangster. He owns *El Molino*, the most important cabaret in the area, and enjoys going and watching the crossdresser shows. He can be violent (as shown in a scene where some customers are looking for trouble at Lubiela’s, to which he responds with his gun), but he is always very friendly to the gay and transgender characters. After working with Angel on a boat the first time, he soon is infatuated with him and, holding his hand at Lubiela’s, invites him to dinner, then they take a walk and

kiss. On a romantic dinner, instead of a love conversation between two people getting to know each other, Javier offers everything to Angel.

When Angel asks him for the first time if he'd like him to transform into a woman, after watching some of the crossdressers of the bar put their makeup and clothes on, Javier responds: "If you want it, I want it". Even later, when Angel expresses that becoming a woman is something he's always wanted, Javier is shown as a very comprehensive boyfriend:

Angel, whatever you do, will be well done. I am leaving for some months now. Talk to Lubiela and Cari, they will give you good advice. When I come back, regardless of how you are, my embrace will be honest.

He is very accepting and in love with Ana when he returns, but their relationship and economic success create jealousy around them (we see two guys plotting revenge, two ladies planning to rat him to the police), and finally we learn that Javier has an enemy, a rival boss.

In order to disconnect from all the pressures, and after Ana tells him that she is worried about other gangs getting more power, Javier invites her to go to the beach on holidays and before she accepts, she has one last question:

Ana: There is another thing that is tormenting me. You always said you don't like women. I am a woman now.

Javier: Whatever, you will always be a boy, the boy that I met that day. My pretty boy. Also, it doesn't matter, you know that, silly

Rather than confounding Javier's homosexuality, Ana's transition is accepted as part of who she is. Even with those difficult questions, Javier is shown as a very comprehensive partner, supportive and likeable. A bit later, he is shot by his rival gang and dies in Ana's arms, suddenly ending their perfect romance. Ana sings a song to him ("Tatuaje" by Concha Piquer), and we see a final montage of their romantic moments.

Javier serves until the end of the movie as a spiritual guide for Ana (he leaves instructions for her in case she's ever in danger), and as Ana confesses: "Javier will always be a part of my life. And his teachings, my God and creed." Their relationship, which allows Ana to transition, and gives her the means to live a comfortable life and become a cabaret star, is the most positive and cherished part of the movie, as we never see a bad moment between them.

To close this section, I think it is relevant to look at one of the conversations of the other transgender girls of the bar, where Cari the waiter interrogates them about their transitions and how they felt when they woke up from surgery:

Girl1: Something horrible, when I woke up as a woman, the dream of my life, I felt something... inexplicable. Like a dream, like it wasn't me who was inside me.

Girl2: Mine was worse. When the effect of the anesthesia faded, I felt a discomfort that invaded all my being. Like a feeling that something was wrong.

They continue wondering why they do it, and think it might be for love, or understanding the reason behind it. However, after sharing such terrible experiences, they cheer each other up. Since they feel strong to cope with everything, they say "deep down, we're men" (implying that men are stronger and more capable of cope with problems). Despite the misogynistic assumption -to which Cari, the homosexual waiter, humorously replies "I was only a man the day I got baptized"- The movie is careful not to judge its sexually diverse characters, and adds this conversation to make visible the processes and struggles of transgender people at the time.

Institutions

Family as a social institution fulfills an important role in the movie. From the beginning, we can see Angel's father pushing him to fulfill his duty as a man, accusing him with a pointing finger: "you are going to do what's right for her, bastard. I swear on my health that even a shameless scoundrel like you is going to marry her." The next shot shows us Angel's wedding. So the father has some authority over him, but after Angel's escape from the village, we only see his father again towards the end, when he reports to the police the Luis' disappearance. Angel's son has gone to the city to find his father.

Angel's wife is not on screen and is only mentioned in an anecdote: "I got her, but I could have had a goat instead", says Angel when leaving the village. The son, however, appears at the end of the movie as the final punishment for Ana's abandonment of her previous family. The first time we see Luis is helping some robbers in the street trying to mug Javier and Ana, although we don't see his face and Ana lets him go for being only a child. The second time is right after we see Ana's father reporting his disappearance, at Lubiela's asking for a cognac (the same first drink that Angel ordered years before).

Luis approaches Ana because he remembers her from the mugging, and she becomes very fond of him, although a bit worried because he's much younger. She says she has a very "special affection" for him, because "that boy carries something of me in him. That's why I love him". Their love escalates. Ana's friends warn him not to hurt her, and finally he asks her to get married. Ana doesn't know how to tell him she used to be a man. Ana's friends don't see the need: "You were born the day you became a woman. You were born in the operating room." But Ana finally tells him she can't carry babies. Before she can explain, Ana gets a letter telling

her it's her son, and she starts yelling and crying in despair. The scene cuts to the cliff from the beginning, where she is about to jump, but keeps hearing a voice "Ana... Ana.... Angel...". She half smiles and the movie ends leaving us to figure out if she finally jumps or not.

La mala educacion: Almodovar and the Criminal

La mala educacion / The Bad Education, directed by famous filmmaker Pedro Almodovar in 2004, also links the main transgender character(s) and criminality. Although Almodovar uses many metaphors and imaginary scenes to develop the plotline, the character of Zahara/Ignacio is associated with blackmail, deception, thievery, drug use, etc. The movie, made almost 20 years after *La ley del deseo* (1987) (analyzed in another chapter), reproduces the trope of the Criminal and shows how Almodovar –the most prominent movie director in Spanish cinema portraying LGBT characters- uses different approaches to the same representation (the other one being the Epilogue of the analysis, *La piel que habito*, 2011). Also notable is *Tacones lejanos*, included in Chapter 7 as a middle point to understand this and the Empowered archetypes as presented by Almodovar.

The movie starts with film director Enrique (Fele Martinez) looking for inspiration in the newspapers, which Ignacio (Gael Garcia) interrupts, introducing himself as his childhood friend looking for a job. With his CV, he also brings a script ("*La Visita*") that Enrique will find very familiar, because is based on their history –more explicitly, Ignacio says "a part inspired in our childhood, and another part that isn't, when the characters grow older... I mean it's fiction". He also tells him that his name is not Ignacio anymore, but Angel (his artistic name), which Enrique finds weird and difficult to process. The deception of the character played by Gael Garcia starts here, as we later find out that he is not Ignacio nor Angel, but Juan, Ignacio's little brother.

Enrique doubts him because "he's changed so much," and the music plays tense violins to mark the moment. With this music, Almodovar warns the spectator that Enrique's intuition is right, and there is something remiss with Ignacio. This is repeated later, in the pool scene,

when Ignacio insists on being Zahara, a transgender character, in the movie that Enrique will adapt from his script “La Visita”. But Enrique is suspicious because “as much as I look at you, I don’t recognize the Ignacio I used to know”. Ignacio defends himself “people change with time.” But Enrique is final: “Not you, you are not Ignacio”. Following the address written on fake-Ignacio’s lighter, Enrique goes to Galicia to find out the truth, where he learns that the Ignacio he’s met is actually Juan, Ignacio’s little brother.

This very Almodovarian plot is intertwined with excerpts of the fictional story “La Visita”, where Gael Garcia plays Zahara, a beautiful transgender woman that was molested as a child by a priest and wants revenge. We finally learn that Zahara is the fictional character based on the real Ignacio, who indeed suffered the abuses of Padre Manolo and was a transgender woman, although she wasn’t as glamorous as her fictional persona Zahara, and suffered from a strong drug addiction that made her spend all the blackmailing money on drugs. Finally, we realize that Juan with the priest murdered Ignacio because his addiction and mood swings were a threat to their future.

Character

There are three transgender characters in the movie: Ignacio and his alter ego, the fictional Zahara (played by Gael Garcia, who also plays Juan, Ignacio’s little brother), and Paca, Zahara’s friend, a marginal character. Both share similarities and differences that make Zahara a better and less pathetic version of Ignacio. Of course, it was Ignacio himself who wrote the script, so he decorated some of her own truths.

Zahara is a cabaret artist that her friend Paca introduces to the audience as follows:

she defines herself as a mix of desert, chance and coffee shop... she's a great artist, and she's a great great friend of mine. For all of you, now, the mystery and the fascination of the *authentic*, the inimitable, Zahara

Zahara then lip syncs to "Quizas, Quizas, Quizas" in her first scene and flirts with a guy from the audience. After the show, they end up having sex. When he passes out, Zahara and Paca empty his wallet and steal his bike until Zahara realizes it is Enrique (the fictional alter ego of the real Enrique, played this time by a different actor –Alberto Ferreiro– and with a different family name). This scene quickly sets Zahara and her friend Paca as two characters used to commit these types of scams, since they already have a *modus operandi*. Zahara finally decides not to steal from Enrique, but has sex with him while he is unconscious, and leaves him a letter asking him to meet her to talk about business, which basically means stealing from the school's church and blackmailing one of the teachers for molesting of Ignacio as a kid.

This scene, together with the next in which she and Paca consume cocaine, heroine, steal the gold from the school church and blackmail the priest unambiguously portray Zahara as a criminal who uses her attractiveness to deceive and achieve her goals. In this fictional story, Zahara ends up dead, her neck broken by one of the priests in order to avoid blackmailing, punishing the criminal transgender character of the movie.

Ignacio does not get a better portrayal by Almodovar, being less attractive and put together than Zahara. Ignacio starts as a young and beautiful boy in a catholic school that attracts the attention of Padre Manolo. He sings for him, and is molested and loved by him. When Ignacio falls in love with his classmate Enrique, Padre Manolo expels Enrique from the school and separates the two boys forever. Ignacio as a grown up is a transgender woman addicted to heroin. She is bitter and resentful and lives in a small apartment in Madrid. She has

stolen from her mother and grandmother in Galicia and is incapable of saving for her operation, something that torments her, so she goes to extort Padre Manolo. But the priest only gives her money little by little, buying time, until he falls in love with Ignacio's little brother, Juan, and they set out to kill Ignacio.

Again, the transgender character is depicted as a criminal and an addict, and gets a final punishment in the movie. This is aggravated by the fact that Angel Andrade (Juan, Ignacio's little brother) is also a deceiver and a murderer, and after he makes Enrique's movie, he ends up being one of the big screen Casanovas and marrying a girl. Heterosexuality and cisgenderism allow for the character to be alive, whereas Ignacio and Zahara, whose criminal activity never includes murder, must die along with Padre Manolo, the pedophile priest who molests children.

Socialization

We see little socialization of Zahara outside of her friend Paca and Padre Manolo. Paca is also in the show, although it seems that she only uses feminine clothes for the show, whereas Zahara lives as a woman. They are close friends and partners in crime, and Paca is constructed as the comical relief to Zahara's adventures. Ignacio only socializes with her family (from time to time goes to see her mother and lives with Juan) and does not have a good relationship with any of them. Finally, both interact with Padre Manolo, who molested them as children and reappears later in life: for Zahara, Manolo is judgmental and serious; for Ignacio, he tries to take care of her, but their relationship is destined to failure because of the blackmailing and the poisoning of Juan. Both characters seem mostly alone and lonely, which adds to their depiction as

criminals, and their relationships are mostly toxic, which leads them to their premature death, with the exception of Paca who is there only as a sidekick for Ignacio's script.

Institutions

School and the church are presented together here, and they do not receive a sympathetic treatment. They are in charge of disciplining the bodies of young boys, rendering them docile, as shown in the scenes of physical exercise that have become the poster of the movie in some countries. Moreover the school not only disciplines their bodies and their minds, and the priests soon become the enemy for Ignacio and Enrique for, on the one hand, forbidding their homosexual love, and on the other hand subjecting Ignacio to sexual abuse in the hands of Padre Manolo.

We see both the arbitrary Enrique's expulsion from the school, due more to Manolo's jealousy than any real transgression and the air of superiority that the priests have when Zahara comes back to the school to blackmail them. At some point, Padre Manolo tells her that nobody is going to believe her word about what happened, to which Zahara answers: "People have changed. It is 1977. This society values my freedom more than your hypocrisy." It is true that the years following Franco's death were marked by a heavy presence of liberation movements, but this conversation (and its ending with Zahara's death) are witness to the fragility of queer people during that time, and the strength of the Catholic church.

In reality (outside of Ignacio's script), Padre Manolo also abandons the school full of remorse, and creates a new family with his wife despite his homosexual tendencies -that are corroborated by his attraction for Juan. However, outside of the church, Manolo is much less

powerful and has to relinquish to Ignacio's blackmailing, although he ends up killing her anyways at the end.

The other institution in the movie, that we can also see in *La ley del deseo* and *Todo sobre mi madre* (both analyzed in Chapter 7) is cinema, and although it is used as a metaphor for the layers of reality/fiction in the movie, as well as a poetic ode to the medium itself, it reminds us that cinema creates discourses that are repeated in life. Almodovar is fascinated by his own profession, and many of his films feature a filmmaker character and many references to the profession. In this case, Enrique is a filmmaker and Juan/Ignacio an amateur actor that ends up being a famous womanizer; Enrique and Ignacio masturbate together in a cinema when they are young boys, and Zahara and Paca reunite at the door of that same cinema years later; Juan and Padre Manolo also go to the cinema towards the end, commenting that "it is like all movies talk about us"; Ignacio is shown as a big lover of cinema and script-writer.

Un hombre llamado flor de otoño: from Criminal to Rebel Outlaw

The opening scene in *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño/A Man Called Flor de Otoño* (dir. Pedro Olea, 1978; henceforth *Flor de Otoño*) starts with the tolling of the bells of Barcelona's gothic cathedral, where several fancy cars are dropping off what we will soon realize is the city's bourgeoisie. The camera takes us to one of the city's landmarks, the cathedral's interior patio, where we meet the main character Lluís de Serracant (Jose Sacristan) and his mother Doña Nuria (Carmen Carbonell) who reminisce of Lluís' dead father and their visits to the cathedral together. His mother is melancholic of past times when he was little and his father alive, and Lluís seems impatient and a bit annoyed at his mother's comments. Walking back home they

greet other families, and his mother brings up the topic of marriage, to which Lluís replies he already has the woman of his life –meaning her. The conversation is interrupted by the sound of gunshots, and two men running away with guns in their hands.

In the next scene we learn Lluís is the only son of a rich widow, from a rich family in Barcelona in the 1920s, during Miguel Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship (before the Second Republic and the Spanish Civil War). During that time, anarchists were revolting against the regime and, as we learn from Lluís’ uncles, the bourgeoisie felt their rights threatened by them and the unions, so they condoned some vigilante activity –like that of the gunshots in the street. Lluís, on his side, does not stand with his uncles on this, and they have a family discussion about Lluís’ job defending union workers as a lawyer. That conversation, in front of his aunt and cousin (who he will call a “nun” later on) showcases the political dichotomy in which Lluís sits for the whole movie: on the one hand, his family –including his mother– is rich, connected with the church and local industry and has a prestige that is somehow protected by the dictator, whereas his job as a lawyer and his own ideals are in line with the anarchist movement. The divide is highlighted by Lluís wearing white while the rest of the family wears black.

This beginning seems fairly typical in a movie about the “two Spains”, a recurrent trope in Spanish cinema that shows Spanish society divided in two camps: the poor/the rich; left/right; or fascist/anarchist-communist. This recurrent symbolism is especially prevalent after the Civil War, during which the country was literally divided in two factions fighting for power. The fact that the movie is introduced by a “based in real facts” announcement, only adds to the sensation that we are going to watch a historical film explaining the beginning of the war. And it

does, only in this case the protagonist is also caught in another dichotomy: he is Lluís de Serracant by day, and *Flor de Otoño* (Autumn Flower) in a night club. Throughout the movie, we learn more about the double life that Lluís leads in 1920s Barcelona, and his efforts to murder Franco. Furthermore, this dichotomy is also presented in the city itself. Barcelona's old town is divided by las Ramblas, one of the main boulevards, and to each side of this street we can find the rich Gothic and the poor Raval neighborhoods. Lluís' life is constantly divided between the two, spending the days in the former and nights in the latter.

Character

Presented differently than the other characters of this chapter, Lluís is from a wealthy family, the De Serracans, who live in the center of the city and control an important factory in Barcelona. We are made aware of Lluís' position in society throughout the movie. However in Lluís' night time we see *Flor de Otoño*, who inhabits the Raval neighborhood, also known as "el Chino", where most of the cabarets, sex workers and sailors spend their hours. We meet Lluís first as a respectable citizen, who accompanies his mother to church and dresses in a bright clean white suit. In the next scene we learn that he is also a lawyer for union workers and anarchists –something that does not please his uncles. And finally when night comes we are introduced to his other life, first as a homosexual as we see him wake up with his boyfriend, and then as a cross-dresser as we see him applying make up and transforming into *Flor de Otoño*, performing her show for the night in the *Bataclan*, one of the historical locales in Barcelona's nightlife.

Lluis never calls himself transgender, nor does he explicitly identify as in transition, but rather inhabits both his masculine and feminine selves, in the two Barcelonas we see onscreen. As *Flor de Otoño*, she refers to herself in feminine, more assertively than her masculine version, and sure of her place in the entertainment and nightlife world she knows so well. She is cunning –as in her revenge of Armengol, explained further below– in charge, and has a network of people that can help her, listen to her, and even obey her.

The only moment we see Lluis talking explicitly about his alter-ego *Flor de Otoño* is in the scene where he reveals to his mother what he does at night. Obscured by the shadows of the room –that he asked the mother to keep dimmed– Lluis confesses that he has lied to her, that he has actually met the woman of his life, and that woman is *Flor de Otoño*. Despite almost failing to reveal his secret (the mother has to ask him to turn on the lights and come closer before he tries to go away without being seen), in this intense scene Lluis comes out publicly as both a woman and a homosexual (since *Flor de Otoño* is “the only woman of Lluis’ life”). In fact, this conflation of cross-dressing and homosexuality is present throughout the movie, as it was also legally during the Franco regime.

Socialization

Lluis has a relationship with his family and the anarchist/union movement. *Flor de Otoño*, on the other hand, socializes with other cross-dressers and their customers. Boths meet regularly with the two partners in crime, Surroca and Ricard, which whom the relationship is the strongest and closest. Lluis has a very tense relationship with his family, including his mother. His uncles –who embody the values and aesthetics of the bourgeoisie of the period– resent him

for not working in the factory like the rest of them, something that is expected of him as the only son of Doña Nuria. Failing to carry on the family legacy, especially with an absent father figure, is also presented as a failure in Lluís' masculinity, albeit only by the uncles. The movie does not make an open judgment on this issue, and the uncles are presented as ridiculous and outdated by Lluís, who expresses his anger when not in front of his family. Being a lawyer is a decent second option for his uncles –despite their critiques- but defending anarchists is too much for them, and they express their concern over the shadow Lluís' professional activity casts upon their noble family name. Lluís tries to quiet them saying he needs the publicity, and his mother also defends him and stops their conversation.

This tense conversation with his uncles is also presented with Lluís' aunt and cousin being silent docile women, very religious (during the movie Lluís calls his cousin a “nun” and she will conduct the prayers after Lluís is taken by the police) and dressed in black. The conjunction of the church and the bourgeoisie, all dressed in dark colors, makes Lluís stick out like a sore thumb, dressed in white, defending anarchists, avoiding religion and, as we will learn later on in the movie, much farther removed from hegemonic masculinity than his uncles suspect.

His only positive, albeit complicated, relationship is with his mother. She expresses unconditional love throughout the movie and, despite her trying to find a suitable wife for her son, she is not broken by her son's confession about being Flor de Otoño, and reassures him that it changes nothing about the way she feels. However, she acts as if that scene never happened the following day and for the rest of the movie. Is as if she cannot really come to terms with it, but she accepts it. At the end of the movie, we learn she can't accept her son's

reality, as she repeats the mantra “He is going to America” upon finding out in the newspapers that he tried to assassinate the dictator.

Her denial is her coping mechanism, but in the final scene we realize that it is all a façade, that she knows and accepts the truth. When Lluís and his partners in crime are imprisoned waiting for their execution, Lluís’ mother comes to pay a final visit. In it she repeats the story of Lluís going to America, but she has brought him lipstick and a small mirror. Symbolically putting together both sides of Lluís –the fictitious in which he is going to America as her bourgeois son, and the reality that he is an anarchist cross-dresser sentenced to death– in this final intervention, the mother allows Lluís to enact his last defiance to the system in dying for his ideals, with lipstick on.

Other characters that surround Lluís, and define him by proximity, are the anarchists and union workers with whom he works to plan the assassination of the dictator (and thus form part of his political-criminal side), and the other cross-dressers and customers of the bar (who in turn belong to his criminal-nightlife side). In fact, both of these sides are constantly intertwined: Lluís cross-dresses to steal the dynamite for the attempt, is investigated by the police for the murder of one of his co-workers, attacked by the dead co-worker’s boyfriend and a gang of thugs, interrogated by the police for the murder, brought in by the police for the illegal alibi (she was with a man in a whorehouse sleeping together) and betrayed by the co-worker’s boyfriend to the police, who finally discover Lluís preparing the attack. All the overlapping plotlines make sense of the complexity of Lluís’ identity, which is never a pure dichotomy, and evolves through the conflicts among its different faces.

Finally, Lluís' accomplices (his boyfriend Ricard and their boxer friend Surroca) accompany him throughout the movie. They are unconditionally by his side, although Ricard warns Lluís of many things like the craziness of the attempt's idea or his meanness as Flor de Otoño. They never betray him, and constantly protect and love him, which position the character as well socialized, with a "family" that he has chosen over his own blood family, like many queer people were (and are) forced to do when their families don't accept them for who they are. The friends also avoid the image of the trans character as a solitary deceiver, incapable of loving or being loved as others in the Criminal archetype are represented.

Institutions

The final level of analysis is Lluís' relationship with institutions. I have discussed Lluís' difficulties with his bourgeois family, although being a Serracant comes with advantages. The church is present in the movie, such as in the opening scene going to the cathedral, or the constant reminder of Lluís' cousin being almost a nun. In fact, when the family finds out about Lluís' imprisonment through the press, we can see the whole family praying, while the mother repeats "he is going to America". Lluís' family shows the connection between bourgeoisie, the state and the dictator, and the church, a triumvirate that was key during Franco's regime. Although Lluís as a Serracant has a good relationship with the establishment, the other facets of his identity put him at odds with it, and finally get him killed.

The legal institution –and more precisely law enforcement– are a constant presence in Lluís life, and also attest to the Serracants' connections. The first time they appear is after La Coquinera's murder (one of the cross-dressers). Because Flor de Otoño had an argument with

her over flirting with her boyfriend Armengol, right before the murder, suspicion is cast over Flor de Otoño and she is interrogated by the police. Although she has an alibi (and is later proved innocent by the finding of the murderer), this puts her in a bad position with Armengol, who thinks Flor de Otoño did it, beats her for it and tries to betray her female identity to her mother. This makes Flor/Lluis very mad, and from then he plots revenge by incriminating him in a pharmacy robbery. Again, this leads to Lluis being interrogated by the police, but this time he has been careful to have an alibi, and spent the night with a man from the club in one of the brothels of the neighborhood.

However the alibi puts Lluis in trouble because in making him innocent of the robbery, it puts him in the position of being a criminal for sexual reasons (being in a brothel with another man). We see Lluis sexuality conflated with his role as criminal, adding yet another layer to his situation as a legal outcast. Furthermore, Armengol testifies to his anarchist connections when he realizes that Lluis has set a trap for him, and helps the police finally connect the dots and follow Lluis, thus preventing, after an intense shoot out, the attempt on the dictator's life. After that Lluis and his accomplices are caught and executed, punishing the protagonist for his multiple transgressions. Lluis is classified by the justice as a criminal, but not for cross-dressing but rather for his anarchist connections, proximity to murders, use of brothels and finally an attempt to kill the dictator. With this representation, the movie conflates different types of criminality but giving it a rebellious perspective against an unfair regime. Although the movie is based on facts before the Franco regime (probably because the time of Franco was still too close to talk so harshly about it), it uses topics and themes that resonate with Franco's

dictatorship and denounce the abuses of authority by dictators and the injustice of criminalizing political ideas and identities.

Final Discussion: the Criminal

The examination of the Criminal archetype in these five movies reveals there is not a monolithic way of criminalizing a character, and the variety of approaches present in this chapter have to be read in conjunction with the analysis of other archetypes, that will inevitably permeate into this one (for example *El transexual* in the next chapter, which puts together the Criminal and the Patient, or *Todo sobre mi madre* in the fifth chapter, that mixes the Criminal and the Empowered). Archetypes are not pure, and they only serve to group all the characters of this dissertation in three recognizable discourses that belong to ways of representing. If we look closer, each of these movies is a different and unique product, a representation with its own particularities. If we step back enough, all of the movies share some traits in common.

Some similarities exist among these five movies: their transgender characters suffer from criminalization in the plot, and receive some sort of punishment for it. Be it Carla's final passionate killing in a jealousy spree; Lola's apprehension by Patrizia's lover before she can get the money; Ana's Oedipal ending or Flor de Otoño, Zahara and Ignacio's death, all of these movies continue in the line of what *Odio mi cuerpo* started, and make the characters responsible for the consequences of their acts. Their responsibility includes paying the final price of death. Furthermore, in some cases the punishment is aggravated by the lack thereof for the cisgender and/or heterosexual characters (see Juan in *La mala educacion* or Patrizia in *Los sueños húmedos*).

Iquino's movies do not present their transgender characters as brave heroes, especially in *Los sueños húmedos*, and they explore the darkest side of their characters surrounded by immoral bourgeois characters. Although in *La basura esta en el atico* Carla is not the villain of

the film, she reacts to and gets caught in a series of crimes committed by her lovers and their lovers, and finally succumbs to the group dynamic. Both movies play with a morbid fascination with sex, deception and moral transgressions. The characters of Liliana and Patrizia respectively, embody a blase wealthy woman that is looking for new emotions, and the transgender character is used as one of these new emotions. In *La basura esta en el atico*, Carla is truthfully loved by the couple, who make her be the third one in the relationship, until Liliana moves on and jealousy and the murder spree that both Liliana and Javier are in ends up catching up with her. In *Los sueños humedos de Patrizia*, Lola is the “homewrecker”, operating in the shadows to deceive, and is caught in the end, and punished with ridicule and humiliation.

In *La tercera luna*, we see a transgender character who becomes a criminal, and once again receives some sort of punishment at the end. In fact, criminality and Barcelona’s underworld are almost like another character. Don Javier is the boss of a gang, but we see rival gangs, robbers, pickpockets, prostitutes, etc. Lubiela’s bar is located in el Paralelo, the neighborhood where -even today- those activities coexist with renowned cabaret spectacles. Criminal life and the nightlife are intertwined in this area also called the Chinese Quarter because, as Javier explains “Chinese people would come here and start their businesses of obliging women... and many pleasures”. The neighborhood is later described as a place where “whores, prostitutes, madams, homosexuals... all marginalized are well received here.” By locating Ana here, the movie attaches the criminal stigma to our main character.

But the movie also counter-balances with a sympathetic portrayal of Ana throughout the movie, and she is surrounded by good friends, an amazingly kind lover, and financial security. However, towards the end she becomes the wife of the boss who *seems* to not know,

but knows how powerful she is. For getting her transition and her life dream completed through Javier's dirty money, and for transgressing the gender binary, Ana is made to pay at the end with a bizarre oedipal curse that pushes her to suicide (ambiguously so as we do not know if she goes through with it).

In *Flor de Otoño*, Lluís' outlaw status is constantly read as defiance to an unjust status quo that prosecutes him as an anarchist and as a cross-dressing entertainer. While the whole movie evolves around the constant threat of his other identity being revealed (to the authorities, and to his family), Lluís is seldom presented as a victim and is very much in control of the situation, so much so that he uses his ambiguous situation in his favor to achieve what he wants. Indeed, criminality here is equated with political resistance to fascism, and even the intent of murder (which the audience knows is doomed to failure since the movie is based on real facts) and the accidental killing of *Guardia Civiles* in the shooting is regarded as collateral damage.

In this movie as well, the transgender character gets punished at the end, dying at hands of the regime. Lluís is executed after spending the night in prison. But even his death feels redemptory (rather than a punishment for being who he is). Firstly, the death is a political death: he doesn't die due to who he is, but rather after attempting to murder Primo de Rivera. Secondly, his death is preceded by a final conversation with the priest –whom he refuses kindly, telling him he prefers to listen to the sea- as well as his mother –who insists on pretending he is going to America, to a better life. She also brings him make up, showing that she is well aware of everything that is going on. In fact, his mother seems more accepting of his gender than she is of his political motivations or intentions. Finally, his death constitutes a final act of defiance,

putting lipstick on before facing the shooting squad, revealing to everyone that hidden part of himself. If he is going to die an anarchist (one of his hidden identities), he might as well die as an anarchist in drag.

What separates *Flor de Otoño* from the other movies analyzed in this chapter is the presentation of 'criminality' as a defiance. In presenting different aspects of the character-sex, gender, sexuality and politics- as opposed to the hegemonic position regarding such identities, the movie is highlighting the intersectionality of oppression and, furthermore, empowering the character as an entity of resistance to hegemonic ideology. Not coincidentally this movie, based in the 1920s, is produced in 1978, a few years after Franco's death. In a post-fascist dictatorship moment, revival of old conflicts portraying the left/right divide was very common, and instead of trying to portray very recent events, the movie evokes the conflict by going back half a century in time when, as we see Lluís saying during the film, there was still hope to overthrow fascism.

Zahara and Ignacio, and both in their own ways, are victims before being criminals, and their past as molested children takes them down some dark roads (like drug abuse), pushing them to blackmailing as their only chance to survival. If Flor de Otoño is educated and rich enough to make informed decisions about how she decides to fight an oppressive system, Zahara/Ignacio seem to fight the system out of survival instinct, trying to find a place as transgender women. I am not equating Lluís' anarchist politics and activist plans to Zahara/Ignacio's clumsy efforts at extortion, but both are fighting oppressive institutions (dictatorship the former, the church and its molester priests the latter) with the means at their disposal.

At least, after looking at all these movies in conjunction, we can see that the Criminal is not always 100% bad or negative, that we can find some heroism among criminals, and that there is a solidarity portrayed among outcasts and thieves too -as well as treason and deception in the bourgeoisie, aristocracy and the church. These movies bear witness of the complexity of representing characters and their realities without falling in a trite and overused trope, and each one in their own way, try to explore the relations of transgender people –illegal in the system for decades– and the dark places of our society where some inhabit, and others are forced to stay in.

CHAPTER 6: THE PATIENT ARCHETYPE

The Patient

The advent of democracy in Spain in the late 1970s brought with it a new open-mindedness for some topics that were long forbidden, or at least the possibility of exploring other realities hidden under the censorship of fascism. Some vestiges of the old regime cohabited still in a new democratic Spain that was looking for a way to become a modern country. Chapter 5 presented an archetype that was based on the marginality and illegality of transgender characters who, very often, ended up being punished. In this chapter I explore the archetype of the Patient as it emerges in Spain right after the beginning of the democratic transition.

The integration of transgender people in society comes through the reproduction of the gender binary, in which medicine and psychiatry have a central role, for example through the protocols and medical regulations that stem out of Harry Benjamin's *true transsexual*. The results of scientific discourse being the central 'knowledge' in this matter are diverse: on the one hand, it removes the blame from transgender people (who, as ill people, cannot avoid the way they feel/are) and through a diagnosis, legitimizes the desire or will of living as the opposite gender. On the other hand, however, this does not apply to people wanting to live as 'another' gender, or 'no' gender. The price one pays for being under medical jurisdiction is reinforcement of the gender binary and compliance with all medical regulations that are thus put into place.

Furthermore, the medical paradigm diagnoses a mental disorder but offers a physical solution. In order to stop 'suffering' from Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria

(depending on the medical moment in history), one must alter their body to achieve the body with which the mind feels comfortable, with the gender and sex that one identifies. As such, once the operation is over, theoretically the patient will be 'cured', becoming a woman (or a man, depending on the direction of the transition) and thus, passing as such, leaving the transgender (or rather transsexual) label behind. As we will see, the movies in this chapter deal with this situation, and surgery is at the center of their discussions about their situation. The medical paradigm also rewards those compliant with transsexuality rather than non-transsexual transgenderism that somehow puts in question the gender binary, or doesn't follow the established path.

Oscar Guasch in *La crisis de la heterosexualidad* (2000) also makes a genealogy of homosexuality and its construction as deviant, marking two stages: "from sin to crime" (p.39), and the "medicalization of sexuality" or the stage from crime to illness (p.63). He adds that "in the XIX century medicine offers bourgeoisie a new legitimation for social control of dissidents" (p.63) and draws on the work on Criminal Anthropology in Spain by Maristany (1973) and Peset (1983) to demonstrate a shift from the legal to the medical institution. Medicine, thus, is from that moment on the guardian of social stability, judge of deviance, and the solution –in a positivist view of science– to the problem. Masturbation, promiscuity, female sexuality, etc. are seen through a heterosexist prism and labeled accordingly. This does not mean that those labels are not changing throughout time, but rather that through the treatises and books of science, each time society decides what is 'normal' and 'healthy'. In this chapter, I explore the movies that that represent transgender people through the lens of science and medicine.

El transexual: Between the Criminal and the Patient

A transgender woman with a Brazilian accent, Yeda Brown, speaks to the camera without any presentation or introduction of who she is:

A homosexual is a person who makes love with another person of the same sex... a bisexual is a person who makes love with men and women... a *travesti* is a gentleman who goes to work, paints his face, puts a wig on, fake eyelashes, a dress and performs as a woman... but when he's out of the stage and goes home, he's like other men...

While she explains to the spectator the differences between such concepts, the images go back and forth between her and crossdressers (or as she says *travestis*) getting ready for their shows.

She goes on and talks about transsexuality:

A transsexual is a person that is born with a defect in their sex. This person has a feminine or masculine psychic and physical ability [sic], which is my problem. I was born a masculine transsexual: I was born a boy, I dressed as a boy, my father considered me as a boy, but inside I was a girl. I started school... when my father took me to school, holding my hand, people always took me for a girl... my parents were really hurt that people took me for a girl. At first I had this cute long hair... because my parents hurt, they cut my hair, and people would continue to call me a girl. And people would ask, why don't you put some earrings to the girl? But he's not a girl, he's a boy, and then he got mad. At school I really liked the company of boys, I fell in love with little boys, with the teacher...

This introduction does the work of defining, for this character and the movie, the terms that preoccupy this dissertation. Furthermore, it constructs transsexuality as a problem, and a 'defect' in a first person narration of a transsexual woman¹⁷, who is thus self-proclaimed problematic and defective. In this presentation we already see a divide between what the character is perceived to be by her family, and what she felt inside. It also mentions the issue of socializing and performing a gender (hair length, earrings), and the problems with gender

¹⁷ Despite her identification as a "masculine transsexual", this dissertation uses the sex of identification and not the biological sex to address transgender people, as it is common procedure nowadays. In fact, this presentation has a very particular way of trying to be accurate or pedagogical for the audience, like her mention of a "feminine or masculine psychic or physical ability", which meaning still escapes me, but sounds like a scientific definition.

deviance from a very young age. Towards the end of the monologue, we cut to another woman who enters a semi-dark room where a man is waiting with a camera. Another woman comes to pick up some photographic material and talks about the man writing an article, so we learn that he is a journalist. He takes pictures of the woman getting naked. Back to the transsexual woman, she explains her story, from falling in love with her teacher, to the psychiatrist, being in the military, and finally undergoing hormone treatment and surgery.

This introduction, convoluted and scientifically inaccurate as it is, presents two of the three pillars with which the movie is constructed: the transsexual woman talking to the camera about her situation, and Sergio, the journalist who works also as a photographer for erotic pictures. Sergio spends the movie looking for Lona, a transsexual woman who will give him the details on the sordid world of transsexuality and nightclubs. The third pillar of the movie is composed by the performances of transgender artists like a rendition of “All that Jazz”, sung by a half-man half-woman or the final musical number sung by Yeda Brown herself. It is also worth noting that, despite being two transgender women the protagonists of the story, the movie is called *El transexual*, with the masculine article “El.”

Through these three sub-stories, director Jose Jara creates a bizarre mosaic that mixes fiction with documentary, science with first-hand witness, seriousness with spectacle, and thriller with social denunciation. One of the most unique movies in this dissertation, *El transexual* blends together a Criminal narrative, which positions its protagonist Lona involved in scandal and punished with death, and the Patient archetype by way of Yeda Brown speaking to the camera, serving as a perfect bridge between chapters. This movie is in transition from criminality (a moral condemnation) to the patient (a scientific diagnosis).

Character(s)

Yeda Brown is one of the protagonists, and although she is completely removed from the thriller plot, she and her monologues are present throughout the movie. She was one of the first public transsexual women in Spain¹⁸ and in the movie plays the part of a narrator/testimony of transsexuality, trying to give the 'realistic' counterpart to Lona's fiction story. Her different interventions make this movie belong to the Patient archetype, as her definition of transsexuality is very much based on the DSM diagnosis. It is almost a recitation of the manual with some personal anecdotes. I have explained how in the first intervention, she differentiates between homosexual, bisexual, *travesti* and transsexual (although she uses "masculine transsexual" in a different way that we would nowadays). Right after, she talks about her childhood and relationship with her family and school. She explains that she "suffered a lot because inside I was a girl, I loved like a girl, had a girl's heart, a body, all was a girl". Later, she had to serve in the compulsory military service, instigated by her father. She says it was hard, with her body, with her small penis, but luckily some high-ranking officers fell in love with her and protected her.

Her other interventions also mix personal experiences, scientific explanations and opinions that correspond to a view of transsexuality foregrounding the gender binary and duality of mind/body. She speaks about her childhood playing with dolls (one of the diagnosis symptoms), and links it to homosexual and transsexual people, since they "have the sensibility of both sexes". In another of her monologues, she details sex reassignment surgery. Later she provides further details about how good her results for the vaginoplasty are, talking about

¹⁸ In her interview in *Que paso con* in 1995 she explains her story as one of the first out transsexual women in Spain, having had surgery in Paris, and becoming Salvador Dali's muse. The interview can be watched on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZGeVLXIOy8>

sexual relations, vaginal sensibility, and how much she loves all types of sex (oral, anal, masturbation) because of her “monstrous” sensibility in the clitoris. After sharing her own desire and plenitude of pleasure of her genitalia –bordering on infomercial about vaginoplasty– she intervenes once more before the end of the movie, in probably the most interesting statement since the opening ones.

She defends herself and other transsexuals about accusations of frivolity: if you decide to become a woman, it is because you are sure, because you really want it; you’re not doing it for business or for a whim. And the best argument for backing up her affirmation is precisely the dangers of vaginoplasty. The unprepared doctors and the illegal situation in Spain forced many transgender people to go to France –like Yeda herself– or Morocco to get the surgery, and early surgical techniques were so dangerous that the patient had to sign a form relieving the doctor of any responsibility. However, the stronger statement that Yeda gives in her allegation is that “the clandestinity of vaginoplasty is the most dangerous thing about the operation”. After explaining all the miracles and advantages of the operation, Yeda warns us about its dangers, and this is intertwined with the final reveal of Lona’s death in the operation room.

Lona is the missing but present character throughout the movie, someone we only see through flashbacks yet has disappeared from the face of the earth without apparently telling anyone. We first see Lona in a flashback, meeting Sergio to settle details of their information exchange the week before. She wants the front cover of Sergio’s magazine as payment for all the evidence she can give to him to complete his expose on transsexuality and nightlife, hinting towards some drug or prostitution network. He’s hesitant because that means a lot of money,

but that's exactly what she wants: "Why do you think I have come? I am sick of making an exhibition of myself every night to prove I am a woman". She doesn't seem to care that is going to be a scandal, nor by the fact that she will have to betray some people.

The second time we see her, she is in some sort of safe house playing cards while two men play pool and a woman is giving birth in the adjacent room, assisted by two transgender women. This scene adds to the sordid story of Lona, but also links her to some underworld to which we get introduced. Sergio later visits her in her apartment, fearing that she's getting cold feet but she just tells him that she needs more time to find the evidence. The last time they meet, he is very aggressive and pushes her into the elevator. He is very angry and does not want to be betrayed by a "shitty showgirl".

These interactions with Sergio are almost all we see of her, but throughout the movie we learn *about* her through Sergio's investigations and conversations with her friends and acquaintances. There is also the final scene in the hospital, analyzed in the *Institutions* segment, that is possibly the most revealing and shows how, despite looking like the perfect Criminal archetype –working in a nightclub, with shady contacts, wanting to expose criminal activity and betraying people in order to get the money for the surgery, ends up dead– Lona is a victim of the medical system of the period. Her character embodies the transition from the criminal to the patient archetype, and the plot of the movie gives us just enough information throughout to reveal at the end that she was a "patient" all along.

Socialization

In this movie, the socialization of the character is pivotal to understand Lona, Sergio the

journalist, and his investigations, which soon become the center of the movie. In fact, it is through the stories each of Lona's friends tells Sergio that we get to know our protagonist. Sergio goes to the "Gay Club" –a historical cabaret club in Madrid where most of the action happens– and starts asking for Lona, who has apparently disappeared right before giving him some important confessions for his exposé. Sergio is shown as aggressive and cocky throughout, but very used to their company –like in the scene he pees standing next to Soraya, one of the cross-dressers, familiarly saying hi to each other in the process. During his search, Sergio visits many of Lona's friends and acquaintances. One of them, Sandra, tells him that Lona was in love with somebody outside the "profession" –i.e., show business– explaining her absence.

Margarita, the old lady who sells tobacco, has once seen this mysterious man, and helps Sergio get closer to finding him. The man in question is Eduardo, a man who fell in love with Lona and gave her a ring promising to always be with her. However, we find that she had some hesitation to accept because she still had "a secret" –meaning her genitalia. When Sergio finds him, Eduardo confesses that the whole affair seemed too good to be true to him: "How can a biology teacher like me be with a woman like her?" asks him in disbelief. But Eduardo is not the gentleman he pretends to be, and after Sandra confesses to Sergio that Lona was not so happy, we see a flashback of a rape scene of Lona, which she manages to escape from. Furthermore, the whole tension of the scene is built around the fact that she has not undergone surgery, and does not want Eduardo to discover it.

Eduardo still wants explanations for not making love, but when she confesses that she was born a man, he feels cheated. He thinks everyone at the cabaret who knows must be

laughing at him “but you never fooled *me*, I always thought that you were nothing but a whore, do you understand? You are a monster! Haven’t you ever considered working at a circus instead of in a cabaret bar?” He is very mean to her, to which she responds by revealing her penis. Later, when Eduardo tells the whole story to Sergio, he is seriously regretful about the way he reacted and accepts his wrongdoing, but it is too late and that is the last time that he will see her (apart from unknowingly crossing the stretcher where she lies dead).

Loti, one of Sergio’s romantic partners and co-workers at the cabaret is seen a couple of times sharing bed with him and talking about Lona, and at the end we realize that she was the one who helped Lona get the appointment for her surgery. Before the final scene in the hospital, she points towards Toni, the local gangster, as the person who lent her the money. It looks like Lona might have died because of this mysterious Toni, but when Sergio goes to meet him –and despite being the boss of two of the men that at some point beat Sergio– we realize Toni is the father of the baby that was born when Lona was in the safe house, and the husband of one of Lona’s coworkers Soraya. Instead of being the danger we are built up to expect, Toni ends up being very understanding and kind, having lent Lona the money and not knowing anything from her since. He only adds that Lona was obsessed with surgery from the moment she met Eduardo, and that she needed a vaginoplasty, which he knows is illegal.

After all the *noir* elements and mystery of the movie, putting together pieces that point towards a criminal involvement in Lona’s death, we find out that she disappeared right after surgery, and Sergio and Loti go to the hospital to find out. During this story, Yeda Brown is also building it up towards the dangers of vaginoplasty and, despite the convolutedness of the

whole plot, the final scenes are very powerful and show the involvement of the medical institution and its illegal practices as the true villain of the movie.

Institutions

Medicine is the main institution represented in the movie, as it happens with most of the movies in this chapter. Surgery and its illegality (the movie is from 1977 and this surgery wasn't legal in Spain until 1983) are the true protagonists of the film. From the first interventions of Yeda Brown, medicine has a prominent role. After explaining how she fell in love with her teacher, she tells us how the teacher called her father and they brought her to the psychiatrist, who said she "had too many feminine chromosomes and hormones, but they had to wait a little to let her develop". Despite her confusion about the chromosomes, Yeda is clear about psychiatry being at the center of her own process. She explains how the doctor told her that she had a case of hermaphroditism, and she had to take masculine hormones to counter-balance this condition. She went to another country to get the surgical procedures (those familiar with Yeda's story know it is in France).

In following interventions, Yeda explains the procedures of surgery, and how they turn the glans into a clitoris, for example. But as much as Yeda's speeches are explicit, the most powerful scene happens with Lona in a flashback in the hospital. The resolution of the whole mysterious plot is given in this final long scene, which is splashed with fragments of Yeda Brown's final performance for the movie. The scene starts with a nurse walking along an empty corridor with a tray. She looks middle-aged, serious and professional. She enters Lona's room as Lona is putting some makeup on, leaning back in bed. Aggressively, the nurse removes the

blankets from over Lona and opens her legs. Still very serious, she applies some product onto Lona's genital area and while she is touching there, Lona stops her make up and with the eye-liner in her mouth looks defiantly at her, then continues to put it on, which catches the nurse's attention:

Nurse: Do not put makeup on, it is forbidden. The doctor could get angry.

Lona: What do you care? Besides, if I die I want to be pretty.

N: The doctor's patients don't die

L: True. You are right. I was kidding. Besides, somebody as willing to live as I am can't die

After this, they look at each other intensely and seriously. Lona can't keep it to herself:

Lona: What happens here is that you are jealous! I am much more beautiful than you!

Nurse: Beautiful or handsome?

L: Shut up!

N: Regardless of the surgery, you will never be a woman like me.

Lona lays back looking at her defiantly, but they never exchange another word.

Two nurses with the stretcher knock at the door, where, after putting her pants on, they transport Lona to surgery.

This powerful scene shows, on the one side, the clear intention of Lona to undergo surgery, and how excited and happy she is about it. It also shows the impositions and authority of the medical institution, as well as the negative affect shown by the professionals, who did this sort of operations illegally and thus, could act how they pleased without fear of reprisal. At the end of the intervention, we can see something has gone awry. They try to make Lona breathe, but the doctor removes his mask. When Sergio and Loti arrive, they find the doctor waiting next to the stretcher with Lona's corpse:

She died of heart failure, but I never specify what type of surgery I was doing. The cause of death is falsified. If this situation came back to me one thousand times, I would do the same every time. She was so willing to live... she told me she'd kill herself if I didn't help her...

Finally, we learn the truth behind Lona's disappearance, and through this final scene we realize that it wasn't some sort of murder in a dark alley, nor a way of silencing Lona, but rather the difficulty and dangers that being a transsexual woman in 1977 entailed.

Vestida de Azul: Showing 'Realities'

Vestida de azul / Dressed in Blue (dir. Gimenez Rico, 1983) takes its name from a children's song about a doll, which was also the image of the poster of the movie. Furthermore the movie seems to objectify as dolls each of its transgender protagonists, and utilizes a central interview of all of the girls together to go in depth into some aspects transgender lives through their individual stories. The movie starts at night, cars coming and going while different women in sequin gowns and fur coats enter and exit these cars. The sound of the sirens interrupts their nightly activity and they start to run. Some of them are taken by the authorities, signaling unlawfulness, darkness and sex work. Furthermore, the movie adds in a starting title "All the characters in this movie are real. The facts and situations they live are true". What the titles do not say is that this is a staged documentary that borders on fiction for their scripting of scenes and the unreality of what happens in them because of the presence of the camera. Our group of protagonists is shown in the second scene, in a greenhouse where they have a drink around a fancy table and the camera goes up and down their bodies, to show them to us in their entire splendor. They become the stars of the show, but also the dolls "dressed in blue" that the title promises us.

Characters

The cast is composed by transgender women of different ages and backgrounds: Lorenzo, the old transsexual; Rene, the young one who wants to come out as transgender to her family; Maite/Nacha, Madam of her own brothel; Eva, the cabaret artist; Tamara, the young gipsy; and Jose who once was married to a woman. This classification is not an arbitrary way of defining

each of them here, but rather the way in which the movie pigeonholes each of them according to one main story. The way this movie works is by letting the girls discuss together some general topics and then treat each of the individual stories as an approach to some of the problems that transgender women suffer: coming out, getting old, work (artists and prostitutes), ethnicity and background, and marriage.

Lorenzo is the most seasoned of the group and represents aging as an issue. We see pictures of her as a boy, and she tells her story as a butler in a rich house. Lorenzo talks about herself in masculine and in feminine, depending of the scene. She's a loner, but she likes being alone. We see her in her house, doing some chores, while she confesses "What I fear the most is when it is seven in the evening and I have to put makeup on to go to work." This is not a happy portrayal: the scene is dimly lit, the character is shown doing very mundane things alone at home, with no friends and no visible amusement until she has to get ready to go to work in the street as a sex worker, and scared.

Rene Amor represents the other side of the coin, young and pretty. Rene starts at an interview with the doctor (analyzed in the *Institutions* section) and then explains to us that she was born in Brussels has "always felt like a woman". When she was 9-10 years old, people already "mistook" her for a girl, but her family doesn't know and she wants to tell her mother despite being really scared. The movie banks on this situation and offers us the scene with Rene writing the letter as some sort of happy ending, but we never see or know Rene's family reaction. Working in the opposite way as Lorenzo, Rene represents the young transgender woman for whom everything is starting.

The third woman we meet is Maite/Nacha, who changes names in her private and professional lives. She is introduced through a phone-call with a client, defining her as a sex worker, quoting the prices for the different services. She is the Madame of a “massage house”. After the phone call, she explains the different aspects of the job, what men demand of them, what types of services they offer and the prices. All those services have special names (a “Greek”, a “Thai”, a “French”, an “English”) and Maite wonders if that specialized vocabulary is a way of showing one’s culture or just wanting to separate common people from those “on the know”.

She is the most sophisticated of the group and brags about having more jewels, properties and coats. When another of the women tells her that these are worthless, she responds: “Do you know why these things are worthy? Because with them, they treat you like a lady, not like a faggot.” Nacha (she first introduces herself with her masculine name, Jose Antonio Sanchez) has an obsession with respectability, and clearly wants to achieve it by having worthy possessions: “I prefer being a respected lady than an old faggot.” Despite many of the girls sharing the belief that they need to save in order to “have something” when they are old, Nacha seems the most determined and the most dismissive of her poorer friends. She reproduces class difference among the group.

Francisco Perez/Eva is shown in a cabaret lip sync show, with the gaze and smiles of men shown in response to her performance. We see her joking backstage with one of the cleaning ladies who is curious about where they hide their penis for the show. They laugh together and try to make the lady believe they are biological women, but soon tell her “girl, you have what we want”, referring to her genitalia, establishing their wish to undergo surgery. Eva

is shown as a carefree entertainer who confesses that, although she is an artist and does shows in other towns around Madrid, she is forced to do some sex work to pay for all the costumes and makeup. However, she has a similar philosophy to Nacha, preferring to choose her clients. Also, she thinks that a *travesti* should make money while young in order to be more protected when old:

When you have something, everyone loves you. When you don't have anything, nobody does, and even less if you are a *travesti*, or imagine a fifty-year-old *travesti*.

We also see her with one of her special clients (who agreed to be filmed for the movie): they are shown on a date, and she puts makeup and a wig on him before getting naked, showing her sex work as specialized in customer's kinks. This is contrasted with the more familiar image that the film gives us of Eva, with a family that seems very supportive of her.

The next girl introduced is Juan Muñoz/Tamara, and on her first scene she talks about having money and saving for her future, to have something she can call her own. She seems Eva's rival from the way they speak to each other, and they work in the same bar. Tamara is a beautiful and young gipsy and a flamenco singer. She tells us that at age 13 she started "*el mariconeo*" (hanging around in the gay scene) and dressing as a woman. She says that she always speaks in feminine of herself because she sees herself "very womanly". She says it wasn't possible for her to be a man, so she started hormones, but she admits that she was treated better as a guy, and now feels more marginalized. She works as a sex worker and explains to the camera that she prefers being treated as a woman, and her preferences as bottom is she likes the boy, or top if the client pays. She is very outspoken and has a natural flair on her. She is also one of the more vocal ones about being a man or a woman: "I consider myself a woman, and I have a flaw, I admit it, a not very long dick... but I can't do anything with

women.” When she is asked about surgery to get rid of her “flaw”, she says she doesn’t want to because some of her friends who have had surgery are now like “furniture” because they don’t feel anything. The topic of surgery reappears later when they are all together, but Tamara’s role in the movie is to show us the additional difficulties of certain ethnicities and backgrounds to become transgender women. As a kid she was beaten a lot by her parents, who wanted her to get married and have children. In her opinion, this was because gypsies have another way of thinking, another mentality, and don’t understand her issue. She says that her dad would prefer “two daughters who are whores than a son who is a faggot.” For this reason she prefers to stay away from her family, and also tells that when other members of the extended family came to visit, her dad made her go away so the rest wouldn’t see her, and later he used to hit her with a chair. This terrifying story is assembled with images of little gypsy boys sleeping in cardboard boxes in the street, a gypsy camp, etc.

Despite the generalized homophobia and transphobia of the movie, both internalized by the girls and in the stories they tell about their lives, Tamara serves as a moralizing tale and warning of how other ethnicities and backgrounds still have it worse. This also contributes to the main discourse of “those who have properties are respected”, portraying the poorer of the girls as much more marginalized, even in their workplace. For example, in the following scene, Tamara goes to the bar where they work and one of the managers calls her attention for being under-dressed, as it reflects poorly on the locale. Despite this, Tamara is represented under a sympathetic light towards the audience –if not towards her boss- lively and happy, expressing her naive desire of becoming a great artist and being on TV, and able to talk about very hard topics without losing her grace and humor.

The last of the gang that we meet is Jose Ruiz Orejon, who stars in one of the most awkward scenes in the movie. He¹⁹ enters a bar asking for a drink, and gets reunited with the waitress there, who happens to be his ex-wife. It shows how the documentary stages this type of encounters, but also as their conversation develops, we can see how it is not scripted, and Jose will have to deal with his ex-wife's unexpected response. Jose explains a little about his situation: he was a very polite kid –which for him was the reason why his father loved him so dearly– and loved to play with dolls. When he was 18, he became an artist, met his wife and despite knowing that he was a *mariquita* (gay), they got married.

When Jose and Elena reunite, they compliment each other, and she tells him (who is dressed as a woman) that he looks very feminine. Jose responds “like always,” but Elena disagrees, he wasn't always like that. This is the first of many tense moments in their conversation. Jose meets Elena's son (who is brought in by Elena's husband), and the husband tells him with a nervous laugh “this is what you could have had”. Then Jose explains their story under a good light: “I always loved you, even when I was sleeping with that other guy, I did it very well and you didn't know”, but Elena the ex-wife doesn't agree, and she considers that Jose cheated on her:

Elena: From my point of view, you deceived me.

Jose: I deceived you with what?

E: Well, apart from knowing, like you said before, that you were... a *travesti* and that you liked...

J: In that time I was not a *travesti*.

E: Yes you were, because you know how I caught you in public toilets... You should have told me and then we would have stayed close friends. Had you come to me, and me not finding out through others but instead you come to me and say “Look Elena, this is what's going on. If you accept it cool, otherwise we stop here.” But you know how badly

¹⁹ Jose is one of the few characters who constantly refers to himself in masculine and for whom we are given no feminine name whatsoever, so I will use masculine pronoun.

it turned out. And then when I left with the father of my child, with Jesus, you know that you did it wrong and badly.

Every time Elena tries to make him accept he was unfair and dishonest to her, he remembers it in a different light since the arrangement worked much better for him than for her. Later he expresses that his marriage wasn't a failure for him, and he thinks that it wasn't either for her. But with this conversation it is clear that Jose tries to change the story for the camera, and once we hear his ex-wife, he doesn't seem honest at all. This feeling is aggravated in the scene where he visits his family. We see Jose and a friend walking in Jose's neighborhood, followed by a dozen children and some adults excited by the cameras. Despite having an accepting family who loves Jose for what he is, there is a looming tension for everyone in the scene: Jose is never relaxed and plays up his relationship with each of the members of his extended –and extensive– family around a large table. The family seems ashamed of the cameras and Jose's friend needs to ask questions to everyone to fill the silence in.

Each of these individual stories analyzes an aspect of the main character which is an amalgamation of a choral work of transgender voices. In that aspect, the movie is successful, but the staging and the topics chosen for showing seem too artificial and sensationalist, and the spectator is left wondering how much of truth is there in the movie, and most importantly, what scenes have been left out of it and why.

Socialization

Most of the movie is based on intra-trans socialization, and we see them socializing among themselves. They also have their own storylines, but some of the big topics are discussed in the greenhouse where they are all together. For example, in one of their conversations they try to

decide the differences between *travesti*, *transformista* and *maricon*. Here *travesti* is used pejoratively for girls who “are prostitutes, because they are not artists”, and *transformista* are those who use their transformation for artistic purposes. However, heterosexual couples that come to their shows, and the rest of society see them as *maricon* or *mariquita* (iterations of “faggot”), someone who makes them laugh. These differentiations are agreed upon in the group, however some consider being a *maricon* is better than a woman and complain about the misogyny they endure in society, where they see homosexual men better placed than women:

As a woman you are marginalized. As a man, they open the door for you, even if you are *maricon*, because there are Popes and ministers who are *maricones*. Homosexuals are the most perfect thing. 99% of men are homosexual: they swallow or they fuck you.

We are shown through their words how in 1983, homosexuality was much more respected and accepted in society because of homosexual men having been in positions of importance, whereas the misogyny that the characters suffer is still very present.

Another of the hot topics for the group is surgery. There is a whole scene dedicated to it, in which we cut to each of the girls who express their feelings about it. We see Eva put to sleep in a hospital and getting breast surgery (which most of them have). Lorenzo says that she was very criticized for the size of the breasts she chose, and for doing it so long ago, but now other people want the same type of breasts. Nacha says that she wants to get rid of Adam’s apple and augment her breasts. Jose wants to do her cheeks but nothing “down there”, a feeling that seems generalized as most of them don’t mention it, and those who do like Tamara or he, say that those who get genital surgery go crazy, or their vagina “ends up like a burger”. The feeling is generalized and corresponds to the clandestine secrecy of the surgery (it was decriminalized that year) and rudimentary techniques that did not achieve a functional vagina –

which reminds us of the moralist ending of *El transexual*. The only one who dreams of getting a vaginoplasty is young Rene, who wants to become a “full woman.”

It might sound contradictory that this movie is under the Patient category even if most of the characters do not consider genital surgery as a solution. However, we need to take into account the fact that all of them have had some type of surgery and hormone treatment, and that the main reason they mention for not doing the surgery is the unsuccessful results it brings. The movie is framed by the medical explanation of transsexuality, but in a similar way to *El transexual*, oscillates between this position and the Criminal archetype, like for example when Nacha’s brother affirms that he prefers Nacha to be a *travesti* than a pickpocket or criminal in the streets, or the beginning of the film hinting the sex work of the characters.

The third hot topic for the group, which each of them responds individually to, is love. Some of them feel lucky to have a partner, like Nacha, but even she laments about the difficulty of finding someone who loves them for who they are. Most of them dream of a future when they find that love, get legalized as women, and can marry, but Nacha has a very clear opinion on the topic: “the day one of us is respected as a normal person, then we will be able to adopt like a normal marriage”. Knowing that she is the one who thinks respect is earned through property and money, it seems that their love lives and future are dependent on ensuring enough capital to live comfortably.

Institutions

All the main institutions of the time are present in the movie. The military and the church are part of the narrative, but police and doctors are the most important among them (while the

other two remain somehow anecdotal). For example, Jose's little brother Angel is called to serve in the military. After a previous conversation in which Jose coaches his brother on how to act, and what to expect, building up for the moment, when Angel arrives to the examination, the members of the military that work in acceptance do not really react (we don't know if because of the cameras, or because it was a normalized situation). Angel is asked to bare his chest, is weighed and measured, and then asked if he intends to undergo surgery, which he denies. The scene is an anti-climax, as it doesn't offer all the problems that it promises from the previous conversation, and once again makes us aware of the staging of the documentary and the edited reality it offers. Later on Lorenzo, the older one, also talks about the military service that he was forced to do, and how she found another *mariquita* to be friends with and got detained every other day for being a dishonor to the institution.

As for the church Nacha is the one who identifies as a "weird Catholic" and has a conversation with a very progressive priest. The conversation gets interesting when they start talking about clothes as a metaphor for normalization. Nacha cleverly talks about how priests could never dress normally before, without their robes, but now it is common to see priests without. In the same way, Nacha thinks, people need to get used to see men dressed as women. The priest makes some comment about Nacha being a man to the eyes of God, to which she responds that maybe that is true, but on earth she is not a man nor a woman, she's a *travesti*, "a ridiculous thing on earth, something that one shouldn't do, someone one shouldn't look at or speak to... and I think that if here nobody understands me, maybe there is someone in the life beyond who does."

The conversation gets more interesting the more it goes on, and shows how Nacha is capable of a good debate. Finally, after mentioning how the church did not understand witches or possessed people, the priest advises some sort of activism to be accepted: “If you, *travestis*, start a strong campaign... well, you definitely will call out the church, and the church is not used to this cultural transformation.” This rare positioning of a priest is met by an even better response, when Nacha says she doesn’t intend to change the church at all, because she only responds to God, and she knows that what she does is well done. With this scene, the film is again very unrepresentative of the church’s positioning regarding the issue at the time, which was closer to what Tamara exclaims later: “we don’t need more suffering than the punishment that God has sent us.” Still, in using this priest for the only religious conversation of the movie, it creates one of the most interesting moments of the story, and certainly an interesting portrayal of both the church and a transgender woman.

Police and law enforcement are present from the very first scene, where we see a police raid in one of the streets where sex work is done. All of them seem to have a difficult relationship with the forces of order, and there is few to none positive mentions of the police. For example, Eva explains how the police tore her ID card apart and then didn’t want to make her a new one at the station, and she needed the help of a friend who works for the government to get it. We also see Lorenzo walking in an empty prison and explaining that she spent a time there, and earlier the girls are talking about a friend who is “on a trip”, but it really is an euphemism to say she is in Carabanchel (Madrid’s biggest prison). These scenes demonstrate a difficult relationship with the authorities.

The only one who defends policemen is Jose, who says that they are very necessary and has never had a problem with them. In this moment we see again how what Jose says and reality are never the same thing, as he is constantly performing for the camera. When Jose is talking, one of the others interjects that Jose's younger "sister" is a prostitute and has been arrested several times for being a *travesti*, which leaves Jose speechless and incapable of responding to the accusation, on top of looking really fake. Lorenzo, on the other side, adds a personal story of a friend she's met inside prison, and how she offered her house to stay now that he's out, presenting a moment of queer solidarity in face of the power abuses that they have to endure constantly from the police and their criminalization as transgender.

Finally, we also have a big presence of the medical institution. Not only do we see a breast surgery and are reminded of the hormone treatments and diverse surgeries that all of them have undergone, but we also have a particular scene of Rene at the doctor, where she is passing the preliminary interview to get her a diagnosis:

Doctor: Why do you want to be a woman? Is it a sexual thing only or what?

Rene: I think I would feel much better seeing myself as a woman than as a man.

D: Tell me a little about your family situation [...] have you talked about it with them?

R: No, not at all.

D: Nothing.

R: Nothing.

D: What would you like to do once you are a woman? In the hypothesis that this is what it is, what type of life do you want to have, what are your interests?

R: A normal life. Becoming a woman, having a job, a... normal job. A simple life.

D: A job in what?

R: For example as a hairdresser... at the moment, hairdressing is the only thing I like...

D: In any case, what you want is to start taking hormones, at least initially.

R: Yes.

D: Well, I think we need to do some exploratory medical tests, we need to do a hormonal study and many other types of studies [...] we will keep on talking about it, and make all the exploratory tests.

This scene cuts into scenes of hormone injections and is an example of the types of interviews and questions that transgender people have to go through to get hormones, access to surgery or a change in their legal sex. As we see in the clip, the questions are focused on finding the motives and how serious the desire is. In fact, most of the interview here focuses on “what to do” as a woman, reminding us of the real life test. This test implies living as the desired gender for a period of time in order to make sure of the person’s will to live as such, before the operation. This test has also been reported to be a very vulnerable stage for transsexual people, leading to transphobic discrimination and aggressions, since in most cases the body has not been modified, and “passing” as the other gender is very difficult (Markman, 2011). The test is obligatory before getting admitted for surgery, according to the International Standards of Care, and it also ignores the danger of social transphobia for people who are transitioning and are forced to dress and live as the other sex, to prove that the person is serious about the change.

Cambio de sexo: The Birth of the Patient

Cambio de sexo / Change of Sex (dir. Vicente Aranda 1977) was originally turned down by the censors in 1972²⁰ and was finally released after Franco's death. It was first named *Una historia clinica*²¹ with the intention of avoiding censorship (Roca Sastre, 1977) and presenting the movie as a real and educational story about transsexuality, which didn't convince the censors. It narrates the story of Jose Maria, an androgynous boy who is bullied by friends and family alike for his mannerisms and effeminacy. His father takes him to Barcelona on a trip to 'fix' his masculinity by having sex with a prostitute. Although Jose Maria never consummates, that trip is crucial for his personal journey of discovery. That night he sees, for the first time, Bibi Andersen, a transsexual woman who captivates audiences in a cabaret bar with her feminine performance and male genitalia. Jose Maria, much as Juan in *Mi querida señorita*, escapes to the big city and starts living gradually as Maria Jose. Under Bibi's mentorship, she pieces together who she wants to be and, after a few heartbreaks and disappointments –which means coming back to her parents and trying to live as Jose Maria for a while– she will find love and get surgery to become the woman she “feels to be.”

There are many similarities with *Mi querida señorita* (analyzed in the prologue): they set up the characters and then make the spectator start a journey of self-discovery, accompanying the protagonists to the big city (Madrid and Barcelona, the biggest two in Spain) where they can live and be their “new” selves; both will have to return to their hometowns and mend the wounds of their lives in the city, but will soon realize that there is no going back; finally, both decide to try again and finally succeed in their personal and sentimental goals. However the big

²⁰Note that this was the year when *Mi Querida Señorita*, which I analyzed in the Prologue, got accepted for release

²¹The title means “a medical record” but it plays on the word “historia,” which can be used as “record” or ‘story’ in this context.

asymmetry in the movie is the presence of medicine and medical institutions: whereas the first one makes the transition of the protagonist invisible and short as an ellipsis between two shots, *Cambio de sexo* lingers throughout the movie in the process, representing it long, difficult and constantly monitored by medicine. We can see the pedagogic intention of the authors, who did extensive medical research to portray transsexuality on screen (Roca Sastre, 1977), but the movie comes off as didactic, reproducing the image of trans people as patients/ill people to the point where cosmetic and surgical procedures are the main focus of the final segment of the movie –before the heterosexual marriage happy ending.

Cambio de sexo is completely focused on explaining to the audience what a diagnosis for transsexualism looks like. It should be noted that the movie itself is formally framed and introduced by two lines in the credits: first, it adds “the presentation of Bibi Andersen, a star of *Cadena Ferrer*,”²² which introduces the fact that there is a transsexual actress in the film playing herself as a cabaret artist; second, there is a warning that “the authors have based this film on a real story.” Scriptwriters Joaquim Jordà and Vicente Aranda (who also directed the film) said in an interview that they researched and talked with transsexual people before making the movie (Ripoll Freixes, 1977; Roca Sastre, 1977). It is not surprising, then, that having consulted the available literature on the topic, they reproduce Benjamin’s “true transsexual” almost point by point in the movie. In doing so, they add in the interview, they wanted to present the topic in a serious and even educational manner, which is precisely what the critics of the time said about the movie (Hernandez, 1976; O.M., 1977). This is made clear on screen through, for example, a sequence made up of graphics that depict the process of gender confirmation surgery, or the

²²Cadena Ferrer was an enterprise of cabaret and night entertainment famous at the time for bringing long-forbidden erotic shows to Spanish stages.

diverse symptoms and situations that translate from the APA diagnosis of transsexuality onto the screen.

Character

This “real story” is centered on Jose Maria, a young androgynous boy played by a young and unknown Victoria Abril, who is presented to us as male through his father calling him “son.”

This certainty about the main character’s gender will not last long, because in that same scene, a client will call him “*mena*.”²³ From the beginning, the spectator witnesses the problems of Jose Maria as a boy: through the interactions with his father and classmates, we will learn that Jose Maria does not feel, indeed, like Jose Maria but rather like Maria Jose²⁴. Unlike Adela/Juan in *Mi querida señorita*, this time the character is presented as Harry Benjamin’s “true transsexual,” fitting perfectly the clinical definition of transsexuality. The three characteristics posited by Benjamin are present in the movie, and medically construct the character of Maria Jose.

Maria Jose is born an effeminate boy who soon feels trapped in her male body, starts dressing privately as a woman with stolen clothes (the fascination with feminine underwear and clothes is present in three different sequences), and finally gets gender confirmation surgery. Her story of transitioning to a woman is paralleled in the movie by the other main transsexual character, Bibi Andersen. In Bibi’s presentation scene, she is prefaced by the introduction of her show: “A mystery of nature, the biological enigma of our century, suspense in the flesh.” This mysterious character will become a sort of godmother to Maria Jose after

²³The equivalent of baby, but in an unequivocal feminine gender.

²⁴Note: The inversion of two of the most popular names in Spain denotes the difference in gender of the person named.

meeting her in a hair salon (still as Jose Maria), and will help her to understand transsexuality. Bibi also helps the audience read both her and Maria Jose as transsexuals, highlighting the pre- and post-surgery moments for both her—showing her penis at the beginning, telling Maria Jose how she went to Casablanca and had the surgery—and Maria Jose (who has an entire long scene dedicated to her transition). In opposition to the subtlety that dodged censorship in *Mi querida señorita*, *Cambio de sexo* and Bibi are explicit and visual about the transsexual body, biology, and participation of an essentialization of transsexuality. For example, in Bibi's introduction ("biological enigma"), or after the show, when Jose Maria's father comments on Bibi's penis, asking, "Is that glued?" to which his stripper friend responds, "The tits are glued, those [the genitals] are *his* and *his parents*" evoking again the role of biology.

After watching Bibi's show, which Jose Maria's father intended to be educational for his performance of masculinity, Jose Maria steals his first feminine clothes and decides to go to Barcelona and present himself as Maria Jose for the first time, although only in the street and in an anonymous way—he will still be Jose Maria for his patrons, his landlady, and even Bibi. Maria Jose's transition is shown through two main scenes: one that is more psychological and another one devoted to physical changes. The first one happens in the motel, when the landlady leaves and Jose Maria takes some women's clothes, dresses herself, listens to a radio program aimed at housewives and starts watching a romantic movie—she will later repeat some of the lines to her first lover. It shows how Maria Jose is learning to act like a woman, performing femininity through feminine role models and indications. She is practicing what she tried for the first time in the street, and in subsequent scenes, she quickly learns how to 'pass' as a woman.

The second transformation scene is radically different, in that it presents feminization as a physical process. It happens later in the movie when Duran (Lou Castel) takes care of Maria Jose and decides to “make her” a woman. Both he and Bibi speak to a still frame of her face, voices overlapping, telling her what to do, while the montage shows different jars with hormones, waxing, depilation, hydrotherapy, exfoliation of the skin, ear piercing, lipstick, facial masks, electrode treatments, etc. All is shown very hygienically and almost surgically. This time, the body needs changing after she has tried living, working, and socializing as a woman. This parallels the process established by psychiatry for transsexuals in Spain (and most of the Western world), in which the person wanting to have a change of sex acknowledged by the law needs to first get a diagnosis and go through the real life test. We see the dangers of the test, and the transphobia of society against that live as ‘another gender’ in the scene with Maria Jose’s first boyfriend, who beats her when he discovers she still has male genitalia.

Finally, it’s worth commenting on Bibi’s slightly different take on surgery from Maria Jose’s. Despite being the first of the two to undergo the procedure, Bibi is much more critical of genital surgery, and she declares at first that she doesn’t want to do it. Bibi Andersen, the actress, not the character, also declared in interviews of the period that she was waiting to be really sure about that step (Torres, 1977), arguing that it’s irreversible and lethally dangerous. For both the actress and the character, surgery is a very important decision that might lead to regret or death, and she comments as well on her lack of work after surgery, because she’s no longer special.

In fact, the relationship between work and surgery has been noted in other Spanish movies featuring a transgender protagonist, like *Agrado* (Antonia San Juan) in Almodovar’s

Todo sobre mi madre (1999) or *La Frio* (Rosy De Palma) in *20 centímetros* (dir. Ramon Salazar, 2005). Especially in the field of porn and sex work, being a transgender person without having genital surgery has recently gained its own space (the so-called “shemale”) and taken it away from those who have undergone it (Escoffier, 2011), making more difficult the decision of undergoing surgery, which is already very expensive. Bibi, then, is voicing her own critique to surgery and its dangers, whereas Maria Jose is constructed as a poster-child for Benjamin’s “true transsexual”.

Socialization

Cambio de sexo highlights the difficulties of its protagonist to fit into social institutions. School is not a safe space for Jose Maria, who is bullied by his classmates and called “faggot” by the entire class in one of the opening sequences. Not only this, but he eventually gets expelled by the principal, who wants to “prevent putting his classmates at risk of perversion.” When the principal implies to Jose Maria’s mother that the boy might be queer (by comparing him to the rest of the classmates who are “normal”), she corrects him and defends her son: “How dare you call him abnormal?!... He’s docile and delicate.” The principal agrees. The problem, then, is not Jose Maria’s sexuality (which has not been shown or explained to the spectator) but that he is too “tame and delicate”... for a boy.

When Jose Maria tells his sister, the only member of the family who looks actually concerned *for* him (not because of him), she tells him not to worry, because “it’s not his fault.” He responds, “Don’t you want to understand? Even if it’s not my fault, I’m their amusement. If I try to talk like them, it’s worse, because they think I’m imitating them. I want to die.” This is the

first time—but not the last—that he expresses his desire to die. However, what’s revealing here is how the story blames Jose Maria’s suffering on what others do to him, not on him. This highlights transphobia, not transsexuality, as the cause for suffering.

The sister will also be the first to see Jose Maria as Maria Jose, who decides to present herself as a woman and have a sisterly night out. The sister likes her much more as a woman, and thinks she’s more confident as such. However, sexuality is also one of the difficult parts of the process for Maria Jose’s sister to understand:

Sister: What do you feel when you dance with a man?

Maria Jose: Same as you do.

S: But that can’t be! I am a woman!

MJ: I, too, feel like a woman.

S: But you *are* not.

MJ: Then what am I? (Sister starts sobbing).

Still in the process of finding her own identity, Maria Jose still is unsure about the precise answer to that question. However, throughout the movie we are shown how she fulfills Benjamin’s three axes: hatred for her genitalia is repeatedly shown and mentioned every time showing genitalia on stage is part of a conversation, and she will try to cut her penis off herself half way through the movie; she also expresses in many occasions that she “feels like a woman,” and shows no desire for other women.

Presented as an embodiment of a true transsexual, Jose Maria has many socialization problems as a boy, whereas Maria Jose passes perfectly as a woman and feels even more confident. The narrative of *Cambio de sexo*, in contrast to *Mi querida señorita*, is that of self-discovery in order to improve the initial situation, and in the words of the protagonist, become “normal” again. Bullied at school, battered by her father for not being manly enough, and expelled from school by a moralist principal, Maria Jose faces as many problems and direct

consequences of discrimination as Jose Maria, but only one instance of violence as Maria Jose – when the first boyfriend beats her upon finding out she’s not a “real woman.” Being a woman, rather than preventing her from achieving goals, is the goal itself, and comes with the advantage that she feels more at home in femininity.

As noted before, Maria Jose’s relationship with Bibi is central to the story, and Bibi will become her transsexual mentor, one step ahead of her during the entire process. She is the one who visits at the hospital when Jose Maria tries to cut his penis off, the one that will get Maria Jose a job, and the one who will introduce her to her future husband. However, there is a mounting competition between the two (other workers in the cabaret compare them constantly), increased by Bibi’s lack of work after surgery, which will end their friendship when Bibi finds out that Maria Jose and their boss are romantically involved. There is another ally in the movie for Maria Jose, the landlady played by Rafaela Aparicio. If we compare the relationship they have with that of Juan and the owners of the *pension* where he stays, the benign relationship that is established between the the landlady and Maria Jose, similar to that of a godmother and godchild of sorts, is reinforced by the fact that she is one of the first to know that Jose Maria is now living as Maria Jose, and seems completely supportive of the situation.

We have briefly mentioned Maria Jose’s relationship with her first boyfriend, who beats her for having male genitalia. The other love interest, her boss Duran, will see her as an employee first, then start flirting, at some point abandoning her and calling her “nothing more than a transvestite,” and finally takes care of her, paying for the surgery in order for the two to get married. As we can see, Maria Jose’s relationship with men is problematic: On the one

hand, she is punished by men for not having “completed” the transition, while on the other hand, it is a man who will secure a job for her, as well as sustenance and the money to surgically change her body. This dependence on surgery to be accepted, and dependence on men to physically become who she is, also references the difficulties of being independent as a woman and adds the cost of surgery as another burden for transsexuals. If we add to this hardship the difficulty of finding a job that is not highly feminized as Jose Maria (who starts working as a hairdresser) or linked to show business (making profit out of their difference rather than their talent), we can read in the movie a desolating landscape for the realities of transgender people.

Institutions

Cambio de sexo highlights the problems with all the institutions that the transsexual character encounters. School and education seem to be part of the problem rather than the solution. Family is a source of support (sister), a source of violence (father), and resignation to suffering (mother). After Jose Maria’s expulsion from school, his father goes as far as to say that he is dishonoring the family: “I will fix you, or nobody will. And if I don’t fix you, I will kill you.” He will try to mend his “broken son” by making him work hard with his body (cutting wood, in construction, etc.). He will, as well, show him how to socialize properly as a man, taking him to see a prostitute, talking about manly things like getting girls pregnant, and giving him money so he can tip people and feel in charge, all components of a very traditional view of masculinity.

By far the institution most present in *Cambio de sexo* is medicine. From the original title to the sequence –done in the style of a public service announcement– about gender

confirmation surgery, the film is educational in its treatment of transsexuality, but always within the medical paradigm. The questions the doctor asks before surgery are well researched and similar to the ones asked in real-life situations. The transformation of Jose Maria into Maria Jose is not possible without the intervention of science, and the doctor is represented as an absolute gatekeeper of the process.

Another looming institution in *Cambio de sexo* (which is also apparent in *Mi querida señorita* and shows the similarities of both movies from 1972) is that of marriage, which problematizes the ways in which transsexuality is presented, almost as a solution for homosexuality. *Cambio de sexo* is no different to *Mi querida señorita* in that regard, as marriage is the “happy ending” that the protagonist receives for becoming a woman through surgery. By portraying marriage and heterosexual love as the centerpiece of its ending, the movie reinforces the idea that surgery (and sex transition) is a means of reinserting the person into society. Through the medical institution, the possible transgression of sex and gender becomes re-absorbed by the gender binary, which remains intact and even reinforced by the power of medicine and science.

20 centímetros: A Transgender Musical

Marieta (Monica Cervera) is a narcoleptic sex worker with many dreams: she wants to stop working as a prostitute; she wants to have a decent amount of money to sustain herself and her friend Tomas (Miguel O'Dogherty); and she wants to have sex confirmation surgery to get rid of her 20 centimeters of penis²⁵, the title of the movie (*20 centímetros*, 2005). With this plot as the basis of the script, director Ramon Salazar creates a musical based on pop songs –Spanish and international– and choreographies that explains the journey of Marieta to achieve her dreams, and especially the surgery that will provide a happy ending for her, making the most of her narcoleptic attacks to introduce the dreamlike musical numbers.

As we can see just by reading the synopsis, this movie is very much centered around a medical understanding of transsexuality, which focuses its attention on a successful surgery as the end of a discomfort (pathology) created by having a gender not matching one's biological sex. Although humorously and colorfully, *20 centímetros* follows the path of *Cambio de sexo* and is constructed as another reenactment of the “true transsexual” for the big screen.

Character

Marieta is well defined in the opening scene, where we can see the two parts of her life that the movie represents. On the one hand, we see her being thrown out of a truck, asleep, in the middle of nowhere. She is a sex worker that gets in dangerous situations, which are made worse by the fact that she gets sleep attacks due to her narcolepsy. On the other hand, we have a dream scene where she sings songs by child star Marisol, a sorts of a Spanish Shirley Temple:

²⁵ Close to 8 inches

“Tombola”, a song about being lucky in this world because of the love of your life, and “Muchachita”, a song about growing up from a little girl into a “real woman”. However, at the end of the song when she repeats “you are a whole, whole, whole woman”, the last word is interrupted by her skirt billowing up à la Marilyn, and when all the dancers see her crotch, they gasp and she faints. This interrupts the musical and choreography scene, and she wakes up in the middle of nowhere, having to go back to Madrid, 40 kilometers away.

It is clear by then that Marieta is a transgender sex worker, who falls asleep in the worst moments, and who has not had genital surgery, so she is not a “whole woman”, as the song states. When she arrives home, we see her cleaning herself, and shaving her face. Later on, when she is getting dressed for a busy day of work after the football game, we can see her 20 centimeter penis, which leads to a dream scene for the French version of “Paroles, Paroles” by artist Dalida. In this scene we see her wandering around the nightlife, metaphorically visiting Marieta’s place of work. All men and women seduce her while dancing, and she appears asleep in the middle of the street.

Later on in the movie, she performs “Quiero ser Santa”, a song about being a saint, holy and blessed, while working as a prostitute, showing her interest in improving her situation and going away from the streets. Each of the musical numbers seem to talk about Marieta’s progression in the plot, and lead her to a happy ending when she gets surgery to the sound of “Break Free” by Queen. The numbers, then, are descriptive scenes that give a colorful depth to our character and her interior world of fantasy, whereas the rest of her life is portrayed as rather bleak and difficult.

Socialization

Marieta lives with Tomas, a little person introduced in a scene where he walks with a cello on his back while everyone looks at him. The cello –inherited through an aunt of his– becomes a conflict between him, who wants to learn to play, and Marieta, who thinks it’s just nonsense to learn, and that they can’t afford it. This is not made better by the fact that the cello falls on Marieta the first time she enters home. Tomas has another “musical” idea for a business: re-selling annual passes for the opera, which they have to buy first with Marieta’s money for the surgery. He gives one to a cello teacher (which doesn’t make Marieta happy), and is later unable to sell them because he says people don’t trust a little person. Tomas is presented as Marieta’s family (she calls him “*el hombre de la casa*” or the man of the house) and also as the clumsy counterpart to Marieta’s path to success.

Her neighbor from upstairs, Berta, is also part of their “family”. She is the one who has the dream to go to Brazil (“the best beaches, the best cocks... the best doctors for your thing”) and finally get Marieta’s operation. Marieta often takes care of Berta’s son, and they have a very good relationship. Berta is being seized by the bank because she is unable to pay for her debt. Her job cleaning dildos doesn’t earn her enough money, and she is very pessimistic about finding a job: “at my age and being as fat as me, I can only aspire to what Ecuadorian ladies do, cleaning somebody else’s shit”. She finally gets in some illegal activity to get the money, while asking Marieta to take care of her son, and despite what classic cinema and the mood of the movie suggest, they get the money without further complications and Marieta can get her surgery in a happy ending.

But not all the neighbors have a good relationship with them. Although she is a friend of the old transgender woman above her house, Pilar, the two transgender neighbors on top, with Latin American accent, are depicted as nosey and bad-tempered. In the patio, they are constantly trying to know about everyone's life, and when Marieta gets home with her boyfriend, they talk out loud about how ugly she is for that kind of man. It seems that transgender solidarity is only present between people from the country and not with immigrants, which speaks to the big immigrant transgender community in Spain and their double oppression as transgender and foreigners.

Marieta's love interest is a guy in the market who works shelf filling. Raul is played by Pablo Puyol. They have the musical number together that mixes "Me importas tu", "I only wanna be with you" and a popular song from Murcia, "La lechera" in a *Grease* aesthetic of boys versus girls. The scene ends with Marieta unconscious in the hospital, with him waiting for her to wake up, calling her Cinderella and pretending to be her husband. He composes a song for her, drives her home and asks her out. Marieta is shy at first, but she masturbates as soon as she gets home, and tells a friend about it, still dubious as to Raul's acceptance of her having male genitalia.

Raul appears later, looking for her in the streets (which precedes the "True Blue" number, a not so sympathetic look on heterosexual love and marriage). After they go home together, he shows no problem with her genitalia; rather on the contrary, he loves giving her oral and being penetrated by her. He is very comfortable with her, bringing her home to meet his family on the second or third date. He is actually very fond of her, but his obsession with getting penetrated by her doesn't appeal to Marieta, who wants a more "normal relationship" (or at

least one that is not based in his adoration of his penis and being always the one who penetrates).

Raul is surprisingly accepting of Marieta's situation, and brings no drama to the relationship. It is all rather humorous, but he is not the right person for her, especially because she wants to "become a woman" and he doesn't think that it would be a good idea. He likes her penis and tells her that, to him, she already *is* a woman –which is a subversive idea within the Patient archetype, that puts surgery as the final condition to 'become a woman'. Moreover, Marieta doesn't like his family, his low culture and class status, and once she realizes that he is not what she was looking for, she breaks up with him. Thus, it is actually Marieta who has judged him by his appearances, and not the other way around like she feared at first. Their break up is summarized by Marieta: "We have a problem, I want my pussy, dude, and you're crazy about my cock."

The most interesting character, and a good counterpoint to Marieta's dreams is "La Frio" (Rosy de Palma, a famous Almodovar actress), who finds her asleep on the floor after a night of full work because of a football game. She offers to stay with Marieta, since she needs company in case she falls asleep, and shows sex worker solidarity at all times. She is also a voice against surgery, which is seen in their conversation about their penises:

Marieta: Girl, do you know that I'm getting my surgery done next year, God willing?

Frio: Why, you crazy? Your cock is what provides for you

M: Because I won't be working the streets after my surgery, what did you think?

F: Yeah... I said the same thing ten years ago when they took away my "chiquitito"

M: But girl, you are illiterate... what "chiquitito"?

F: Chiquitito my dick

M: Wow girl, calling it "Chiquitito"...

F: And what do you think of Carla, who called it "Pinch", as in "pinch of salt"... and

Charete, how does she call it?... "Cochombo", like the private detective... "Cochombo"

M: Well girl, for me it's a family issue. The Carpanta's all have a cock really thick, really long and really hard (La Frio laughs) What are you laughing at? What did you have? A tiny little worm? Something ridiculous? (Marieta lowers her hand to La Frio's crotch, and she stops laughing)

F: A little button, it was horrendous girl. You don't know how disgusting and embarrassing it was to me.

This scene exemplifies the complicated relationship of transgender people with their genitals, and makes us think of one of the symptoms for diagnosis: "hatred of own's genitalia". At the same time, it is one of the few examples in all the filmography analyzed where the characters fully discuss their genitalia, and are honest and open about it. This shows what an ambivalent (and sometimes strategic) position transgender people must have with their own bodies, having to hate –or say they hate– their own body to get a diagnosis. The conversation continues:

Frio: Since I got surgery ten years ago, I don't feel anything down there, neither for good nor bad, *niente*.

Marieta: Ok girl, but you got surgery in the Stone Age. Now things have changed a lot.

F: Nobody really recovers from cutting their little flap. Those who say that they feel like a woman, they say it to not be ridiculous... but it is a lie.

The strength of this conversation exposes one of the big taboos in transgender representation (and overall, of the medical paradigm), which is the questioning of surgery as the end of all problems. Furthermore, it takes us back twenty years to the declarations in *Vestida de azul* and the death of *El transexual*'s protagonist about the low quality and dangers of surgery in the "Stone Age". La Frio states her doubts and concerns, and demystifies the feeling of victory after surgery that everyone seems to *have* to feel. However, this is the only critical voice against it, and La Frio herself backtracks to Marieta and says that she doesn't want to scare her, that she doesn't know much because she's illiterate –as in she doesn't have the 'knowledge'. There is only one other movie in this list that questions this issue (*Vestida de azul*). The fact that it is so

uncommon to see this topic debated is because it puts in trouble the medical paradigm, to which surgery is the ultimate solution to a mental illness, and after which one must (and has to) consider oneself cured. As it often happens with critical voices in cinema, La Frio does not appear again and is punished for her subversive opinion. When a truck driver asks both of them for their service, Marieta declines because she is tired, and La Frio goes with him and is later killed. Marieta is saved and the movie chastises the transgender critical voice that tries to ruin Marieta's dreams of getting surgery and becoming "a respectable woman."

Institutions

Classic social institutions like religion or medicine are present in the movie, especially the latter as it is pivotal for constructing the Patient archetype, but we can also see the relationship of Marieta with one of the branches of the State, the Unemployment Office, where she is still classified as a man under her original name, Adolfo Carpanta. When they call her for a possible job, Marieta gets very excited and tells Tomas "We are getting better already". However, and reflecting on transgender people's difficulties to access the job market, the process is not very amicable at the beginning, and Marieta has to conjugate her existence as a man in the system and her identity as a woman. The clerk is very rude to her, and asks for her identification. When she looks at Marieta, she apologizes because Marieta is been assigned a job for a man and "her name does not correspond with her appearance". Marieta starts to flirt with her, playing the fact that "Adolfo is still me", and it seems to have a huge effect on the clerk, who gets very aroused by Marieta's flirting and sexual innuendo and has to excuse herself for a moment to go and masturbate in a private room, to Marieta's surprise and the audience's laughter.

At that moment, Marieta has another of her dream scenes, although short and without a musical number, before being offered the job as long as she wears a male uniform. The job is cleaning Atocha train station at night, which is very monotonous but calm. She is happy until the moment she falls asleep on the floor, and people find her the day after, so she loses her job and has to go back to the streets. For a narcoleptic transgender woman, the only job available is that of sex worker, and if a regular monotonous job is difficult to keep with her condition, sex work is shown as lethal to someone like her. Still, the movie doesn't lose its light and humoristic treatment of Marieta's situation.

The only moment when she has contact with religion is when she goes to church to ask Jesus why he is so mean to her, gifting her with a huge penis she doesn't want. A lady in church tells her she should go. Marieta thinks it is for using the word penis, but actually the fish she bought in the market is making the whole place smelly.

Law enforcement and police do not represent a big problem for Marieta -indeed, this is not the 1980s anymore- and there's only one scene where Marieta has to bail Tomas, but she has no problem with the authorities, despite her illegal work. In fact, she gets warned by a police friend about Tomas' situation, and is able to save him using her contacts in the authorities.

Of course, the medical institution is present in the Patient archetype, but only in the final number with "Break Free" by Queen. She is taken on a stretcher to the surgery room, and cannot contain her laughter of happiness and excitement for what is going to happen. Right away, the dream scene follows and Marieta re-encounters all her friends in the movie –even the dead ones like La Frio– dressed in white, blue or green hospital uniforms. During the song

we can see 'crazy' girls on straitjackets that she pushes away, as if to get rid of the mental disorder aspect of transsexuality. In the choreography many of the dancers look at Marieta and do the sign of the scissors cutting with their fingers, as to signal the removal of her penis, metaphorically giving her surgery and providing for her unique happy ending. The final image is Marieta in a blonde wig and naked, so we can see that she has no penis, opening her arms wide and smiling to the camera. The appearance of Marieta here reminds us of Eve, the original woman, and some of her graphic representations.

Nevertheless, the hospital in the final scene is not the only time we are reminded of the medical institution, Marieta's neighbor Pilar supplies and injects illegal hormones to what she calls all the *travestis* in the neighborhood. Pilar is Marieta's friend and gives her special treatment compared to the other transgender neighbors, but her situation is all but glamorous. She receives people in her living room while her husband is watching TV. Through the pictures on the wall we can see that she is an old star, who met Ava Gardner, but now she is old and gets some extra money by injecting hormones. This signals the difficulties -still nowadays- of accessing hormones for many transgender people, and the backchannels that are put in place to circumvent medical waiting lists and requirements that not everyone can fulfill.

Final Discussion: The Patient

Despite what I envisioned before starting the analysis of this project, the medical or Patient archetype is not as prevalent as expected. Nowadays, when looking at documentaries about the topic, it is difficult to find media explanations of transsexuality that do not count on the professional and experienced voice of the medical institution. However, when we look at Spanish cinema, we realize that the number of movies that use a criminalizing archetype, or that resort to a more empowered and political approach are greater than those basing the movie on the medical paradigm. On top of that, two of the four movies analyzed in this section (*El transexual* and *Vestida de azul*) mix the Patient with the Criminal archetypes reminding us that the medical definition of transsexuality –for example in the work of Harry Benjamin– was originally put forth to protect transgender people from criminalization.

El transexual does a good job of portraying the transition from the Criminal archetype – through the *noir* story that we are set to see at the beginning– onto the Patient archetype, one which defines the transgender person through the diagnosis of transsexuality and celebrates the dichotomy of gender, defining transsexual people as a ‘man trapped in a woman’s body’ (or vice versa). This definition helped transsexual people to get recognition and films like this or others that I analyze below like *Vestida de azul* or *Cambio de Sexo* foreground the issue of medicine and illness to denounce the situation of transgender people of the time.

The use of the documentary parts, together with showing the reality of some transgender people combined with a fictional story where illegal surgery is the surprise villain revealed at the end, make of this movie a unique crossover between the Criminal and the

Patient archetypes, and locate this text in the center of this dissertation for its uniqueness, explicitness and cultural and pedagogical work in the medical sense at the end of the 1970s.

In *Vestida de azul* we see a similar situation to that of *El transexual*, using pieces of “reality” in the form of a documentary to try to make a critique of the hardships that transgender women suffer. However, focusing on the hardships and problems, *Vestida de Azul* offers a pathetic portrayal of many of its protagonists and constantly highlights their flaws and stages situations to show their failures. It also shares with *El transexual* a difficult in-between of the Criminal and the Patient archetypes, both being somehow present, but the film focuses much more on telling the spectator what surgeries are performed, what intentions they have for the future, their sexual practices, and how they felt in their childhood -all of them characteristics explored for the diagnosis- than on their problems to be legally recognized as women, or the many issues of class and poverty that they all seem to face.

Unlike *El transexual* and *Vestida de Azul*, *Cambio de sexo* is a perfect representation of the Patient archetype. Even in the intentionality of the movie, the director and scriptwriters consulted with specialized medical personnel to better portray the life of a transsexual woman. This is a very common practice in documentaries on the topic, which always feature a doctor/nurse as an expert on the topic, and privilege their voices over that of the transsexual person. Furthermore, *Cambio de sexo* constructs a classic narrative in which our hero finds the problem (wants to be a woman) and ends with surgery, which is the final destination, and apparently the cure to all her problems. She fulfills all the steps of a Gender Identity Disorder diagnosis, and the movie is not critical about the downsides or secondary effects of vaginoplasty. Instead, surgery is offered as the final solution –as if post-surgery transsexual

women did not suffer from transphobia— and a way to love and marriage. *Cambio de Sexo* is, then, the poster child for this chapter, and many of its features are repeated in *20 centímetros*, the next movie, albeit in a less serious manner.

Despite Marieta being a sex worker, the movie fits clearly in the Patient and not in the Criminal archetype. To begin with, she is shown being very careful with safe sex, and not marginalized or feeling bad about her work. She intends to leave it all behind and find another type of job, but without ever portraying her sex work as something despicable or undeserving. Even when the movie talks about the dangers of prostitution, it never blames or punishes Marieta, and rather tries to convey the inherent risks in the profession and the inevitability of sex work for many of them. On the other side, the movie is very much focused on Marieta's surgery from the first musical number to the last, and the *leitmotiv* of the film is finding the money to afford surgery (which tells us that Marieta has already undergone and past preliminary interviews, and has a diagnosis that allows her to have surgery). The happy ending, and the feeling that all her problems are solved thanks to surgery clearly leans towards the Patient archetype and makes *20 centímetros* a mainstream musical in the 21st century about sex reassignment surgery.

Summarizing, the medical paradigm has fostered a certain understanding of transgender people that, albeit victimizing, exonerates them from all blame and forces compassion on others due to the inevitability of the “condition”. On the other side, the medical institution also acts as gatekeeper and instead of having a mere function of accompaniment, they have been erected as the specialists who decide the fate of each transgender person, sometimes in spite of the person's own wishes. The movies in this chapter are also very aware of the dangers and

flaws of surgery, and except in the case of *Cambio de sexo*, all of them raise critical voices against surgery, or at least give a nuanced vision of it and state the problems of undergoing it as an inevitable happy ending. In more than 30 years of difference between the first and the last, these movies show that even a monolithic paradigm like the medical one, can have several different iterations, each of which bring something new to the table: the pedagogical aspect of *Cambio de sexo*, the bizarre choral voices and staged scenes of *Vestida de azul*, the ability to turn a sex reassignment surgery into a thriller of *El transsexual*, or the humoristic tenderness of *20 centímetros*.

CHAPTER 7: THE EMPOWERED ARCHETYPE

The Empowered

The last chapter of analysis focuses on movies with transgender characters that go beyond the pathetic-deceiver divide of Serrano (2013), and the abnormal/normal first two categories of Alberto Mira (2004), pushing forth new understandings of transgenderism that escape legal and medical definitions. Mira's third category of homosexuality deals with 'camp' or '*la pluma*' as a resistance to the gender binary formula that the previous two follow, and has been the inspiration for this chapter.

If the first one presents the transgender character outside the norm (and the law), and the second one uses medicine to make them 'normal', this third category is neither in nor out of the norm, but rather uses the norm itself to personalize it and make it unique, giving voice to the transgender characters. They are not defined by knowledges or institutions, but rather by their own voices and actions. They are 'Empowered'.

Furthermore, what makes these movies escape the previous chapters is precisely that they are complex characters, with a personal goal that goes beyond the fact that they are transgender. The characters in this chapter are flawed, so much so that they become normal, one of us. But their flaw is not *being* transgender. Rather, their flaws connect them to the spectator and bring them closer to our realities or so far away that we never think they are representative of transgender people. And this is precisely their strength: their uniqueness avoids generalization.

In this chapter, I analyze texts that offer a resistance to the main legal and medical paradigms, representing transgender characters as something more complicated, more nuanced, and use humor, exaggeration or explicit politics and activism to reshape and reform our understanding of transgender people. The movies here analyzed have less in common among them than those of previous chapters, but each of them brings a different approach that somehow proposes new understandings of a multifaceted issue that does not seem to be easily –or solidly– defined.

In this chapter we will see the plural takes on gender non-conformity from an underground film and its three protagonists, three of Almodovar’s powerful women and, finally, we will close the full circle going back to Ignacio Iquino and his personal take on “*el destape*”. Both Almodovar and Iquino were present in the Criminal chapter, showing once again the fluidity of the archetypes, even in the work of the same filmmaker. It also speaks to the overlapping and cohabitation of different discourses around transgenderism in time and style.

Manderley: Underground Empowerment

Jesus Garay's film *Manderley* (1981), a film about three friends spending their holidays together in retirement in an old country house, features artist, cross-dresser and activist Ocaña in the role of Olmo, sharing top billing with the other two friends: Paula (Quique Tejada), and a third friend known as "the actor" (Joan Ferrer). The three of them explore and express their genders and sexualities differently, and share the space and their thoughts in a journey of healing and self-discovery. Paula is a transgender woman who is using the time in retirement to prepare for her transition, and makes active participants her two friends that she has invited to her country house in the North of Spain.

Jose Perez Ocaña, who plays a character based on himself in the movie, was an Andalusian artist who was central to the sexual liberation movement in Barcelona. So central in fact, that his arrest due to one of his public drag shows led to an illegal demonstration (and one of the firsts of its kind) promoted by the Catalan Gay Liberation Front in 1978. Ocaña's aesthetics in his paintings, drag performances in the public space, and unique religious views are celebrated in Ventura Pons' documentary *Ocaña, un retrato intermitente* (1978) and turned into monologues in *Manderley*.

The three characters use their time in the house to escape their problems in the city. *Manderley* is also a play of mirrors, smoke screens and layers, from the actor playing the role of "the actor", the three of them pretending to be what they are not, and the importance of the mirror in the attic for Paula's monologues. The movie starts with some letters on the screen

that read “Last night I dreamt I arrived to Manderley...”²⁶, while we hear a car noise arriving to a big mansion. This beginning references *Rebecca*, both the novel by Kate Douglas Wiggin (1938) and Hitchcock’s movie (1940), with the starting sentence as a quote.

Inside *this* Manderley, a woman walks alone, on the upper floor, while she approaches the camera. We only see her backlit silhouette, because of all the windows behind her. She walks down to the ground floor, the only sound we hear is her heels stomping. She looks at herself in the mirror and the clock and bells start tolling. She gazes through the window, and we see the sea waves crashing on the rocks. The music starts, and she finally goes outside, through the main door, and walks towards the cliff over the sea, still in a panoramic shot, so we cannot really see her, just the silhouette of her dark dress. Once at the border, we get the first face shot, where we can see that it is actor Enrique Rada dressed as a woman, Paula. She looks at the sea and the rocks below her, and when she turns around, she covers her face and black smoke appears on screen, as if the mansion we just saw started burning, like in *Rebecca*. The credits start rolling up over the sea and the smoke.

This presentation already establishes the referential tone of the movie, and the theatricalization that we are going to see. The references to *Rebecca* are spread throughout the movie, but the story of this film is far from similar. After Paula is introduced, the narrative moves to the city with the three characters’ problems (boredom in the case of Olmo/Ocaña, and love trouble in the case of the actor), before coming with them to Manderley, the house that Paula’s dad has left her to spend the summer and where the three of them expect to fix their problems and start new projects.

²⁶ The original title in Spanish “anoche soñe que llegaba a Manderley...” uses the verb “arrive” and omits the “again” of the original opening sentence of *Rebecca* “Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.”

Character

The first time we see Paula, she is walking alone in Manderley, but the first time we hear her mentioned is through a phone conversation when Olmo talks about “Quique” and right after responds “oh! Now his name is Paula? She’s crazy, what a crazy person... changing her name like that... so crazy, calling herself Paula”. But Paula has decided to live and be treated as a woman, and when the friends arrive to Manderley, they never call her Quique again. After explaining about her boyfriend, the two guests get settled, and Paula calls them up to the attic, where in front of a mirror, she opens a folder with pictures of *Rebecca* the movie. This is one of the three conversations that they have in front of the mirror and that define Paula’s character.

For most of this conversation, we only see the two friends’ faces, since Paula is off-camera. Paula starts to explain about this beautiful woman called Rebecca, to which the actor replies that Rebecca is actually never seen in the movie, because she is dead before the start of the film. Paula replies that there was a glorious time when she was the lady of Manderley, which the actor keeps on nitpicking, saying that the mansion ends up going down in flames.

Paula stops him there, as she has something important to say:

Paula: Well, she is my model, my goal. I will be like her: mythic and desired, very beautiful, Rebecca. It is a decision that I want you to be the first to know, because I have been thinking it through during many years without telling anyone, and I want to confess to you something that I carry deep, deep inside of me, and with a lot of suffering: since my tender childhood I feel like a girl. At first. After that the full interior psychic maturity of a woman. And then this permanent, constant fight. This disgusting dichotomy of a body and a psyche that do not correspond. And it renders me... it renders me anxious, it puts me in a state where I can’t be relaxed anywhere. I cannot be happy, and I want to be a happy woman. I want to feel realized, I want to abolish this biological error. Whatever it takes. The only way is to push through until the end, this is what I want to tell you, and get surgery.

Olmo: [jokingly] Girl, be careful because there are some tits out there...

P: Well, I don’t know what tits are out there, but I am going to do it, and I will do it in Casablanca, and Luis [her boyfriend] will come with me. After this summer... Now, of

course I want to rest, right? Relax in your company since you're here, and you're with me, and I am so happy about it... let the months pass with you two, and prepare my body for this, right? And there's more, I don't know, like see, I wanted to tell you in front of this mirror because, I don't know, every transformation has something magical, and this mirror is magical. It belonged to one of my grandmothers whom people said was a witch, imagine. Or at least she was a famous healer around here.

Despite her biological and medical discourse of mind/body division and surgery as a solution, Paula's statement works at another level, and seems much more a monologue in a play than a realistic conversation of coming out as transgender. The staging, in front of the mirror, and the references to the women in her family as well as Rebecca work in this scene as Paula's metaphorical connection to her femininity, and also establish the mysticism that Paula brings to the table throughout the movie.

The two friends are a bit puzzled about the amount of money it is going to cost her, but they know her grandfather is rich, so they suppose he is going to sponsor her. At some point in the movie, Paula asks a water well "When will I be a woman?" to which Olmo responds "When your grandfather dies, baby!" We even meet her grandfather in the movie, who recites poetry to the three of them. They talk about love, until Olmo pushes the conversation towards money so Paula can ask for it, but she never really does and remains quiet.

Three more scenes happen in front of the mirror. In the second one, she is combing her hair ready in front of the mirror and says the famous line from the beginning "Yesterday I dreamt...", and all three of them start talking about dreams, especially the actor. In the third scene, Olmo adds another layer of artificiality when he puts a polaroid of Paula on the mirror "for reference" before she starts to put on makeup, reciting another monologue about taking care of one's skin and body, and our biological limitations. This intervention is much more centered on the physical aspect of our lives, questioning the body and its limits, something that

seems very pertinent in a moment in which Paula is preparing her body to “become” a woman through surgery –as a way to overcome her body’s limits. Before the fourth and last mirror scene, Paula is getting ready but her high heels do not fit, like an unlucky Cinderella. This time she wants to ask the question - “who is the fairest of them all?” another reference to Snow White's evil mother-in-law- and Olmo plays the voice of the mirror behind it, to create a conversation between Paula and the mirror about beauty. Through these four scenes, we are told about Paula’s desires (transitioning) and frustrations (her bodily limitations), her dreams and her goals, all in a stage where she can pretend, play her character, and answer herself through the mirror. The rest of the movie she continues with this mysticism, celebrating a Greek/Roman festival as a priestess or in contact with space (she explains her connection to nature, to empty buildings, etc.). At the end, however, Paula cannot get the surgery and has to abandon her dream for, at least, one more year.

It is interesting to see, next to Paula, the character of Olmo fluidly and freely transitioning back and forth from feminine to masculine: in the way of speaking, the pronouns used to refer to himself and the other two, the way of dressing, dancing and moving. Olmo’s playfulness –and the unavoidable presence of Ocaña’s persona- contrasts throughout the movie with the seriousness of Paula, portraying characters with contrasts and depths that escape Paula’s internalized medical discourse and bring the movie to a metaphorical level. Even in the most poetic scenes like the conversation through the mirror, Olmo is the voice that responds (and mocks) Paula’s monologues, the counterbalance to her voice.

Socialization

The actual interest of the movie is the socialization among the three of them. Paula's family is shown here and there (a visit to her sister, two trips with her nephews, the dinner scene with her grandfather) but it is when the three friends are together that we see character evolution through meaningful conversations. They treat each other mostly in feminine address, as is fairly common in gay circles. Olmo performs comic relief, constantly talking about sex and playing down the importance and transcendence from the other two. At some point he dresses as a woman, recites poetry, dances around, etc. bringing some of the real-life Ocaña to his character. He also has the most "realistic" and grounded approach to Paula's wish to transition, for example constantly talking about the breasts she will have and the consequences of having them. Despite seeming superficial, Olmo's questioning of the transition takes into account the embodied consequences more than Paula's metaphorical approach, which sounds very nice in words but seems unrealistic and difficult to cope with in real life.

The actor (Joan) is more absent-minded, with an internal struggle that makes him a serious and quiet character most of the time. He leaves his boyfriend at the beginning of the movie and spends the days in Manderley calling his mother, going for walks alone and listening to the other two. He confesses being jealous of Paula: "Sometimes I think I am jealous of her. She still believes in transformations, in changes. She thinks there is a solution for everything. I feel more a woman than she does, and look at her". It is not clear what he refers to by saying "I feel more a woman than she does" (is he more effeminate? Does he want to transition too?), but the actor is the serious and melancholic counterpart to Olmo, and brings the reflexiveness -

and also the weariness- of spending the summer in a country house, far away from civilization.

Institutions

Through the character of Paula, the medical institution is very much present, but as we see at the end of the movie, is just another smokescreen mirroring a deformed reality. When Olmo and the actor arrive, Paula is waiting for them, laying in bed, and tells them she's met an incredible man:

Paula: Luis. It's a pity that you two can't meet him, because he is going to travel all summer long. He is a medicine student but... one of those with an absolute interest in medicine, especially biology. He's told me things, I don't know, so so interesting... processes in life, changes, transformations... the pith of life [...] he's made me think a lot, you know, and now is like I have an entirely new vision of things.

Her friends are happy for her, and Luis sounds like an incredible partner. Furthermore, this description is given before she confesses she wants to transition, so the spectator understands that Luis -as a medicine student- has helped her decide how to proceed. Luis' involvement also explains her vocabulary when talking about the psyche and mind divide, reproducing the medical paradigm. During most of the movie, Paula lives vicariously through Luis' postcards and letters without leaving the house. Luis regales her with incredible tales about Greece and the Mediterranean Sea. However, in the second half of the movie Luis has an accident, and we learn that he is not travelling but resides in a psychiatric ward. In fact, the psychiatric facility is the house we see at the beginning (Manderley), and Paula's fantasy is finally revealed.

The fact that it is precisely a psychiatric facility –Psychiatry being the part of medicine that determines and classifies transgender people– is another of the layers of metaphor that adds to the film. The film portrays in its beginning a dark, lonely Paula within the walls of what

we think is Manderley, but turns out to be the psychiatric facility where her boyfriend resides. Furthermore, she is presented as the 'Rebecca' of that Manderley, using a world of fantasy that we will see, accompanies Paula's story more than she cares to admit. The psychiatric facility, then, is the space that contains the lies, the metaphors, the imaginary realities of Paula and her transition, her love and her impossible future.

There is another scene where we witness a representation of the medical institution and surgery through the actions of Paula. In the beach, Paula's nephews have built a sandman, and after adding a penis to it, Paula performs surgery on it to make it become a woman, explaining the whole process in front of the kids in a medical language (she talks about neo-clitoris and neo-vagina, the removal of the gland, etc.), to which Olmo reacts getting dizzy. This apparently innocent scene is, when we come to think of it, the only surgery of the movie, another metaphor.

What is even more disquieting is the fact that we learn that Paula does not have a doctor boyfriend (who has taught her all the procedures), but rather she has learnt all this by herself. However, Paula does not end her delusion, and in her final scene, looking at pictures of Rebecca, decides to write a letter to her boyfriend. She has a secret that she wants to share with him: she has been awarded a post to work for the government ("the feathers and jewels will have to be buried by now") and the trip to Casablanca will have to wait until the following year. In a scene that reminds us of *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño* and Lluís' mother scene before he is executed, Paula decides to continue her fantasy until the end, preferring to be a ghost in a house that burns down, but remaining the beautiful ghost of her dreams.

Almodovar and his Empowered Women

Almodovar is undoubtedly the most internationally famous of Spanish filmmakers. His movies are acclaimed around the globe, and he is the only director in Spain that has been awarded an Oscar outside the best foreign film category. However, his start as a filmmaker was not as well polished and aesthetically pleasing as his recent films. His early films show that he was firmly rooted in “la Movida Madrileña”, the cultural movement emerging from the Spanish transition amongst the youth in Madrid. An in-your-face style, low budgets, and themes like drugs, sex and rock and roll pervaded the cultural scene. Young photographers, musicians and filmmakers were imbued by this revolution. Even Madrid’s mayor, Tierno Galvan, encouraged young rockers to have fun and take drugs in his now famous saying “Rockers, if you’re not high yet, get high... and *beware!*” In this breeding ground, a young Almodovar self-financed *Pepi, Lucy y Bom y otras chicas del monton* (1980) at the same time that he participated in musical projects and wrote for some magazines of the period.

In this section, I analyze one of his first movies with his production company El Deseo, *La ley del deseo / The Law of Desire* (1987), with Carmen Maura, his muse, in the role of Tina, a transsexual woman. Following this analysis, I move to the end of the century with one of his emblematic films *Todo sobre mi madre / All About my Mother* (1999) and its double transgender feature of La Agrado (Antonia San Juan) and Lola (Toni Canto). I also analyze *Tacones Lejanos / High Heels* (1991), a movie that falls in between the archetypes of the Empowered and the Criminal, but that classifies for this dissertation for the relevance of the character who is a drag queen. Together with *La mala educacion* analyzed in chapter 3, and *La piel que habito*, which I will use for the Conclusions of the analysis, Almodovar is the most

present filmmaker in this dissertation, proving true his fame for being a groundbreaking artist in LGBT representation in Spain and internationally.

La ley del deseo: an Empowered Survivor

La ley del deseo is one of the many films in which Almodovar uses a filmmaker protagonist and reflects on the profession through layers of performativity. For example, the introduction of the movie shows a young guy getting naked and following the orders of a voice over, like in a porn movie. We then can see two voiceover artists who are giving him orders and pay him after he ejaculates while masturbating in front of the mirror. All this is a scene in the movie of the protagonist, so we have an actor playing an actor, in a movie inside of a movie, having sex with his own reflection. The layers of this presentation of the movie already point us towards a self-awareness of Almodovar's fiction, and his postmodern auteuristic style. The next image we see is Tina, emerging from the cinema room where the movie was projected. Her smile is in front of a cinema screen, between two curtains that open, with *FIN* (The End) projected on it.

It is like the end of the movie inside is the beginning of this movie, to which Tina and the man she looks at, her brother Pablo (Eusebio Poncela) are the protagonists. They kiss, the image stops and turns black and white, and the title of the movie is written in pink letters over it. What is less obvious to the audience is the blurry presence of a third person in that frame. It looks like one more of the spectators of the cinema they are in, but we will discover that it is Antonio (Antonio Banderas), the third main character and eventually the love interest of the two siblings. After Tina congratulates Pablo for the film, which lets the audience know he is a film director, we follow Antonio to the toilet where he starts masturbating and saying "Fuck me", like the guy in the porn movie of the beginning. The shot focuses on Antonio's lips saying it, as if he also was a voiceover artist, and in the progression of the movie we will realize that Antonio is also an impostor, a poser and a very good actor.

This beginning is already very telling of the story. We meet the siblings and the good relationship they have: the happy Tina and the worrisome Pablo who are there for each other. And we also discover a fan, obsessed with Pablo's work, who will do anything in his power to get him. This love triangle will be the center of the story and, in a very Almodovar style, generates complications in the narrative. However, for this chapter, what is interesting is the character of Tina, a transgender woman. Her representation elides both her pathologization and criminalization as a transgender person, and despite her convoluted background, she is one of the most honest, sincere and common characters of the movie, especially next to her conceited brother and psychopath lover/fanboy. Under a very different light than that of *La Mala Educacion*, Almodovar constructs a character with her own flaws, without linking them to the fact of being transgender, and succeeds in offering a vision of a transgender character that is not moralistic or paternalist, but rather loving of the character.

Character

Tina is defined by her joie de vivre, lively attitude, and spontaneity. One of the most memorable scenes –and one to which is paid homage in a *20 centímetros* musical number– is when Tina, Pablo and Ada go back home in a hot night and there are some municipal workers cleaning the streets. Tina runs and yells to the worker “Come on! Water me! Don't be shy! Water me!” and starts moaning and enjoying the freshness of the water in a hot summer night, in a scene somehow reminiscent of Anita Ekberg's Fontana di Trevi in *La dolce vita* (dir. Passolini, 1960). When she's done, she says she always wanted to do something like that, and asks Pablo to go and get drunk. This scene captures Tina's personality as a whole, portraying

her as fun, carefree and very intense. Furthermore, she also likes to get high, telling her brother to share the coke because she is “also a drug addict.” However, her use of drugs is shown as much more recreational than that of her brother, portraying Tina under a better light than Pablo in this regard.

One of Tina’s insecurities is her career, which is not great, especially living in her brother’s shadow. When a journalist asks her at the beginning if she’s currently working on something, she responds affirmatively but vaguely. She is an actress, but she doesn’t seem to be very lucky. We learn that she went to a meeting with producers, and they offered her to star in a porn movie –including Ada, the little girl she’s taking care of, in the offer– and she responded that she is too old to show her ass. Despite the gravity of being offered to do porn with a minor by a bunch of producers, this information is given nonchalantly, as if it were the most normal thing to happen. Finally her brother offers her –and the little girl– a role in his new theatre play, although he warns her it’s going to be intense because it will bring back many “painful memories.” When we see the play, she is hysterically destroying a house with an axe, while the girl Ada, lip syncs and dances to “*Ne me quitte pas.*” The play (and Tina’s role in it) is a big success, and Pablo tells her he’s willing to offer her another role. Pablo also gives Tina some money every month, before she stars in his play so, in a way, during the film we see Tina progress from a dependent situation to that of a successful worker.

As for her love life, she repeatedly states her disappointment with men, especially since she was molested by a priest –an intertextual reference that Almodovar uses for Zahara/Ignacio from *La mala educacion*– and seduced and then cheated on by her father. When her brother tells her she should find a guy to not be so lonely, she responds she doesn’t need “a guy or a

girl. It's over and I don't want to talk about it", which shows us her complicated relationship with love. When Pablo tells her that in the next script he is writing for her, he will use her troubles with men, Tina gets very angry:

Tina: I don't have trouble with men, because to me they don't exist since a long time ago.

Pablo: And you don't think *that* is a problem?

T: What's the matter? Are you going to treat me like a freak too?

P: I didn't say that.

T: Talk about *your* troubles with men and leave me alone.

P: Can you listen to me?

T: I forbid you to talk about the smallest event in my life, as ridiculous as it might be.

P: But who said that your life is ridiculous?

T: Nobody needs to tell me, I know it.

Tina is very sensitive with this topic, but she seems more worried about making her scandals public ("my failures with men are more than a plot for your script, I won't let you or anyone else play with them") than she seems unhappy about her situation. Actually, throughout the movie, Pablo seems more preoccupied with Tina's single status –despite his very unhealthy love life– so unhealthy in fact, that it ends up bleeding onto Tina's life when Antonio pretends to be in love with her just to get closer to Pablo.

Apart from her work and her love life, Tina has an over-elaborated story about her transsexuality, which Almodovar foregrounds when Tina goes to see Pablo after waking up amnesic from the accident, and she has to retell him their whole story. The whole conversation is very telling of Tina's character. It starts with her showing him a picture of their mother:

Pablo: Mom?

Tina: Yes.

P: Is she coming to see me?

T: No, we are orphans. Well, our father is alive, but in New York. And it's been years since he last wrote. Our parents separated when we were very young. You stayed with mom here, in Madrid. We are in Madrid. I went with dad, to Morocco. He is a painter and had a studio there. Pablo, there are things that we never talked about. I am to

blame for our parents separating. I was having an affair with dad. One day mom found out, and well, imagine.

P: Then you went to Morocco?

T: Yes. We lived there for some years, and we were very happy, until he left me, for another woman. I haven't forgiven him yet. He hurt me so bad that I haven't been able to be with another man.

P: Did I know all of this?

T: Is it possible that you don't remember anything? Your amnesia leaves me with no past. If you don't get your memory back I will go crazy. Look, this is us two [shows him a picture]. You are him, and I am him.

P: What do you mean?

T: At first I was a boy. Soon after getting to Morocco with dad, I changed of sex. We had decided before going.

P: Did you decide it, or he did?

T: Who cares? He liked the idea, and I was crazy about him.

P: Would you have done it anyway?

T: Probably... Pablo don't judge me now, you have never judged me.

P: I don't judge you, it was your life. But I have to know. He is also my father I guess.

T: I don't regret it. I would have given my life for him if he'd asked.

P: I understand. What happened after?

T: After he left me, I got a fake passport and went to Paris. I didn't dare seeing you and mom. I came to Spain for her funeral. There I met with you again. We were both so alone, and even without seeing each other during all these years, we loved each other so much. And you were not resentful, and I can't thank you enough for that. That's why I stayed with you. You are the only thing I have. [cries]

P: Hug me, I can't. I am very happy that you are my sister.

This emotional scene finally opens Pablo and Tina's relationship to the spectator and reveals Tina's past, which has been hinted throughout the movie but not made clear until this moment. We are not sure as to Tina's agency in becoming a woman, and her incestuous romance is too easily digested by an amnesic Pablo, given the complexity of the story. However, Tina refuses to be the victim in all of this, and telling the whole story to Pablo is her own way of atonement. As she repeats throughout the movie, the only thing she has is her memories, and even her mistakes are held close and dear. This way of portraying Tina escapes victimization and criminality, erases any medical discourse in Tina's transition and also any mention to illegality.

Her biggest sin was to fall in love with her father as a minor, and the movie allows her to make peace with it through this scene and the final acceptance of her brother.

Socialization

As I have explained, Pablo is the most important relationship to Tina, who adores her brother. She starts the movie going to his film premiere and to the after party. She watches his interviews on TV and encourages him in everything, and during the course of the movie she ends up working for him. When she visits him, she does his dishes and offers to iron some clothes. They have some bad encounters, especially when Pedro wants to talk about the past or talks to her about her love life, but all of them are resolved in the hospital's conversation. Pablo at the end of the movie exchanges his own life for Tina (although he doesn't die) when Antonio kidnaps her. Their relationship starts as one of dependence but finishes being one of mutual support and unconditional love.

Tina is also in charge of a little girl, called Ada like her mother, who left her with Tina before running away with one of her lovers. Apparently, her mother is following boyfriend after boyfriend around the world and is not interested in coming back. Ada is infatuated with Pablo, and gets along great with the two siblings. She mimics Tina in many ways, learning to perform her own femininity from her -which is in itself interesting for my analysis since Tina is a transsexual woman. In one scene both have arranged their ponytail around a brush, or in another they wear the same oversized Betty Boop t-shirt to sleep. The girl constantly compares herself to Tina ("Do you think that when I grow up I will have tits like yours?")

Together, Ada learns Tina's very unique religious customs and during the movie everything she prays for ends up happening one way or the other. She says explicitly that she prefers Tina to her own mother, something that we will see when the mother reappears. Paradoxically, Ada the mother is played by transsexual actress Bibiana Fernandez, at the time known as Bibi Andersen, who also appears in *Cambio de sexo* and *Tacones lejanos*, both analyzed in this dissertation. Ada –a biological woman played by a transgender actress, the contrary than our protagonist– reappears in the theatre where Ada junior and Tina perform to bring her daughter back with her to Milano, but the girl seems to have found her stability with Tina, and trusts her more than her mother because “she likes boys less than [her]”. When Ada junior refuses to go with her, her mother slaps her in the face and yells at her. Right away she says “This girl makes me hysterical” and realizes she's broken two fingernails.

Mother and daughter look at Tina while she delivers her monologue on the phone, and it looks like it is directed to Ada's mother. Ada leaves without the little girl, back to her boyfriend. The fact that Almodovar chooses a well-known transsexual actress to play a biological mother, and a well-known cisgender actress to play a transsexual woman only adds to the layers of performativity of the film, but also reminds us that very seldom are transgender characters played by transgender actors, who –like in the case of Bibiana Fernandez– keep being relegated to secondary characters, as she is in the three movies I analyze.

Finally, while Pablo is in the hospital, Tina finds a boyfriend. She says she's in love and since she has not been with a man since her father, it is a big deal. “I have a feeling that this time it's going to be different” she tells her brother, and she is right, but not in the way she thinks. Her new boyfriend is no other than Antonio, and when Pablo finds out, he knows that

she is in danger and that deranged Antonio is only going out with her so as to be closer to him. Antonio kidnaps Tina and a cop in the final scene, and Pablo exchanges himself for Tina. Antonio then forces Pablo to live a fantasy of love with him, and pretend they are happy together. Meanwhile, Tina is downstairs, drying her tears and blood from her body. She is crying and cold, and one of the policemen gives her his jacket. That's the last we know of her. She finds a job, is a good mother figure to the girl, and atones with her brother, but she doesn't have (yet) happiness or love.

Institutions

One of the first institutions in contact with Tina is her old Catholic school, Instituto Ramiro de Maeztu. When Tina and Ada walk past the building, she reminisces of her times there and wants to take a peek with Ada, especially inside the chapel. They enter through a hole in the fence ("they still haven't fixed it!") and Tina exclaims "How many times have I masturbated here!" Once inside, Tina starts singing to the song the priest is playing on the piano, facing him in response to his disapproving eyes. The scene and the dialogue remind us of *La Mala*

Educacion, but Tina is not like Zahara:

Tina: When I was little, I was the soloist in the choir. It is the only thing I miss about that time.

Father Constantino: You remind me of an old student. He also sang in the choir.

T: Father Constantino, it's me.

FC: You? It can't be.

T: It can.

FC: You've changed so much...

T: Don't think so... I am essentially the same person.

FC: And the girl?

T: She's... my daughter

FC: Have you married?
T: No. I'm afraid I am doomed to loneliness.
FC: You can't say that for sure.
T: I can. In my life there's only been two men. One was you, my spiritual guide. The other was my father. Both of you abandoned me, I can't trust any other man.
FC: Turn to God, he'll never abandon you.
T: Maybe you're right. I think... I'd like to go back to sing in the choir.
FC: Not here please.
T: Why?
FC: If you're looking for God, go to another church. He's in all of them.
T: But my memories are here.
FC: Run from them, like I have.
T: I don't want to. Memories are the only thing I have left.

Tina never asks for money, nor does she blackmail the priest. In fact, she is much calmer and at peace than the priest seems to be, especially when she hints at abuses by him. She doesn't want to forget her past, and she doesn't try to appear someone she's not, as she immediately confesses to the priest who she is. We can see here a much more dignifying and honorable look at the transgender character than that of *La mala educacion*, and a greater critique to the unaccepting priest and church.

Law enforcement and the police are not given a sympathetic look either, and again Tina ends the encounter with more dignity and honesty than them. Police investigate the death of Pablo's ex, who Antonio killed by throwing off a cliff. Antonio used Pablo's typewriter and Pablo's letters under a woman's name to throw police off his scent. Since Tina is the main woman in Pablo's life, police suspect her of being involved. Two detectives, father and son, are looking through Pablo's house for clues. The father sees Tina's picture and expresses sexual desire for her, right before he finds Pablo's cocaine and snorts a line.

Tina walks in on them, establishing from her entrance that the criminal is not her, but the detectives. Still, they accuse her of the murder due to the script that Pablo wrote based on

her. The older inspector flirts with her, but his son is very cocky and conceited. When the detective asks Tina to smile –the ultimate misogynistic comment– Tina does not take it well:

Tina: I don't want to, you son of a bitch

Young Detective: Shut up! [he slaps her] People like you don't deserve to live.

T: And people like you, capable of hitting a defenseless woman, what do *you* deserve?

YD: You are not a woman –she knocks him out.

T: I guess now you'll accuse me of abusing the police.

Old Detective (to his son): Your mother didn't deserve you to fight for her...

YD: Faggots! They are going to pay for this!

The detectives are represented doing drugs, abusing their power, being violent towards a civilian, and explicitly misogynistic, homo and transphobic. Even if it is true that Tina hits one of them, it still leaves her as the one with the higher moral ground and them as corrupt and vile.

Almodovar has clearly no sympathy for them, and redeems Tina.

Todo Sobre Mi Madre: Iconic Almodovar

Todo sobre mi madre / All About My Mother's (1999) final reference to *All About Eve* (dir.

Mankiewicz, 1950) is a tribute to women and motherhood, as much as it is an homage to classic cinema, postmodern referentiality, and the performativity of gender:

To Bette Davis, Gena Rowlands, Romy Schneider... To all the actresses who played actresses, to all women that act, to men that act and become women, to all the people who want to be a mother. To my mother.

The movie, considered one Almodovar's best, received the Academy Award for best foreign film and cemented his international renown. It begins at a hospital, credits sweeping through medical machinery and oxygen tubes, and then we hear a beep through the piano music. Manuela (Cecilia Roth), a nurse, starts the process of a transplant from a recently deceased person. She is our protagonist, a woman who used to be an actress when she was younger, and still has to perform as such during the dramatizations to prepare doctors to get authorizations for transplants from family members in distress.

In the next scene, Manuela and her son watch *All About Eve*, and we see him writing in a notepad "All About My Mother," as the title of a script: he wants to be a filmmaker. The recurrent figure of a filmmaker character in Almodovar films (for example in the other two analyzed here, like *La mala educacion* and *La ley del deseo*) is present here through Manuela's son, who dies in a car accident in the first part of the movie. We still have to wait for a while until we meet our transgender character, who becomes the true protagonist of the movie and steals Manuela's spotlight, remaining the one character everyone remembers by name: la Agrado (Antonia San Juan).

When Manuela's son dies, she decides to go from Madrid to Barcelona, to search for his father. To do so, she will have to meet old acquaintances, one of which is La Agrado. Manuela takes a taxi to the outskirts, where a big group of prostitutes and clients do their nightly rounds. She's about to give up, because she doesn't see her, but right before going back, she sees a man hitting a screaming woman on the floor, and decides to help. Manuela hits the man with a rock on the head to save her, to her surprise, and when she says her name out loud, Agrado, Manuela recognizes her and they hug each other happily. We learn that it has been 18 years since they last saw each other.

Character

La Agrado is presented in the first scene as the stereotype of the Criminal. Only in the first few minutes we learn that she works as a prostitute in one of the shadiest places out of town, she is attacked, she carries a knife, she doesn't own a basic first-aid kit ("I only have vaseline, condoms and surgical tape, lots of it") and when Manuela asks her for alcohol to cure her, she says she had a bad night and drank it all. However, throughout the movie she quits sex work, becomes the personal assistant of a big star in a play, is respected and desired by many, and becomes one of the more memorable characters. But probably the best description of herself is her famous monologue she gives in the theatre after informing the audience that the two stars cannot attend the play. In exchange, she offers a show telling the story of her life, and it goes like this:

They call me “la Agrado²⁷” because all my life I only tried to make life pleasant to everyone. Apart from pleasing, I am very authentic. Look at this body, all tailor-made: eye slanting, 80,000 [pesetas]; nose, 200, thrown away because a year later they left it like this after a beating... I know it gives me a lot of personality, but if I had known, I would not have touched it. Tits, two, because I am not a freak. Seventy each, but these I have already super-paid off. Silicone in lips, forehead, cheeks, hips and ass. The liter is around 100,000, so you do the sum because I have already lost count... jaw-filing 75,000; definitive laser depilation, because women also come from the monkey, well, the same or more as men, 60,000 per session. It depends on how bearded you are, the normal thing is two to four sessions, but if you are *folclorica* [flamenco singer] you need more of course... well, as I was saying, it takes a lot to be authentic, my ladies, and in these matters one cannot be scrungy, because you are more authentic the more you look like the you of your dreams.

This monologue on her aesthetic surgeries and authenticity define la Agrado as she performs her own definition and personal story on stage in front of an audience. She is humorous and casual about personal events like beatings, transitioning and “pleasing” and servicing her customers: she refuses to be the victim of the story, and humbly but assertively achieves her own personal success during the movie. Also, her take on authenticity in the monologue, linking it to all the surgical enhancements she has had, and her “authentic” self with her “dreamt self” -her projection of her own becoming, her transition towards the “new” self-, is a curious but poetic way of dealing with the issue at stake.

La Agrado addresses the spectator with humility and well-grounded views of the world. When Manuela asks her if the Chanel she is wearing is authentic, she responds: “How am I going to spend half a million on something with the amount of hunger in the world? The only authentic thing I have is my feelings and the liters of silicone that weight like hundredweights.” Her humorous comments are very sensible and denote a view of the world of someone who has not lived luxuriously. In fact, Agrado has very little money when Manuela comes back. She

²⁷Literally kindness, generosity. The verb “agradar” means “to please”, so she is called la Agrado because he only tries to make life pleasant for everyone.

is happy to even have milk for breakfast, and the thing that worries her the most about being beaten is that she won't be able to work ("I can't even give a blowjob..."). Although she works as a prostitute, she is never victimized, not even when they beat her at the beginning. She decides to take it with humor and resignation, always proactive in the face of adversity, and by doing so she is empowered and able to overcome her situation.

She was a truck driver before going to Paris and having breast surgery, and since then she has worked mainly as a sex worker. Still, she talks about her job in a jokingly manner, and she even says that she works as a model:

Being a model I have to take care of myself, it is the downside of this profession: that you have to be hot at all costs, and be always in the know of the last technological advances in surgery and cosmetics.

The fact that she is a professional sex worker who mainly benefits from being a woman with a penis, and puts so much effort in remaining "updated" makes her resent those fellow transgender people that only do it for the show, like drag queens. Agrado's take on drag queens is all but positive:

The street is getting worse everyday, sister. If we already had competition with other whores, now drag queens are sweeping us out. I can't stand drags. They are *mamarrachas*²⁸. They have confounded circus with transvestism. Why am I saying circus... Mime! A woman with her hair, her nails, a good mouth to give blowjobs or to criticize... I mean, where have you seen a bald woman? I can't stand them, they are *mamarrachas*.

As much as Agrado wants to please everyone, she is not happy about her competition in the workplace, and even less from those who she considers "unauthentic" women, unable to perform femininity right, without proper hair or nails. In these lines, Agrado sums up internalized transphobia of a transsexual woman who has fought to become an "authentic"

²⁸ Pejorative word used for insulting that means something between a jerk, a clown or a monstrosity.

woman versus others that do not want to perform femininity or gender in the same way. As in any group, there are also hierarchies and privileged discourses within and among transgender people -and since transsexuals have the medical institution backing up their transitions, and don't question the gender binary -which is widely accepted- their discourse is often privileged over other transgender people that transgress the binary or do not pursue "authenticity".

Secondary Character

Todo sobre mi madre features a second, less central, transgender character: Lola (Toni Canto), Manuela's ex-partner, father of Esteban and co-worker of Agrado. The first time we hear Lola mentioned is in the first conversation between Manuela and Agrado. She is a woman who appears in a picture with the two of them, and who apparently stole many things from Agrado after staying with her. She is described as someone troubled, taking lots of drugs, using heroin for 15 years, and robbing her own friends. Agrado is resentful because she didn't show her respect after twenty years of friendship. She says they even got their breasts together, implying that Lola is also a transgender woman.

Later on, Manuela finds out that Lola also got sister Rosa (the nun played by Penelope Cruz) pregnant and infected with HIV, and gets very angry. Manuela decides to share her own story with Lola, starting with a tough statement about her: "Lola has the worst in a man and the worst in a woman." Manuela explains how she and Lola fell in love, how Lola went to Paris as a man and came back "with two big boobs", how Manuela still accepted her because "women are stupid, and a bit dykey". Then Lola started flirting with everyone but got jealous if Manuela wore a bikini, which makes her wonder "how can one be *machista* (misogynist) with such a big

pair of boobs?” Lola finally makes her appearance at the end of the movie, dressed in black with black shades, to Rosa’s funeral. Manuela goes to talk to her, and they have a short but intense conversation:

Lola: Manuela, I’m so glad to see you. Such a pity it is here.

Manuela: It couldn’t be anywhere else. You are not a human being Lola, you are an epidemic.

Lola: I was always excessive, and I am very tired. Manuela, I’m dying. Come. I am saying farewell to everything. I stole from Agrado to pay for my trip to Argentina. I wanted to see for the last time the village, the river, our street. And I am happy to be able to say goodbye to you as well. There’s only one thing left, meeting sister Rosa’s son, my son. I always dreamt of having a son, you know that.

M: When I left Barcelona I was pregnant of you.

L: What? You mean that you...? Did you have it?

M: A beautiful boy.

L: I want to see him. Did you bring him with you?

M: He is in Madrid, but you can’t see him.

L: Even from afar Manuela, I promise he won’t even see me. It’s the last thing I ask of you.

M: You can’t see him (starts crying)

L: Manuela, please...

M: Six months ago he was hit by a car, and died. I came to Barcelona to tell you, I’m sorry.

Despite finally meeting her son with Lola, seeing a picture of Esteban (her son with Manuela), and reading a mention of herself in Esteban’s diary, Lola’s is far from a happy ending. She is depicted as conniving, selfish, a bad friend, and an absent “father.” Furthermore, she is a heavy drug user and a thief, and is about to die for her sins (due to HIV caused by unprotected sex or heroin injections, as hinted in the film). All this makes Lola’s character belong to the criminal archetype, improving Agrado’s character by comparison. In *Todo sobre mi madre*, Almodovar shows us how two archetypes can perfectly cohabit, and even complement each other, in the same story.

Socialization

Manuela is the main character with which both Lola and Agrado socialize in the movie, but there are others that define Agrado by their relationship with her, especially in her new job as an assistant, which the movie represents as an upgrade. Her new boss, HumaRojo (Marisa Paredes, another staple actress in Almodovar's filmography) is -despite being a cisgender woman- the ultimate drag queen for her wigs, makeup, mannerisms and constant performance of femininity: she started to smoke to imitate Bette Davis (and derived her artistic name Huma, from the smoke *-humo-* of those cigarettes). She also drops lines from the play *Streetcar Named Desire* in her real life, and has a very dramatic and intense lesbian love story out of the stage. Portrayed as the ultimate diva, Agrado expresses her admiration in their first meeting: "Huma, you are a goddess, a living legend. I'm telling you I am *fans* [sic], in plural."

Huma and Agrado become very close and friendly. Agrado soon is accepted as Huma's personal assistant, replacing Manuela. Agrado's relationship with Huma's lover Nina (Candela Peña) is much better than the one Nina had with Manuela. Agrado's street talk is straightforward enough for Nina to know what to expect from her, and they have the only conversation of the movie about genital surgery:

Nina: Agrado, have you ever thought about getting the whole surgery?

Agrado: Those who get surgery everywhere have no job. Customers want us pneumatic and well endowed.

N: Rheumatic? Guys are so weird...

A: Not rheumatic, pneumatic! A pair of tits hard as inflated tires, and a good cock too.

N: Agrado... show me your cock.

As in *Vestida de azul* or *20 centímetros*, Agrado explicitly discusses the trouble with surgery for sex workers, and does so with her particular sense of humor. Furthermore, Nina is not the only one interested in Agrado's penis, as later on, the male co-star in the play Mario (Carlos Lozano)

enters the dressing room and asks her for a blowjob because he is nervous, to which she responds that she could also use a blowjob as she's also nervous. Mario says he will if she wants, although it would be the first time he sucks woman. Agrado reacts to this with her dear common sense, trying to make Mario empathize with her: "Such an obsession all the company has with my cock, like it is the only one here! Don't you have a cock too? And do people in the street ask you to suck their dicks just because you have one?" Indeed, she is regarded differently than everyone else, but her character and the way she interacts with the theatre cast make her more the special and desired Agrado than the freak or outcast of the group.

Institutions

The church is the only institution shown in the movie, through Penelope Cruz's character, Sister Rosa. She helps the poor, junkies and prostitutes and ends up pregnant from Lola. The church is not represented here as some moral authority dictating what the characters should or shouldn't do, but rather as the work of charitable individuals devoted to "do good" to society, especially those less fortunate, amongst which we find Agrado.

***Tacones Lejanos*: a Brief Mention of the Empowered/Criminal**

The transgender character in *Tacones Lejanos / High Heels* (dir. Pedro Almodovar, 1991) is not the protagonist, and barely a main character, but is interesting to consider since it is in another of Almodovar's movies that seems to follow the Criminal archetype, but ends up closer to the Empowered. This time, Almodovar uses Judge Hugo Dominguez (Miguel Bose, a famous pop singer), who is also a female impersonator at a bar called Letal. The over-the-top story behind the plot, and the humoristic tone, together with the layers of performativity of femininity (a famous singer playing a judge who impersonates a famous singer) complicate the character's storyline and give him depth. However, the fact that he is a representative of the law and still insists on bending and transgressing it for the love he feels for Rebeca, made me consider this character as a possible Criminal, and the bridge between *La mala educacion* and the two other Almodovar movies that I analyze here.

We first see Letal, the cross-dresser, in a poster, when Becky the protagonist arrives in Madrid and sees a picture based on one of her famous looks. Becky's daughter Rebeca explains: "He is a *transformista*²⁹ who imitates your pop era". Manolo, Rebeca's husband, calls Letal "traveston" and expresses his disgust over his wife being best friends with a "travesti". Even Becky, Rebeca's mother, agrees: "One thing is being modern and the other is belonging to their world. They are not bad people, but they lead sordid lives." But Rebeca, in spite of them, loves her friend Letal dearly, and in doing so embodies the new mentality of "la movida" in Madrid - in the way she dresses, the friends she has and the club she goes to. Furthermore, Rebeca is portrayed as a good, albeit troubled, girl, whereas her husband personifies all the prejudices of

²⁹ Translatable as transvestite, crossdresser or drag queen, depending on the intention.

the time such as cheating, and her mother is a narcissistic and selfish diva who slept with her son-in-law. By siding Letal with Rebeca, the movie casts a sympathetic light over the transgender character.

In the club –where another *travesti* was killed not long ago, according to Rebeca’s husband– Letal does her show, dancing and lipsynching in drag. The three visitors, Manolo, Becky, and Rebeca, sit in tension watching the show. Almodovar makes us aware of his mis-en-scène through his shots replicating points of view and playing with mirror images. The three main characters, for example, are mirrored by three other drag queens sitting on the first row, singing and dancing to the same choreography as Letal. Letal approaches the trio at the end of the show and is very nice to Becky and Rebeca, who seem to be having a blast. But Manolo is very grumpy and not very nice. He asks Letal “What is your real name?” and we are presented with his POV shot of Letal’s bulge, before she closes her legs, ashamed of Manolo’s question and gaze. She responds in a classy and metaphorical way: “Like in Concha Piquer’s song, I am what you want to call me. My friends call me Letal”. This answer is met by a mirror POV shot of Manolo’s bulge but with an emphasis on his gun, which he quickly covers. Manolo continues:

Manolo: Sorry but, Letal is masculine or feminine?

Letal: It depends. To you I am a man.

This is Letal’s way of telling him not to mess with her, but also of stating the obvious about Manolo’s sarcastic questions, showing that he doesn’t believe she is a “she”. However, once again the sympathy belies on Letal.

After that, Becky and Letal exchange presents in one of the most famous scenes, where Letal wants Becky’s earrings and she demands her right fake boob, highlighting the “fakeness” of Letal. She and Rebecca go to the dressing room and there, Letal asks Rebeca to help her

unzip. Rebeca is amazed at all the undergarments she has to wear, but Letal tells her “suffering is the price you pay for an amazing body” before venturing onto a more personal conversation:

Letal: Listen, Rebeca, do you mind that I imitate women?

Rebeca: Bother me? Why? On the contrary, I love the fact that you impersonate my mom.

L: I would like to be more than a mom to you.

R: Oh, the things you say...

During their conversation, Letal opens her heart to Rebeca, saying she wants more and is in love with her, while Rebeca literally peels away all of Letal’s dressing accessories, like the padding of her thighs. When Rebeca is helping with the thighs, Letal un-tucks and shows her his penis, to which Rebeca observes that he has a mole and they start kissing (something that will help her recognize him later on). Rebeca wants to stop, and in trying to escape from Letal, running up and down the run, she ends up climbing a metal bar, and she can’t come down because she might get hurt wearing heels. Letal takes advantage of this to start a cunnilingus that looks a bit rapey at the beginning. But she ends up confessing she hasn’t had sex in four months, and they end up kissing and having sex while Letal is still half in drag.

Rebeca is grateful, but she doesn’t want it to happen again. Since she doesn’t know Letal’s real identity, they say goodbye forever. However, the next scene shows us Letal as a man, Eduardo, living with his mother who is a fan of Becky, Brigitte Bardot and Mother Theresa. His mother is in bed, and asks him if he’s taken the AIDS test. She thinks that AIDS is what might be wrong with her too, because she’s not feeling like herself lately. Humor is always a weapon for social commentary in Almodovar’s movies, and *Tacones Lejanos* being shot in the very early nineties is contemporary to the big AIDS years, made worse by “la movida” with all the sex and drugs involved, which became a fertile ground for the virus.

When we learn that Letal's character is actually a judge –the judge ruling on the case of Rebeca's husband murder– and that Rebeca does not realize that the judge and Letal are the same person, the movie verges on the absurd. A grown up judge that lives with his mother, and alternates his judicial life with impersonating pop divas is a staple Almodovar character. Despite him helping Rebeca lie about her innocence, and pushing Becky to take the blame for her daughter, the humoristic tone and the absurdity of his situation in the movie help remove the scourge of Criminality, and focus the attention on the main plot rather than the consequences of Letal's transgenderism.

It is worth mentioning Rebeca's short stay in prison, both because it shows a female prison as yet another stage to perform femininity, and because we find again actress Bibiana Fernandez, who has a dance scene in the patio of the prison, with dozens of inmates dancing to the choreography. When Rebeca looks at her curiously, another inmate tells her: "She is a whore. She threw a brick to a policeman to be able to stay here with her girlfriend, but she is a good person... She's got a heart bigger than her tits." Once again we see the transsexual actress being pushed to the background, and somehow criminalized, although the humoristic tone and the fact that she is in prison only for love, somehow redeem this character.

I have briefly looked at the main aspects of this film because it is a good middle point between *La mala educacion* and *La ley del deseo/Todo sobre mi madre*, and shows us how a same director can use different archetypes, transition from one to another and even make them coexist or rather inhabit the blurry delimitations between one and the other. *Tacones lejanos* does not put a transgender character at the forefront of the movie, but still uses the fluidity of gender to enrich a plot in which women, as it often happens in Almodovar's cinema,

are the leading roles, and their performances of femininity, the strongest points in the Spanish filmmaker's work.

Inclinacion Sexual al Desnudo: Iquino, from Criminal to Empowerment

With this last movie, I want to go full circle and go back to the Criminal chapter. If Almodovar is widely celebrated for his versatility, depth and filmmaking, here I want to reclaim and redeem Ignacio Iquino's work, at least regarding transgender representation. I started the Criminal chapter by locating Iquino within *el destape*, a culturally reviled wave of cinema and photography during the Spanish transition to democracy that never got the status that other movements, like *la movida* had at the time. *El destape* is considered uneducated and coarse, with dumb humor and finding excuses to expose more body parts. However, and despite the criminalization of his transgender characters in *La basura esta en el atico* or *Los sueños humedos de Patrizia*, Iquino managed to create a transgender character in *Inclinacion sexual al desnudo* (1983) that escapes both the Criminal and the Patient archetype, and deserves her place amongst the renowned names of this chapter for its approach to transgenderism.

After images of fireworks (that separate the movie in three acts and don't seem to have any other narrative function), a couple of smiley girls go to a waterpark and tell a third one to join them later. It's summer and they seem to be having a blast. The two of them go to the changing room after sliding in the water, and one tells the other she has a letter from her ex-husband, promising to break one of her legs when he finds her. They laugh at it "but you have such beautiful legs!", and start to flirt, as if the threat wasn't real.

Right after this, the two of them reunite with two other girls (the one we saw at the beginning and a new one), all in bikinis except the last one, who is dressed to "open the shop" and seems more serious than the rest. The first two go to the beach for a bit, but after a while they say they need to get going or "Mother Superior will get angry." On the way to the shop,

they meet yet another girl who confesses “I would do anything to be your friend” and, in a conversation full of innuendos, the spectator realizes that all of them work making erotic films in VHS, except for the last girl who is still a minor.

Throughout the movie we will follow the adventures of these four girls and their interactions with the ex-husband, a couple of gay guys or the mentioned underage girl that wants to become part of the group. The “Mother Superior” and her band of girls participate of all kinds of erotic pairings during the movie, that rather than telling an elaborated story, tries to fit in as many sex scenes and nudity as possible.

Despite the genre of the film, one of the erotic movies of *el destape*, we see a completely different approach to the topic from the director compared to the other movies analyzed. All the movies were directed in his last years of life, when he was more prolific (in 1982, when he directed *Inclinacion* and *Patrizia*, he also did three more titles for example). But whereas the other two present a dark and negative view of the transgender character, here it is rather the opposite. Furthermore, the movie has some scenes verging on surrealism, attempting to be humoristic and casual about love and sexuality.

Nonetheless, misogynistic views and stereotypes of gender and class are abundant in the movie, which often sets the plot just to be able to display eroticism and sex on screen, and in many aspects lacks coherence and character development. What is even more, rape is depicted as something normal and even funny, and homosexuality is something to laugh about, displaying misogynistic and homophobic ideologies that were very pervasive in Spain in the 1980s. Still, this movie deserves to be analyzed differently and belongs to this third chapter of

analysis for bringing a representation of a transgender character that doesn't fall adhere to criminalization nor pathologization.

Character

The "Mother Superior" of this group is actually Victoria (Tessi Arno), a transgender woman who runs a tech store (TVs, radios, VHS) and an amateur production company of erotic films in the back of the store. We meet her being hit on by a customer in the store, who wants to "buy her" instead of one of the VHS. The rest of the girls arrive, and they kiss each other on the lips, which has the customer pleased and surprised. Then Victoria and Doris (Concha Valero, who is Patrizia in *Los sueños húmedos de Patrizia*) go to the back of the store to get changed and, right away, the camera shows us Victoria's penis. Surprisingly enough, this time there is no big reveal nor a build up until the end of the movie, like we saw in other movies by Ignacio Iquino, analyzed in the Criminal chapter.

The fact that Victoria is transgender is presented naturally and openly, not as part of a shameful secret or deception. She is shaving her armpits shaven while her body is put on display, as the object of desire for Doris, something that is confirmed and repeated throughout the movie. Indeed, Victoria is not a dark character in the shadows that needs to hide from criminal dangers, nor a patient who needs our compassion and understanding. She is the manager of the store, loved and desired by many of the other characters in the film, men and women, friends and strangers alike.

The movie introduces Victoria as the boss in charge. She has suitors in the village and a blooming business. Sure of herself, Victoria is accepting of who she is and lives a fairly common

life. In fact, even her job in an amateur porn company is made very unproblematic to the audience, and serves the plot more for showing bodies than providing drama. This is not a job she intends to leave behind, and none of the characters seem ashamed by it.

However, Victoria is shown as having an unhealthy attraction to men that are very *macho*. This attraction to violent and aggressive misogynists, together with her status as transgender woman make the spectator think that it is going to be the main conflict of the movie. Despite what the other girls fear will happen once Victoria's boyfriend sees her penis, Desiderio proves to be far less disgusted and much more in love than expected. Victoria's worst enemies, then, are gender stereotypes (made worse by the two homosexuals in the movie) and her own obsession with *macho* men.

Socialization

Victoria's group of friends, coworkers and lovers is her extended network, and she does not have any trouble relating to people. Furthermore, Doris is deeply in love with her, but Victoria doesn't seem to want to settle with her. We see them loving each other, caressing each other, kissing each other and even having sex with each other at the end, but Victoria is always reluctant to do so because she does not see her as her love interest. For example, in a scene where Doris is looking at her with desire while she's shaving and singing, Victoria tries to put an end to it:

Victoria: What's up? When are you gonna get tired of looking at me, buddy?

Doris: I would be admiring you forever...

V: Are you sure you want to come to the beach?

D: I would rather take a bath here, with you soaping me up...

V: You're out of line, Doris.

D: Kiss me (Victoria makes a negative sound) If you don't kiss me like the other day, I won't go to the beach (they kiss and fall on the bed while kissing, but Doris falls on the floor and they laugh while Victoria escapes and walks away).

Throughout the movie, Doris suffers for Victoria's love, having to see how she falls for Desiderio, constantly refusing her. In one of the last scenes, we finally see them consummating, after all of Doris' insistence throughout the movie, but the scene is more consistent with the fact that it needs to show as much sex as possible than with the plot and character development. When Desiderio's call interrupts them, Doris asks Victoria to delay their encounter until "After the world cup" (which was that year in Spain) and then we see a weird scene, with high pitch music and the girls running around in fast motion. Even the possibility of a dramatic scene or serious romance is cut by Iquino with surreal effects that have nothing to do with the (already weak) script.

The list of people interested in Victoria is long. Apart from Doris, who is more central to the plot, we have the customer at the beginning, who is a rich village farmer; Don Ricardo in his sports car, who ends up with Victoria in the final scene; and most importantly, Desiderio, one of the girls' ex-husband. We meet Desiderio in the store, looking for his ex-wife to beat her up for being a lesbian in one of the erotic films. Since the girl, Silvia, is there, Doris and Victoria have to keep him busy. Doris is annoyed by it, but Victoria wants Desiderio from the very beginning. There is a rape scene of Doris while Victoria warns the other girls to hide. Doris' body -and without her consent- is used as a way of keeping him busy. Victoria lets him rape her, but the other girls seem to be worried about him raping Victoria:

Silvia: Can't you see that if he sees your penis, he'll jump so high he'll break his head with the roof?

Victoria (jokingly): with his horns³⁰ you mean...

Adriana: Don't be crazy, Silvia says he's a very *macho* man.

V: Precisely what I like.

The scene is resolved in a bizarre triangle, in which Victoria wants Desiderio, Doris wants Victoria, who only kisses her to please Desiderio, and he originally wanted and raped Doris, but is happy to be with both. They agree to meet once a week when he's in town, and it is surprising that Victoria doesn't care that he is a misogynist, a batterer, and a rapist.

Victoria is constantly worried about Desiderio discovering her "secret", and the other three girls even more. They don't stop talking about him as a monster, someone to be feared. The spectator is led to believe that too, with all the warnings. When he's going down on her, she says she's got a surprise but she needs him "drugged and crazy with passion", so she starts fellating him. Before the reveal, she makes him swear not to get angry or beat her, that he will accept things as they are, and he agrees. Then she takes his hand, puts it between her legs and we see his surprised face before jumping away saying "coño³¹!".

Desiderio: [seeing Victoria leave] Where are you going?

Victoria: I can see that you don't love me

D: Why don't I love you? I was crazy for you!

V: You *were*, but not anymore.

D: Victoria, you can't leave... don't you see I've already spent a lot of money?

V: You're so stingy...

D: But I stay with you. Also, do you know what?

V: What?

D: That I don't care about anything.

V: Are you serious Desi?

D: I like, what the hell!

V: You're totally nuts

D: Yes, crazy for you, insane, kiss me!

³⁰ In Spanish, having "horns" means that your partner cheats on you.

³¹ An exclamation of surprise, but that literally means "cunt"

It is very rare to see this type of scene ending like this. The audience and the other girls have been anticipating Desiderio's rage, the consummation of the deceiver trope, the emasculation and disgust of a man being seduced by another man. Instead, after a brief initial surprise, Desiderio doesn't care. This scene in particular proves how different this movie is from the other two analyzed, and how it makes a strength out of the transgender character, who breaks with victimization and criminalization.

However, at the end of the movie, Desiderio comes to get Victoria with her certificate to marry and a car decorated as a newlywed car. But to Victoria's surprise, the two homosexuals of the movie are inside the car ("They are my managers" he says), and with an effeminate tone that has been inexistent until that very moment, Desiderio runs away with the two homosexuals, leaving Victoria alone in the street with the marriage certificate. The girls don't seem surprised, but Victoria refuses to stay alone and when Don Ricardo -an old suitor of hers- appears with his car, Victoria decides to jump in and tell him to marry her. This ending, which might seem very bizarre, is coherent with the disjointed reactions of the rest of the movie, and just adds some more misogynistic humor. For instance, Desiderio has to be homosexual if he likes a woman with a penis, so he escapes with the two homosexuals of the movie and adopts their mannerisms. As well as the director empowers the transgender protagonist to choose her own destiny.

Institutions

As in most of the movies in this chapter, the characters are more defined by themselves and their friends and family than through institutions. The police are briefly mentioned by

Desiderio as a way of blackmailing the girls, but the girls never think of calling the police for Desiderio's rape. The church is only mentioned to talk about marriage, and they say that in order to get married they'd have to go to London or Holland, however in the last scene Desiderio gives Victoria a certificate to marry, without really explaining why or how he got it

Final Discussion: The Empowered

The Empowered archetype is, possibly, the most heterogeneous of the three. The fact that it is constructed against the abnormal/normal binomial opposition of the previous two results in a group of movies that work at very different levels and speak from completely different places about the topic. Mixing the underground of Spanish cinema with big mainstream titles, *el destape* filmmaker Ignacio Iquino with revered Pedro Almodovar, constructs a widely open archetype that, nevertheless, works at the level of empowerment and gives the voice and their destiny back to the transgender characters that they present. If it is true that Almodovar is prevalent in this archetype (three out of the five movies in this chapter are his), the counterpoint of the other two show us how the Empowered can inhabit different environments and styles. Furthermore, Almodovar's work was also included in the Criminal archetype –as well as Iquino's. This also signals a cohabitation of discourses within the same author that is made possible by the overlapping discourses on the topic.

Manderley works at a very metaphorical level and is, at times, slow and brainy. The poetry recitals, the staging of the scenes and the apparent spontaneity create an overacted string of scenes that sometimes work too hard to convey a simpler message. However, Garay succeeds in using exaggeration to talk about the limits of gender and gender transition, less due to the acting of the three characters and more to the depth of the script. The mirror scenes are the base for the movie's transgender representation and work as main discourses to define Paula's situation which, despite being constantly defined by medical concepts and discourses, its mise-en-scene leave no doubt as to the artificiality of it.

Moreover, the presence of Olmo as the humoristic side-kick and his continuous transitions between femininity and masculinity without any apparent problem and a carefree attitude contribute to debunk some of Paula's medical discourses, add some levity to the seriousness of her situation and, overall, look at the topic from a different perspective without ever negating any of the two voices. If *Manderley* is successful for this archetype, it is because it places its efforts in conveying each of the character's struggles as unique, rather than generalizing, and gives all the power to each of the characters to define, and redefine themselves.

La ley del deseo features powerful woman and actress Tina, whose definition and portrayal is made off many pieces, only one of which is being a transgender woman. Her complex character touches on illegality but falls outside the Criminal archetype: she almost does not participate in illegal activities and when she does (like snorting a line of cocaine or hitting the police), she does it less than those around her at the moment; she is responsible for Ada's well-being and does a good job at it, gaining the child's love and admiration; she is not punished with death at the end of the movie, and is saved by her brother –who finally assumes responsibility for his mistakes. The Patient archetype also does not apply to Tina, since the medical institution is never present in her life -other than going to the hospital to visit her brother- her transition is only mentioned as part of her past and never as a traumatic event. She didn't even want to start the transition by herself. The sympathetic treatment that she receives in the movie, together with her over-the-top background and story, make her an example of an Empowered character, triumphant over the adversities that she faces, humorous next to the drama that surrounds her and, most importantly, master of her own destiny.

In *Todo sobre mi madre*, Almodovar juggles with two of the archetypes in two very different characters that complement each other. While he gives the spotlight to the likeable Agrado, making her everyone's best friend, comic relief and at the same time an "authentic" woman wherever she goes, Lola awaits creeping in the dark corners of everyone's memories, like the Criminal she is, representing everything bad about being transgender or, as Manuela puts it, "the worst of being a man and the worst of being a woman." However, the ideology behind the movie never questions the gender binary openly and, despite accepting that authentic women can have penises –so not making surgery an inherent procedure to become a woman– drag queens are far from accepted.

Through her humor and layers of performance, Agrado is one more of those actresses playing actresses to which Almodovar dedicates the movie, almost assuming that every woman, actress or not, needs to perform womanhood and that the very concept of womanhood is multi-layered and polymorphous, impossible to enact in only one way or one archetype. Through her representation and the plot, Agrado becomes an empowered transgender character that can (and has to) make fun of normality and other conventions, and paves her own way of acceptance unapologetically and without making any concessions. Agrado's transgender status is more a 'particularity' than a defining trait in the plot, and despite other characters insistence in treating her differently for it, she constantly delivers responses that highlight her common sense and put the others in question.

Tacones lejanos crosses over to the Criminal archetype due to some illegal actions of the character as well as his secrecy over his drag queen identity. Despite not being so central to the story –thus losing some depth in the character– Letal has a very memorable presence in the

film, and bends the limits of private/public, reality/fiction, and il/legality, while also playing with her two personas: a masculine and assertive judge who helps the protagonist and a campy drag queen who is her best friend and seduces her. The play of masculine/feminine together with his/her agency in determining the actions taken qualify the character to be present in this archetype.

Finally, in *Inclinacion sexual al desnudo*, we find a bizarre product of erotic cinema that doesn't in any way marginalize the transgender character, but rather makes her the leader and object of desire of the rest of characters. More than half the movie are sex scenes, some of them verging hardcore porn rather than erotic cinema. The other half includes dialogues that are incredibly absurd, and the plot twists and turns make no sense at all. However, this dissertation does not evaluate the cinematic value or the good use of filmic language, but rather the film's representation of a transgender character, which in this case is treated with an absolute obliviousness compared to the rest in this chapter.

Granted, Victoria is sexualized as the object of desire, but then again so is every other girl in the movie. The views of the characters are rather misogynistic throughout, but the movie also offers a very fluid vision of sexuality, in which many characters oscillate between hetero and homosexual desires and act without overthinking their transitions. In the same way, Victoria's transgenderism is presented as one more characteristic, and despite building up towards *machista* violence for her transgender status, she never receives any kind of punishment for it. She never expresses any desire whatsoever to remove her penis -which is incredibly visible throughout the movie, and explicitly hard in two of the scenes- nor in undergoing surgery, and she eludes the medical paradigm as well.

While I can't say this movie makes a strong political statement, it shows how not only high-brow experimental cinema like Garay's *Manderley* or respected and awarded mainstream like Almodovar's *Todo sobre mi madre* can construct representations of transgender people outside the medical and legal paradigms, and offers an interesting and unique perspective from one of Spain's forgotten directors of *el destape*.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter closes the analysis section with an Epilogue that includes the analysis of *La piel que habito / The Skin I Live In* (dir. Pedro Almodovar, 2011), which thematically returns to *Odio mi cuerpo* and brings us back to the Prologue. The similarities of both movies, almost forty years apart, speak to the permanence in time of certain discourses, and their ideological work through repetition and iteration. Furthermore, *La piel que habito* is chronologically the last movie with a 'transgender' character at the forefront in Spanish cinema, although not included with the others (like *Odio mi cuerpo* and *Mi querida señorita*) for not featuring a character that desires to transition, but rather one that is forced to do so.

After this analysis, I will expose the conclusions stemming out of the process of data gathering and discourse analysis. Retaking the research questions of this project, I state the answers I have got through the movies and comment on the ways it differed or coincided with previous notions I had entering this dissertation. Finally, I offer a section on this research's limitations, acknowledging the gaps and voids that any research has, and a Future Research section, in which I explore possible avenues to take after this dissertation. The latter shows the many and varied ways in which this dissertation can inspire my future research on the field, and the interests that doing this project has inspired me to continue my endeavor.

La piel que habito: Epilogue

La piel que habito is the first of Almodovar's movies that focuses on the transition of the character and the interactions with the medical institution in the main plot. Radically different from the complicated melodramas that characterize Almodovar's corpus, the movie is an adaptation of the French novel *Mygale* (Tarantula) by Thierry Jonquet (1995). It explains the story of Doctor Ledgard (Antonio Banderas), a famous surgeon that, traumatized by his wife's burned body and subsequent suicide, develops the science of skin and facial transplants. When his daughter gets raped, he kidnaps the rapist and slowly performs an unwanted sex reassignment surgery on him, while also giving him the face of his dead wife. Keeping the rapist prisoner in a room, Ledgard acts as both the metaphorical and literal gatekeeper of Vicente/Vera (Jan Cornet/Elena Anaya). Ledgard finally falls in love with her, but she kills him in order to escape from his house and be free.

Character

Vicente is presented as a young man working with his mother at a shop. He seems a bit bored of his little town life and when the opportunity for a big party arises, he does not hesitate and goes there with his friends and they do lots of drugs. He meets Doctor Legard's daughter, and they walk into the gardens with the rest of young people. He and Norma start kissing and petting but when Norma starts to yell and say stop, he hits her and she loses consciousness. Scared, he decides to escape, but Doctor Legard finds him, kidnaps him and punishes him for his crime.

This is not a transgender character, but rather a man to whom a sex transition is imposed as a punishment for his transgressions. We see him fight against this new identity throughout the movie, but removed for years from his life, friends and family, and given a new body and face, Vicente slowly becomes used to the “skin he lives in”: the skin of Vera. Indeed, the movie focuses on the skin to metaphorically talk about Vicente/Vera’s identity, and also as a way of linking the idea of sex and gender, body boundaries and even addressing the early distinctions between transvestism and transsexualism that both Hirschfield and Benjamin explored. Almodovar’s use of the skin and clothing as markers of inner identity allow us to see Vicente’s evolution and the efforts of doctor Ledgard in aligning again Vera’s sex, gender and sexuality (and clothing!) –forcing her to become a true woman and a ‘true transsexual.’

In *The Skin I Live In*, clothing has a central role for the plot and is reinforced by the fact that Vicente works at a vintage clothing store owned by his mother. In those early scenes, Vicente is shown as infatuated with the lesbian coworker in the shop and offers her a dress as a present, trying to seduce her. That particular dress is the one that he will wear in the final scene as Vera, and the reason he is able to convince his coworker that Vera is in fact the disappeared Vicente. The true identity under Vera’s new skin, as well as her acceptance of the sex she now lives in, is revealed through that dress. In fact, it is seen as a contrast with the previous refusal of Vicente/Vera to wear any of the dresses that the doctor provides, tearing them apart over and over again throughout the movie.

Furthermore, Vera’s ripping of the dresses at the beginning parallels doctor Ledgard’s ripping and replacing of her skin, which she also refuses to ‘wear.’ Those destroyed dresses are posited as a representation of Vera’s inner feelings, conveying the darkness of her

imprisonment and annihilation as a person when she starts recycling stripes of the dress to build a whole set of disturbing sculptures. The dresses, even if not worn, constitute a means of self-expression and a mirror of an otherwise invisible identity.

In opposition to those feminine pieces of clothing that Vera refuses to wear, the only clothing that she accepts during her captivity is the one-piece skin dress that the doctor offers to help heal the skin from the abrasive and continuous surgery she undergoes.

Vicente/Vera does not reject that piece of clothing and it becomes –literally and metaphorically- his/her second skin during the transition. The first black then nude skin-dress becomes the iconic piece to represent Vicente’s transition to become Vera. Evoking a straightjacket historically used for mentally ill people, the skin upon the skin gives Vera the firm and perfectly feminine body and contains her in-between identity up until the moment when she gets raped, a pivotal turning point that makes her change her behavior and act as the woman they want her to be in order to gain doctor Ledgard’s trust. The skin-dress can then be read as the marker of the boundary ritual from one sex to the other and a metaphor of the containment and restrictions that the medical institution places on her body.

Socialization

The most important character in the movie apart from our protagonist is doctor Ledgard. Doctor Ledgard, as I briefly explained, is the edgy surgeon that succeeds in improving the lives of many –by improving to fictional levels face transplants for severe burn victims– while annihilating the lives of others applying a sort of vigilante justice. Antonio Banderas’ character is constructed as the embodiment of institutional patriarchy and central male character in the

movie, fulfilling the roles of son, husband, father, boss, lover and, more importantly, doctor. In his persona we can see the display of hegemonic masculinity through his interactions with the other characters, especially within the community of women that inhabit the space around him and the male colleagues in the medical institution.

The doctor is shown imposing on Vicente/Vera his ideas on gender and sex, and modifying his/her body accordingly, as well as forcing her to wear a skin, a skin-tight suit, and dresses, as I explored. But Vicente/Vera is not the only character that suffers the doctor's impositions on gender display through the clothing. The doctor's daughter, Norma, also expresses her disgust over the feminine clothes and dresses that her dad makes her wear in the scene before the Vicente's sexual abuse. She takes her jacket and high heels off, throwing them away. This refusal of femininity by Norma will be exacerbated later on when she is in the psychiatric facility. When doctor Ledgard asks the psychiatrist why is Norma wearing those awful hospital clothes that make her look so bad, the psychiatrist says that she refuses to have clothes and dresses that are in any way tight to her skin. It is ambiguous here the exact relationship between Norma and his father –hinting through her irrational fear of him towards a story of sexual abuse. However, what is made clear is that doctor Ledgard, representing the medical institution and the patriarchal figure in the movie, is very invested in the gender performance of his own daughter (and overtly of all the feminine characters in the movie). Medicine is, once more, represented as a pillar for the maintenance of the dimorphic sex/gender.

Clothes in the movie are also used to convey other identity categories, becoming at times a marker of class and race, especially for secondary characters. On the one hand, we

witness the performance of getting dressed by the medical clothes of doctor Ledgard and his colleagues, and the emphasis on sterility through a highly aesthetic and clean montage of the process of getting dressed as a doctor before surgery. The surgery clothes are conceptualized as clean and functional, even in the way they are folded, and the process to get dressed for Ledgard –to transition from a person to a doctor, to become a doctor- is shot with precision and in depth, as if documenting some kind of highly ritualized dance moves. On the other hand, Marilia (Marisa Paredes) the house maid wears a uniform, which she imposes on herself despite the doctor's saying that it is not necessary, and Marilia's son Secca, who rapes Vera and is killed by the doctor, spends de movie dressed as a tiger. The tiger stands for several tropes historically attached to men of color as scholars in Latino/a Studies have explored (Molina Guzman and Valdivia 2004): unrestrained sexual desire, exoticism, irrational, primitive, uncivilized, etc., and in Secca's actions we confirm this uneducated and hot blooded character that is killed by the white doctor. In both cases, class and privilege are constructed through the external presentation and the clothing, reflecting interior identity categories that are performed for the screen and for the others around them.

Institutions

If *La piel que habito* constitutes a radically different representation of a transgender character in the work of Almodovar, it is not only because of the bizarre conditions under which the sex reassignment is performed but rather because, for the first time, the emphasis of the plot is precisely on such procedure. The movie features centrally in its story the surgery, and reflects on the tensions between the medical institution and the transgender body. Through the

character of Robert Ledgard issues of bioethics, the gatekeeper role of medicine and the interactions with the legal system are made visible, and not precisely in a sympathetic manner.

We see medicine as a hierarchical institution, as shown in the relationship that Ledgard has with other doctors that come to assist him in Vicente/Vera's operation. Doctor Ledgard is positioned at the higher spectrum of medical hegemony: he is a super-star doctor with a high reputation (as we see him lecturing about his discoveries and participation in successful facial transplants) that has, as well, a complete dedication to his private medical office for rich women, who can afford to pay for his services on plastic surgery and want to spend the recovery period in a discreet mansion. This seems to speak to the tensions between the Spanish public and private system, opposing universal coverage to an individualized service catered to wealthy patients, highlighting again issues of class and privilege within the medical institution.

Furthermore, the independence from the state to exercise the medical profession is pivotal for the plot and Doctor Ledgard's interactions with the legal system. The interactions with the law and legal boundaries is threefold in the movie: (1) medicine and the law enforcement institution –i.e. the police-, (2) medicine and the legal coverage of the patient and (3) medicine self- regulating itself.

On the first level, we see how Doctor Ledgard is able to escape law enforcement institutions in several points of the narrative. For example, Ledgard will take onto himself the punishment of Vicente after allegedly raping his own daughter and traumatizing her. Medicine is responsible for redressing what the law cannot handle, becoming an individual avenger and kidnapping Vicente for his transformation. The police are unable to help Vicente's mother and, even more, they don't suspect that the doctor has anything to do with Vicente's disappearance.

Following the same logic, the police will not be present –not even as a threat- when Ledgard kills Secca. It seems like whatever happens in the privacy of the doctor’s office has no legal consequences outside of it. Furthermore, it is relevant to note that the subjects punished by Ledgard –Vicente and Secca- are both coded as criminals. In the case of Vicente, he is seen as guilty of rape (and, in the mind of the doctor, he is also guilty of heading Ledgard’s daughter to her death) while Secca is a nationally exposed fugitive of a robbery *and* a rapist. In fact, it is actually the rape of Vera what will lead Ledgard to finally kill Secca. The fact that the character representing the medical institution performs the ultimate punishment for a crime like rape, points to the articulation of both legal and medical institutions in regulating criminality and sexuality.

The second layer of interaction is the legal coverage of the patient. We have situations like the confidentiality doctor-patient that participate of the very few exceptions to the law together with lawyers and priests. The different state apparatuses –law, medicine, religion– go hand in hand when matters of power and exceptions of power are being given. Another of these exceptions to law that the movie deals with is higher-class people being able to pay for illegal –or out of the normal– procedures. The access to the services of the doctor, even without the legal consent, is openly discussed in the movie. When Ledgard is asked towards the end by one of his colleagues about the clandestine surgery they performed on Vicente – precisely because Vicente’s disappearance has been brought to him by the media, *not* the police– Ledgard tells him that, in fact, they both know that it is not the first time they break the law for the privacy of a good patient. Implying that patients can buy his clandestine services – while enjoying the privacy of the mansion and the luxury of a private clinic– is indeed telling of

a system in which public health has its own procedures, waiting lists and mechanisms of control, while private health in Spain enjoys sometimes the space of a limbo that, guarded by medical professionalism and power hierarchies, allows the rich to obtain immediately the treatment they want, whereas the poor are forced to jump through all the hoops.

On the third level, we find the self-regulation of medicine. The movie is again very forward in dealing with issues of bioethics and the boundaries of medicine. Bioethics is explicitly mentioned when Ledgard makes his presentation and hints towards the genetic enhancement of human skin with pig's skin cells. His obsession to create an anti-flammable skin results in him lying to the medical community about his testing with animals for the experiment. We learn that Vicente/Vera has served him as a guinea pig to try human genetic modification, something that falls outside the limits of current bioethics. After hinting at testing with humans, he is dismissed from the experimental research and, despite the interest of pharmacological laboratories to make the project of a resilient skin come true and commercialize the product, the medical community imposes its limits on Ledgard. His obsession on perfecting the human skin, after achieving perfect facial surgery, tackles on issues of perfecting the species and eugenics, other known limits of medicine and fields in which medicine has historically played an important (and unethical) role.

Less explicitly, but still present in the movie, euthanasia is discussed through the character of Vera. After years of surgery and confinement, Vera rebels herself against Ledgard and succeeds in leaving the room in which she is normally locked up by kicking Ledgard and running to escape. Once Ledgard automatically locks the exterior doors and Vera finds herself out of possibilities to escape, and after pointlessly threatening him with a knife –he has a gun-

she says “you won’t have me as your toy” and cuts her own throat. Ledgard saves her from dying against her own will, which occurs again earlier in the movie –but later chronologically– when she tries to kill herself by cutting her skin with book pages.

Those scenes seem to speak, on the one hand and in a broader sense, to the medical decisions about keeping somebody alive against his/her will, and on the other hand, more particularly, about suicide being one of the dangers and risks of Sex Reassignment Surgery. Indeed, one of the arguments of the APA for maintaining such strict controls over who gets ‘permission’ to be recognized as the other sex and start the transition is to make sure that it will not affect mentally or put in danger the patient requesting it. Those risks have been constructed in a way by which the medical institution has secured a privileged place in the process of granting sex reassignment interventions, deeming through psychiatric evaluation, who is eligible to get one. What looks as a means of avoiding situations that could harm the patient becomes, at times, a power fight between doctor and patient that results in the medical institution deciding who is “worth” to get to the surgery stage.

The extend to which Medicine can, and does, supersede the legal system is blurry, but medicine has its own people within the system (i.e. psychiatric forensics) and doctors have the last say in situations over patients in which not even a judge could deny permission. By exposing, again through a very extreme case, the power of medicine over law, *La piel que habito* highlights the limits of both institutions and the abuses of power that occur within and between them. The medical institution is portrayed in the movie as a vigilante breaking the law, but also as a surveillance institution and gatekeeper of the transsexual character. At multiple times during the film we see Ledgard looking at the screens broadcasting Vera’s life in her cell.

This mediatized representation of Vera will seem to interact with those looking at her. Recuperating film codes on the objectification and look-at-ness of the female body, Vera will return the gaze of the doctor when he looks at her by looking back at the camera. Vera knows that she is being watched and performs as such for the pleasure of Ledgard. Mediatized surveillance of the female (transsexual) body evokes issues of representation and surveillance of the transsexual narrative, but also the domination of women under the male gaze.

Ledgard performs the role of gatekeeper too, on top of the surveillance. He is literally and metaphorically the one who decides over Vicente/Vera's sex and the one to hold the key to his/her cell. The importance of the key is highlighted several times in the movie: Vera snatching it from Ledgard to try to escape, Secca hitting his own mother to gain access to the key (and thus, to Vera's body), and Marilia being forbidden to trespass the door of the cell even when feeding and taking care of Vera. The doctor and the medical institution are portrayed as ultimate guardians of the transsexual patient, holding the key and the final say to their transition and to their freedom.

Discussion

The movie seems to punish the doctor in its presentation, thus fostering the representation of the medical institution as the evil agent in the plot. The movie is problematic for its imposition of the transition and erasure of the transsexual character's will to change his sex, but it is also true that, unlike *Odio mi cuerpo*, the 'transgender' character has a dignifying ending: whereas Ernesto ends up raped and dead in the port, never able to take the money he earned and go away to live peacefully as Leda, Vicente/Vera escape the doctor's prison, goes back to his/her

mother and lesbian coworker and seems to accept Vera's body but still retaining Vicente's identity.

Despite the efforts of Ledgard to align heteronormatively Vera's sex, gender and sexuality, to transform her against her will in Benjamin's true transsexual, he does not and *cannot* succeed. By trying to create this mythological perfect woman –of course, a replica of his dead wife- Ledgard succeeds in changing her sex and even ultimately her gender (as we see Vera finally accepting the dress and presenting herself as a woman to her mother and coworker). However, Vera's resistance to comply with heterosexuality, keeps her alive and frees her. And by the ending of the movie, we can even imagine how she will finally get her lesbian co-worker, whom Vicente was in love with at the beginning of the movie- to finally be with her as Vera.

La piel que habito is an interesting text not despite but precisely because of its ambivalence. It exposes the tensions that the myth of transsexuality tries to erase and naturalize and denounces the abuses of power of the medical institution. By exaggerating metaphorically those issues through a thriller, it constructs a bizarre plot that, on a first viewing, can enrage for its removal of agency of the transgender character and the use of transgenderism and femininity as a punishment. However, a deeper reading of the film allows unpacking the complexities of sex transitioning, made all too natural and simple by the medical institution.

Medicine and science are invested in maintaining a strict separation between binaries, inventing diagnosis and tests to separate the two parts. Nevertheless, the relationship of many people with their sexual and gender identity is far more complex than the scientific approach

can recognize. While, for medicine, there seems to be an objective (biological?) explanation for sexual and gender differences, time and time again –through the change of laws, through the historically varying acceptance of new forms of living sex, gender and sexuality– the definitions have shifted and changed, with new categories emerging at the speed of scientific advances that try to contain and reify abnormal categories through mythological explanations.

La piel que habito shows a ‘transgender’ character that is a criminal, but is redeemed through his actions, and who is a patient without accepting his/her condition, casting a doubt over the role of medicine, science and law in regulating our sexes and genders and, as I have argued, exposing the invisible work of the myth for what it is: a social construction that –when not contested- works to maintain the status quo of the sex, and gender, that we all live in.

Conclusions

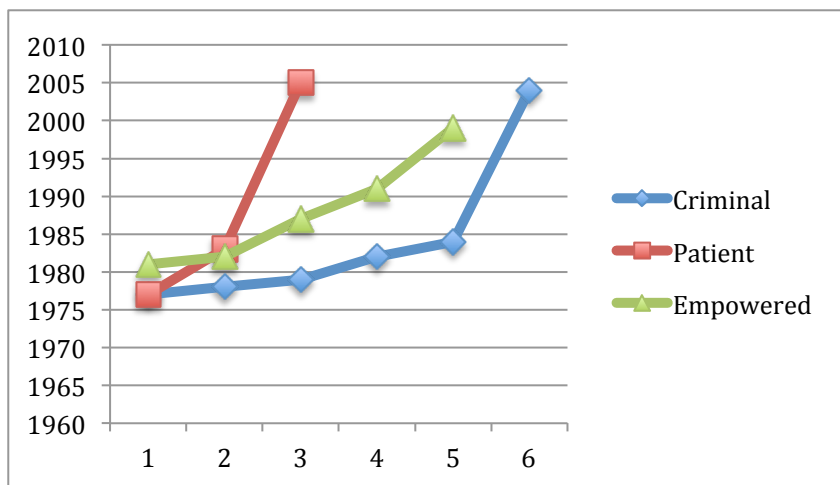
After the analysis of the data and classification of the movies into archetypes, there are some findings to be addressed in this section. Each of the archetypes has a final discussion section at the end, but here I expose the overall conclusions and expand on the Limitations and Future Research that can stem out of this research. I start by responding to the research questions and see to what point they have been answered through my data, to then move onto other questions that each of the archetypes or the methodology further address. But before I even approach the research questions, there is one first conclusion that overshadows the rest of findings for its blatant presence and implications: only one among all the characters analyzed transitions from woman to man. Furthermore, it is in the first movie chronologically (*Mi querida señorita*, 1972) and the fact that Adela/Juan is at all transgender is contested in the work of Estrada-Lopez (2012), who argues that the character is intersex.

I leave the intersex/transgender debate aside since there is not enough information in the movie to be certain about that claim, and this dissertation focuses on the fact that there is a transition rather than trying to label Adela/Juan's gender non-conformity. Furthermore, this sole example is not analyzed with the rest of the movies in the archetypes, but rather in the prologue, because the transition does not directly respond to the character's wishes. The movie is already granted a 'special status' among the other texts of the dissertation, and it is not representative of any archetype. This complicates and worsens the fact that none of the other movies use a FtM character. This lack of representation speaks volumes to the symbolic annihilation of transgender men in the media, which is also noted in Kellaway's work (2014).

The reason behind this absence is complex, and has several possible explanations that can make converge lesbian invisibility, the act of ‘passing’, masculine privilege, sanctioned female masculinity, etc. However, this issue should be explored and researched further in order to get to any conclusions, and has been included in my Future Research section. Still I found it necessary to address at the beginning of this section since it is a noteworthy absence. Since I am talking about representation and tropes, this finding shows that transgender men still haven’t got a place, a trope or a discourse in their representation in Spanish cinema.

The first research question inquired about the chronological correspondence among archetypes. In *Table 2* we can see how all three archetypes, despite their difference in numbers (indicated by the horizontal length of the lines), spread over from the 1970s when the first texts emerge, up until the 2000s.

Table 2. Movies through time.



This indicates that, contrary to what I assumed when entering this project, the three archetypes coexist and overlap through time, and don't emerge and die in solitary at a certain period. It is true, however, that the Criminal movies are much more concentrated in the beginning, while the Empowered –and thanks to the work of Pedro Almodovar- is dominant in the decade of the 1990s.

I also detected a much higher presence of transgender protagonists in the early years of democracy: more than double the cases in the first 15 years (1975-1990) than in the next two decades (1990-2011). However, and due to the reduced sample, it is difficult to make generalizing claims that would be better founded through quantitative research and a bigger population in the analysis, something that is contemplated both in the Limitations of this research and in the Future Research section.

The second question asked about hegemonic discourses dominating transgender representation. If we look at the numbers in the table, the characters that are framed by the legal or medical institutions (the Criminal and the Patient) combined, are almost two times in number the total of Empowered characters. The Criminal is the most prevalent and the Patient the least used. However, this numerical comparison does not take into account the many cross-archetypes that I have found in each of them (*El transexual*, *Vestida de azul*, *Tacones lejanos*) as well as the complexities of the three movies in the Prologue and Epilogue of the analysis.

What is a finding here is that the characters and archetypes are much more nuanced and complex than I believed at first, which I will explore now in each of them. Archetypes are not pure, they serve to group all the characters of this dissertation in three recognizable discourses but each of these movies is a different and unique product, a representation with its

own particularities. If we step back enough, all of the movies share some traits in common.

Within the Criminal archetype, for example, transgender characters suffer from criminalization in the plot, and receive some sort of punishment for it and, in some cases, the punishment is aggravated because it happens *only* to the transgender character and not the rest of the criminals around them in a way that links criminality to transgenderism directly.

Nevertheless, movies like *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño* reverse this treatment of criminality and talk about a hero who tries to stop an oppressing system and kill a dictator. Even Ana in *Tercera luna* is portrayed under a very sympathetic light and her punishment is more dedicated to her abandonment of her family than to the fact of being transgender.

Zahara/Ignacio, despite their use of blackmail and extortion, can also be seen as fighting against an oppressive institution (the church) that has permitted their abuse as children.

Another particularity is that space is used to define the criminality of the characters, and certain geographies are ascribed to the trope. So much so, that these places become signifiers of criminality. The neighborhood in *Tercera luna* is described as a place where “whores, prostitutes, madams, homosexuals... all marginalized are well received here.” By locating Ana here, the movie attaches the criminal stigma to our main character through the space she inhabits. For these movies, transgender people exist in the darkness, the sordid spaces of our society: el Paralelo in Barcelona, cabaret theatres and bars, public parks and nightlife in general. The discourses on criminality do not only depend on the characters themselves, but also the space they inhabit and the people they frequent, furthering the idea that socialization is central to this discourse.

The archetype of the Patient is not as prevalent as I expected in the beginning. Only four of the movies can be considered as representing of the archetype, and two of them are in-between the Criminal and the Patient (being *El transexual* the clear example of this transition of the archetype boundary). For the Patient I have encountered a fairly extended usage of 'staged' documentary in order to make the discourse more credible and real, but that also has undertones of the sensationalism of the time (*El transexual*, *Vestida de Azul*). Indeed, the time of emergence of those two examples, closely after the new democracy, is characterized by the constant appearance of topics that were previously taboo and it is easy to see this in the frequency of these movies in the early years, as I explored.

Another particularity of this archetype is the direct influence that the medical institution has had on the ways of telling the story. While in *El transexual* Yeda Brown reproduced the medical discourse she has learned directly looking at the camera, and in parallel to the plot of the movie, *Cambio de sexo*'s scriptwriters were informed by specialists and patients in order to make the movie, and their findings are shown as an educational part about surgery towards the end of the movie. A successful characteristic of *20 centímetros* is, in fact, the ability to present those same characteristics of the diagnosis in a way that fits the plot, rather than coerces it like the previous two examples. In all three, we can see medical 'knowledges' shaping cinema and the stories told.

Finally, in this archetype and its crossings with the Criminal or the criminal aspects of the character's life (like in *20 centímetros*) we can see at work a discourse of redemption of the character through their 'condition'. When their medical situation does not completely

exculpate them (like in *El transexual*), it is used as a means for providing the characters with a happy ending (*Cambio de sexo, 20 centímetros*).

The last archetype, the Empowered, is undoubtedly the most heterogeneous of the three for its many levels and styles, comprising mainstream, 'el destape', underground and many genres within. Many of them have multiple transgender characters, something that seems to help their empowerment by bringing dissenting voices to the table. The presence of a variety of voices and points of view works in favor of the archetype, and construct the character as more unique and personal (and different from, for example, the Patient archetype). But even in the Patient, the fact that Marieta shares conversations with other transgender friends like La Frio, makes possible a critique to the medical institution even within the Patient archetype.

This archetype recurrently uses humor as a weapon in their representation. By laughing at their situation, the characters assume their problems and face them –each one in their ways– instead of positioning themselves as victims of their destiny (like in the Patient) and without the implications of guilt and/or repent (like in the Criminal). Master of this empowering use of humor, Almodovar is a very central agent in this archetype. Despite his movie *La mala educación* being framed by the Criminal archetype, Almodovar's stories bring the Empowered transgender character to the forefront and result in a change of paradigm during the 1990s that no one else seems to be doing if we look at the dates.

Almodovar reigned alone the 1990s with his representations of transgender people, once the trend of exploring provocative topics of the 1980s was over, and manages to offer some of the most humanizing and sympathetic representations overall. Despite some positions being problematic (Agrado's intolerance against drag queens, for example), Almodovar

manages to include his transgender characters within a great a varied cast of powerful and unique women, flaws and all, that have made him become the iconic filmmaker he is today.

The third and last research question was concerned with the work of these films in acceptance and understanding of transgender issues. First and foremost, the tropes of sex work and drug used are confirmed overall, and it is very common and even problematic the amount of times those tropes appear in such a small sample. However, some of their appearances are nuanced or redeemed by the other characters, who are not transgender, and also participate of them. This is particularly clear and polarized in the Criminal archetype, where some of the movies use all the tropes and explicitly link the protagonist to such damaging stereotyping, whereas others work hard to build a sympathetic portray of their characters (like *Flor de Otoño*).

In general, the archetype of the Empowered is the most akin to use political and nuanced representations, and escape from trite tropes of marginalization and perversion. While the Patient avoids them in pro of a well-defined medical discourse and the focus on surgery and transitioning, the Empowered lets some of those tropes work *for* the character and add complexity, background and personal depth. Agrado's beginning as a sex worker in *Todo sobre mi madre* ends up participating of a story of self-improvement whithout demonizing the profession. The common but very casual use of drugs of Tina is framed by *la Movida Madrileña* –when drugs were widely available and common amongst the youth- and serves to locate her in a particular moment in time and space in Spanish history. The erotic cinema production company owned by Victoria in *Inclinacion sexual al desnudo* is an illegal activity at the time, but it is not badly regarded by the people in the village, offers a steady income to the girls and

offers a means of expressing their sexualities and artistic minds. Furthermore, it puts Victoria, the transgender character, in charge of the representation in the movies, and locates her in a position of power.

In summary, despite the instrumentation of the questions into archetypes, and a small sample to generalize the findings, the movies analyzed have proved more nuanced than envisioned at the beginning of the project. What is more, they continuously escape definitions and archetypes and bring new topics to the table. Some of the tropes (sex work and drug use) are in place, but there are many more discourses working at the same time that end up giving more complexity to the characters and make them difficult to analyze as a group. Almodovar is the undisputed filmmaker of the Empowered archetype, which offers the more nuanced representations and the less attachment to degrading tropes. The Criminal uses more often those tropes, but has some movies in it that complicate the archetype by including not only criminality but also rebellion against unfair systems or institutions regulating their lives. Finally, the Patient is much less prevalent than envisioned, and all three of them seem to be more numerous in the early years of democracy and spread through the 40 years under study more or less evenly.

Limitations

This dissertation has many limitations, some of which I have already mentioned in my conclusions like the lack of possible generalizations due to the small sample. Furthermore, some of the research questions and previous assumptions have been denied (or not proved) by the findings.

The sample might lack some titles less famous or distributed that have escaped my gathering data process. Despite consulting the main databases and anthologies on the topic, I discovered movies like *La tercera luna* through the recommendations of experts in the field because they were not present in all the consulted databases. Furthermore, they were only available through official archives and very difficult to find even in that way. The sample also excluded documentary film and movies not released in film –there is at least one instance of a movie released in video, *Poniponchi una chica cuasi perfesta* (dir. Anderson, 2009) that wasn't included. Characters that only momentarily dress as the other gender, without any identification at stake, and only for the plot of the movie are quite numerous and have also been excluded. While those exclusions were a thought-out decision, it leaves out other discourses that would bring a wider variety of ideas to the project.

The questions proposed do not account for gender inequality (the number of transgender men and women) nor for the presence of race, which is a missed opportunity seeing the whiteness of most of the characters, and the othering of secondary characters through their race and poverty. In framing this dissertation otherwise, the questions lack some intersectionality in their inquiry that I want to address in future research projects.

Secondary characters have been excluded of this research for reasons of logistics and

depth of the characters in a qualitative research, but would be perfect to extract more generalizable findings, and also address better the issues of transgender men invisibility and race/class intersections. For this, the dissertation focuses only in well-rounded protagonists and main characters who tend to suffer less from stereotyping. The inclusion of secondary characters may drastically change the results obtained and privilege one of the archetypes over the others, as well as maybe bring forth new archetypes.

The shortcomings of this project will serve of guidance for future research projects stemming from here. Both the slippages and the intentionally left-out ramifications of this project are all future opportunities to build upon this present work, which tries to address the lack of an archive of transgender characters in Spanish film. Moreover, by addressing *this one* shortcoming of the current scholarship in transgender studies of media, and including Spain and its cultural production in the net of academic knowledge in such field, I want to encourage for further interrogation of the topic and better understand this powerful relationship of communication and our communities.

Future Research

This dissertation is full of opportunities for further research, and this aspect has been one of the most educational outputs I have taken from the project. Transgender men's invisibility is clearly a topic for discussion and interrogation, and finding representations in other media or formats could be a way of starting this new research that is yet to be partaken in the Spanish context. Secondary characters as well are a possible line of inquiry. It would be interesting to see if such characters tend to identify transgender people with criminality, drug use or prostitution (some of the tropes frequently attached to transgender people), but it would entail a different research project, ideally one that uses a more quantitative approach to identify chronological and other trends in the representation of such characters. As I mentioned before, despite the interest of such research, it remains a project for future research. However, during my time at University of Illinois I created a quantitative protocol for this project in one of my graduate courses and I want to carry it out if possible.

There could be a further exploration of the transgender/homosexual confusion in early years of democracy as well as during the dictatorship. Both concepts are often conflated and focusing on their overlapping, erasures and breaks could be an interesting project in and of itself. Nevertheless I didn't want this project to look too much into that, since transgender issues in cinema are often erased for gay and lesbian explorations, and I wanted this dissertation to focus on sex and gender rather than sexuality.

Finally, I would like to approach the topic in other media, focusing on them explicitly or by comparison to film. I would like to look at documentary film, short films and TV as other sites

for transgender representation, as well as looking into more underground and unreleased productions that I think would bring another edge to the topic.

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