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Representations of Gay Men in Contemporary Spanish Cinema

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A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Department of Hispanic Studies
Durham University
2013

Representations of Gay Men in Contemporary Spanish Cinema
Abstract

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The aim of this thesis is to offer a diverse perspective on the representation and conceptualisation of male homosexuality in Spanish cinema over the past twenty years. Key questions considered include: how is male homosexuality represented on screen? With what particularities and ideological inflections has Spanish cinema categorised gay male characters? What is included and excluded in such representations? What do these representations say about Spanish society? Also, how are those representations related to the past – and, possibly, the future?

National cinema is invariably shaped by, and in turn shapes, the social, political, and legal contexts in which it is forged, and Spain's cinematic traditions are no exception. The aim of this thesis is to explore the interrelationships between Spanish film conventions and changing legal, discursive, and visual frameworks. The thesis explores the interrelationships between these frameworks and focuses on three thematic areas: Space, Body, and Family.

In *Queer Spaces* I analyse the representation of Madrid's gay district Chueca in Spanish cinema over the last two decades, and how it has evolved from an underground and liminal area of *jouissance* in the 1980s and early 1990s to a commercialised and globalised 'village' in the 2000s. I also examine how films subvert those binary oppositions often associated with space, such as hetero/homo, local/global or private/public. *Gay Male Bodie*s focuses on the medicalisation of the male gay body and the discourse of homosexuality as 'the other:' I discuss how discourses that originated in Spain during Franco's regime can still be seen in some contemporary films, and what this means for the progressive representation of male homosexuality on screen. The final section, *Same-Sex Families*, questions the notion of 'family' and 'family values' in regard to gay characters, and I consider key issues in contemporary GLBT politics, including gay marriage, gay families, gay adoption and the relationships between gay and heterosexual family members.

To Lee, Agueda & Azalea

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a child I was never able to understand how Oscar winners were almost never able to finish their speeches within their allocated 60 seconds. Year after year, I would watch the ceremony and marvel at the amounts of people they had to say thank you to, thinking to myself that, when I won an Academy Award or a Goya Award – and it was always a case of *when* and not *if* – I would be able to be short and concise in my acknowledgments. With the hindsight that age gives you, and if making a film is anything like writing a thesis, I realise that the amount of people without whom you would not have finished your project is immense, and that, perhaps, 60 seconds is, after all, an extremely limited time to name everyone you should.

First and foremost I must thank Dr. Santiago Fouz-Hernández for his unending patience and dedication throughout the past years. Your guidance has been incommensurable, and I feel I have not just gained a supervisor, but also a mentor, a colleague, and a friend. Secondly I must also thank Dr. Lucille Cairns for her comments and suggestions, and for being supportive whenever I needed it. I must extend this gratitude to the whole School of Modern Languages and Cultures at Durham University, particularly the Department of Hispanic Studies. Thank you also to the people involved in me getting the Durham-Harvard Scholarship which allowed me to spend the fall semester in 2011 researching at Harvard University. At Harvard University, I must thank Professor Brad Epps for his beneficial insights and assistance. I am also profoundly grateful to Professor Doris Sommer for her wisdom, friendship and support.

On a personal note, I must thank my parents, Inma and Albert, who would rather believe that the Earth is flat than stop believing in me. You have been by my side every step of the way, with a blind trust in everything I do. To Lee, there are not enough words of gratitude that would do your support justice during these years. I am thankful for your patience and encouragement; you have believed in me whenever I doubted myself, and have motivated me whenever I needed it. I am extremely lucky you said 'hello.'

To my sisters Agueda and Azalea, and their partners Slawek and Tom. To Agueda, you got me into loving films (both a blessing and a curse!), you are an inspiration, and I hope I can one day be there for you as much as you have been there for me in the past years… *zanahodia*. To Azalea, thank you for your support, the '1-minute-go' moments, and countless

laughs – I am grateful for your eagle eyes, *Australopitecus Manolin*, since without them there would be a sea of commas and unclosed brackets all over my words.

There is also a long list of friends that have kept me sane during these years, and the fact that you are all speaking to me after the amount of times I have ignored your calls and refused to leave the comfort of my books and DVDs demonstrates how highly I should cherish your friendship. In alphabetical order, and surely forgetting more than one name, I need to personally thank Amelie, Anna, Carol, Diego and Merce (y Manuela!), Grace, Jo, Martin, Morag (specially!), Rebecca, Sara, and Richard – you have kept my feet firmly placed on Earth, and my hands close to a coffee. Thanks also to all my family, my twenty cousins and their partners, my aunts and uncles, my grandparents – you are all too many to mention one by one but please know I am grateful. Also a massive thank you to my Fife family, your words of encouragement, fantastic meals, and Lego discussions have always made me relax and take a step back from the Thesis-madness. Big thanks must also go to Bert and Ernie, as I truly owe you my sanity – the long lonely hours I have spent writing and researching at home have been made more bearable by your endless calls for food and attention.

Finally, I feel I must thank everyone and anyone who has ever worked in the Spanish film industry since without your work my work would not have been possible – I cannot wait to see what else you will produce in the coming years.

INTRODUCTION

> Two years after the famous Parisian screening organised
> by the Lumière Brothers in December 1895 […] most
> spectators went to the cinema in order to see their
> neighbourhood, their street, and possibly their
> friends and themselves depicted on the screen.
> (Pierre Sorlin, 2005: 26)

The aim of this thesis is to offer a diverse perspective on the representation and conceptualisation of male homosexuality in Spanish cinema of the past twenty years. In doing so, I acknowledge that the term Spain itself can, as Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés (2000 [1997]) summarise, be defined as a state formed by a diverse number of nationalities, identities, and regions (2000: 11). This sense of plurality will become very important throughout my discussions, as when I discuss the representation of gay male sexuality on screen, I am not presenting one unique reading or understanding of what it means to be a gay man in contemporary Spain. I am, however, examining, analysing, interpreting, and evaluating what different cinematic representations of gay male characters say about contemporary Spanish society. Representations are important: Alberto Mira (2004) discusses that it is in the representation of something that we find its definition, as well as what it is defining itself against, such as the stereotype or the insult (2004: 21). He contends that the relationship between representation and experience is 'tan compleja como inevitable' ('as complex as it is inevitable') (2004: 21)[1] and that representations come from or elaborate upon social, cultural and political systems of classification, which can be very revealing.

Questions of key consideration to me in the research and writing of this thesis include the following: what does it mean to be a gay man in 21st Century Spain? How is male homosexuality represented on screen? With what particularities and ideological inflections has Spanish cinema categorised gay male characters? What is included, and unavoidably, excluded in such representations? What do these representations say about Spanish society at any given time? Also, how are those representations related to the past – and, possibly, the future?

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[1] All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

A Personal Perspective

In terms of the rationale underlying my choice of subject, I have been motivated and inspired by the notion of cinema as being reflective of the society in which it is made. The words with which Mira (2008) introduces his excellent volume on gay men and lesbians in cinema encapsulate my view of the nature of cinema in this regard:

> Para muchos espectadores en el pasado y el presente, el cine es una experiencia que excede los límites de las historias que cuenta y genera modelos de conducta, refleja vivencias personales, aporta cierto conocimiento del mundo.
>
> (Mira, 2008: 13).

> For many audiences, past and present, cinema is an experience that exceeds the limits of its narratives and it generates models of conduct, it reflects personal experiences, it provides an insight into our world.

As a young man in Spain in the late 1990s and early 2000s – and one only just beginning to understand my own sexuality – and as an avid cinema goer, I often turned to film as a means of exploring that which I did not yet know about, namely the lives and concerns of contemporary gay men. I searched within those representations for an insight into who I was, trying to understand what being gay meant, and how gay men lived. Cinema for me was not only an escape but a window out into the world. On the other hand, as a nascent filmmaker, I was also interested in the commercial side of cinema – what decisions were made not for artistic reasons, but budgetary constraints? The interplay between these functions highlights the binary of cinema as both business and art form, of entertainment and education, of both escape and a reflection of the social and political climate in which it is produced.

When in February 1997 I saw *Perdona bonita pero Lucas me quería a mí / Excuse me Honey, but Lucas Loved Me* (dir. Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso, 1997) I was both pleased to see characters who, like myself, identified as gay men, but also confused because at the same time I could not relate to them, the stereotypically flamboyant behaviour of Toni (Jordi Mollà) and Dani (Roberto Correcher) was not reflective of how I felt or acted. Months later, in October of the same year, I attended a screening of *Amor de hombre / The Love of a Man* (dir. Yolanda García Serrano and Juan Luis Iborra, 1998), which was introduced by the director, Juan Luis Iborra, himself. In his presentation he mentioned in passing how they had attempted to show the 'reality' of many gay men in 1990s' Madrid, and after watching the

film I thought to myself that although these characters seemed closer to who I was, they still did not represent me. I then realised three things in quick succession: firstly, that I was searching for *the* representation – the one characterisation that would tell me what it means to be a gay man in contemporary Spain; secondly, that I was probably searching for an impossibility because just as there cannot be one type of gay man, so there cannot just be one type of representation; and thirdly, that representations are important.

It is with that in mind that my thesis examines 'gay men' – plural – and not 'the gay man' in Spanish cinema. I understand, as I will discuss later on, that the gay male community is not formed by any one type of gay man – even when, at times, it thinks it does – but, on the contrary, by an array of different 'types' of gay men. My study will shed light on the representations of gay male characters in Spanish cinema, acknowledging that these will be multiple and contradictory, even when at points there are commonalities or trends. I also acknowledge that life is not built on clear binary systems, but I do hold the view that at times people do categorise themselves in this way. The process of 'coming out,' for example, is built on the heterosexual / homosexual binary (which I will explore further at a later point in the introduction) because it defines an element of one's identity in relation to what one is not. The world is full of labels and in our need to understand it, in our search to comprehend everything that is around us, we frequently categorise, compartmentalise, and create labels that can be difficult to remove or move beyond. As I will shortly explore, working within these binaries can indeed cement the categorisation system, but it can also allow us to destabilise it by making us aware of how these labels are socially constructed.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to explore how gay male identities are discursively and ideologically produced and presented in and through cultural contexts, in this case, Spanish cinema; and how these screen representations reveal deeper structures of power and control. I will study the thematic trends within which gay male characters have been depicted on screen, and how these correlate to wider social and cultural developments in Spanish society. Where relevant, I will supplement these by analysing not just the narratives and overall themes, but by analysing also the cinematic techniques used to highlight these representations. My intention within this framework is to avoid generalisations and purely subjective ideas of what constitutes positive or negative representations of homosexuality in contemporary Spanish cinema (see Manning, 1996: 98-108, for a discussion on the futility of analysing purely 'positive' and 'negative' representations of gay culture in the media).

Paul Julian Smith (2007) states,

> la investigación teórica no puede reducirse a los objetivos políticos del momento, por transcendentes que sean; y tampoco el cine puede limitarse a la transmisión de imágenes positivas en las que nos vemos reflejados tal y como quisiéramos ser.
>
> (Paul Julian Smith, 2007: 416).

> academic research cannot be reduced to the political objectives of the moment, however important they might be; nor can cinema be limited to the broadcast of positives images in which we see ourselves portrayed as we would like us to be.

As such, I aim to explore how gay men are represented on screen, and analyse how manifestations of gay male identities in Spanish cinema are contained through hierarchies of legitimacy, structured predominantly through social, cultural, and political discourses on 'socially correct participation' (Sender, 2003: 336). In order to achieve this, I will be using, amongst others, the theoretical approaches of Rubin (1999 [1984]) and Sender (2003), which help illuminate how sexuality is socially, culturally, and politically constructed.

Thinking Homosex: Rubin's 'Charmed Circle'

In her influential article, 'Thinking Sex', Gayle S. Rubin (1999 [1984]) defines a model with which to analyse the intersections between social and sexual stratification. The model suggests the processes whereby some sexual practices are legitimised while others are not. Rubin argues that, in western culture, sex and sexual practices are constrained by several persistent assumptions which are rarely questioned, and which govern society's views and actions (1999: 149). One such example, which she considers to be embedded 'in the folk wisdoms of Western societies' (1999: 149), is sexual essentialism – the view that sex is a natural, unchanging, transhistorical and asocial force that exists outside of, and prior to, social life and institutions.

In recent decades, new historical and theoretical scholarship has challenged essentialism by arguing that sexuality is not biologically ordained but constituted in and shaped by society and history (Rubin, 1999: 149; see also Foucault, 1978; Weeks, 1981; Browne, 2004: 333). As a result of this, and as I will discuss in Chapters 3 and 4 on the representation of gay male bodies, throughout time, sexuality – and homosexuality in particular – has been subjected to extreme forms of control in western societies. From the 20th

Century onwards, sexual arrangements have a distinctive character which sets them apart from pre-existing systems of sexual control. Sexual acts are now entwined with sexual identity – that is, homosexual behaviour, for example, has been always present amongst humans (Rubin, 1999: 155), but today homosexual acts are socially and culturally related to a gay identity, a gay space, and a sense of group commonality (1999: 156). The new sexual system is characterised by the emergence of distinct types of sexual persons, identities, or labels. As Mark Simpson (1996) summarises it: 'once upon a time there were no gays only dreary *homosexuals*' (1996: 2, Simpson's emphasis); a view in which the word 'gay' is linked to identity definition, while 'homosexual' is a medical term.[2]

Rubin (1999) argues that in addition to sexual essentialism, there are five other ideological formations at play in the regulation of sexual acts: 'sex negativity, the fallacy of misplaced scale, the hierarchical valuation of sex acts, the domino theory of sexual peril, and the lack of a concept of benign sexual variation' (1999: 150). These serve to control / define sexual acts and create a general sexual value system, from which non-normative sex (and, subsequently, non-normative identities) are ejected. Rubin calls this 'the charmed circle,' in which certain delegitimised practices are 'subject to even tighter constraints than others, with queer sex requiring specific restrictions' (Rubin in Sender, 2003: 333). According to this system:

> sexuality that is 'good', 'normal', and 'natural' should ideally be heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial. It should be coupled, relational, within the same generation, and occur at home. It should not involve pornography, fetish objects, sex toys of any sort, or roles other than male and female.
>
> Rubin, 1999 [1984]: 152 (Rubin's emphasis)

This type of sexuality would be inside the 'charmed circle,' while any type of sexual behaviour viewed as violating its rules is excluded and defined as:

> 'bad', 'abnormal', or 'unnatural.' Bad sex may be homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, or commercial. It may be masturbatory or take place at orgies, may be casual, may cross generational lines, and may take place in 'public,' or at least in the bushes or the baths. It may involve the use of pornography, fetish objects, sex toys, or unusual roles.

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[2] On the terminology used throughout this thesis, please see next section.

Rubin identifies another aspect of the sexual hierarchy worthy of consideration. She contends that there exists a social and political need to have and maintain a line between what is considered 'good' and 'bad' sex. Most discourses on sex delimit a small portion of human sexual capacity as politically (or legally, as I will explore in Chapter 3) correct. Arguments then arise over where this line is drawn, and which activities, if any, are allowed to cross over into acceptability. Most systems of sexual judgement, be they religious, political, or social (amongst others), attempt to define which particular acts fall on which side of the wall, with normative heterosexuality acknowledged as the most legitimate form of sexual practice (1999: 152) – creating, therefore, a notion of a single ideal (heterosexual) sexuality (1999: 153). As I will explore in Chapters 1 and 2, and as Niall Richardson (2003) argues, heterosexuality condemns, in this oppositional structure, non-normative gay sexuality 'to lurking in a secret underworld' while 'supposedly 'normal' life continue[s] elsewhere' (2003: 214, Richardson's emphasis).

Rubin concedes, however, that 'the sexual system is not a monolithic, omnipotent structure' (1999: 161). There are continued battles over the definitions of sexual behaviour. For example, and as a result of the sexual and social revolutions of recent decades, some behaviours that were below the decency line are inching across it – homosexuality being one of the forms 'moving in the direction of respectability' (1999: 152). As I will examine in Chapters 5 and 6 on same-sex family formations, if homosexual relations are presented as 'vanilla, coupled and monogamous' (Sender, 2003: 333), society is, in Rubin's words, 'beginning to recognize that it includes the full range of human interaction' (1999: 152) and therefore able to cross into the 'charmed circle.' As Todd G. Morrison, Travis A. Ryan, Lisa Fox, Daragh T. McDermott, and Melanie A. Morrison (2008) point out, certain sexual practices are hard to categorise in Rubin's hierarchy because they become ambiguous – such as long-term gay relationships which combine both homosexuality (technically 'bad' according to the charmed circle) and monogamy (which is 'good') (2008: 161).

In fact, as Katherine Sender (2003) comments, the dominant voices of gay and lesbian media (and I would add LGBT politics) argue that the 'fundamental goals of the gay rights movement should be fought within Rubin's charmed circle' (2003: 359) – namely, and as I will fully explore during the discussion on same-sex marriage, the right to have 'married, monogamous, coupled, private, vanilla sex' (2003: 359). On the other hand, as I will study in the analysis of the film *Tú eliges* / *Your Choice* (dir. Antonia San Juan, 2009) in Chapters 5,

promiscuous homosexuality remains in the outer limits, regarded as 'unnatural' or 'abnormal' (Rubin, 1999: 153), and those gay men and lesbians that practice it are seen as 'stepping outside the circle […] [and] are on their own' (Sender, 2003: 359). As Robert Richmond Ellis (2010) discusses in his article on the representation of queer sexuality in contemporary Spanish constitutional democracy, Spanish cinema in the 1980s and 1990s used to represent homosexuality as 'un desafío a las normas sexuales imperantes' ('challenging the prevailing sexual norms') (2010: 67). Nevertheless, with the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2005, Spanish cinema has started to represent homosexuality in the context of marriage and nuclear family (2010: 67), integrating homosexual sexuality within the charmed circle.

According to some forms of mainstream media and some forms of popular prejudice, for example, the marginal sex world is still viewed and represented as bleak and dangerous. At the same time, and as I will analyse in Chapter 1 on the evolution of Chueca, Madrid's gay neighbourhood, the success of gay entrepreneurs in creating a gay-specific space and a gay economy have not only altered the quality of life within the gay area (Rubin, 1999: 162), but also created a more 'palatable' or 'vanilla' form of homosexuality (to use Sender's (2003) terminology) which is – and is seen to be – closer to Rubin's inner charmed circle. Gay spaces, just like inner circle homosexual acts and identities, are more 'accepted' as long as they conform to some (social) norms.

In her study on the relationship between sexual and social stratification, Laura Kipnis (1999) argues that control over sexual acts and sexuality also means control over the body. Control over the body, she summarises, 'has long been considered essential to producing an orderly work force, a docile populace, a passive law-abiding citizenry' (1999: 134). Control over the body then, also creates a 'charmed circle' that regulates how bodies may be represented, and what 'you may do with your body in public *and* in private' (1999: 134, Kipnis' emphasis). I will look at the representation of the gay male body in contemporary Spanish cinema in Chapter 3, where understanding Rubin's model will prove fundamental to the analysis of *Mentiras y Gordas / Party, Sex and Lies* (dir. Alfonso Albacete and David Menkes, 2009). In Chapter 2, I will also look at how cinema regulates the representation of private and public space, and how gay characters queer or de-queer space through, among other things, what they do with their bodies in these spaces.

As I will explore in the coming chapters, this inner / outer charmed circle opposition is more evident in films where the narrative highlights the (homo)sexuality of the characters, placing them in opposition to heterosexual characters. In Chapter 3, for example, I will examine the relationship between two characters in the film *Mentiras y gordas*. Both are

young, male, and best friends, but one of them hides his homosexuality from the other. Rubin's model will help me explore their relationship and, while analysing the representation of their physical bodies, understand the social beliefs placed upon homosexuality on screen. In the same chapter, the use of religion and its moral values in both *El mar / The Sea* (dir. Agustí Villaronga, 2000) and *Pa negre / Black Bread* (dir. Agustí Villaronga, 2010), is discussed using the dichotomy 'inner and outer circle', 'heterosexuality and homosexuality,' that Rubin's model explains. On the other hand, when analysing the concept of family in Chapters 5 and 6, or looking at the evolution of Chueca in Chapter 1, the fixed line between inner and outer circle seems, if not more blurred, at least less strict.

As argued by Morrison, Ryan, Fox, McDermott, and Morrison (2008), there are certain limitations to Rubin's model. The model is grounded in an American understanding of human sexuality, therefore ignoring variations in sexual attitudes among different cultural groups. Moreover, Valerie Amos and Parmar Pratibha (2001) criticise the fact that 'we cannot simply prioritize one aspect of our oppression to the exclusion of the others' (2001: 31), highlighting how Rubin's selection of sexuality as the singular categorical analysis creates an incomplete and ineffective reading of society. Although I do agree that gender, race, class, and sexuality intersect, and I will indeed analyse these intersections if and when pertinent throughout the case studies, it is also important to realise that any piece of research must limit the framework or breadth of study, or the task would otherwise be impossible. In light of Amos and Parmar's considerations, then, and taking into account the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, race and class, I will mainly focus on the study of sexuality, and specifically gay male sexuality, in order to comprehend how the representation of male homosexuality in Spanish cinema has evolved over the last two decades.

Lastly, Rubin's hierarchical system was formulated in the mid-80s, raising the possibility that her categorisation of various practices as normal or abnormal is now outdated (Morrison, Ryan, Fox, McDermott, and Morrison, 2008: 162). Nevertheless, in my view, sexuality remains socially and culturally constructed within a 'good' versus 'bad' dichotomy, which positions (more generally) heterosexuality within the boundaries of the 'good' inner circle values, and homosexuality outside of it. At the same time, and as Toby Manning (1996) discusses, the propagation of 'positive images' is a political tactic 'intended to counter negative culture representation of homosexuality: a politics of "affirmation"' (1996: 99; emphasis on original). Rather than try to re-inscribe gay male representations into an opposing categorisation of positives and negatives, my intention is to challenge the thinking behind 'taxonomies of "deviant" and "normal"' (1996: 100, Manning's emphasis), analysing

not only how cinema re-inscribes sexualities and identities within Rubin's charmed circle, but also how representations of gay identity are able to navigate cultural, social, and political understandings of heterosexuality as the dominant sexuality and identity in society. As Stevi Jackson (2005) highlights, 'heterosexual desires, practices, and relations are socially defined as "normal" and normative' which marginalises other sexualities as abnormal and deviant (2005: 18). But it is the 'coercive power of compulsory heterosexuality' derived from its 'institutionalization' which creates more than merely a sexual relation in the homo / hetero binary (2005: 18; see also Butler, 1990: 24-26, 34-35; Butler, 1991: 22-24; Aliaga and Cortés, 2000 [1997]: 25-26; Storey, 2006: 124-128, Rich, 2007 [1980]: 209-236; or Salgado, 2008: 23-24 for a discussion on compulsory heterosexuality). I will not be only discussing how (homo)sexuality is represented on screen, but also what the institutionalisation of compulsory heterosexuality means to the representation of gay identities and the gay community.

Working Within the Homo / Hetero Binary

Riki Wilchins (2004) states that western thought tends to cast any 'difference' into 'opposing halves that between them exhaust all meaning' (2004: 40), and that any binary looks suspiciously like 'covert extensions of the series "good/bad", in which one term is always the defining one while the other is derivative' (2004: 40). I am aware that using Rubin's charmed circle theory and working within the 'good' / 'bad' or 'in' / 'out' dichotomy could be understood as counterproductive to the normalisation of sexualities that are alternative to the one promoted by heteronormativity, as it might seem to reproduce and reinforce the binary itself.[3] As Butler (1990) concedes, it could well be that by using terms such as gender, man, woman, and sex (and I would add homosexuality and heterosexuality, amongst others, to that list) I might be reinforcing and essentialising the same terms and concepts which I seek to destabilise (1990: 9). Butler (1992) herself suggests that resistances can reinforce hegemonic power relations through establishing the very same thing we seek to resist (Butler in Browne, 2004: 334). Given that my film analyses discuss, at points, the representation of sexuality in Spanish cinema in comparison to that of heterosexuality (or how gay male representations differ, or break from, the heteronorm), some might argue that I am agreeing with the culturally and socially established definitions of opposing sexualities and identities. Diana Fuss (1991) for example, calls into question the 'stability and ineradicability of the

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[3] For a discussion of the binary categorisation of homosexuality / heterosexuality and its criticism, see Roseneil (2002) or McPhail (2004).

hetero/homosexual hierarchy, suggesting that new (and old) sexual possibilities are no longer thinkable in terms of a simple inside/outside dialectic' (1991: 1); while Eve Kosofky Sedgwick (2008 [1990]) famously argues in her article *The Beast in the Closet*, how the binary hetero / homosexual can, at times, be considered simplistic (2008: 182-212).

On this front, I borrow from Peter Tatchell's (1996) discussion on the definitions, and transient nature of, sexuality to answer those who might view my research as reinforcing the heterosexual / homosexual binary. Tatchell argues that the only reason this sexual divide exists, 'with competing identities and behaviours,' is that historically and socially, one form of sexuality has been deemed 'more valid than the other' (1996: 44; see also Foucault, 1987; Seidman, 1995: 116-117). Society, he continues, has 'determined that "the homosexual" must be labelled and pilloried as someone separate from "the heterosexual"' in order to be able to control and contain same-sex desire, which it deems 'unnatural, perverted, immoral, sick, abnormal and inferior' (Tatchell, 1996: 44; I will study in greater detail the historical and social Spanish frameworks for the containment of homosexuality in Chapter 3).

Tatchell agrees that the 'gay/straight schism' does help sustain queer oppression (1996: 44), but without first securing the social validation of same-sex love, 'it is impossible to create a society where the difference between straight and gay no longer matter' (1996: 45). That is, when sexual orientation is still the basis for the denial of rights, it is no surprise that the hetero / homosexual divide cannot be bridged. Moreover, until society is able to end 'favouritism towards straightness and its chastisement of gayness', gay identity has a historical value as a defence against compulsory heterosexuality. On the other hand, 'once straight privilege and homophobia disappears, the need to assert a distinctive gayness will decline' (1996: 52). Until then, analysing homosexuality through the sexual binary lens will help us to understand the existing values and discourses within the binary itself: I believe that, to be able to eradicate the binary system of sexuality, I must work within this framework, in order to foreground its inequalities – fracturing binaries is not sufficient for escaping the deep structures surrounding sexuality. Just as Judith Butler (1991) argues, identity categories tend to be 'instruments of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory connotation of that very oppression' (1991: 13-14); that is, to deconstruct identity categories, one perhaps must work from within these categories.

Besides, as Paul Johnson (2004) states, even when scholars argue that sexuality is experienced as fluid and malleable, sexual identities and intimate relationships are founded through and reiterate 'highly rigid and defined borders' (2004: 183). No matter how theorists might understand sexuality to be, cultural texts tend to reinforce the defined hetero /

homosexual binary.[4] Even when, as Butler (1990) discusses, sexuality and gender are socially constructed, I do not believe they are not felt as true or real – socially and culturally, sexuality is very real. However, and as Corey W. Johnson (2002) points out, critically scrutinising 'how and why gender and sexuality ideologies are shaped to form complex structures of heteronormativity that ensure their continued dominance is a necessary step towards emancipation of lesbian and gay men' (2002: 37).

Sasha Roseneil (2002) argues that queer theory, and more specifically gay and lesbian studies, have largely been concerned with analysing the cultural texts and processes through which the homo / heterosexual binary is produced and reproduced – with how 'heterosexuality is continuously re-naturalized and re-prioritized, and how heteronormativity operates as a mode of regulation of identities and cultural and social possibilities' (2002: 30). Jo Eadie (1996), when discussing bisexuality, adds that the heterosexual imagination brings forth the figure of the homosexual in order to reject it (to deny its rights), while the lesbian and gay imagination must bring it forward so it can assimilate it (1996: 70).

To summarise, I am not endorsing nor condemning one sexual orientation relative to another one, but offering a framework from which to critique underlying ideologies that surround dominant heterosexual beliefs, attitudes, and values. Discussing homosexuality, from a non-heterosexual perspective, attempts to challenge heterosexist assumptions, while at the same time speaks of the need and the right to visibility and equality. Throughout my study of contemporary Spanish cinema I intend to examine how gay characters navigate compulsory heterosexuality and the heteronormative discourse within the films' narratives. Since homo and heterosexual identities are discursively and ideologically produced in and through cultural contexts and texts, analysing how homosexuality is currently represented in Spanish cinema will, furthermore, tell us how homosexuality is also currently lived / viewed in Spain. As Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés (2000 [1997]) state, 'el acceso de la ciudadanía a realidades, vivencias, conceptos e iconografías sobre el planeta gay pasa sobre todo por el tubo catódico y por la gran pantalla' ('society's access to realities, experiences, concepts and iconographies of the 'gay planet' is through the cathode tube [i.e. television] and the big screen') (2000: III). If heterosexuality is continuously being naturalised, deconstructing the representation of homosexuality in contemporary Spanish cinema will help understand how non-heterosexual identities are currently formed and viewed, and how they try to de-naturalise and de-prioritise heterosexuality.

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[4] Arguably, and as I will demonstrate through the analysis of, for example, *El consul de Sodoma* in Chapter 3, there is currently scope for the representation of a not so rigid sexuality.

Discussing Terminology and 'Identity'

Since heterosexuality is, as argued, conceived to be the norm, it goes 'unmarked and unnoticed' (Boswell, 1997: 124). On the other hand, John Boswell (1997) discusses that homosexuality is understood as a 'primary and permanent category, a constant and defining characteristic which implies a great deal beyond occasional sexual behaviour' (1997: 125), defining all other aspects of an individual's personality and lifestyle. I am aware, however, that assuming a commonality to any identity (that is, to discuss 'homosexuality,' 'homosexual identity,' or the 'gay community' as a whole) can assume a unity that does not exist in reality (see Butler, 1990: 13-16). Just as it can be argued that heterosexuality at points reduces homosexuality into a stereotype and the identity of 'the other' (that which heterosexuality is not), it can also be argued that heterosexuality can also be reduced similarly to a single narrow stereotype. When discussing homosexuality, gay male characters, gay male representations, or the gay and lesbian community at large, it is not the intention of this thesis to suggest one homogeneous group without internal differences. As Elise Jay (1997) argues, there is a 'strong sense of difference 'within' the gay male community' to begin with (1997: 166, Jay's emphasis); a 'sense of difference' which I will discuss in Chapter 1. However, it is arguably impossible to discuss all the intrinsic differences within the gay community, and for that matter, any identity-forming group. When I discuss identity, and in particular gay identity, I do in light of Aliaga and Cortés' (2000 [1997]) description that identity is not 'una sustancia inquebrantable y fijada de antemano' ('an unbreakable and pre-fixed substance') but a,

> fluir de elementos de distinta significación, a un proceso a través del cual los individuos van moldeando su personalidad, sus afinidades, sus preferencias, su concepción de la existencia en oposición a determinados principios y en relación a cierta idea de pertenencia a unos valores comunitarios.
>
> (Aliaga and Cortés, 2000: 11)

> flux of elements with different meanings, a process through which an individual shapes his/her personality, affinities, preferences, his/her conception of his/her existence in opposition to certain principles and in relation to some idea of belonging to certain community values.

In discussing the representation of gay male characters in Spanish cinema, my work considers how a number of diverse representations exist within this category of sexual identification (as opposed to how one view of homosexuality is presented on screen). At no point am I denying the existence of different identities within the gay community – as Gordon Brent Ingram (1997a) points out, the gay community is a 'community of individuals who possess only vaguely similar desires, practices, and sensibilities' but who also 'demonstrate a great disparity in their vulnerability to economic and cultural inequities' (1997a: 36). While 'gay' is generally not the only identity-defining characteristic of the film characters I will be discussing, this is sometimes the case, as we will see in my Chapter 4 discussion of some of the roles played by Spanish actor Jordi Mollà. My aim, then, is to study these roles through their homosexuality, in order to understand the rest of meanings and identities attached to these characters, and to the films in general.

Additionally, I want to echo Judith Still's (2003) analysis of what she calls 'individuals', which I would expand to include the analysis of gay identities and characters. In her introduction to the *Men's Bodies* special of the journal *Paragraph*, Still states that 'any represented individual (or group of individuals) is a subject crisscrossed by different, sometimes contradictory, texts' (2003: 9). I understand, therefore, that any discussion I offer on the representation of gay male characters in contemporary Spanish cinema is not an all-encompassing, definitive study but that this discussion can, and should be, contrasted, compared, contradicted, cross-referenced, agreed on, etcetera, with other personal and academic analyses of the same films or others.

In order to proceed with the study, it is important to define the terminology I will be using throughout the thesis. Michel Foucault (1987) explains that before the medicalisation of sexuality (which I will discuss in more depth in Chapter 3, during my analysis of the medicalisation of the gay body in Spanish cinema), there only existed sexual acts. It was only as a result of naming sexuality that 'homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or naturality be acknowledged,' often using the same categories and vocabulary 'by which it was medically disqualified' (1987: 101). Although Butler (1990) attempts the 'impractical' and 'less appealing' (Manning, 1996: 109) strategy of the dissolution of identity itself, and even when sexuality is a historical invention, Jeffrey Weeks (1991) warns that 'we are ensnared in its circle of meaning. We cannot escape [sexuality] by act of will' (1991: 166). Butler (1995 [1992]), channelling Foucault's studies, does argue that sex and sexuality are not only a biological function and anatomical characteristics, but also are capable of characterising and constituting an identity (1995: 9). Nevertheless, as Patrick

Paul Garlinger (2004) discusses, the term 'homosexuality,' while seeming to provide a coherent category of sexual orientation (and sexual identity), it is in fact riddled with 'internal contradictions' (not only due to the homogenisation of the term) but also due to its relationship between 'erotic desire, sexual acts, and personal identity' (2004: 44).

My research has a male preoccupation which, similar to James R. Keller's (2002) study on queer film and television, is not intended to 'slight lesbians' (2002: 4) or suggest that lesbian representations in Spanish cinema are unimportant or unworthy of inclusion. Although the term 'gay' can include lesbians as well (Aliaga and Cortés, 2000: 12) I do not use the word in this manner: for the purpose of this thesis, I use the terms 'gay,' and 'gay man' indistictively. While I acknowledge the negative historical connotations of the term 'homosexual,' unlike David Lugowsky (2009: 99) or Juan González (2005: 30) I do not reject it due to perceiving it as too 'medical-sounding.' Like Kerman Calvo (2006: 23) I use the term 'homosexual' since I believe that the word has won a neutrality nowadays which was lacking in the past (I will discuss further the medicalisation of the word 'homosexual' in Chapter 3; see also Donovan (1992) and Green (2002), for a discussion of the definitions, and social and cultural usage of the terms 'gay,' 'homosexual,' and 'lesbian'). When I use the term 'same-sex' I mainly refer to gay and lesbian, unless otherwise stated. Finally, I reject Ruthann Robson's (2001) preference of 'sexual minorities' due to the reinforcement of the minority status of homosexuality, although I recognise her political justification of using this term as a means to emphasise the resistance to a 'world of heterosexuality and gender conformity' (2001: 916).

With regard to the term 'queer' I acknowledge that this is, as Jean-Ulrick Désert (1997) describes it, 'an antiquated pejorative for homosexual, [which] has in recent time been appropriated by lesbian and gay activists to subvert its negative denotation' (1997: 18). Resulting from this subversion of the term's original negative denotation, I follow Alexander Doty's loose definition of 'queer' and 'queerness' as an attribute that is related to 'any expression that can be marked as contra-, non-, or anti-straight' (1993: xv); or, as James R. Keller (2002) similarly defines it, queer as meaning 'difference, dissension, and protest' (2002: 5). I also subscribe to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1993) definition of queer as 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning' (1993: 8). As María Yazmina Moreno-Florido (2009) reinforces, the political (and I would argue not only political, but also social, cultural, and academic) power of the term 'queer' lies in its 'elasticidad y en su resistencia a la definición' ('elasticity and its resistance to be defined'). At the same time, I recognise, as Jaap Kooijman (2005: 74) does,

Teresa de Lauretis' argument that queer identities (and non-heterosexual sexualities) act as agencies of social process whose 'mode of functioning is both interactive and yet resistant, both participatory and yet distinct, claiming at once equality and difference' (Lauretis in Kooijman, 2005: 74).[5]

Finally, I reject the Spanish usage of 'maricón' (loosely translated as either 'fag' or 'queer,' depending on the situation and who uses it) even though it has been appropriated by some members of the Spanish gay and lesbian community just as 'queer' has been assimilated in the Anglo-Saxon world / context (see Aliaga and Cortés, 2000: 45-46; or González, 2005: 19-31). I reject its usage because I believe its links to homophobia are still nowadays too close, although I do acknowledge that some gay men do use the term humourisly to refer to each other. While I understand the possible contradiction of accepting 'queer' but not 'maricón,' I concur with the assertion by Aliaga and Cortés (2000 [1997]) that

> por extensión, en la España actual este término (a veces sinónimo de *cabrón*) […] equivale siempre (aún a veces, según algunos homosexuales) a algo o, a una situación negativa.
> (Aliaga and Cortés, 2000: 46; itallics in original)

> by extension, in contemporary Spain this term (sometimes synonymous with *bastard*) […] always equates to (or sometimes, according to certain homosexuals) something negative, or a situation which is negative.

On Contemporary Spanish Cinema

José Enrique Monterde (1993) argues that in Spanish cinema, the narrative space is organised as a 'microcosmos representativo de lo social' ('representative microcosm of society') (1993: 25). As I have noted, cinema is invariably shaped by, and in turn shapes, the social, political, and legal contexts in which films are forged, and Spain's cinematic tradition is no exception. As Manuel Trenzado Romero (1997) asserts, cinema is not just a reflection of society, but it can articulate different, and at times contradictory, discourses (1997: 96). This is how I will approach the analysis of contemporary Spanish cinema: while acknowledging that cinema is a construct and not a faithful mirror to reality, I will discuss Spanish films through

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[5] I would like to highlight that, as Aliaga and Cortés (2000 [1997]) mention, the term 'queer' is not used socially in Spain and there is a lack of similar word to signify 'ese cúmulo de pretendidas agresiones' ('that cumulous of feigned aggressions') that the word embraces (2000: 47). Nevertheless, the word 'queer' has been generally accepted amongst Spanish academics and it is used in Spanish theory.

their ability to speak of the here and now of contemporary Spanish reality both in terms of replicating the physical and social conditions as well as their ability to illuminate aspect of Spanish society and human relations within that context.

<div align="right">(Paul Begin, 2011: 128)</div>

With regard to non-heterosexual images in cinema, and specifically Spanish cinema, I would agree with Eduardo Nabal's (2005) statement that 'queer cinema' as a film movement does not exist (2005: 229), while arguing, as he does, the contested notion of 'film movements' to begin with, which tend to be named after the end of the movement per se and rarely during its existence. There exists a number of films that can be included under the 'queer cinema' or 'new queer cinema' banner – more specifically in the United States, for example – but less as a 'movement' than as a commercial genre; that is, as a by-product of the proliferation of the 'pink market' or 'gay dollar' (a phenomenon I will explore in more detail in Chapter 1, in my analysis of the evolution of Madrid's gay neighbourhood of Chueca). While the quantity of Spanish films dealing with representations of gay male sexualities has increased in recent decades (see Perriam and Fouz-Hernández, 2007: 61-62), I would argue that it is unwise to affirm the existence of a mainstream queer Spanish cinema. There are, however, a significant number of mainstream films that do offer gay and lesbian narratives, not from the margins, but within the traditions of Spanish national cinema – it is these films that I will be studying.

Although my understanding of LGBT-themed films may, at first, seem at odds with Perriam's (2013:1-8) claim that there currently exists a queer cinema produced and consumed in Spain, this is certainly not the case. Perriam's study contemplates not only mainstream cinema, – as I do – but also the production of short films, as well as the consumption of short films, feature films, documentaries, film festivals. The mainstream films that I consider cannot, by themselves, be considered as defining Spanish queer cinema, but they do form part of a greater definition of queer cinema in Spain. The films I will be discussing 'make a difference and they form a distinctive cultural space – an imaginary – of inclusion' (2013: 5), but they are not politically 'queer.' I would agree with Perriam in that they are 'Spanish forms of queer on film' (2013: 11). They form part of a bigger 'umbrella' of production and consumption of cinematic culture that does in fact form Spanish queer cinema, even though they are not, in and by themselves, queer films; as Perriam discusses, there exists 'an overall or cumulative effect of queer' (2013: 15).

As argued in the first pages of my thesis, my interest lies in a socio-cultural study of the representation of gay men in contemporary Spanish cinema. The films studied in this thesis are those considered as commercial films, or mainstream films, and not those made independently or on the margins (see Perriam (2013) or Berzosa (2012)). This personal interest in mainstream films as the main corpus of the thesis comes from a willingness to understand what social, cultural, and / or political messages appear in those films that have premiered in Spanish cinema screens and which are easily available to buy or rent on DVD. As these films reach a wider audience – compared to those independent films, short films, or documentaries that are available, primarily, on the film festival circuit – my thesis will identify and analyse the main trends in the representation of gay men in films which reach a wider audience. This is because I wish to critically analyse the ways in which mainstream cinema presents male homosexuality in film, and my thesis will demonstrate how these representations not only reflect but are also shaped by – and in turn, help shape – broader social, cultural, legal, and political contexts in contemporary Spain.

My research on the representation of the gay male character in contemporary Spanish cinema builds on recent studies offered by a number of academics such as, amongst many others (and in no particular order), Paul Julian Smith (1992, 1998, and 2007), Juan Carlos Alfeo Álvarez (2000, 2007), Santiago Fouz-Hernández (2004b, 2007, 2008, 2010, and 2011), Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés, (2000 [1997]), Chris Perriam (2002, 2004, and 2013), Chris Perriam and Santiago Fouz-Hernández (2000 and 2007), Alberto Mira (2000 and 2004), Alejandro Melero Salvador (2004, 2010a and 2010b), Jacky Collins and Chris Perriam (2000), Santiago Fouz-Hernández, and Alfredo Martínez-Expósito (2007), and Robert Richmond Ellis (2010). My study expands on these studies of gay and lesbian film, however, by offering an interdisciplinarian methodology, thus bringing a sociological, geographical, and cultural perspective into film studies, and Spanish film studies in particular. This approach allows me to broaden my discussion and analysis of the films not only from that of film theory; while at the same time highlight and scrutinise the current social, cultural, political, and legal trends in regards to gay men in contemporary Spain.

Finally my research focuses on films that have been made in Spain between the mid-1990s and the present day for three reasons. Firstly, Spain has, during this period, undergone major historical, legal, political, and social changes in relation to gay-related issues; likewise the Spanish gay and lesbian community (see, for example, Llamas and Vidarte 1999; Petit 2003 and 2004; Aliaga and Cortés 2000 [1997]; Calvo 2003, 2006, 2007, and 2010, amongst others). This change has, of course, influenced and been reflected in Spanish cinema, making

this time period a richer source of material for analysis, with the political and cultural changes being discussed throughout my thesis. This timeframe does not preclude reference to previous stages of Spanish history. Nor does it suggest a study of contemporary Spain disconnected from the past. As Samuel Amago (2011) points out, it is nearly impossible to discuss contemporary Spanish culture 'without referring to the country's authoritarian history and its "miraculous" transition to democracy' (2011: 100; Amago's emphasis). It does mean, however, that my frameworks of analysis, and the case studies selected, come from the mid-1990s and 2000s. Secondly, a mid-1990s starting point coincides with the aforementioned increase or 'small explosion' of gay-themed films that occurred in Spain in the 1990s (Perriam and Fouz-Hernández, 2007: 61). Thirdly, there is a relative shortage of studies on gay male representations in contemporary Spanish cinema (mid-1990s onwards). In comparison, there are many more studies that focus on issues of homosexuality on screen in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s (see Melero Salvador 2004, 2010a, and 2010b; Smith, 1992, 1994 and 1998; Pérez-Sánchez, 2007; Beyer, 2004; Arroyo, 1992; Mira, 2000 and 2004; Silverthorne, 2005; Triana Toribio, 2000; Trybus, 2008; Berzosa Camacho, 2012). The number of studies which concentrate in the years after the mid-1990s are considerably lower (Fouz-Hernández, 2008, 2010, and 2011; Fouz-Hernández and Perriam, 2000; Richmond Ellis, 2010; Smith, 2007; Perriam, 2004 and 2013), and this thesis helps to fill this relative void.

Anglo and Spanish Theories

I will draw from both Spanish and Anglophone theorists in an attempt to bridge both theoretical backgrounds and to continue Emilie Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith (1995) as well as Gema Pérez-Sánchez's (2007) (amongst others) challenging of Anglo-American academia, in order to learn from and engage with other world theories (Spanish ones in this case) on queer sexualities, identities and cultures.

I will be using and seeking out national (Spanish) theorists to demonstrate that, despite the existence of a general identification of the idea of 'theory and or/conceptual writing' as coming from 'UK and US producers,' and of Europe as only figuring as 'object'; 'as a case study application, existing in a subsidiary relation to and as a commentary on theoretical knowledge produced elsewhere' (Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou, 2003: 9-10),

both national and international writings can, and must, work together in dialogue with each other.[6]

The Chapters Ahead

Mark Casey, Janice McLaughlin and Diane Richardson (2004) state that as a community, gay men and lesbians have moved from a 'rights discourse' primarily focused on sexual activity – what they call, 'the expression of a "sexual orientation" that was assumed to be located in the homosexual body / mind' – to one that is progressively relational, 'centred upon the (public) good same-sex couple rather than the private "sexual actor"' (2004: 388). This means that, in a sense, gay and lesbian communities are no longer about maintaining boundaries of what is considered private (what one does with one's own body), but demonstrating sexuality through a 'publicly recognised "normative" couple relationship' (2004: 388).

The chapters below are divided into three sections: Space, The Body, and Families. These sections tap into Casey, McLaughlin, and Richardson's (2004) argument, demonstrating not only how the gay and lesbian community has moved towards the recognition of homosexuality based on relationship and familial bonds (instead of what one does with one's body), but also how this evolution has been represented in contemporary Spanish cinema. Although the sections, and the chapters within each section, are not based on a chronological order, their themes do attest to these changes within the gay male community in Spain. The order of the sections reflects to a degree a historical and sociological structure. Queer space offers an introduction to a number of important historical changes that occurred after the end of the dictatorship. The section on gay male bodies studies some of the stereotypes and discourses ingrained both socially and culturally due, in part, to Spain's past. The final section analyses the legal, political, and social changes that have arisen in Spain in the last ten years with regard to the family institution and how society perceives same-sex relations.

In the first section on queer space, I analyse how after Franco's death in 1975 there is a slow evolution in the creation of a Spanish gay and lesbian community and a specific geographical settlement of this community. As Pat Califia (1997) mentions, gay men 'comprise the only sexual minority that has established its own enclave in the modern city' (1997: 181). Although his comment arguably reduces the gay and lesbian community in general to that of gay men (perhaps hinting that lesbian or bisexuals have been less successful

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[6] See Minca (2000), García Ramón (2003), Garcia Ramon, Simonsen and Vaiou (2006), or Desbiens and Ruddick (2006) for further discussions on this subject.

or less interested in creating 'territories'), he does highlight the fact that the formation of a queer space stems from a sexual identifier – sexuality as the unique communal feature. Throughout the first section I will also study historical, geographical, and financial factors that helped develop a gay space in Spain, specifically, the Chueca neighbourhood in Madrid. I will also discuss the distinction between private sexuality and public image, and how in the realm of sexuality, what constitutes private and what public means are often blurred.

Gay male bodies are the main subject in the second section. While in the first section I draw from Spain's contemporary history to discuss the representation of gay spaces in Spanish cinema, in the second section I will look briefly at the treatment of homosexuality during the Francoist period, and how some stereotypes and negative discourses have prevailed in the representation of gay male characters in contemporary cinema. Studying the body heightens the aforementioned sexual aspect of the gay male community. Representational discourses have either over-sexualised or asexualised gay male characters in cinema, sometimes to the point of marking their homosexuality as the only defining aspect of their identity. Through analysing the representation of the gay male body, I argue that cinema seems at times unable to distinguish the gay male character from the (homo)sexual act, what Casey, McLaughlin, and Richardson (2004) call the 'private "sexual actor"' (2004: 388). In this section I will examine how a number of narrative and visual 'regulations' are still being applied in contemporary Spanish cinema, more often than not to the detriment of the representation of gay male characters in the films. Particularly, I will concentrate on the discourse of homosexuality as a disease, and Richard Dyer's (1993) 'sad young man' stereotype that is mostly used in fiction, but can also be encountered 'in probably all representational media' (1993: 74).

Finally, in the third section, I will study the representation of same-sex families. Focusing, primarily, on same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting, I will analyse the evolving nature of the family institution and how the legal, social, and political changes in the last ten years have been represented on screen. In June 2005, the Spanish Parliament approved a law to change the Spanish Civil Code, in order to legalise same-sex marriages. After four decades of Franco's repressive dictatorial regime during which homosexuality was persecuted, banned and punished with prison sentences and even, in extreme cases, the death penalty, Spain became one of the first countries in which same-sex marriage was made legal. In the section on same-sex families I argue that the films not only mirror, but also help formulate in cinematic terms, Spain's gradual transition from traditional to more modern understandings of the concept of family. Looking at issues of heteronormativity, sexuality,

representation and family relations, I will argue that the films analysed in this last section – and, to certain a extent, the other two sections also – can be understood as vehicles for the 'normalisation'[7] of gay (and lesbian) relationships and families in Spanish cinema and, more importantly, in modern Spanish society.

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[7] I acknowledge the divisive opinions regarding the 'normalisation' of gay and lesbian relationships, and I will explore this issue further throughout the thesis, and particularly in Chapter 5.

PART I

QUEER SPACES

Todo territorio se constituye en hetero salvo
el gueto gay y algunos espacios de libertad
provisional y, a veces, semivigilada
(Aliaga and Cortés, 2000: IV)[8]

Cinema has, since its inception, been
constantly fascinated with the representation
of the distinctive spaces, lifestyles, and human
conditions of the city
(Mark Shiel, 2001: 1)

'Space' is generally defined as a delineated or 'loosely bounded' area which is occupied cognitively, physically, or both (Désert, 1997: 20). Theoretical debates concerning the nature or essence of space date back to antiquity, but the study of space in regards to sexuality were made prominent in the 1970s and 1980s by research projects that examined gay and lesbian urban territories (Podmore, 2006: 595; Oswin, 2008: 90). The appearance of a queer public space in western societies has been an incremental, rather than sudden, occurrence (Grube, 1997: 128), and the enquiry into gay male territories illustrates both the historical and geographical specificity of this 'enclave model of community and territory for gay men' (Podmore, 2006: 597; see also, Castells, 1983; Chauncey, 1994; or Knopp, 1998). Although the study of space might not be, as Gordon Brent Ingram (1997a) states 'the final frontier of queer theory' (1997a: 40), it is nevertheless taking an increasing key role in recognising inequalities within sexual communities (and identities), as well as developing new strategies to counter homophobia (1997a: 40).

As the abovementioned quote by Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés (2000 [1997]) states, space is socially construed as heterosexual. Natalie Oswin (2008) discusses that just as individual persons 'do not have pre-existing sexual identities, neither do spaces' (2008: 90). In saying that, although space is not 'naturally authentically "straight"' it nevertheless is 'actively produced and (hetero)sexualised' (Binnie, 1997: 223) – as David

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[8] 'All territory is established as heterosexual apart from the gay ghetto and some spaces of momentary freedom which are, sometimes, under some sort of surveillance'

Bell, Jon Binnie, Julia Cream, and Gill Valentine (1994) argue, space is produced, but implicitly heterosexual spaces remain the original, the 'real space which gay space / queer space copies or subverts' (1994: 32). Heterosexual space has an innate quality that makes it feel as if it was there first, as if it was 'not produced, not artificial, but simply there' (1994: 32). Oswin (2008) argues that critical geographers depict queer spaces as spaces of lesbian and gay men or spaces of 'queer existing' in opposition to 'and as transgressions of' heterosexual space (2008: 89). Queer spaces enable the visibility of non-normative sexualities, resisting the hegemonic heterosexuality that is 'the source of […] marginality and exclusion' (2008: 90). Heterosexuality, Lawrence Knopp (1995) argues, is more often than not promoted as the 'glue' that holds the spatial discourses together (1995: 149), appearing as the dominant form of sexuality in modern western society. Although there are those theorists that argue that space is not inherently heterosexual – Jean-Ulrick Désert (1997), for example, believes that there is a 'mistaken notion' that most places are straight (1997: 20) –, Bell, Binnie, Cream, and Valentine (1994) argue that, if there is the existing notion that space needs to be queered (or 'made gay or lesbian'), then implicitly it means that it then must be heterosexual to begin with (1994: 32). Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (1997d) agree, stating that just as queer identities are constructed 'within the context of heteronormativity, queer places have been forged within spaces not originally intended for gay use' (1997d: 295). Heterosexual space, then – and similar to the heterosexual / homosexual binary discussed in the introduction –, becomes the 'underlying frame' with which to work with: it is the space that gay men, lesbians, and queers must subvert (Bell, Binnie, Cream, and Valentine, 1994: 32).

Defining Space

The notion of space can be understood in a number of different ways. Firstly, it refers to geographical concrete spaces (such as restaurants, bars, clubs, individual living spaces, and so on). Secondly, it also refers to what Clare Hemmings (1997) calls 'spaces of articulation', that is, 'the scope and range of meanings that concrete spaces have outside their specific geographical confines' (1997: 153). In a way, as I will point out in my analysis of Chueca in Chapter 1, a queer space might be a non-sexed space to begin with, that has been actively queered by (part of) society, and this confined queer space (a bar, a restaurant) can then form a bigger picture when in interaction with other confined queer spaces, and then create a larger lesbian and gay male culture. It is similar to the distinction William L. Leap (1999: 6-7) makes between 'place' and 'space'. A 'place' is a naturally formed or constructed location

but in which meaning-potential has not yet developed. It is the equivalent to Michel de Certeau's (1988) place – passive and stable. A 'space', on the other hand, emerges when practices are imposed on a 'place', when 'forms of human activity impose meanings on a given location' (Leap, 1999: 7). As such, bars, clubs, shops, restaurants, and so on, can be 'places', and once in these places, human interaction creates what Leap defines as 'spaces' or Hemmings as 'spaces of articulation.' Brent Ingram, Bouthillette, and Retter (1997c) make this distinction simpler. They call a 'queer place' a 'queer site,' understanding the latter as a 'point in physical space where there is a [queer] contact and exchange involving at least two people and where there is positive or impartial relationship to homoeroticism' (1997c: 447), while an expanding set of queer sites, is what constructs 'queer space'.

Finally, I will also be looking at space in reference as a type of 'performative space,' those temporary spaces where same-sex relations (either social or sexual) occur, and which may have an influence on the formation and meanings of larger queer spaces. These spaces are, mainly, temporal and experimental ones, that is, fleeting moments of same-sex encounters which create a momentarily queer space. These can help build a bigger queer experience, but they do not need to continue existing as queer spaces in the bigger scheme. Interestingly, Brent Ingram, Bouthillette, and Retter (1997c) seem to oversimplify the analysis of queer geographies and do not distinguish this third kind of 'space' as any different from a 'queer site' since they believe that 'sites' can be stable, or exist just for a moment (1997c: 447). Nevertheless, these three senses of space are not discrete, and in most cases, elements of all three will be combined (Hemmings, 1997: 153). Furthermore, they are all equally important in the creation of a delineated queer space.

The Evolution of Chueca and the Public / Private Debate

As Santiago Fouz-Hernández (2005) argues, studies of space in Spanish cinema flourished during the late 1970s / early 1980s, with the decentralisation and political reorganisation of the country intro autonomous regions (2005: 189). These studies focused on the celebration of (as well as search for) the regional identities repressed during the Franco dictatorship (see Fouz-Hernández, 2005: 189-190) – regional difference (as well as social and cultural) being the key spatial factor in their analysis. Studies on the representation of gay male spaces – that is, based on sexual difference, and spaces created from this type of difference –, however, are less common. In the next two chapters I will analyse how space, and more importantly, queer space has been represented in contemporary Spanish cinema. As Robert A. Beauregard (1995) states, the city is the object of discourse and representation, unable to represent itself

or speak for itself (1995: 60). In Chapter 1 I will study the evolution of Madrid's gay and lesbian neighbourhood of Chueca, and how this has been represented on screen, examining how this evolution can be studied through Allan Collins's (2004) theory on the formation of queer spaces, and how this evolution can also be seen in the films based on, or around, this area of Madrid. I will also discuss issues of national identity and the globalisation of gay and lesbian spaces, and how the hetero / homo binary can also be translated into a Spanish / Global binary as well. Starting my analysis by looking at the 1996 film *Más que amor, frenesí / Not Love, Just Frenzy* (dir. Alfonso Albacete, David Menkes, and Miguel Bardem, 1996), I will discuss how queer spaces have evolved from that of a liminal and marginal area of Madrid, to that of the gay-affirming and globalised space represented a mere ten years later in the film *Chuecatown / Boystown* (dir. Juan Flahn, 2007).

In Chapter 2, on the other hand, I will study queer spaces not in a general, city-wide scale, but will concentrate instead in how gay male characters may queer or de-queer private spaces focusing, primarily, on domestic spaces. Although, as Leap (1999) discusses, 'public' and private' are relative terms, defined almost in subjective interpretations, these understandings must be read against broader forms of regulation and control (1999: 9). Claims to privacy can be understood as fictional as they reference 'features which are not 'inherent' in a local terrain, but are constructed, assembled, and imposed' (1999: 11). In my analysis of both *Los novios búlgaros / Bulgarian Lovers* (dir. Eloy de la Iglesia, 2003) and *Cachorro / Bear Club* (dir. Miguel Albaladejo, 2004), I will discuss the topic of privacy in public spaces and the public nature of private spaces. I will also explore at how gay male characters navigate their identity in relation to the spaces they inhabit, and how through coexisting in or sharing different (public and private) spaces familial bonds can be built and strengthen.

CHAPTER 1
Boystown: The Evolution of Madrid's Gay Village[9]

> En Chueca se prueba un modelo de vida,
> pero también se producen herramientas
> para llevarlo a cabo en la vida cotidiana
> (Mira, 2004: 608)[10]

In Manuel Valenzuela and Ana Olivera's (1994) study of Madrid, there is no mention of any gay neighbourhood, 'village,' area, or community existing in the Spanish capital. With regard to the study of queer space in Spain, this highlights two factors: firstly, that the birth and evolution of Chueca as a gay area is a relatively recent development (see Mira, 2004; Llamas and Vidarte, 1999 or Petit, 2004); and secondly, that there is a lack of in-depth studies of this evolution. This is partly due to its very recent nature, but also to the fact that gay geographies as a whole (and not only in Spanish territories) constitute a relatively new area of study (Bouthillette, 1994: 66). According to Ricardo Llamas and Francisco Javier Vidarte (1999: 206-224), the 'homosexualisation' of Chueca's territory began in the mid-80s. In contrast to New York, where gay spaces were suddenly and stridently visible after the riots of June 1969,[11] or Toronto, where the 1981 gay steam bath raids (see Grube, 1997), controversially brought to the collective queer (and wider) conscience the need for a queer public space, Chueca evolved with a considerably lower profile. Indeed, it is not until the late 90s that we can definitively talk about a distinct Madrid neighbourhood that is aware of its own status for

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[9] I use the terms 'gay village' or 'gay neighbourhood' and not 'gay ghetto' since the word 'ghetto' – meaning an enclosed space – evokes a sense of an area from which you cannot escape. Although I see some similitudes between the study of, for example, the 'black ghetto' and my own study of the neighbourhood of Chueca, and the representation of the gay body in Chapter 3 (see for example, Clark (1989 [1965]: 81-110)), overall I reject the term 'ghetto' in its use to refer to the 'gay community' and the 'gay village' (see also Klein (1999: 254-255) for a discussion of the 'ghetto' terminology). Furthermore, Chueca is known as the *barrio* of Chueca, understanding the Spanish *barrio* as community and / or neighbourhood (see Martínez and Dodge (2010: 226).
[10] 'In Chueca one tries a lifestyle, but one also creates tools to take that lifestyle to one's daily life.'
[11] As Betti-Sue Hertz, Ed Eisenberg and Lisa Maya Knauer discuss in their article *Queer Spaces in New York City: Places of Struggle / Places of Strength* (1997) about gay visibility and queer spaces, a homosexual space did not just emerge due to the riots, but it previously existed at underground and private spaces. What the riots did was make those invisible spaces, visible. What I argue here is that, in Spain, there was no clear-cut moment when a queer space was made visible for mainstream society, unlike New York or Toronto. In a way, and as I will demonstrate throughout my analysis, it could be argued that the gay 'village' in Madrid has more in common with how the gay quarters in Manchester (United Kingdom) came into being, were the emergence of a queer space 'has been closely connected to, and implicated in, a wider explosion of youth culture' (Quilley 1997: 275).

the gay community; and even then this progression lacks the sense of transformation that occurred in other cities. A brief socio-political and historical introduction will be helpful in providing a context from where to understand the evolution of Chueca and its representation in the different films that I will be analysing throughout the chapter.

It is undeniable that over the last three decades Spain has made a 'historical leapfrog' (Giorgi, 2002: 58), repositioning itself on the map of modernity; but although there were some radical social and political changes once the dictatorship years were over (changes that transformed a country generally regarded as backward and conservative into a modern democratic nation), gay visibility was not part of these changes. As Alberto Mira (2000) discusses, while the death of Franco in 1975 could be regarded as the obvious starting point for the national creation of both a clear gay identity and a queer space, such developments were largely side-lined by the fact that homosexuality was just one of the many taboos that had to be broken – and, for that matter, one which was fashionable to include or mention in passing but not discuss or assess in depth (2000: 245). Even as this new era proclaimed sexual libertarianism and despite the onset of new changes and ideals, 'homosexuality' itself was not a topic with which the new Spain felt comfortable (2000: 246).

As Mark Allinson (2000: 265) states, in the early 1980s the younger generations in Spain went into a frenzy of spontaneity, playfulness, and erotic curiosity, characterised by an apolitical hedonism, apathy, and an excess of 'sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll', all embedded in what became known as *la movida madrileña*, a time that is better defined as 'anything goes'.[12] It can be argued, therefore, that the need for a queer space after years of Francoist repression was not as important, nor necessary, as a more general public, liberated, youthful space. Homosexuality was just part of the need for sexual freedom, and sexual freedom was just one of the freedoms that Spain started to experience and search for after Franco's death. As such, a filmmaker like Pedro Almodóvar could be wholly integrated into *la movida*'s spirit, with its libertarianist ideology, because 'the diverse menu of libidinal [sexual] options celebrated in his films' (Bergmann and Smith, 1995: 11) fitted well, and did not jar with this wider sense of freedom. By adding homosexuality to the bag of sexual liberations, society (without realising it) could contain and control it.

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[12] It is important to note that such *movida* was not a movement per se, but more of a symbol of the new freedoms achieved, something better described as a state of mind than a real political or social movement. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (1995) describe it as an 'explosion of creative activity, centred around youth culture, which dominated the Madrid cultural scene […], similar in many ways to British punk, it was nevertheless a response not to unemployment but to affluence and the new sexual permissiveness […] of an aggressively apolitical nature' (1995: 423). See Allinson (2001a), Gallero (1991), Triana Toribio (2000), Marí (2009), Fouce (2009) or Song and Nichols (2009) for further reading.

Moreover, because *la movida* was not a well thought and pre-planned movement with clear and delineated objectives, no structures were created where a gay or lesbian identity or community could be articulated (Mira, 2004: 583). Certain repressive structures had expired but there were no new and progressive ones to replace them. Even when Spanish society started to regain its civil rights and public spaces, it did so en mass, without clear gendered or sexual distinctions. A new culture 'based on sexual ambiguity and freedom spread quickly' (Mira, 2000: 246), but this did not mean that homosexuality was a defining characteristic with which society was comfortable. Similarly, society's experimentation with new-found freedoms did not mean that its political and legal spheres followed immediately. Homosexuality was not decriminalised until the end of 1978; associations and political congregations lived in a state of legal limbo until the first years of the 1980s; and it was not until 1995 that the Spanish Penal Code accepted the concept of 'sexual orientation' as one in which members of the public could seek protection by law (Olmeda, 2007: 26; see also Chapter 5 for a discussion of Kerman Calvo's (2006) four-stage evolution of social visibility and gay and lesbian rights in democratic Spain).

As such, any type of (homo)sexual space or defined queer area did not emerge quickly or openly, and a specific date for their development is impossible to establish. For Chueca, an open awareness of its own status as a gay space did not exist for quite some time. Even when the saunas or underground clubs and bars that catered to a homosexual clientele were in existence and starting to be more to be more open about their business, these could not be said to constitute a community or gay neighbourhood. Importantly, however, these were indicative of the potential for such a community to emerge. Jordi Petit (2003: 50) asserts that for Chueca to be defined as both a cumulus of gay pubs and clubs and also as a queered space with services and specialised gay shops, we have to look towards the end of the 90s, after the last of the three main equal rights demonstrations, which used Chueca, now known as Madrid's pink neighbourhood, as the base for 'this and future and historic Pride demonstrations' (2003: 50) (the biggest of these big Pride demonstrations was in late 1998 and is referenced in *Sobreviviré*, which I will analyse in this Chapter).

To reach this level of self-referential queer space, the modern, cosmopolitan, gay area of Chueca's neighbourhood has had to evolve enormously over the past two decades. Petit's (2004) brief summary of this evolution sits perfectly well with Allan Collins' (2004a) economic transformation of gay urban space theory. Petit says:

A lo largo de varios años el asentamiento de locales gays en ese antes deprimido barrio lo sacó de la marginalidad, elevó su nivel de vida, alentó a vecinos y comercios que vieron prosperar su entorno.

(Petit, 2004: 171).

Over the years, the settlement of gay bars in this previously depressed neighbourhood, brought it out from its marginal status, raised living standards, encouraged residents and businesses, who saw their environment thrive.

Allan Collins (2004a) also discusses how, even with differing historical roots, there is a recurrent developmental pattern in the construction of urban gay areas (2004a: 1789). This urban regeneration follows a four-stage chronological model, and Chueca can easily be analysed through it. Indeed, the representation of Chueca in film (or the evolution of the representational space in which gay characters interact in Spanish cinema) can also be seen as following Collins' model, which is perhaps due to the close relationship between Spanish film-makers and the cities in which they set their narratives. The evolution of Madrid (and its gay quarters) is easily traceable throughout Spanish film history, and with the help of Collins' four-stage steps, I aim to analyse this evolution in order to examine the changes that have ocurred in Chueca, and what these changes mean to how Chueca is understood nowadays. To be able to apply this model, however, it is pertinent to first address some of the concerns that might arise in using it to analyse Spanish queer spaces.

1.1.- Allan Collins' Four-Stage Chronological Model

There are two issues that need to be acknowledged when applying Collins' model. The first one is the fact that his approach to urban regeneration is principally based on an economic, rather than theoretical linkage between sexuality and urbanism. His emphasis is more on the economic geography of the area, something he defends by claiming that while there are already numerous social writings on the relationship between urbanity and gay or lesbian gay identity (see, for example, Knopp 1998 or Rothenberg 1995), there is a lack of studies on the economic relation with urban regeneration. Dan Black, Gary Gates, Seth Sanders and Lowell Taylor (2002) agree with Collins' view in this regard and assert that 'available evidence points to the simple economic explanation as a more useful model for predicting' the spatial distribution of gay areas (2002: 55). While Collins' method can help us understand and analyse the queer evolution of Chueca, it is also important to draw from other theorists who include a more gender or sexuality-based approach. As Henning Bech (1998) contends,

economic and political struggles do have an effect on the structuring of urban physical spaces, but the city is 'invariably and ubiquitously, inherently and inevitably, [and] fundamentally', a sexualised space (1998: 215), and therefore it is counterproductive to take a unique economic route when analysing space.

The second concern about Collins' model is that it is based on empirical trends in Soho, London, which means that there is a specifically English focus to it. As Collins himself admits, this provides 'an albeit imperfect means of controlling […] some cross-cultural factors' (2004a: 1789) that may (and would) influence urban gay developments. However, Collins' intention is to identify any commonalities and points of contrast in the general evolution and development of any given gay and lesbian urban space. Moreover, as Brad Ruting (2008: 260-261) states in his use of Collins' model to understand Sydney's inner city gay area, there are broad similarities in the emergence and transformation of gay districts elsewhere (see, for example, Knopp 1998), and the model has a more general applicability than initially thought.

Studies on queer space in other cities or countries posit very similar patterns of evolution to the one Collins establishes. Julie A. Podmore's (2006) consideration of lesbian visibility and queer space in Montreal also identifies four stages of territorial development, starting with what she calls a 'Red-Light Era' and finishing with 'The Queer Era' (2006: 605). Podmore observes how the four stages follow one another, in a constant state of flux, and how they evolve from a state of liminality and underground queer sexual spaces to the 'consolidation of [a] queer territory' that comes to represent 'all queer cultures at the urban scale' (2006: 620). Lionel Cantu (2002) proposes an analogous structure in his analysis of Mexico and the emergence of a gay space in Mexico City. He argues that the city's queer space emerged from an initial development of *zonas de tolerancia* ('tolerance zones' or red light districts) conceived as 'a way to regulate spatially various forms of social deviance, including prostitution and homosexuality' (2002: 144). These *zonas de tolerancia* are similar to the conditions Podmore describes as defining her 'Red Light Era' in Montreal, or the 'Pre-Conditions' stage of Collins' model. Cantu (2009) continues by explaining that:

> the combination of urbanization/industrialization, along with the creation of *zonas de tolerancia*, in all probability provided the social spaces whereby sexual minorities could establish social networks and, at least to some degree, create [a] "community". This spatial segregation resulted in queer zones or ghettoes.
>
> (Cantu, 2009: 145)

What is clear is that while taking into account national, cultural, and historical differences, studies of the creation of western queer areas have enough similarities to enable us to find a common pattern in all of them. As such, Collins' (2004a) model, although based on empirical research on British space (which, as mentioned, he uses as an example of a queer area), is a resourceful and valuable tool to be used when considering the emergence of queer space in western territories – and in this particular case, Spain.

As noted, Collins (2004a) talks of four stages that an urban neighbourhood or area goes through to evolve into a 'gay village'. This process is sequential, occurs over a number of years and develops gradually. This developmental pattern is characterised by 'an urban area in decline progressing through several broad stages of economic enterprise' (2004a: 1789), denoted by:

- *First Stage*: Sexual and legal liminality.
- *Second Stage*: Gay male social and recreational opportunities.
- *Third Stage*: A widening service-sector business base.
- *Fourth Stage*: The assimilation of the area into the fashionable mainstream.

In other words, these stages transform queer space from that of a liminal space to a commercial one, which is similar to Dereka Rushbrook's (2002) study in which he argues that queer spaces are transformed from:

an introverted, closed, private space epitomized by dark, unmarked bars
to a space appropriated from the night and beckoning with neon signs
and full-length windows open to the street.

(Rushbrook, 2002: 193).

Before I examine Collins' model in relation to the representation of Spanish queer space in contemporary cinema, I must also take into account one last point, mentioned briefly in my introduction, regarding the use of Anglo-Saxon writings on sexual and geographical theories / studies. Although I am working within the context of Spain's national geography, I understand this spatial analysis within a broader international theoretical context. Even though there is a general consensus that 'Anglo-American geography [···] sets the guidelines for intellectual debate in many parts of the world' (García Ramón, 2003: 1), I will also be making use of Spanish theorists who have discussed and analysed Chueca's evolution, and examining how their discussions on the evolution of Chueca have commonalities with the evolution of queer spaces in general discussed by Collins (2004a). Collins' model has an

international (or, at least, western) appeal, and its similarities to the aforementioned theories of Podmore (2006) or Cantu (2002) testify to this. It is my view that Collins' writings on queer space complement, for example, Llamas' and Vidarte's (1999) analysis of Chueca, and vice versa, and that they therefore provide a useful framework for my approach.

Finally, I believe Collins' model mirrors Gayle S. Rubin's (1999 [1984]) 'charmed circle' theory, which she uses to discuss the intersections between social and sexual stratification. Rubin contends that there is a social and political need to have and maintain a line between what is considered 'good' and 'bad' sex, and that there exists debate over where this line is drawn and which activities are allowed to cross over into acceptability. I would argue that the evolution of a queer space can also be examined through Rubin's theory, as non-normative, liminal space is positioned outside the charmed circle before moving slowly towards the inner circle – or, at least, as close to the limits of the charmed circle as possible.

In the next sections, I will analyse each one of Collins' stages and discuss them in relation to Madrid's gay area, and how the evolution of Chueca has been portrayed in Spanish films. I will discuss and analyse a different film for each of the stages, selecting examples of Spanish cinema which reflect each stage of this evolution of queer space. Starting with the 'pre-conditions' stage, I will examine the spatial, sexual and sociological evolution of Chueca and this will culminate with an in-depth study of *Chuecatown / Boystown* (dir. Juan Flahn, 2007), which perfectly embodies the different dichotomies existing in today's queer territories.

1.2.- Chueca: Creating and Defining a Queer Space

In terms of the evolution of queer space, Collins' (2004a) first two phases are the 'pre-conditions' and 'emergence' stages and can be seen occurring in Spain between the mid-1980s until the end of the 1990s. During this time – effectively from the end of the *movida* period up until the new millennium – the neighbourhood of Chueca evolved from a liminal area to a fully-developed gay enclave with establishments that cater specifically to a gay and lesbian market.

1.2.1- Stage 1: 'Pre-Conditions' and *Más que amor, frenesí*

Collins contends that the first stage of his model, 'Pre-conditions', is defined by an emergence of a small cluster of gay residents or, more likely, a gay-friendly bar or two. These enterprises tend not to be situated too near each other, due to the fact that they do not wish to draw attention to themselves – either because of their illegal status in supporting gay

activities and lifestyles, or because of the fear factor relating to social retaliation (2004a: 1800). These establishments typically emerge in a run-down inner-city area, where low rents, empty buildings and a degree of liminal activity (crime and / or prostitution) are the norm (Ruting, 2008: 261). These districts also tend to be close to city-centre jobs and facilities, and the degraded status (or marginality of the area) may tend to reduce the extent to which urban authorities intervene in any type of activities that might be occurring there. An early example of the representation of Chueca as a dangerous hub of criminal activity is Almodóvar's film *¡Átame! / Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1990), in which Ricky (Antonio Banderas) visits de Chueca neighbourhood in search of drugs for Marina (Victoria Abril).

In Spanish cinema, a perfect spatial representation of this stage can be seen in *Más que amor, frenesí / Not Love, Just Frenzy* (dir. Alfonso Albacete, Miguel Bardem, and David Menkes, 1996), which is very much set at the onset of Madrid's queer urbanity. In my discussion of this film with regard to Collins' stage one, I will concentrate on five key aspects: how the film imitates the aesthetics of early Almodóvar films – reinforcing Chueca's status as an early queer spatial formation; the film's presentation of liminal activity in Chueca; the appearance of drag queens as early indicators of a nascent queer area; the existence of a national versus global ideology in the film; and the presentation of night as the time in which queer space comes to life - something which we also see occurring in *Báilame el agua / Fill Me with Life* (dir. Josetxo San Mateo, 2000).

The film by Alfonso Albacete, Miguel Bardem, and David Menkes adopts the camp tone of early Almodóvar films, drawing comparisons in its aesthetics (and characterisations – see Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas (1998: 84-85)) to *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón / Pepi, Luci, Bom…* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1980). Moreover, it subscribes to what Perriam and Fouz-Hernández view as the start of a 'small explosion' of Spanish gay cinema that happened in the 1990s (2007: 61-62). It is also one of the first contemporary Spanish films that spoke to the young audience of the time, attempting as it does to represent their lifestyles and routines, just as *Pepi, Luci, Bom...* did fifteen years previously, and as *Historias del Kronen / Stories from the Kronen* (dir. Montxo Armendáriz, 1995) did with its conscious adoption of a light, popular postmodern style (Perriam, 2004: 151). Indeed, we can see both *Más que amor, frenesí* and *Historias del Kronen* as two of the first contemporary Spanish films which tried to address the country's post-Franco generation – those young and carefree individuals who had yet to contribute a single page to Spain's contemporary history due to their political or social disengagement (itself an attitude stemming from the perception that democracy had been restored).

Más que amor, frenesí has another commonality with early Almodóvar films in that it represents the Chueca neighbourhood as one of the most rundown areas of the city, a home to those on the fringes of mainstream society, something evident in *Entre tinieblas / Dark Habits* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1983), *La ley del deseo / Law of Desire* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1987) or *¡Átame! / Tie Me up! Tie Me Down!* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1990).

Reflecting the spirit that came out of *la movida*, and the sense of liberty and experimentation that followed Franco's death, the characters in *Más que amor, frenesí* meet in bohemian pubs and spend most of their time there. Jordi Petit (2004: 151-164) observes that gay social interaction used to exist primarily at night in the clubs, streets, and house parties, where gay men could become 'normalised' around other liminal activities. The central character of Álex (Javier Albalá) uses this time to escape what he sees as a monotonous heterosexual life and experiment with his homo(sexuality). He fulfils his sexual desires in the private space of Alberto's (Gustavo Salmerón) house but it is in the clubs and parks where Álex is able to explore his gay identity – not just his sexuality but also his identity. According to Gordon Brent Ingram (1997b), bars, clubs, and parks have become crucial sites for erotic contact between individuals who cannot have guests at home due to the heteronormative households they live in (1997b: 119). Álex can become who he really is when surrounded by likeminded others in these queer spaces, where the spirit of openness is further underscored via the film's use of music – in this case Alaska's track *¿A quién le importa...?* (which can be freely translated as "it is nobody's business").[13] Moreover, the city offers a special allure: as Gargi Bhattacharyya (2002) argues, the city promises anonymity and the chance to reinvent oneself; it offers spaces for sexual freedom and experimentation, and the opportunity to be 'different things at different times or for different audiences' (2002: 150). In the film, Álex chooses to define and re-define himself according to the different spaces he inhabits: hetero-family father during the day; gay single man in the nightclub, a space where definitions and labels are discarded in favour of a more inclusive 'anything goes' attitude. In line with Petit's idea (2004), the night is, therefore, very much a time for exploration and indeed escape from the dominance of heteronormative models of behaviour.

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[13] Another link between both *Más que amor, frenesí* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom...* since Alaska played the character of Bom in Almodóvar's film. See Allinson (2001b), Bermúdez (2009) or Jordan (2002: 5) for more information on Alaska, her cult status as a *movida* figure, and her iconic and gay status nowadays. It is important to note also how the *¿A quién le importa...?* song is thought of as a gay anthem, Llamas and Vidarte (1999) calling it 'our anthem' (1999: 222) in a clear reference to all Spanish gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, and transgender people.

Jean-Claude Seguin (2005) argues that there is a Spanish tradition, started before the 1960s, of representing Madrid as a city where corruption and the road to human perdition collide (Seguin, 2005: 230), as a place in which the streets are full of scoundrels and illegal excesses. Madrid is represented similarly in *Más que amor, frenesí*: the characters' world is one where drugs and alcohol are consumed daily in a need to discover and experiment with sexual liberation, freedom, and carefree attitudes. As Collins discusses, one of the pre-conditions for an urban gay environment is the existence of some type of illegal activity, such as crime and prostitution (2004a: 1800). Throughout the film, the characters can be seen consuming illegal substances, mainly when in the club Frenesí; while Cristina (Bibí Andersen)[14] is a madam who has some unresolved business with Max (Nancho Novo), reinforcing the link between crime / immorality and the development of early queer spaces.

The film's representation of illegality and the law is interesting, particularly the fact that the only law enforcer in the film is a psychopathic policeman, Luís (Javier Manrique), who comes into Frenesí high on drugs and beats up María (Beatriz Santiago). I see in the representation of Luís a reinforcement of Collins' (2004a: 1800) and Ruting's (2008: 261) idea that urban authorities do not intervene in activities occurring in these areas. It is not only the law that fails to operate in these spaces, for the characters themselves normalise the use of drugs, and this uninhibited usage in these areas then reinforces the marginal status of the space. Sean Slavin (2004) argues that early queer spaces do not easily fit the usual categories of meaning by mainstream society (Slavin, 2004: 288). The drug consumption in *Más que amor, frenesí* highlights how the evolving queer space is produced in opposition to other current spaces within the city. Drug use is socially frowned upon outside of liminal spaces, implying an opposition between the social (outside of the queer space) and the asocial (within Chueca), and suggesting that these 'asocial areas' have not developed socially yet, acting against the social rules of the 'normalised' space. *Más que amor, frenesí* therefore reinforces the idea that its characters act and live outside of the norm, in liminal spaces, creating a world of their own and acting against the socially and legally imposed behavioural rules. This is a concept visually exemplified in the film by a shot of Mónica (Cayetana Guillén Cuervo), wearing an over-the-top, bulky, 16th Century corset walking down one of the busiest streets in

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[14] It is important to highlight the relevance of Bibí Andersen as a transgender celebrity during the Spanish transition. Andersen (now known as Bibiana Fernández) is the first transgender actress in Spanish cinema, becoming a television and cinema celebrity for many years, including being one of the most recognisable "chica Almodóvar". Andersen also became, as Fouz-Hernández & Martínez-Expósito (2007) explain, a source of information about sex and sex change, and the "perfect token of the spirit of progress and tolerance that were meant to symbolise the new Spain" (2007: 143). See Garlinger (2003) for more information.

Madrid in the opposite direction to everyone else. She is an outsider (an asocial being) of the outside (the social) world. Interestingly, the scene also suggests that drag and performance can at points be associated with heterosexuality (since Mónica herself is not defined as lesbian) – nevertheless, it is not mainstream heterosexuality, but liminal heterosexuality, as Mónica is seen as an outsider of mainstream society, and part of Madrid's 'underworld' culture.

Más que amor, frenesí also emphasises the role drag queens have in the early development of a gay space, a role that can easily be traced, in the Spanish case, to the Francoist tolerance of spectacle and cabaret as the only places where some kinds of gay tendencies could be presented, albeit under the guise of entertainment – see Petit, (2004: 43-45) and Mira, (2008: 78-83), or Cleminson and Vázquez García, (2007: 217-264) for a discussion of even earlier cases (from the 1850s until the end of the Spanish Civil War). An example of the representation of drag queens during the Francoist years is the character of Tino (Jorge Calvo) in *Los años desnudos / Rated R* (dir. Dunia Ayaso and Féliz Sabroso, 2008), who is depicted as using his theatrical, extremely feminised persona as a way of hiding his actual homosexuality and therefore surviving the dictatorship years. As Tucker (1990) states:

> Gay people have often learned to protect privacy at the same time as they
> claim the public world by immersing themselves in disguises and dramas,
> in costumes and carnivals, in art of all kinds.
>
> (Tucker, 1990: 21)

It is interesting to note that drag acts (as well as male strippers) lost their appeal as nightclub entertainment as such venues evolved with time (Petit, 2004: 162) and focused more on catering to a more consumer-centric, dance-music focused audience. The need to reaffirm these early queer spaces as unconventional is lost with time, while the use of drag queens as an entertaining, non-threatening way of presenting gay life to mainstream audiences is no longer needed (see Taylor, Rupp, and Gamson (2004) for a discussion on the role of drag queens in early gay and lesbian movements). Representations of drag queens in Spanish film similarly lost their appeal and, ultimately, visibility once gay representations evolved from the topic of 'sexual difference' to that of 'equality' (see my discussion of assimilation and legal equality in Chapters 5 and 6).

Lastly, there is an emerging thematic polarisation throughout *Más que amor, frenesí* that can be seen in many Spanish films dealing with the heterosexual / homosexual

dichotomy: namely, the notion that national Spanish identities are represented by heterosexual characters, while gay ones tend towards more globalising and international characteristics. For example, during the costume party scene at the *Frenesí* club, David (Liberto Rabal) – who is heterosexual – is dressed up as a bull-fighter, the embodiment of a Spanish cultural symbol (and one linked to masculinity and patriarchal ideals).[15] Meanwhile, Alberto (the only 'out' gay character in the film), is not only dressed as international supermodel Cindy Crawford, but is also depicted as using spoken English, which only accentuates the sense of camp and caricature. Indeed, the carnivalesque context of the costume party setting allows for all types of fantasies and subversive roles to come to light. Mikhail Bahtin (1984 [1965]) argues that the term 'carnivalesque' is a literary approach which subverts the dominant assumptions through humour and chaos, while Linda Hutcheon (1983) defines it similarly as 'the inversion of forms' (1983: 85). The ambience in the *Frenesí* club allows for the characters to blur the boundaries of their sexuality, and we see straight characters Yeye (Ingrid Rubio) and Mónica kissing, groping, and dancing with each other, while Bullfighter-David behaves – *'acts'* – as Crawford-Alberto's boyfriend for one night. The scene reinforces the idea that in the queer spaces of the 'pre-conditions stage,' definitions and boundaries are constantly blurred, allowing for sexual freedom and experimentation, and the opportunity to behave differently to the norm (Bhattacharyya, 2002: 150).

Spanish cinema's early relegation of gay male characters to the night, and to the dark, noisy environment of pubs and clubs, is even more pronounced in the film *Báilame el agua*. Set in Madrid in the early 1990s, the film presents a clear opposition between heterosexual characters enjoying the daytime and gay characters occupying the night, as if limiting the space the gay characters can inhabit. Both María (Pilar López de Ayala) and David (Unax Ugalde) are constantly shot walking the streets of Madrid – their first kiss occurs on a rooftop with the whole of Madrid as the background to their romantic moment, further equating heterosexuality with the city of Madrid as whole. Meanwhile, Julito (Juan Viadas), their gay friend, is only seen within the confines of the nightclub where they all meet at night. There are only two scenes throughout the film where Julito is seen outside the club, which again reinforces the idea that homosexuality, during the 'pre-conditions stage,' is confined to such secluded spaces. The first instance is the scene in which he tries to commit suicide and Julito

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[15] It is interesting to note, however, that in *Matador* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1986) and *Jamón, Jamón* (dir. Bigas Luna, 1992) this correlation between masculinity and bullfighting is explored and subverted (see Fouz-Hernández, 2004a: 147).

is seen about to jump from the balcony of his flat. Curiously, this is not shown directly, but framed through a television screen broadcasting a news piece, the screen almost acting as a containment of the gay male character, limiting the space in which he exists, just like the nightclub. The second exception sees Julio go for a night walk with his friend, both of them dressed in drag. In this instance, Julito's foray outside the nightclub costs him his life, since both Julito and his friend are assaulted and killed by a group of men. Both scenes represent the character facing some sort of danger – and ultimately death – which introduces the discourse of homosexuality as a disease that I will explore in Chapter 3.

The representation of the space inhabited by gay characters in *Más que amor, frenesí* and *Báilame el agua* are clear examples of the queer spaces that defined Chueca's development in the 1980s and early 1990s. With time, however, these night-time queer spaces would evolve into more visible areas. As Petit (2004: 159) discusses, gay men (and women) wanted to socialise during the day and not be limited to a night timetable, the clandestine sensation of the dark or indeed ghettoised into dark, secluded clubs. When this finally occurred, and more daytime bars and establishments opened, Chueca developed into what is described by the second stage of Collins' model.

1.2.2- Stage 2: Emergence – *Sobreviviré*

In the second stage of Collins' (2004a) model, small clusters of gay pubs emerge and, although they are not necessarily fully visible to mainstream society, they begin to cater for a daytime customer as well. This raises the area's attractiveness to gays and lesbians, and the growing gay population consequently attracts gay-oriented businesses, in time creating a neighbourhood with a reputation amongst the gay and lesbian community as a 'gay' place.

Arguably, it is here that Hemmings' (1997) 'spaces of articulation' start to appear. From the scattered gay (or ambiguous) venues of the first developmental stage, there occurs an evolution into an area where an actual community – in its very early stages – begins to form. Hindle (1994) argues that there are three different strands to a community's development and it is at this time that the first one of them – visibility – comes into place, with gay places, residential areas or businesses run by and for gay people starting to appear. It is by the shared experience of these gay places (or venues) that an early community starts to operate and the 'physical manifestation' of said community forms as a defined gay space (Hindle, 1994: 11), and creates a 'readily identifiable gay village identity' (Collins, 2004a: 1800).

This newly formed space plays an active role in the constitution and reproduction of social identities (reaffirming those that interact within them in their sexual and gendered lifestyles) just as much as social identities and relations will help in the creation of material, symbolic or metaphorical spaces (Valentine, 2002: 146). Both space per se and social relations then generate a stronger bond, simultaneously empowering both the area and the people living in it. It can be understood as a socially reciprocal circle: gay space reaffirms lesbian and gay men not as 'outsiders' but as an acceptable sexual identity; at the same time, when lesbian and gay men use this queer space as a means to express their sexuality, they support the development of that space both in terms of its visibility and of the physical area it encompasses. This is something I will explore further in my analysis of *Sobreviviré / I Will Survive* (dir. Alfonso Albacete and David Menkes, 1999), when I will focus on two aspects of queer spaces: the evolution of gay bars / clubs through the 'emergence' stage, and then Hemmings' (1997) 'spaces of articulation.'

As I have established, the end of Collins' first stage is characterised by a need and a new willingness to socialise during the day, to leave behind the sense of being limited to the night and stop, as Petit (2004) puts it, feeling limited to life as 'aves nocturnas' ('night owls') (2004: 156). We can see this change in the 1999 film *Sobreviviré*. As Marga (Emma Suárez) and Iñaqui (Juan Diego Botto) go out on a date, they enter a gay bar called STAR'S for a drink, and in a clear reference to the changing attitudes of the gay venues of the time, Iñaqui describes the establishment as: 'uno de esos sitios que están abriendo ahora en Madrid, que cambian según la hora. Te puedes tomar un café por la mañana, un sandwich al mediodía, o una copa por la noche' ('one of those places that are opening nowadays in Madrid which change depending on the time of the day. You can have a coffee in the morning, a sandwich at noon or a drink at night').

In keeping with Rushbrook (2002: 193) and her aforementioned view of the evolution of gay spaces, the bar in *Sobreviviré* is not a secluded dark place with loud music and neon lights but a central venue with big window panels which open up the space to the outside world (see Figure 1). Indeed, the big windows have a dual objective: they open the place, the bar, to the neighbourhood's surroundings, but they also allow - even invite - the 'outside' world to look into 'normalised' space within. The bar blurs the distinction between 'interior' and 'exterior' (2002: 193), creating an area – in this case, Chueca – as a whole, as the sum of all its parts, and not as a place with uncorrelated venues. It is a clear indication of the increased visibility and acceptability of gay businesses in the area.

Figure 1 – *STAR'S* pub in *Sobreviviré*

Ricardo Llamas and Francisco Javier Vidarte (1999) argue that this new type of queer establishment was often designed with maximum visibility in mind, almost exhibiting its clientele as exotic fish in a bowl for everyone to admire (1999: 219). Such an approach is surely borne in reaction to years of hiding, marginalisation, and discretion. Llamas and Vidarte also comment that these new commercial buildings were often completely over-lit, again highlighting the new-found willingness to move out of the literal and metaphorical darkness and leave behind the life of what they call 'vampires' (1999: 219).

There is in *Sobreviviré* a recurrent theme of gay spaces and the arts: Iñaqui uses *STAR'S* as the venue for his sculpture exhibition and the owner of *STAR'S*, Omar (Omar Butler), is in the showbusiness. This link between gay space and the arts is a frequent one (see, for example, Friedman (2007), Roth and Luongo (2002) or Hughes (2005)). It is an association, for instance, which exists in *Más que amor, frenesí*, where Alberto is an arts student, and *Sobreviviré* uses the connection as a way of subtly defining both Iñaqui, and the space he inhabits. It is also something I will examine further in my analysis of *Chuecatown*, in which Víctor (Pablo Puyol) takes Leo (Pepón Nieto) to a gallery exhibition, so he can mix with what he calls the 'gay upper classes.'

As for *Sobreviviré*, it is interesting to see how the film reflects just how far gay visibility has evolved, and how Chueca is in the process of being seen as a gay space. During the scene in which Marga visits her family, and while they are all eating, they discuss a news report on television showing the 1998 gay parade in Madrid – clearly a conscious choice on the part of the film-makers given the aforementioned importance of this date in Spain's fight

for equal rights (Llamas and Vidarte, 1999: 219-222; Petit, 2004: 169-175). The family's dialogue in this small scene highlights that the nascent gay area is not a ghetto, nor of insignificance to mainstream society, but is in fact important enough to be considered national news. It can be argued that Chueca was finally recognised around this time as Madrid's (and Spain's) first out and proud queer space (see also Chapter 5 for a discussion of this scene in relation to what it says about the family institution and same-sex marriage), and *Sobreviviré* reflects this.

There are other queer spaces throughout the film that do not involve specific or limited areas. Clare Hemmings (1997: 153) discusses 'performative space', which she defines as a heteronormative space which is fleetingly dominated by a queer narrative. We see this when Iñaqui, while browsing in a clothing store, finds himself cruising a younger man. Jean-Ulrick Désert (1997: 20) argues that the act of sex is not what defines queer space but the 'function of wishful thinking or desires' (1997: 20) that solidifies the reading of the space as queer, and that is very much what we see here (particularly given the fact that the intended sexual encounter – Iñaqui is unable to perform – does not really occur). The representation of queer space depicts a move from pub / club venues, and even the private space of home, to a public area, which is momentarily queered. In keeping with the emergence stage of Collins' model, we might argue that gay space is gaining visibility.

It is useful to highlight at this point that terms such as 'public' and 'private' can become relative, almost subjective interpretations, which Leap (1999) maintains must always be read 'against broader forms of regulation and control' (1999: 9). So while Iñaqui and the stranger are in a 'public' space – a mall – it can be argued that the changing rooms become a 'private' place, defined less by the actual location than what happens there. The contrast between public and private is a question I will explore further in Chapter 2.

The maintenance of privacy in a public setting (and therefore the creation of a momentarily private shared space), depends heavily 'on the interaction and on a special ritual that must be both noncoercive and noncommital' (Nardi, 1999: 24). John Hollister (1999) asserts that there needs to be a 'ritualised understanding' between the two agents engaged in public cruising and that their communication must be discreet so as to expose the activity to others. As such, the store changing room in the aforementioned scene is a 'performative space' in that it is subjected to social codes and regulations only known to certain social groups – what Nardi (1999) describes as a the 'actions of positioning, signaling, maneuvering, contracting, foreplay' (1999: 24) and possible consummation.

While the scene in *Sobreviviré* presents the clothing store as a fleeting queer space, it is one that will revert to its heteronormative norm as soon as the moment is over. Indeed, it is interesting to compare this scene – where Iñaqui is unable to perform and ends up leaving the young man after some initial kissing and fondling – with an almost identical store-set scene, where Iñaqui and girlfriend Marga are shown kissing in the changing rooms. The difference this time is that their passion is much more open and unsubtle, with no need for the type of codes described by Nardi, reinforcing the heteronormative status of the location and of public spaces in general.

It is in this type of sexual encounter that Henning Bech (1998) sees the closest relationship between sexuality and the city. She states that cities provide an exciting sense of 'supply and abundance, opportunity and freedom' (1998: 219) and a wealth of possible experience – including the sexual – which, when connected to the anonymity and non-committedness of urban relations' (1998: 219) offers potential for personal freedom. Iñaqui's changing room encounter offers this, specifically the opportunity to queer the space and re-gay his identity, for however long he chooses to. There is also a consumerist side to the sexual exchange in that Iñaqui is 'picking and choosing and discarding again' (1998: 219) as if shopping for something – appropriate, then, that the cruising happens in a mall, establishing a link between gay space and consumerism (an association found in the last stage of Collins' model – the commercialisation of queer space and the consumer culture created within it, which I will discuss in my analysis of *Chuecatown*).

What can be clearly seen with these examples – both the evolution of the establishments in the Chueca neighbourhood, and Iñaqui's fleeting sexual encounter outside a particular gay space – is the higher visibility homosexuality has, how homosexuality subverts rules, breaks conventions, and searches for more spaces of identification. Gay men and women no longer need to limit self-expression to the dark, crammed surroundings of a nightclub, nor do they feel like these are the only spaces where they can interact with one another.

1.3.- Chueca: The Spanish Gay Neighbourhood Par Excellence

The 1998 Pride parade demonstrated Chueca as an established, distinct gay area with very distinct features. The last two stages of Collins' model – 'expansion and diversification' and 'integration' – I would argue span, in Spain, from 1998 to recent years. During this time, as I will examine, Chueca promotes itself as a gay village, and its origins as a liminal, undesirable

space of clandestine activity are all but gone. From the third stage onwards, then, queer spaces are visible to all, and the gay community that forms and defines the space inhabited.

1.3.1.- Stage 3: Expansion & Diversification: *Chuecatown* and *Los novios búlgaros*

Once a 'critical mass' is reached, a cycle of self-sustaining growth develops and a growing number of gay households and businesses start moving into the area (Collins, 2004a: 1792). One of the driving factors in this is that gay men and women have higher than average incomes and no children, which offers them a wider choice of locations in which to reside (Black, Gates, Sanders and Taylor, 2002: 55). Historically, there were also benefits to living in the same area, such as a greater sense of solidarity and security at a time when discrimination was particularly strong. Moreover, greater levels of disposable income enabled the gay community to upgrade these spaces and, therefore, gentrify; implying that, unlike other marginalised groups or communities, gay men and women are in a position to reshape not only the inhabited landscape, but to also 'influence the social, political, and economic systems that govern it' (Bouthillette, 1994: 66). This third stage in Collins' model is what he calls the 'Expansion and Diversification' Stage.

As the gay population grows, there follows 'secondary explosions' of gay or gay-friendly services, shops and venues, and the gay men and women within this area actively perceive themselves as part of a specific gay neighbourhood or community (Ruting, 2008: 262). Furthermore, the first signs of a pink economy appear – understanding the term here as one based on 'a combination of the idea that gay men and women spend their [money] differently and that as a group homosexuals tend to have above-average spending power' (Hird and Gardiner, 1994; see also Naylor, 1997). This brings further visibility to and public awareness of the urban gay village to both the gay and lesbian community and mainstream society, creating a cycle of growth whereby more gay men and lesbians come to the area, resulting in further expansion and supply of specific services for the community, which brings yet more visibility and profile. Two key features of this stage need to be taken into consideration. The first is the creation of new – and conversion of existing – commercial premises for gay service-sector enterprises (Collins, 2004a: 1802), and the fact that these enterprises market themselves not just as a restaurant, bar or bookshop, but specifically as a gay restaurant, bar or bookshop, thus adapting themselves to this newly evolved and clearly defined gay space. In *Chuecatown*, a clear example of this conversion (or intention to convert) can be seen in Mr. Pardo's (Joan Crosas) desire to 'gay up' his driving school, Auto Escuela Pardo, in an attempt to attract the gay consumer living in the area and revive its

falling client base. He sees a marketing advantage in having a gay driving instructor and begins advertising with rainbow flags and images of barely clothed male models, an image that is already being used in other establishments around Chueca.

Indeed, *Chuecatown* successfully captures and reflects this expansion of gay space, with numerous examples throughout the narrative: scenes with panoramic views of Chueca square, with its gay bars and terraces, help define the queer urbanity and put the viewer in the middle of the gay neighbourhood; some of the protagonists are depicted as living in the Calle Pelayo itself, one of the main arteries of the neighbourhood (see Llamas and Vidarte (1999: 221-222) for a discussion of Calle Pelayo's history); well-known gay venues are name-checked or shown, with characters seen, for example, in bear-friendly gay club The Angel – indeed, Leo (Pepón Nieto) even wears a t-shirt branded with the bar's log and web address; gay couples are shown casually strolling by hand in hand, reinforcing the normality of the setting; and Leo even mentions gay politician Pedro Zerolo,[16] whom he describes as a figure who 'hace mucho por el mundo gay' ('does a lot for the gays'), again conveying the reality of a distinct, visible and burgeoning Chueca neighbourhood. The film even ends in the gay sauna XXX, which consolidates the normality and ease with which gay sexuality and urban space coexist, and the image of a distinct, self-aware community. One other point of note here is what might be described as the over-sexualisation of a developing gay space, in which the queer space appears to be defined and reduced to just the sexual aspect of gay identity, overshadowing other identity-forming markers that can delimit gay spaces. It is a subject I will discuss further in Chapter 2.

The second key feature of this third stage is gentrification (Collins, 2004a: 1802), the upgrading of low-quality housing stock in certain areas by middle-class immigrants (or property investors). It has been proven that gay populations can be significant triggers for this process (Castells, 1983; Lauria and Knopp, 1985; and, of course, Collins, 2004a), due to the fact that queer urban areas tend to emerge in declining, or economically stagnant areas. As Ruting (2008) observes, the cheaper rent and the higher vacancy rates potentially allow for the enhancement, through renovation, of the area (2008: 262). In *Chuecatown*, the theme of gentrification is integral to the central narrative, which has Víctor (Pablo Puyol) pursuing his dream of putting Chueca at the forefront of global gay urban space, able to compete with

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[16] Lawyer and politician, Zerolo is nowadays councillor for the city of Madrid, and member of the PSOE. He has fought for gay rights since 1992 when he became the legal consultant of COGAM (Gay Collective of Madrid), addressing the Spanish Congress during the debate over civil partnerships. He married his long term partner, Jesús Santos, in 2005, shortly after the same-sex marriage law was passed in Spain (see Chapter 5 for a study of same-sex marriage in Spain).

New York or San Francisco. As he explains to Leo: 'para que el barrio refleje la personalidad de sus maravillosos habitantes, es necesaria una labor lenta pero constante de reforma inmobiliaria' ('for the area reflect the personality of its wonderful inhabitants, it is necessary to have a slow but constant housing renovation'). To create a neighbourhood that reflects the 'personality' (that is, reflect the 'gay identity') of its new inhabitants, Víctor believes that the area must rid itself of everything that ties it to the past. That he sets about achieving this through murder, extortion and manipulation is what propels the murder mystery arc forward, but ultimately, modernising and gentrifying Chueca is what propels his actions and provides the thematic impetus for the central narrative.

There is an interesting and playful dichotomy of ideas throughout the film: the gentrification of a gay space versus the traditional, conventional representation of heteronormative spaces; and the globalist function of the gay space as opposed to the nationalistic features of straight places. I will analyse this oppositional representation of straight and gay spaces in the last section of the chapter, but for now, what is important is how all of these factors feature in what has now become a fully-developed queer space, and in the integration of a gay community into the wider city landscape.

The spaces the characters in *Los novios búlgaros* (dir. Eloy de la Iglesia, 2003)[17] inhabit provide clear examples of this duality, and the fact that Chueca is now an established queer space in the Spanish capital. The film presents queer space as progressive, open minded, and international. This is perhaps most evident in the character of Gildo (Pepón Nieto), who admires the glamour of Hollywood (he adorns his flat with cardboard figures of American film-stars and name-checks Ava Gardner and Woody Allen), spends his leisure time and money at glamorous gay parties – populated almost exclusively by men – and in the bars of Chueca. Heterosexual space, by contrast, is presented as traditional and, interestingly, nationalistic. This is most evident in the scene where Gildo and Daniel (Fernando Guillén Cuervo) visit a straight bar to meet the wife of Daniel's lover: as soon as they enter, they are confronted with a large statue of a bull in the doorway (see Figure 2). As with David's costume in *Más que Amor, Frenesí*, the national symbol is associated with convention and the past. The gay protagonists are also depicted as affluent: there are frequent references to their jobs (lawyers, doctors), the earnings, and depictions of lavish, carefree lifestyles, very

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[17] An important director when it comes to Spanish gay issues being raised on screen, Eloy de la Iglesia is also the director of *El diputado / Confessions of a Congressman* (dir. Eloy de la Iglesia, 1978) and *Los placeres ocultos / Hidden Pleasures* (dir. Eloy de la Iglesia, 1977), films released during the Transition years, that broke with taboo gay subjects. *Los novios búlgaros* was De la Iglesia's last film. See Smith (1998) or Melero Salvador (2004 and 2010).

different to traditional representations of Spain and reflective of those characteristics of Collins' third stage, namely greater disposable income, gentrification and commercialism / consumerism.

Figure 2 – Daniel and Gildo visit a straight bar in *Los novios búlgaros*

Gentrification increases property and rental prices, and it is interesting to note Ruting's point that less affluent gay men and women – or those who do not conform to the physical or economical standard imposed by the gentrification factor – can and indeed tend to be displaced from the district (2008: 263). The characters in *Los novios búlgaros* are presented as having a high economic status, but in *Chuecatown* we see the displacement and exclusion Ruting discusses, particularly in the scene where Leo, Rey and their friend Lola (Mariola Fuentes) are ejected from a stylish bar – which is very much presented as a gay bar – because they do not look the part. As such, the new queer space can be seen as also developing an economic class structure (see, for example, Weir (1996: 31-34), Polchin (1997: 387), or Llamas and Vidarte (1999: 214-217), amongst others). There is perhaps an irony here in that the need for a place of tolerance – open, welcoming, and free from prejudice – has evolved into one which excludes based on economic status and image. We also see elements of this in Víctor's attempts to 'gay-up' Leo and make him conform to a certain ideal, exhorting him to look better by exercising, eating more healthily, having beauty treatments, and to be more cultured by reading more and attending museums.

It is interesting that *Chuecatown* so clearly presents this superficiality. John Weir (1996) is critical of contemporary gay communities for the same reason, claiming that their 'collective impulse' today is not human rights but shopping (1996: 27). It is a strong view

and not entirely accurate – in the Spanish case alone, for instance, the gay community has recently fought for (and achieved) the right to same-sex marriage (which I will analyse in Chapter 5) – but it does hint strongly at one of the key features of Collins' four and final stage: commodification.

1.3.2- Stage 4: Integration and *Chuecatown*

With the gay area established, defined and sustained by its own community, there follows a desire from heterosexual consumers to visit the area, attracted by the gentrification itself and the popularisation of gay bars (Collins, 2004a). These are very much the characteristics that act as a transition between the third and fourth stages of development.

With integration, gentrification, and the popularisation of gay bars, there is an attraction of heterosexuals into the district. Along with some of the broader processes of urban regeneration, gay space – and gay lifestyle, for that matter – becomes commodified (Ruting, 2008: 262-263). Mainstream venues and shops may increase their prominence and function alongside already established gay businesses. The area becomes more mainstream as non-gay citizens move in, which can result in some of less affluent gay population moving out as property prices start to rise. The area may also see a new influx of better off young gay urban professionals, which further modernises and globalises the area. Relatively mature urban gay areas at this stage have thrived to such an extent that 'they have become the "chic" social and cultural centres of the city – the place to be seen [⋯] regardless of one's sexual preferences' (Collins, 2004a: 1793).

Chuecatown embodies this appropriation of modern and vibrant areas by other parts of society – nowhere more so than in the election speech given by Councillor Laura Roderas (played by performance artist La Prohibida), which takes place in the centre of Chueca's main square. Before her speech we are shown news footage at Leo and Rey's apartment, where the newsreader commends the councillor for meeting 'semejante nido de invertidos' ('such a nest of deviants') since one must 'hay que tener redaños para tratar con esa gente' ('have the courage to deal with such people'). It is an example of what Brent Ingram (1997a: 50) calls 'heterosexual voyeurism,' the curiosity of straight people to observe or experience queer space as something 'different' that needs exploring and exploiting.

During her speech, Councillor Roderas alludes to Chueca's past: 'Chueca no es sólo un barrio más bonito, sino también un barrio mucho más agradable' ('Chueca is not just a prettier neighbourhood, but also a more pleasant one'), making reference to how Chueca has developed from the *Más que amor, frenesí* type of area to this young, ultramodern one. She

then makes everyone aware that she is not a lesbian (although, ironically, the character is played by a man in drag – a joke between director and audience which helps undermine the Councillor's right-wing views) before stating that she believes the changes in Chueca 'nos beneficia a todos' ('will benefit everyone'). Moreover, she continues that 'Chueca tiene que convertirse en un referente para todos los jóvenes de España, sea cual sea su orientación sexual' ('Chueca must become a point of reference for all Spanish youths, regardless of their sexual orientation') – Councillor Roderas' comment recalls Collins' concept of a gay area being a cultural place open to anyone. It highlights the evolution of a queer space to a stage where it is consumable for non-gay visitors and tourists – becoming, in fact, what Rushbrook (2002) defines as what modern gay space should be: a 'marker of cosmopolitanism, tolerance, and diversity' (2002: 188) and a 'cosmopolitan buffet' that facilities the erosion of 'individual histories and functions' (2002: 188), the transgression of social boundaries, and 'participation in exotic worlds' (2002: 185) – the use of 'exotic' here in reference to queer urban space is notable, clearly marking it as an exotic other to the norm. Definition of homosexuality as the other is a topic I will explore further in my analysis of the gay body – so often marked as different in Spanish cinema – in Chapter 3.

Just as ethnic difference has been embraced as another type of modern social diversity (see, for example, Johnston, 2005), the Councillor's speech 'embraces' sexual difference. It is, however, a cynical 'embrace,' done for financial and political gain. In this we see a reflection of society playing a 'pivotal role [in the] production and consumption of urban spaces as cosmopolitan' (Binnie and Skeggs, 2004: 40). As Ruting summarises, 'gay districts have been gentrified or have become zones of lifestyle consumption and tourist attractions' (2008: 260), which is exactly what the speech implies. The changes may not all be positive, however, at this stage in the development of a queer space, Elsie Jay (1997) contends that difference and diversity within the gay male community become marginalised and that the area begins to present an image of a 'one size fits all' community, where ideals, economic range, and tastes tend to become tailored by and for 'white, affluent, and middle-class' (1997: 166). This, Knopp (1995) concurs, is unsurprising given that these urban gay areas are now being developed 'primarily by and for white middle-class male markets, and have been financed by progressive (often gay) capital' (1995: 158).[18]

In this final stage of Collins' (2004a) model, then, gay spaces become markers of the city's cosmopolitanism, zones of consumption for white, middle-class gay men – as shown in

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[18] See also Llamas and Vidarte (1999: 136-144) for a critique of Chueca's commodification and homogenisation.

both *Los novios búlgaros* and *Chuecatown* – and zones of 'exotic exploration' for heterosexuals, and where difference within the community is eroded . For a community based on difference from the norm – for a space that evolved in reaction to the need for a distinct and accepted identity – this homogenisation is noteworthy, and a topic I will discuss further in the last section of the chapter.

1.4.- Stage 5: Where Do We Go From Here?

Ruting (2008 263-266) questions whether Collins' (2004a) model is completely accurate, and whether the processes underlying the transformation of gay urban areas have 'integrated' with the mainstream, or whether they have been 'colonised' by others (non-gay), actually reducing that area's appeal to gay men or lesbians. Alternatively, Robert Aldrich (2004) argues that gay villages in general are a passing phase in gay and lesbian urban history and evolution – while they have been crucial in establishing an identitarian gay and lesbian culture, they are increasingly superfluous in a more tolerant society where, for example, gay establishments are being opened in urban areas generally alongside other types of venues (2004: 1732). David Bell and Jon Binnie (2004) see a positive outcome, stating that the globalisation of queer spaces, and cities in general, has meant that the embracing of sexual difference is now a marker of a desirable place to live – and that this implies considerable progress given the fact that gay men and lesbians were historically labelled as 'undesirable' (2004: 1809). Indeed, they posit that cities are currently using queer spaces as a calling card, as a promotional tool in presenting the city as a cosmopolitan, go-to destination, which is in clear contrast to the early stages of the development of queer spaces, when such spaces were viewed as detrimental to the image of an area of a city more widely.

When looking at the Spanish model and Spain's gay areas in general – and Chueca in particular – it is still too early to assess what the next stage of evolution will (or should) be. Chueca remains the queer centre of Madrid, and although I concur with Aldrich's argument that gay and straight venues can co-exist and do not need to be separated into different sections of the city, I also consider it true that, for better or for worse, and for a number of reasons, the gay and lesbian community at large does – and particularly gay men – enjoy having a defined queer space. This, I trust, comes from three reasons. Firstly, there is a question of visibility. Defined queer spaces allow for a defined spatial visibility within the city, which enables to overcome the heteronormativity otherwise generally established in urban spaces. As Andrew Tucker (2009) discusses in his analysis of queer visibility in the South African city of Cape Town, queer spaces is more than fleeting 'queer public

performances,' but a means for the gay and lesbian community to perceive itself and each other in relation to 'their own community structures, the structures of others and the problems of social and political exchange' (2009: 3; see Tucker (2009: 3-6) for a discussion of queer visibility and gay and lesbian communities). This idea of 'perception,' is the second reason for which I believe the gay and lesbian community enoys having defined queer spaces: the idea of belonging. The gay and lesbian community offers a sense of belonging with a group of people with whom you have certain commonalities. As Anne-Marie Fortier (2002) highlights, in the transnational and globalised 21st Century, issues of 'home,' 'identity,' and 'belonging' are constantly questioned (2002: 184), and queer spaces offer a point of commonality for those that embrace it, and are embrace by it (see Fortier (2002: 183-198) or Taylor, Kaminski, and Dugan (2002: 99-114)). Thirdly, queer spaces are not only spaces of collective resistance to cultural norms of gender and sexuality but are also spaces of what Llamas and Vidarte (1999: 137) call of 'buen rollo' ('good vibes'), a space where 'las posibilidades de interacción con otras personas […] se multiplican potencialmente hasta el infinito' ('the posibilities of interacting with other people […] are potentially multiplied to infinity') (1999: 132). That is, queer spaces allow for an enjoyment of gay and lesbian identity and sexuality without – at least at face value – any constraints; the idea that gay men and lesbians have a space that is viewed as utopic, safe, interesting, fun, and 'cool,' where gay men and lesbians can roam freely and 'where every passing person is an opportunity' (Skeggs, Moran, Tyrer, and Binnie (2004: 1844).[19]

In cinematic terms, *Chuecatown* currently provides the most up to date and accurate representation of gay urbanity in Spanish film, and no other Spanish film has – yet – spent so much time and effort in evaluating, representing, and using queer space in its narrative. It is my view that the global versus local, straight versus gay dichotomies at the thematic heart of *Chuecatown* shed more light on how space can be contested. In the next section, therefore, I will analyse the film not just through Collins' (2004a) model, or by focusing on the evolution of the neighbourhood, but on how different and contrasting ideologies are represented within one space.

1.5.- The Globalisation of Chueca: The Case of *Chuecatown*

Chuecatown contradicts Pierre Sorlin's assertion that European films use cities as 'merely a setting and a stock of potential stories' (2005: 35), as an unimportant backdrop to the

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[19] See Skeggs, Moran, Tyrer, and Binnie (2004) for a discussion of the representation of queer spaces as 'fun,' particularly in the British series *Queer as Folk* (1999-2000).

storyline. In fact, the film even opens with a home-made advertising video recounting Chueca's recent evolution, immediately establishing Madrid's gay neighbourhood as an integral part of the story. If we look at the cinema from Spain in the last two decades, there are many directors who set their films in specific cities, making these very much a part of the narrative, and which become much more than 'neutral and basically uninteresting' backgrounds (Sorlin, 2005: 29). Almodóvar's *Carne trémula / Live Flesh* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1998) and *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios / Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1988) are clear examples of this (see Allinson (2001a), or Seguin (2005)), as indeed a number of other films in his extensive career. Similarly, much of Ventura Pons' cinematic output is as much about Barcelona itself (see for example, Pujol, 2009) as his characters and storylines. The films *20 centímetros / 20 Centimeters* (dir. Ramón Salazar, 2005), *Noviembre / November* (dir. Achero Mañas, 2003) or *Princesas / Princesses* (dir. Fernando León de Aranoa, 2006), for example, are very much an exploration of Madrid's streets and its inhabitants, while Juan Luis Iborra and Yolanda García Serrano's *KM. 0* (dir. Juan Luis Iborra and Yolanda García Serrano, 2000) references one of Madrid's pivotal national spaces in its title, just as Juan Flahn does in his opera prima *Chuecatown*, the narrative of which could not exist without the specific physical space it is set in.

Steven Marsh (2004), in his analysis of Almodóvar's *Carne Trémula,* describes Chueca as 'one of the areas of the city centre to have undergone the most radical demographic and social changes in the last decade' (2004: 59), an idea that is at the narrative core of *Chuecatown*. Furthermore, Marsh asserts that the history of Madrid's gay district is 'an example of the historical mediation of space by opposition' (2004: 59), an opinion that I would also applied to the latter film and its main theme. Not only is there a dichotomy of gay versus straight space throughout the whole film (best exemplified by one of the protagonists Víctor's vision of a gay paradise through the eradication of any evidence of the old, heternormative Spain) but there is, more interestingly, a constant oppositional tension between the national and the global, between Spanish 'flavours' and globalising tastes.

In *Chuecatown*, it is clear from the beginning that when we talk about Chueca we talk about gay Spain, and when we talk about gay Spain, we are looking towards the future, never the past. In the film, heterosexuality and heteronormativity represent the past – Spain's and Chueca's – while youth, modernity and the future are associated with the gay community. Víctor's crusade is to make Chueca 'un barrio moderno, tolerante, divertido y cultural' ('a modern, tolerant, fun and cultural neighbourhood') and a 'un espacio para los jóvenes'

('space for the young'). While his words do not denote any gender specificity or sexual preference, his promotional video features athletic, semi-naked men - objects to admire or obtain for the young gay man who sees the rainbow flag as his banner. Víctor mentions that there is still 'mucho trabajo por hacer' ('a lot of work needed') in the modernisation of Chueca, in obvious reference to the old generations that still populate Madrid's centre (see Valenzuela and Olivera (1994) for a study of Madrid's census, history and modernisation), and he knows that he will have to get rid of the neighbourhood's past in order realise his vision. This then sets in motion much of the plot, and the scenes that follow are telling.

Shortly after the infomercial finishes, Víctor murders his first on-screen victim (we later learn that there have been more), an elderly lady who has spent her whole life in the flat he is trying to buy, and who embodies all that is traditionally Spanish and, therefore, all that holds back the evolution and resurgence of a modern, vibrant, and gay neighbourhood (and by extension, a modern, vibrant, and gay nation). Almost every element of the murder scene – set design, dialogue, mise-en-scene, screen composition – combines to signify this. The elderly woman's home is extremely old-fashioned; there is a lack of light – the curtains and blinds are shut, as if closing the flat from its surroundings; her cats are all named after right-wing Spanish politicians (Federico (Trillo), Aznar, Rajoy, and Acebes); and her first words – uttered after turning Víctor's video off – are to scold one of the felines for knocking over a tacky plastic Flamenco dancer doll, which she calls *La Pantoja* – a knowing reference to Isabel Pantoja, the Spanish singer whom Miguel Ángel Gózalo (1989) defines as 'un retazo de la España más castiza y folclórica' ('a piece of the most traditional and topical Spain'). Even the murder weapon is symbolic, for Víctor strangles the elderly woman with the blind's cord, simultaneously filling the room with light as well as the bright background of Chueca itself. Interestingly, the scene is shot, primarily, in medium close-ups and close-ups of both Víctor and the elderly lady, framing them in the shadows of the unlit flat. As Víctor kills the elderly lady in extreme close-ups, and as the blinds roll up, the room lits up, and the scene finishes with a medium-long shot of the room bathed in sunlight, while the elderly lady hangs dead in front of the window. The new Chueca, it would appear, is on its way, and is determined to erase the archaic Spain (the village-mentality of the previous owners) to allow for a new globalised society – exemplified in the very next scene in the form of a gay couple, who are about to buy the newly refurbished flat from Víctor.

In terms of physical space, *Chuecatown* repeatedly presents us with the dichotomy of gay as the new, as progress, and heterosexual as the old, the outmoded and the oppressive. It is not only the elderly lady's flat that needs modernising, but the driving school office where

Leo – and his homophobic employer – work, not to mention the greengrocers' shop owned by Leo and Rey's straight best friend – the traditionally named Lola (Mariola Fuentes). We also see this in the police station, with its Spanish flags and photos of King Juan Carlos, and in the shabby, dated hospital where Leo and Rey are reprimanded by a homophobic nurse for kissing and then again for talking too loudly: 'señores, casi prefiero que se besen' ('gentlemen, I'd almost prefer it if you kissed each other'). The nurse's words can perhaps be seen to signify the homophobia of traditional institutions more widely.

Figure 3 – Auto Escuela Pardo in *Chuecatown*

All these heteronormative and 'straight' places are cluttered with history and national identity, just as the old lady's flat was, and feel either oppressive (like the driving school) or submerged in Spain's history (like the aforementioned police station). The driving school has a very busy exterior, its door full of signs and information, not fitting in with the tidy modernity of its surroundings. The first time we see the Auto Escuela Pardo is in a establishing shot, the image on screen almost divided in two, with the driving school building presented as a boring, austere grey block on the left, in clear contrast to the lively, colourful building on the right (a block of flats with a shop underneath), something that can also be mirrored in the advertising signs they present: the driving school a plain-looking one, while the contrasting shop has a rainbow flagged, neon illuminated, attention-grabbing one. As Leo's car enters from the right of the frame – from the modern, 'gay side' of the street – it stops in the 'straight side' of the street, besides the driving school door and in front of a rubbish tip: the visual metaphor could not be clearer (see Figure 3). Once inside the driving school, Mr. Pardo, the owner, is thinking about blending in with the neighbourhood by either painting its cars pink, placing rainbow flags or having posters with naked boys around his

establishment (in order to attract a bigger gay clientele), token gestures that allow him not to change much of his oppressive looking, small school, while at the same time appealing to a stereotypical superficial gay community.[20]

Later on, Rey, Leo and Lola are seen enjoying a drink in a very modern gay pub. The driving school's small, claustrophobic premises contrast with the openness and lit space, and while Mr. Pardo has filled its walls with driving posters and signs (some, even, with the red and yellow of the national flag), the pub is bright and minimalist in its décor, with white furniture, pastel colours and clean surroundings, giving a sense of peace and tranquillity. Comparing the pub to the club in *Más que amor, frenesí* and the bar in *Sobreviviré*, there is a clear evolution towards more Americanised and stylised-looking establishments. In fact, the pub could easily fit in the type of establishment the girls in American TV series *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), further corroborating Víctor's comment.

If this binary presents heterosexual places as institutional, traditional, dated, and somewhat foreboding – the health service, the police (where Milá (Rosa María Sardà) and Luis (Edu Soto) work) and politics (represented by the rightwing Councillor) are all featured in this light – the gay sphere is presented as defined by leisure, culture, and aspiration: pubs, clubs, restaurants, the modern art gallery, gyms, and gay saunas. Natalie Oswin (2008) observes that 'gay and lesbian or queer spaces are frequently commercial spaces' (2008: 93) and that as such there is no sense of a governing national body behind them to inhibit one's social enjoyment. In the film, gay establishments are about freedom and enjoyment, while straight establishments, particularly national institutions, are characterised by tension and oppression. Furthermore, this binary can also be applied to the characters themselves. Both Antonia (Concha Velasco), Rey's mother, and Milá, Luis' mother, are controlling; they invade both personal and literal space, trying to dominate and possess it, never allowing their sons independence. In contrast to Víctor's aggressive creation of queer private spaces, we see Antonia take over the private space of Leo and Rey's flat and try to revert the queering of the space by breaking up their relationship.[21]

Helen Liggett and David C. Perry (1995) explain that there is a need to acknowledge the function of physical space in 'constituting, maintaining, and challenging social life' (1995: 2), and this is certainly captured in the opening scenes of *Chuecatown*. The change of

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[20] See, for example, Holt's (2011) study on gay men, superficiality, and the 'gay community,' or Weir (1996: 31-32).

[21] As I will discuss in Chapter 2, when analysing *Cachorro* and the use and meanings of private and public space, the family is one of the main causes for the 'heterosexualisation' of private queer spaces. An important point to bear in mind also when studying same-sex family formations in Chapters 5 and 6.

the physical space of the flat is indicative of the challenging of Spanish social standards and values. For example, the murder scene cuts, through a dissolve, to the same flat where we now find an empty space with pristine white walls – a blank canvas, free from the past and ready to accommodate the new: 'clean-cut, minimalist spaces, whitewashed walls, light designer furniture, finished to perfection with the latest gadgets and home appliances' (Fouz-Hernández, 2010: 86). Ironically, perhaps, it is implied that the new space is not necessarily one of individuality, as the new gay tenants plan to place a spinning bike in the living room – gay globalised life is about fitting in with everyone else ideals, and having a perfect body is essential to the centrality (both figuratively and spatially in their own flat) of their lives (see Llamas and Vidarte, 1999: 55-73).

The idea of globalisation asserting itself as the necessary foundational concept (Soja, 2000: 190) is further developed throughout the film. Edward W. Soja states that if you are not thinking 'global,' you can 'miss out all that is new and innovative in the contemporary world' (2000: 191), and this view is exemplified in Víctor's declaration that 'Quiero *Sexo en Nueva York*, No *Ana y los siete*' ('I want *Sex and the City*, not *Ana y los Siete*') referring to two famous television series, one American (and therefore of global scope) and one national (and which represents everything that he is fighting against). Moreover, and as Figueras Mas (2005) argues, the storylines in *Ana y los siete / Anna and the Seven* (2002-2005) do not speak to the young, but instead to children and older generations (2005: 5) – demographics that Víctor sees as irrelevant. His vision has no place for the 'pueblo' ('village') mentality of Madrid, (see Allison (2001a: 117) for a discussion of the perception, and representation of, Madrid having a 'village' mentality).

It is useful at this point to explore Víctor's motivations in the film. In some respects, his characterisation seems to be similar to Jon Binnie's (2004) suggestion that 'a strong disidentification with one's own citizens' (2004: 37) characterises many radical elements of lesbian, gay and queer politics. Theoretically, Víctor can certainly be seen as the most radical side of queer politics, focused as he is on eradicating from Chueca anything that is not queer, that still has certain links with nationalistic ideals or that represents traditional Spanishness in any shape or form. As written, the character never defends anything that can be related to his country of origin and the historical past he comes from. Interestingly, Víctor's sexuality is never established or revealed in the film, and while he can be seen to embody radical characteristics of queer politics, his interest in developing Chueca as a gay space is driven by the market potential of the pink economy. Given his ruthlessness and his obsession with the global, there is evidence to suggest a character who has taken queer political ideals and is

using them for financial gain. We can argue, then, that the character of Víctor functions as a criticism of the exploitation and rampant commercialism of the queer community – aspects of queer spatial evolution already discussed and highlighted by Jay (1997) or Knopp (1995, 1998).

Related to this, we can also see Víctor as a force that marginalises diversity and promotes conformity. While he acts as a putative-father to Leo (taking him shopping, encouraging him to improve himself, etcetera), he is essentially attempting to 'globalise' Leo's image – in order to also deceit him – just as he updates the flats he wants to sell. This, we can argue, represents further criticism of the commodification of the gay community, as he attempts to mould a new Leo based not on individuality, but in line with the body politics of a gay community obsessed with 'fit, athletic, or just muscular, bodies' (Fouz-Hernández, 2010: 90). Víctor is trying to change the face of Chueca, and to do so, he has to change people into what he believes the perfect gay individual and the perfect gay space should look like. In this respect, he is not unlike Antonia and Milá in that he is trying to control, invade and possess Chueca. He is in effect a gentrifying factor, similar to that described in the fourth stage in Collins' (2004a) model, and in trying to modernise and globalise Chueca – and make it perfect for all those who can afford to pay for it – Víctor embodies Gill Valentine's (2002) description of how gentrification in queer spaces 'gradually displac[e] the long-term poor, minority residents, as well as squeezing out low-income lesbians and gay men' (2002: 147). Víctor's actions are also contrary to Lewis Holloway and Phil Hubbard's (2001) definition of home as a place to 'assert one's identity and be what or who one want to be' (2001: 90). Conversely, he presents a direct parallel to the definition of capitalistic interests by Brent Ingram, Bouthillette and Retter (1997a) where the focus is in 'creating relatively privatised, elite, and expensive queer space' (1997a: 59).

As noted, Oswin (2008) is concerned that gay, lesbian or queer spaces – which tend to be commercial spaces – are unevenly consumed, exclusionary, and class-dependent. Ruting states that those who do not conform to dominant notions of acceptable gay public behaviour may need to be displaced from the district (2008: 263). This is reflected in the aforementioned scene where Leo, Rey and Lola are ejected from a gay bar for not meeting its preferred standard of clientele. They do not conform to the desired image of affluence and physical accomplishment.[22] As Rushbrook (2002) observes, access to the 'safety' of queer

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[22] For a discussion of the body politics in the gay community see Yelland and Tiggermann (2003), Gil (2007), or Bergling (2007); see also Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito (2007: 111-134) for a discussion of 'hyper-corporeality' in the representation of gay bodies in Spanish cinema.

spaces is 'limited to those who "look right" and can afford to pay the "pink premium"' (2002: 197-198). Chueca, then, has been transformed as a space of liberties, but one that comes with its own internal strictures and which marginalises those who fail to conform. As Llamas and Vidarte (1999) put it:

> Las selecciones de clientelas que se establecen en función de unos u otros criterios son el factor de control más evidente. De éstas, la más patente (que no la única) es la selección impuesta por el poderío económico.
>
> (Llamas and Vidarte, 1999: 216)

> How the clientele is selected according to one or other criteria are the most obvious control methods. Of these, the most obvious one (but not the only one) is the selection imposed by economic power.

Interestingly, the film does ultimately present an alternative option to the globalisation of queer space. It can be argued that there is still 'hope' for Chueca and its founding concepts of multiculturalism, difference, and eclecticism. At the end of *Chuecatown*, Víctor is defeated and jailed for the murder of the old ladies, and both Leo and Rey go back to their previous lifestyles, rejecting the imposed notions of conformity and sameness. We can see this as a small victory – the defeat, of sorts, of globalisation and gentrification by means of two gay outsiders who prize individuality and difference over 'homonormativity.' The last minutes of the film also allow for a union of sorts between national and global ideologies – for while Leo and Rey continue to live in Chueca (suggesting change from within the community) they invite Antonia, Rey's mother, to stay next door, which constitutes an olive branch, not only between family members, but the old and the new, the past and the present, and the modern gay inhabitants of Chueca with the old ladies of the neighbourhood. It is a softening of the gay / straight binary presented in the film thus far. There is even a suggestion that the new, gay Chueca can embrace national traditions, for as the film comes to an end, Leo and Rey request Spanish casserole for dinner[23] – hope indeed, perhaps, for as Robert J. Holton (1998) and Jarrod Hayes (2000) argue, globalisation has wrought not only homogeneity but, on the contrary, a proliferation of nationalist sentiment, suggesting a backlash against the loss of diversity, tradition and individuality.

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[23] Interestingly, and as I will discuss in Chapter 6 in my discussion of same-sex parenting, the opposite occurs in *Fuera de carta / Chef's Special* (dir. Nacho G. Velilla, 2008), where in order to open a traditional Spanish food restaurant, Maxi (Javier Cámara) must move out of Chueca.

1.6.- Conclusion

It is undeniable that the neighbourhood of Chueca has gone through some major changes since the late 1980s. From the liminal space populated by prostitutes and drug addicts – as seen in, for example, Almodóvar's *¡Átame!* – to the globalised village in *Chuecatown*, the area's evolution is very similar to that of other western queer territories. Aldrich (2004) argues that gay villages – what he calls 'gay cities' – are not confined to the western world, and he cautions against assuming simple 'replications of European and American gay life' (2004: 1730). Although I would concur that the chronology of the appearance of gay spaces – as well as their 'contexts, social and spatial segregation, legal situations, political entitlements, [and] the degree of public visibility' (2004: 1731) – varies, it is clear that a similar queer spatial evolution does occur in many western societies. As such, Collins' (2004) theory offers a clear model with which to examine the creation of a queer space and, while accepting that there exist particular cultural, social, and political differences to this process, I am of the view that it also identifies a number of similarities with which to analyse and compare the Spanish case – and other western cases for that matter.

My analysis of the representation of Chueca in contemporary Spanish cinema demonstrates not only how Collins' model can be applied to the analysis of said representation, but also how Chueca's evolution has occurred in a constant oppositional binary system where Spanish identity has been associated with heterosexuality and globalisation with homosexuality. This binary only reinforces the idea of homosexuality as the 'other,' a concept I will discuss further in Chapter 3.

Although, as mentioned in the section on *Sobreviviré*, the act of sex is not what defines queer space (Désert, 1997: 20), the proliferation of saunas and dark rooms in *Chuecatown* and *Los novios búlgaros* for example, or Iñaqui's sexual escapades in *Sobreviviré*, reinforce the stereotype of Chueca, and gay spaces in general, as over-sexualised. Nevertheless, and as I will discuss in Chapter 2, there is something very progressive in representing this side of the gay community, since it also normalises non-normative sexualities and sexual acts. As David Bell and Jon Binnie (2004) argue, gay men are currently seeking more sexual gratification in public spaces as a response to the assimilation of other gay consumption spaces into the urban fabric (2004: 1811).

Finally, *Chuecatown* illustrates the current gentrification and modernisation that is occurring in Chueca, while at the same time critiquing the homogenisation – or, in Bell and Binnie's words 'the new homonormativity' (2004: 1808) – that exists in modern queer spaces. By presenting a gay couple that is contrary to gay stereotypes – a couple who are not

affluent nor conform to hegemonic gay body politics – the film ultimately voices and champions the differences that exist within the gay community at large, offering alternative characterisations to the more commodified aspects of gay culture. This is something which also occurs in *Cachorro*, a film which serves as the main case study in the next chapter and the discussion of private and public spaces in Chueca.

CHAPTER 2:
Privacy in Public Spaces and the Public Side of the Private Space

> Mis amigos, los de verdad, piensan que es
> indiferente lo que haga con mi cuerpo
> debajo de las sábanas o en la
> intimidad de un bosque.
> (Juan González, 2005: 27)[24]

In the previous chapter I looked at how public queer commercial and communal spaces have been represented in Spanish films, but I have not yet explored the concept of private spaces as areas where a gay identity may be asserted. Though I briefly discussed the queering of a private house at the start of *Chuecatown*, it is necessary to examine how private space is contested by gay identities and how, in return, these spaces are translated into film. As such, I will focus on the idea of the home as a private space, particularly in relation to the characters of Pedro (José Luis García-Pérez) in *Cachorro / Bear Cub* (dir. Miguel Albadalejo, 2004) and Daniel (Fernando Guillén Cuervo) in *Los novios búlgaros / Bulgarian Lovers* (dir. Eloy de la Iglesia, 2003). I will also asses the private versus public dichotomy when it comes to the representation of queer spaces, and how, in the realm of sexuality, both spheres are 'neither clearly delineated nor mutually exclusive' (Cantu, 2002: 159).

In the next section I will begin by providing a quick overview of previous literature about sexuality and the home, which will offer a framework within which I will base my subsequent analysis of several Spanish contemporary films (concentrating mainly on *Cachorro* as the case study for this Chapter). After looking at the private, domestic space as a means to express one's gay identity, I will then consider public space as a substitute for private space, when the private space has been 'colonised' (once again) by heterosexual identities.

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[24] 'My friends, my true friends, are indifferent to what I do with my body under the bed-sheets or in the privacy of a forest.'

2.1.- Home and Sexuality: The Absence of Geographic Literature in Gay Men's Homes

When researching theoretical discourses on public and private queer space, it is interesting to note, first and foremost, the dearth of literature on private queer spaces compared with public queer spaces. As Yolanda Retter (1997: 328) posits, this may be because public spaces are easier to find or establish (since they may be recorded through listings in community publications and directories), while private ones often remain invisible (unless otherwise decided by the occupant) and lost to history. It could also be that in contemporary activism (and therefore in the analytical and theoretical papers which cover these subjects) one of the most important functions of queerscape[25] architecture and geographical studies has been the 'reappropriation' of public space from heteronormativism and heterosexual dominance. As Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette and Yolanda Retter (1997b) point out, however, private space 'has often been closely tied to patriarchal and heteronormative notions of sexuality and intimacy' (1997b: 373), and I would argue that these also need to be studied and considered when discussing queer space. As of late, for example, there has been an increasing interest in the geographies of home and domestic space – of private space – as a means of (queer) identity formation.

Research on the meanings and experiences of home has proliferated over the past twenty years, recently gathering pace in geographical disciplines (see Blunt and Varley, 2004 or Blunt and Dowling, 2006). As Shelley Mallett (2004) argues, though, these analyses and studies have centred on particular dimensions of home – normally those aspects that fall within their own discipline (2004: 64). Therefore, it is practically impossible to review all spatial, sociological, political, etc., aspects of home, and there is a need for an interdisciplinary sharing of ideas and concepts in order to fully comprehend what we understand as home. What this body of work has revealed is essentially 'the complex experiences and perceptions of the domestic spaces we call "home"' (Gorman-Murray, 2008: 32), and what it has proven is that when we refer to 'home,' we mean not only the actual physical site (the 'house,' the building itself), but also an array of different personal meanings, emotional attachments, social relations and shifting cultural associations (Duncan and Lambert, 2004: 382-403).

Although house (the physical private space) and home in contemporary western societies are linked concepts, we cannot reduce the understanding of home to the physical site

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[25] Understanding 'queerscape' as Brent Ingram, Bouthillete & Retter (1997c) describe it: 'a physical landscape that harbours queer sites and queer space, where resistance to heteronormative constrains and a diversity of homoerotic relations intensify, cumulatively, over time' (1997c: 449).

of the house. As Peter Saunders and Peter Williams (1988) define, home is both 'simultaneously and indivisibly a spatial and a social unit of interaction' (1988: 82), that is, the physical setting where social relations are constituted and reproduced. The home, then, is the fusion of the physical unit (house) and the social unit (household) (Mallett, 2004: 68).

A point to take into consideration is that previous literature has tended to focus on women's experiences of home, establishing how differently men and women experience domestic spaces, and how, through the design and spatial organisation of the building, normalised heteronormative and heterosexualised 'gender roles and gendered uses have been built into the very fabric of the home' (Gorman-Murray, 2006: 54). The home then, informed by normative heterosexuality, becomes the space where the nuclear family interacts, a nuclear family presided over by a husband and father figure and a wife and mother one, embedding and enacting in the home / house, their heteronormative gender roles (Walker, 2002: 824-827; see also Chapter 5 and 6 for further discussions of the concept of family and the nuclear family in particular). As such, while geographical studies of home have critiqued the gendered meanings and social interactions that occur inside it, they have done so within an established (and implicit) heteronormative framework (Gorman-Murray, 2006: 54). As Lynne Walker states, the home is 'heavily patriarchal in terms of territory, control, and meaning' (2002: 836), and geographical theorists have tended to rely on these patriarchal and heteronormative ideas when analysing and discussing their studies.

David Bell (1991) highlights that 'housing is primarily designed, built, financed, and intended for nuclear families' (1991: 325). Since contemporary western domestic environments are theoretically and discursively imagined (as well as physically constructed) as heterosexual spaces for nuclear heteronormative families, Andrew Gorman-Murray (2007a) argues that sexuality theorists have debated how specific sexual relations and identities have been 'positioned as homely, their presence in domestic space normalised' (2007a: 197). At the same time, this has marginalised other sexual practices, identities, and relationships, rendering them 'improper for ideal imaginings of home' (2007a: 197). Gay men (and indeed lesbians and bisexuals) constitute the group rendered 'improper' for the home and the (private) domestic space (see Valentine (1993), or Kirby and Hay (1997)). This division of the home space is strikingly similar to Gayle Rubin's (1999 [1984]) division of the inner and outer charmed circle, positioning the house environment as the inner side, with all that it entails.

Returning briefly to the opening of *Chuecatown*, when Víctor is trying to convince the old lady to sell her flat, he mentions that he knows a lot of couples looking to move into a

house such as hers, but her answer comes fast: '¿Parejas? ¡Maricones!' ('Couples? Fags!'). It is obvious that she does not see 'the home' as a place for gay male couples, nor believe that the term 'couple' (subscribing to the traditional definition of the word) as appropriate for queer people (see Chapter 5 for a discussion on same-sex relations and the family institution). Gay men, in her view, are 'improper' for the domestic space, excluding same-sex relationships (and identities) from ideal discourses of home. As aforementioned, the home could symbolically be seen as existing within Rubin's (1999 [1984]) physical charmed circle ('the charmed house / building') and just as gay identities and acts are outside the charmed circle, so they also are outside the domestic space.

Mallet (2004) argues that the main problem here is that the home is frequently described as a 'haven or refuge' (2004: 70), as a place where one can 'retreat and relax' (2004: 70). If this is the case, then it would seem that queer bodies do not have a private space to escape to and in which they can be themselves. Those that do not conform to conventional ideas of gender and sexuality will, according to Julia Wardhaugh (1999), be excluded (both symbolically and literally) 'from any notion or semblance of home' (1999: 97). Other theorists, however, question this idea of the home being an oppressive site of normative heterosexual domesticity. Some sexual and geographical theorists have pointed towards the fact that there are some gay men and lesbians who use domestic spaces to affirm their sexual identities and relationships (Gorman-Murray, 2007a: 198). Amongst others, Sarah A. Elwood (2000) looks at how lesbians are asserting their sexuality in suburban areas of Minneapolis, while Yolanda Retter (1997) has done the same with lesbian spaces in Los Angeles between the 1970s and 1990. Andrew Gorman-Murray himself subscribes to this line of thinking (see Gorman-Murray, 2006, 2007a and 2008), analysing how gay men have queered their homes, in the hope (consciously or not) of subverting the normative domestic heterosexuality intrinsically associated with the private space.

In the next section of this chapter, I will study the film *Cachorro*, paying particular attention to how Pedro re-affirms his sexual identity by queering his private space. Initially, Pedro feels the need to de-queer his home in order to accommodate nephew Bernardo into his private space and his life; and in doing so falls prey of the heteronormative understanding of the home and the family unit. I will explore further Pedro's parenting role in Chapter 6, analysing the space they inhabit rather than the familial bond that they develop. Although both spheres (space and family) are highly interconnected in *Cachorro*, for the purposes of this chapter I am interested in how Pedro compartmentalises his relationships with regards to the space he inhabits. Initially finding his gay identity incompatible with his parenting role, I

will demonstrate how Pedro is able to re-queer his flat and establish a bond with Bernardo by sharing both his domestic space and the surrounding neighbourhood of Chueca, while at the same time opening up to him about his sexuality. The film portrays a clear link between Pedro's personal identity and development and the flat he inhabits, and I will argue how the character's queering and de-queering of this personal space has a corresponding effect on his openness and inhibition about his homosexuality. I will follow this with an exploration of *Los novios búlgaros*, studying the blurring between the private and public space, and how public sexual spaces are used by the protagonists for different reasons and in different ways.

2.2.- The Private Domestic Space: The Case of *Cachorro*

Cachorro presents an interesting example of a private space being queered by a gay male, and then momentarily de-queered or heterosexualised as it then evolves into a familial queer space. Andrew Gorman-Murray (2006) details that if one's own home is to function as a private space affirming one's gay identity, then it must often be queered – deleting or limiting reminders of the discursive fusion between the domestic space and heterosexual nuclear family or heteronormative socialisation (2006: 56). To queer it, then, gay men (and lesbians) will try and displace the 'inherent heteronormativity of domestic space', creating non-normative socialisation and identity-affirmation, by 'opening up the private space of the home, inviting in external non-normative counter-discourses, bodies and activities' (2006: 56).

As the opening credits roll, the first frames in *Cachorro* are close-ups of personal objects around Pedro's bedroom: a family portrait of Pedro himself and his deceased boyfriend; some wall paintings; his bed side table; and a picture of Pedro as a child. Reflected across these surfaces (in the glass of the picture frames, in the small mirror of the bedside table) we can see the figures of two men having sex, and also hearing them. The first images we see, then, are of a non-heteronormative sexual encounter and relationship. It is immediately established that Pedro's flat is a gay one – the images of the two men (neither of them Pedro himself) having sex are not just reflected on the surfaces of objects (as if these where just mirrors), but the slow panning of the camera, editing and sound mixing of the sequence creates a link between the flat and the same-sex sex act, as if these two (the flat and the same-sex sex act) are as one. The reflection of the (homo)sexual act on the family pictures and flat objects points towards a queering not only of the space, but also of the concept of family, as I will discuss in my analysis of Pedro's parental role in Chapter 6 (see also Fouz-Hernández (2010: 88-89)).

Gill Valentine (1993) argues that common features in home-building reinforce the heteronormative cultural norm of the 'reproductive monogamous family unit' (1993: 397), such as the master bedroom (the main bedroom for the heterosexual married parents), and smaller bedrooms for the children. Pedro's master bedroom is used by two single (non-married) gay men, subverting the heteronormativity of the private location (and the heteronormativity of the family institution). Pedro has opened his private space to external non-normative counter-discourse bodies and activities (those outside of Rubin's (1999 [1984]) charmed circle, in this case gay men, in non-stable relations, having non-reproductive sex), queering his personal space, and de-heterosexualising it. As Gorman-Murray (2006) argues, opening the domestic space to outside non-normative bodies for 'unhomely activities' queer these homes, 'rendering them sites of comfort, safety, emergence and connection for gay men' (2006: 61). In this case, both men having sex in Pedro's bed (without him, as he is in the shower getting ready for the arrival of his sister and nephew), feel secure in the knowledge that this is a queered space where their (sexual) acts will not be punished or judged.

As the film clearly establishes, Pedro's private space is an extension of his sexual identity. Next, I will discuss how this space is de-queered in order to accept Bernardo into Pedro's life. Following from this, I will study how Pedro is able to re-queer his private space not in spite of Bernardo's presence, but thanks to their interactions.

2.2.1.- De-Queering Pedro's Flat: Bernardo's Arrival

Shortly after the initial sex scene, Pedro is seeing de-queering his home, in order to accommodate the imminent arrival of his (heterosexual) family into his personal and private space. Although Pedro highlights that he is open about his sexuality with his family, he stresses that he does not want to 'recibirles con dos tíos en cama' ('greet them with two men in my bed'). As the two nameless men leave, Pedro mentions that this encounter is something of 'una fiesta de despedida… de momento' ('a goodbye party… for the time being'), as there will be no sex in the flat while his nephew is staying. Pedro is then seen tidying up the flat. There is a close-up of a chest of drawers, where Pedro puts his pornographic material (videotapes and magazines) and sex toys away. This is followed by a medium shot of a coffee-table, which is also cleared (more porn, empty whisky bottles, and drug paraphernalia) and then another medium shot of his bedside, from which a number of condoms are removed. The focus on close-ups and medium close-ups seems to detach these sexual objects from the flat as a whole – indeed it is a telling stylistic choice that we never see a long shot of the

house until it has been de-queered. After he is done tidying, Pedro opens his living room windows to air the stuffy flat. Just as he opens the windows to the outside world (the heteronormative space of Madrid's streets), the doorbell rings, announcing the arrival of his (heterosexual) family. The house has been completely de-queered, and it is presentable for normative discourses. Gorman-Murray (2007) argues that through the accumulation and arrangement of material possessions, same-sex sexual identities and relationships are materialised and reflected in their homes, queering them up (2007: 206). As such, by getting rid of (sexual) partners, homoerotic pictures, souvenirs, books, magazines, porn films, etc., Pedro has had to stop reflecting his own sexual identity (and his relationships) in his own home – a space that is now shown in a fixed medium long shot rather than a succession of different close-ups.

It is interesting to note how the opening of windows – as in *Chuecatown* – is used to symbolise a shift from one type of private space to another. Just as Víctor opened the old lady's window, letting gay Chueca into the heterosexually repressive space of her home, so Pedro is presented as doing the opposite in *Cachorro*: his gay space intruded upon by the heternormative world outside; the open windows this time signifying a de-queering rather than a queering of the domestic space. Visually, the shot (looking out of the window), is dominated by the image of a red neon-sign with the words 'Español' ('Spanish') in it, emphasising Pedro's return to the more traditional and heteronormative society represented by his family.

On opening the door, Pedro's family (his sister, brother in law and nephew) bursts in, and from then on he is presented at the margins and background of most shots, visually and metaphorically displaced from the centre of his own home. For example, we see a medium shot of the family in the foreground, with Pedro standing passively not only in the background but also towards the edge of the frame. Pedro's home is then inspected by the heterosexual gaze of nephew Bernardo (David Castillo) who starts to touch everything he sees, essentially imprinting himself on the place. Pedro is then relegated to tidying up after his sister, Violeta (Elvira Lindo), who uses the space as if it were here own – charging to the kitchen, opening cupboards, pouring herself a drink. Back in the living room, Pedro is depicted in the background once more, sitting defensively and holding a pillow almost as a shield (see Figure 4) while his family continue to dominate the space: Violeta and Bernardo in the foreground, doing all the talking; Violeta's boyfriend, Borja (Cali Caballero) poring through Pedro's book and record collection. While the family is aware of and does not question Pedro's sexuality, his space is 'taken over' by the hetero family unit. Pedro is seen

throughout these initial scenes with his sister holding things between himself and Violeta: at first he holds her jacket and then crosses his arms in the kitchen, as if shielding himself from her words; in the living room, he places the aforementioned cushion in front of him; finally, in the airport, he hides behind Bernardo as Violeta leaves to the airplane.

Figure 4 – Pedro in the background in *Cachorro*

Pedro seems at first tense, unable to fit Bernardo within his lifestyle and space. Again, this is represented visually. Throughout the first half of the film, as Pedro is getting used to the presence of his nephew in the flat, he is presented in medium long shots at one side of the frame or indeed in the shadows. It is particularly clear in the scenes that depicts the first morning after Bernardo's arrival: we see the boy and his babysitter, Lola (Diana Cerezo) dominating the frame of medium shots, the space around them almost entirely occupied and Pedro's presence almost erased from the home.

With Bernardo in the house for 15 days, Pedro decides that there can be no gay (sexual) acts during that time, which also displaces non-normative bodies and activities from the house. This is of course in stark contrast to the images with which the film opens – not just the reflections in household possessions of nameless men having sex, but a more direct, explicit and close-up presentation of the two men in coitus (see Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito (2007: 128) for a discussion of this particular scene).

These initial images also contrast with Pedro's inability to relax with Manuel (Arno Chevrier), an on-off lover who arrives to stay for the weekend. When Manuel, who is a flight attendant (perhaps a nod to the instability of his relationship with Pedro, and the flux between different spaces), and Pedro enter the flat, the scene is presented in a long shot dominated in the foreground by Bernardo, asleep on the sofa-bed. The lighting accentuates the sleeping boy further, while the gay lovers are barely seen in the background shadows. As they move

into the bedroom Pedro finds it difficult to concentrate, and is unable to perform sexually knowing that his nephew is in the other room. It would seem that the heteronormative world has not only marginalised Pedro in his own home and inhibited homosexuality activity, but is psychologically dominating Pedro and preventing him from physically expressing his (gay) sexual self.

Andrew Gorman-Murray (2007a: 200) highlights that there are two ways in which the process of queering a home works. One is through the activities and uses of the home within the domestic space and this is certainly present in *Cachorro*, with Pedro (prior to the arrival of his nephew) having queered his home through, amongst other things, the presence of (homo)sexual activies and relationships. The other way discussed by Gorman-Murray (2007a) extends to the impact of these uses: for example, queer homemaking practices might bring about changes to the very materiality of the domestic space; that is, material alterations to the design of the dwelling (2007a: 196), Interestingly, Pedro is faced with the opposite situation: he has to change the layout of his flat to de-queer even further his private space. This becomes necessary when Violeta is imprisoned in India for drug possession, and it becomes clear that Bernardo will have to stay for longer than expected. Pedro then has to make the decision to physically alter his home. Initially, he starts by emptying his closet, in order to allow for Bernardo's belongings to fit in.

Figure 5 – Pedro engulfed by the new wall in *Cachorro*

In this scene, while Pedro and his friend Javi (Mario Arias) are shown removing clothes from Pedro's wardrobe (a metaphorical emptying the 'gay closet' perhaps) Bernardo is presented in a medium long shot in the centre of the screen, his red pyjamas blending in

with the red curtains in the living room – as if Bernardo is already part of the furniture. We then see a group of workmen building a new bedroom for Bernardo, and a telling medium-long shot of Pedro, once again in the background, engulfed by the new wall that is being erected (see Figure 5). Heteronormativity is once again shaping the domestic space, with the private space in which Pedro can express his (homo)sexual identity being literally (and very visually, with new walls being erected) diminished and closeted.

2.2.2.- Re-Queering Pedro's Flat: A Queer Family Space

Interestingly, after Pedro has to physically alter the flat in order to accommodate Bernardo staying long term, as I will explain shortly, Pedro and Bernardo are shown bonding and equally enjoying their private space together. Although the aforementioned wall-building scene shows Pedro's personal space being diminished, there is a turning point – both visually and in the narrative – after this scene where Pedro and Bernardo are finally able to open up to each other about their fears for Violeta's future, and where they are seen to be able to share their domestic space together.

In this scene, both Pedro and Bernardo are shown standing side to side in front of the bathroom mirror, a frontal, eye-level, medium two-shot offering the same amount of empty space around each character. Visually, Pedro is not in the background anymore but placed besides Bernardo, heightening the relaxed attitude between both characters. Pedro is trimming his beard; Bernardo is brushing his hair. As they discuss how long Violeta might be imprisoned in India (which they both concede will be years), Bernardo suddenly says 'Estoy harto de llevar el pelo largo. ¿Me lo cortas como tú?' ('I'm sick of having long hair. Could you cut it short like yours?'). Through a series of dissolves we see how Pedro progressively shaves Bernardo's hair, with the dissolve editing hinting at a new-found closeness – a change also reflected in the fact that Bernardo starts to look like Pedro, with the new images of both characters superimposed over their old selves.

It is also in the public space that Bernardo and Pedro are able to bond together – namely, by sharing Madrid's gay community with Bernardo, which also allows Pedro to relax and re-queer his private space. After the hair-cutting scene, Bernardo and Pedro are seen shopping together in Chueca or going to a bar to drink a chocolate milkshake – the medium two shot, similar to that of the bathroom scene, sees the characters drinking at the same time, imitating each other. Pedro is finally seen sharing his private space – and the Chueca neighbourhood as an extension of this space – with Bernardo in a paternal manner. The film seems to be pointing towards Pedro accepting that he can create both a queer space and a

familial space, without having to choose only one of them. The change is also represented visually back at his flat, with camera shots no longer depicting Pedro at the edge of the frame, but rather Pedro and Bernardo together contentedly co-existing in the same space.

Shortly after, Bernardo and Pedro go to a surprise party at Javi's flat, which is, importantly, at the centre of the Chueca neighbourhood (and an example of the gentrification of queer spaces I discussed in Chapter 1). Here, Pedro is able to relax and re-queer his identity outside of his own domestic space. Scott Tucker (1990) argues that in the private sphere, gay people often feel 'the world contract to the space of a closet' (1990: 21) since they cannot express their gay identity in the realms of the private heteronormative home. Although Pedro is shown to now comfortably live in a queered home, he finds himself having to 'de-gay' it, in order to make space for his nephew. His 'world' (his home) contracts (by putting up physical walls to create a room for Bernardo), and Pedro is able to re-enact his gay identity outside of his de-gayed personal space. It is through sharing the space of Chueca with Bernardo, and seeking out private spaces in the public realm, that he is able to find himself and his gay identity again.

Leaving Bernardo at Javi's, Pedro goes to a gay club, where is surrounded by friends and other gay men. The framing of this scene effectively conveys that he now feels very much at home and able to express himself: we see Pedro framed in the centre of the shot, no longer at the margins or relegated to the background, surrounded by people but not swamped by them. This scene is followed by one in which Pedro goes to a cruising areas in the outskirts of Madrid.[26] Even in this public sexual space Pedro seems to be less displaced than in his own house, the shot again framing him in the middle of the shot and the action. While 'it is not the sexual act that is central to a queer identity' (Kentlyn, 2008: 330) and while public sex is not a 'fundamental and inseparable' component of gay culture (Leap 1999: 4), if the private space of the home – the 'safe space in which to enact "outlaw" sexuality' (Kentlyn, 2008: 331; emphasis in original) – is neither private nor safe to enact a queer sexuality, then there often exists a need – as we see here with the character of Pedro – to find such a space. The public space, then, is a substitute for the lack of same-sex privacy in the private (domestic) space.

The heternormative world continues to exert an influence over Pedro's private space, however. This is clear when Pedro is visited by Doña Teresa (Empar Ferrer), Bernardo's grandmother and Violeta's mother-in-law, who blackmails Pedro – threatening to reveal his

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[26] Understanding cruising area in Maurice van Lieshout's (1997) sense of a place of impersonal, anonymous, or casual sex (1997: 350). See also Hollister (1999: 55-70); Tattelman (1999: 71-72); or Rushbrook (2002: 190).

HIV status if he does not comply with her desire for legal guardianship of Bernardo. The camera once again displaces Pedro from his own space: as they talk, a medium two-shot positions both characters in the middle of the screen; slowly, a side tracking shot brings Doña Teresa to the forefront and middle of the frame, leaving Pedro visually diminished in the left hand corner as she chastises Pedro's sexuality and lifestyle. The framing effectively conveys the impact of her imposition and words, if not de-queering then certainly undermining his identity and status in his domestic space. Indeed, as Bernardo and Pedro say their goodbyes in the next scene – Doña Teresa having taken control and decided to send Bernardo to a private school in Valencia – the familial and visual space created by both Pedro and the child is constantly interrupted by the sound of the flat's intercom, and the heteronormative presence of Doña Teresa is felt diegetically off screen. As I will analyse in Chapter 6 in regards to Pedro's queer identity and parenting role, although Pedro and Bernardo had finally been able to share and create a queered and familial space, the possibility of both sphere's (homosexuality and the family) co-existing is questioned and disallowed by the character of Doña Teresa who takes Bernardo away.

Pedro then falls ill from pneumonia, and spends a short spell in hospital. As he returns to his flat, he is seen convalescent in his living room, in the same sofa that Bernardo used to sleep in before Pedro built him his own room – positioning Pedro in the same space that was previously occupied by Bernardo heightens the sense of solitude that Pedro feels now. Sidestepping the link between homosexuality and illness (a link which I will study in depth in Chapter 3), Pedro seems to have re-gained his domestic private space, but at the expense of his relationship with Bernardo. Although at the beginning of the film Pedro seemed unsure of how to deal with both his gay male identity and his new role as a father figure to Bernardo, he had finally been able to create a space where both (homosexuality and family) could exist. A close up of Pedro in the sofa is transformed, by a backwards tracking shot, into a medium long shot of Pedro alone in the flat, the darkness around him (he is only lit by a side lamp) engulfing him. The nephew's absence is further highlighted by a voice over of Bernardo – as Pedro reads a letter from Bernardo, the voice over of the child tells him that 'te quiero mucho, igual que los otros niños a sus padres' ('I love you a lot, the same way other kids love their parents'). Bernardo's words endorse Pedro's parenting role, and although the film seemed to progressively portray the existence of a positive queer family and queer domestic space (as well as a progressive representation of homosexuality on screen), as Fouz-Hernández (2008) argues,

> the implicit pathologization of gay lifestyles, together with a blackmail narrative and the insistence of promiscuous sex scene, are elements that seem to shed a negative light on gay representation.
>
> (Fouz-Hernández, 2008: 52)

Just as it seemed that a compatible queer and familial space was possible, the narrative in *Cachorro* introduces the blackmail element of the plot, which of course focuses on Pedro's sexuality and HIV status as negative factors. This undermines the progressive spatial representation of Pedro re-queering his space and not at the expense of creating a family space with Bernardo. Although Pedro had initially to de-queer his own space in order to accommodate Bernardo, the film positively reinforced the idea that a queer domestic space – indeed, a queer domestic familial space – could exist, and that Pedro as a gay man was compatible with Pedro as a father-figure. As I have argued, however, this is essentially undone in the third act.

While the use of these stereotypical narratives – that of the medicalization of the gay body, which I explore in Chapter 3, or the sad gay man stereotype, which I will discuss is Chapter 4 – used in the third act is (as I will argue in the next chapters) a common one, *Cachorro* then takes a final turn. The conclusion of the film, as Fouz-Hernández highlights, does 'offer a more positive horizon' (2008: 52), with the death of Doña Teresa and Pedro's return to good health. In fact, after a 'Three years later' title card, Pedro is shown naked in a gay sauna – a scene which directly echoes the one at the film's beginning. The film avoids representing Pedro in a monogamous relationship, opening up the idea of same-sex family to include those outside normative monogamous relationships (see Chapter 6 for a further analysis). Unlike, for example, the gay characters that get married in *Reinas / Queens* (dir. Manuel Gómez Pereira, 2005), Pedro is seen in the physical act of sex, an element of gay male identity not depicted in the former film. As I will analyse in Chapter 5 in regard to same-sex marriage, in *Reinas* there seems to be a softening of the gay characters who get married, toning down the sexual (physical) aspect of their gay identity in order to conform to a heteronormalising family discourse. As Maurice van Lieshout (1997) argues, promiscuous sex as an end in itself often seems shocking, while promiscuous public sex is often met with hostility and controversy (1997: 342). In *Cachorro*, on the other hand, both promiscuity and public sexual gratifications are not frowned upon, and Pedro's non-monogamous status and his sexual activities are not, ultimately, seen as contrary to him forming a familial space with Bernardo. In the scene that follows the three-years-later title, the camera frames Pedro in the middle with several bodies around him, pleasuring him. The message is clear: Pedro has re-

queered his lifestyle, and he is no longer displaced in his own space, whether at home or in the Chueca neighbourhood. Furthermore, sex is still presented as an important aspect of Pedro's sexual identity, and not something that negates, prevents, or detracts from his identity as a parental figure. Indeed, the next scene, which sees him reunited with an older Bernardo after Doña Teresa's funeral and their return to Madrid, confirms this progressive message: a queered domestic space is possible.

As I will explore in Chapter 6, *Cachorro*'s narrative also deals with the parenting ideology from a non-normative, and non-traditional perspective, inscribing same-sex parenting within the concept of family, instead of rejecting it. Interestingly, it does so while at the same time avoiding criticism of the over-sexualised, promiscuous elements of the gay community, presenting non-monogamous parents as equally capable of good parenting as those within a traditional monogamous understanding of the family concept. Pedro's escapes to different cruising areas and gay saunas in the film are naturalised, and although they serve as blackmail material for Doña Teresa, the film's epilogue points, as discussed, to a more progressive representation of homosexuality and parenting relationships.

In the next part of this chapter I will analyse the representation of cruising areas as sexualised public spaces, using *Los novios búlgaros* as the key text. This analysis follows my aforementioned discussion of *Cachorro* in relation to the character of Pedro finding privacy, sexual gratification and personal freedom in a public space. While Pedro was ultimately able to regain privacy within his own private space as well as create a queer family space, this is not the case for the leading gay character in *Los novios búlgaros*. In this film, the protagonist must exercise and fulfil his desires primarily outside the private space, since his domestic space is constantly reinscribed within the confines of heteronormativity by the presence of his on-off bisexual lover Kyril (Dritan Biba) and Kyril's girlfriend Kalina (Anita Sinkovic). As I will argue, *Los novios búlgaros* is a film based on oppositional dichotomies (Richmond Ellis (2010: 69-71); and as I discussed in Chapter 1 with the gay / global, heterosexual / Spanish binaries) that positions Daniel as the outsider in his own private space, but an insider in public sexual spaces.

2.3.- Searching for Privacy in the Public Space

As Cantu (2002) discusses, 'public and private spheres are neither clearly delineated nor mutually exclusive' in the realms of sexuality (2002: 159). Sexual encounters in public spaces are not only the result of a lack of privacy within the domestic space (see, amongst many others, Leap, 1999; Hollister, 1999; van Lieshout, 1997), of course, but I would argue

that this is very much the case in the film I explore in this section. As argued, public sex is not an inseparable or fundamental component of gay culture (Leap, 1999: 4) but, as Anne-Marie Bouthillete (1997) stresses contemporary gay male culture is very much centred on sexual freedom, at least in its beginnings, and public sex is a historically intrinsic component of this search for sexual freedom (1997: 218-219).[27] Furthermore, Sue Kentlyn (2008) argues that when the safe space of the private space is no longer private (2008: 331), public spaces are sought. We see this in *Sobreviviré / I Will Survive* (dir. Alfonso Albacete and David Menkes, 1999) (and which I analysed in Chapter 1) when Iñaqui (Juan Diego Botto) pursues a (homo)sexual rendezvous in the changing rooms of a shop. Since Iñaqui's private space has been taken over and heterosexualised by his relationship with Marga, he seeks expression of his gay identity in the privacy of a public space – a substitute for the lost private space.

According to John Hollister (1993), 'public,' by definition, excludes sexual activities, while 'privacy' is 'the context in which sex is appropriate' (1999: 63). Ira Tattelman (1999), however, argues that the separation between public and private should be described as an 'artificial construction' (1999: 73). Therefore, there are certain spaces that balance these notions of private and public. These in-between spaces are gay-specific social spaces called 'beats' which Stewart Kirby and Iain Hay (1997) define as 'public spaces where men meet other men for the purpose of having sex' (1997: 296). As Robert Aldrich (2004) discusses, cities provide venues where men who have sex with men can meet, such as parks, clubs, public baths, or toilets (2004: 1721). In *Cachorro*, Pedro visits a cruising ground in the hope of fulfilling and reaffirming his sexual needs and, essentially, re-queering his life. In this place, he is at ease in the knowledge that, although he is entering a public space, there is a certain privacy in these areas, and that he can express and enjoy his sexuality there safely (and if not as safely as one would in the privacy of the domestic space, at least as safely as one can). As noted, similar situations can be found in *Los novios búlgaros* and I would argue that they offer the protagonists a relatively safe and private space, with the gay saunas depicted offering Daniel a comfortable, homo-like quality – one missing from his own abode.

As I will discuss, the public sexual spaces are an extension of Daniel's identity, an alternative space where he is able to explore his sexual urges; and although they oversexualise the representation of Chueca onscreen, they are not critiqued as counterproductive to the formation of a public gay community – unlike, for example, *Tú eliges / Your Choice* (dir. Antonia San Juan, 2009), which I will discuss in Chapter 5.

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[27] It is worth noting that Bouthillette concedes that sex-focused identity only applies to a certain proportion of gay men and 'arguably, only part of the time at that' (1997: 218).

2.4.- *Los novios búlgaros*: Daniel's Private Space

Eloy de la Iglesia's film starts and finishes with the lead character, Daniel, visiting a gay sauna. Both scenes are darkly lit and in both instances he is framed at the centre of the screen. Around him there are images of men having sex projected onto the walls and curtains of the sauna. These images are also reflected on (or superimposed over) Daniel's body, visually linking Daniel to the erotic space he inhabits, as if the sauna space is but an extension of his identity. These two scenes serve as, respectively, prologue (occurring before the title sequence) and epilogue to the film. Ira Tattelman (1999) argues that gay baths are sites of 'eroticism and pleasure' that try to appear both 'timeless and separate from the world' (1999: 71). By editing these two scenes outside of the main narrative of the film, the sauna space in *Los novios búlgaros* seems to act as a safe-house, a separate space for Daniel to lose himself in, away from that of his romantic life (at least in Daniel's view) with Kyril – which is the main narrative in the film, told in first person flashbacks by Daniel himself. The sauna, although part of Daniel's lifestyle, is outside of his loving relationship with Kyril, and is a safe place he returns only when things with Kyril are not going well. While the film presents these establishments as contrary to the notion of romantic love – which is represented through Daniel's idealised view of his relationship with Kyril, and which is predominantly portrayed as occurring within the confines of the private domestic space – I would argue that the representation of gay saunas in the film refutes Michael C. Clatts' (1999) view that 'public sex has become increasingly resignified as evil' and a 'symbol of sanction' within the gay community (1999: 141). In fact, in *Los novios búlgaros*, gay saunas and cruising grounds are presented as Daniel's 'safe spaces,' very much in contrast to the home, where he is constantly displaced and reminded of Kyril's heterosexuality.[28] As noted, Andrew Gorman-Murray's (2006) analysis of the home reasons that sometimes, 'unhomely bars and cruising grounds become home'like' through functional interactions with, or substitution for, domestic spaces' (2006: 57-58), and that therefore, bars, saunas, parks, etc., can become a kind of home for some gay men. Kentlyn (2008) argues that the privacy of home usually provides a safe place where people can cast off the constraints of heteronormativity (2008: 327), but in the film, this 'safe space' status, as I will explore, is reserved for the public space. As in *Cachorro*, where Pedro is displaced from his private space when he de-queers it to make way for

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[28] Kyril's sexuality is never defined as gay, but as a heterosexual man that has an affective and sexual relationship with a gay man (Daniel). To assume that Kyril is gay, or even bisexual, would then be erroneous – instead, he is a man that has sex with men, but who does not define himself by his (homo)sexual activities. In fact, Kyril defines his relationship with Daniel as 'una estrecha amistad' ('a close friendship').

Bernardo's arrival, Daniel is displaced from his own domestic space when he begins his relationship with Kyril.

In *Los novios búlgaros*, Daniel's use of his domestic and public space can be understood in the context of Rubin's (1999 [1984]) charmed circle, with the private space of the home – which is where the evolving monogamous relationship between Kyril and Daniel is largely depicted – being the centre, and the public, anonymous, sex space of gay saunas and cruising groundss lying at the outer limits of this circle. Importantly for a film that seems to be built on dichotomies,[29] neither of these spheres are criticised: the public sexual space in not presented as contrary, or in opposition to, Daniel's identity within the private domestic space; rather, they are portrayed merely as different elements of Daniel's life and identity.

Interestingly, however, while both elements are accepted equally within the narrative, (Daniel's sexual escapades in the public sphere are not criticised), problems do arise when our protagonist tries to merge these public and private spheres by introducing agents from the public sphere into the private. As Robert Richmond Ellis (2010) argues in his analysis of the film, what Daniel yearns for is not sexual intimacy with Kyril (which he has on numerous occasions) but rather for 'their relationship to be made public' (2010: 70-71). Daniel's use of private and public spaces does reflect this yearning: it is in the privacy of his home that his relationship with Kyril evolves and in this space that he is slowly displaced; but it is in the public spaces (those spaces where his relationship with Kyril cannot be known) that he has sexual encounters with other men, and where he feels more at home.

An example of Daniel's displacement within his own private space is when Kyril's Bulgarian fiance, Kalina, arrives to Madrid. As Daniel finds the 'homo-normativity' of the private space (his home) disturbed by the arrival of the female (and heterocentric) presence of Kalina, Daniel tries and re-queer his own space, bringing an outsider he has met in a gay sauna. This act follows a set of scenes between Kyril and Daniel which contrast with those of Kyril and Kalina. Shortly before Kalina arrives in Spain, there is a short scene where we observe an intimate moment between Kyril and Daniel, both with their tops off, sitting in the sofa. We then cut to another scene where they are enjoying the countryside together, Daniel holding Kyril tight while riding a motorbike. These images are then juxtaposed with similar ones once Kalina is in Madrid, but this time around it is Kalina and Kyril making out on the sofa or having sex in bed, and Kalina and Kyril on the motorbike. Daniel's voice-over accentuates these images with his sentiment of his private space being taken over by

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[29] See Richmond Ellis (2010: 69-71) for a discussion on the feminine / masculine, Spanish / immigrant, passive / active polarisations within the film.

heteronormative activities: 'nada más llegar, Kalina ocupó sin el menor reparo el lugar que en su aparente candor creyó que le correspondía. En realidad fue como si lo ocupara todo de golpe' ('As soon as Kalina arrived, she innocently occupied the space she thought was hers. Actually, she occupied everything at once'). Daniel then, since he can no longer feel at home – and as he must hide his relationship with Kyril – , resorts to a gay sauna (a cruising ground) as a means of feeling at home / at ease with his true sexuality and identity in a public (but private) space.

Figure 6 – Daniel and his vandalised flat in *Los novios búlgaros*

Although Daniel's use of gay saunas and sexual activities in public spaces are openly and uncritically explored in the film, it would nevertheless appear that these non-normative (and non-monogamous) activities cannot occur within the domestic private space. The next shot inside Daniel's home re-affirms both Daniel's sexuality and his re-queering of his own private space, since he is having sex with a stranger he has picked up at the sauna. The medium close-up of Daniel aggressively fucking this stranger in the master bed is a perfect visual metaphor: Daniel is re-inscribing his authority within his own home. Tellingly, however, he is caught in the act by two armed robbers, who vandalise the flat. In an establishing shot of the living room after the robbers have gone, Daniel is framed sitting on a chair alone, in the background, on the right hand side corner of the screen, while the rest of the screen is filled with the aftermath of the robbery (see Figure 6). His private space has been looted once again, and there is no safety in claiming his own queerness here. This suggests that his private space is only to be shared with his domestic, self-idealised relationship with Kyril, and that any sexual activity outwith this relationship belongs outside the private sphere. Unlike *Cachorro*, where Pedro brought un-homely and un-monogamous

agents into his flat, in *Los novios búlgaros* the domestic space is only occupied by the idealised (in Daniel's mind) family that he forms with Kyril, which Daniel himself describes as a 'curiosa familia' ('peculiar family'). The link between family and the domestic space is made evident in the film, and is a theme that I will discuss further when I analyse same-sex marriage in Chapter 5 and the role of the father figure in Chapter 6.

This binary between the domestic private space, from which Daniel is displaced, and the public space, where he goes to satisfy his sexual urges, is repeated in subsequent scenes set in Bulgaria, where Daniel goes to attend Kyril and Kalina's wedding. Although he is welcomed into Kyril's family, scenes set inside Kyril's family home depict Daniel on the margins on the screen: in the first of these scenes, he is shot in a high angle long shot, very much relegated to the edge of a frame occupied by Kyril's extended family; in another, we are presented with a medium shot of Daniel, alone on a couch at the edge of the frame, listening to one of Kyril's uncles playing the accordion in a family-packed living room. These scenes present Daniel as being accepted into the familial space he inhabits, but always on the margins of it, equally part of and displaced from it – similar, indeed, to that of his own domestic private space in Madrid.

The two scenes that follow the wedding of Kyril and Kalina reiterate what Richmond Ellis (2010) points out as the 'mainstream heterosexual and homosexual modes of sexual representation' (2010: 70). Furthermore, these scenes also restate Daniel's place within private and public spaces in the film. We see Daniel, who has remained on the periphery of the wedding celebrations at all times, follow Robi (Nikolay Maksimov Genchev), Kyril's cousin, into the nearby woods. Once there, Robi begins to take his clothes off and invites Daniel to join him, but Daniel turns around and goes back to the celebrations. The framing of this scene, in contrast to those depicting Kyril's nuptials, presents Daniel in medium close and occupying the centre of the shot. These scenes echo those set in the gay sauna and, by spatially centring the character of Daniel once more, the film effectively conveys how comfortable he is in these public sexualised spaces. Although the homosexual encounter between Daniel and Robi is hidden from public view (Richmond Ellis, 2010: 70), its location is still a public environment, similar to those Daniel visits in Madrid. The forest scene is similar to the gay sauna scenes not only in the framing of Daniel, but also through the extradiegetic use of sensuous and tranquil music which provides another contrast to the loud, celebratory music played at the wedding party and which echoes the sensualised sounds heard at the start of the film, when Daniel is at the sex club.

As they return to Madrid, Kyril is imprisoned for drug possession and his involvement in a car theft operation organised by the Bulgarian mafia. Hereafter, Kyril and Daniel only see each other in prison, separated by bars. The jail can be seen as a substitute for Daniel's flat, their separation through imprisonment a metaphor for their failed relationship, which has never been expressed or even allowed to exist in public – merely confined to the walls of a domestic private space. Next time Daniel is seen inside his flat, he is furiously cleaning himself in the shower, as if cleansing himself from Kyril's presence. He is then framed in the middle of the bedroom in a medium long shot, sitting alone on his bed, clothes scattered around the floor. Daniel is finally at the centre of his private space once more, Kyril and Kalina gone from it, and also from his life.

Daniel never achieves the lasting romantic monogamous relationship he desired with Kyril. In a voice over, Daniel states that his relationship with Kyril consisted of something that was 'quizás amor' ('perhaps love'). Looking towards the future, he ponders: 'afortunadamente el amor ya no es lo que era' ('luckily, love is not what it used to be'). As these words – his last in the film – are spoken in the voiceover, Daniel is seen back at the gay sauna featured in the film's opening, where he unexpectedly meets Robi. The film then closes on them leaving the club. We never see how this encounter develops, but as Richmond Ellis (2010) argues, the viewer can assume that a relationship similar to the one Daniel shared with Kyril will follow, and that Daniel's sexual desire will continue to short-circuit his concomitant desire for a relationship, since he searches for intimacy with ostensibly heterosexual men (2010: 71). I would also argue that Daniel's private space will always be heterosexualised; that he will continue to be gradually excluded from it; and maintain his search for new experiences in the public space. William L. Leap (1999) discusses that 'public' and 'private' can become relative, 'almost subjective interpretations of local terrain' (1999: 9). In Daniel's case, I would argue that what he wants to be public (his relationship with Kyril) must happen in the privacy of his domestic space while that which society argues that must happen privately (anonymous sexual encounters) he performs in public spaces (the saunas and bars of Madrid's Chueca). The line between private and public in the realm of sexuality, as Cantu argues, is clearly blurred (2002: 159).

2.5.- Conclusion

Gargi Bhattacharyya (2002) highlights a growing academic interest in the intersection between sex and space, revealing the role of 'territory and individual navigation in the performance of identity, perhaps most of all in the identities of sexuality' (2002: 149).

Throughout this chapter I have analysed how the characters in *Cachorro* and *Los novios búlgaros* interact in the public territory of Chueca and the private space of the home, and what these interactions reveal about both their identity and their sexuality.

Diane Richardson (2000) argues that the private / public distinction is very much a sexualised notion which has different meanings, depending on whether it is applied to a heterosexual or homosexual context (2000: 34). The private has been institutionalised as the border of social tolerance for lesbians and gay men, as 'the place where [they] are "allowed" to live relatively safely as long as one does not attempt to occupy the public' (2000: 34). As I have discussed throughout my analysis, both Daniel and Pedro contest the notions of what is 'allowed' in public and / or private, blurring the social constraint imposed on them; while at the same time problematising the notion of the private, domestic space.

As noted, housing has traditionally been designed primarily for heterosexual nuclear families (Bell, 1991: 325), positioning normative heterosexual sexual relations and identities as 'homely' while marginalising those that do not conform to these norms. Although gay men constitute one of the groups that have been rendered 'improper' for the home (Gordon-Murray, 2007a: 197), recent research has questioned the idea of the home being an oppressive site of normative heterosexual domesticity. Andrew Gorman-Murray (2006, 2007a and 2008), for example, in discussing how gay men and lesbians use domestic spaces as a means to re-affirm their sexual identities and relationships, opens the discussion on how gay men subvert the normative domestic heterosexuality intrinsically associated with the private space.

In my study of *Cachorro* and *Los novios búlgaros* I have analysed how the films represent the problematisation of domestic, private, non-normative, gay spaces. In both cases I would argue that there is a strong correlation between the identity of the protagonists and the space they inhabit. In the case of the former, for example, Pedro's queering, de-queering, and re-queering of the home has a corresponding effect on his openness and inhibition in regard to his sexuality and identity more widely. In the latter film, Daniel's relationship with Kyril has an effect on how he enacts his identity in private and public spaces, and how he acts upon his sexuality.

Cachorro presents the idea that a queered, domestic, familial space is possible, and it also presents Pedro's changing attitude to his parental role via the interactions of the protagonists with the private spaces they inhabit. To reach the point at which Pedro is comfortable with a conflation of both his parenting role and his gay male identity, Pedro must first de-queer his home, which enables Pedro to create a blank canvas from which to eventually build a new queered domestic space. Although at points Pedro feels that his

private / personal space is being conquered or de-queered – such as the new walls that are being built around him, or him being visually framed on the background or to the sides – the film visually represents how Pedro overcomes his fear of parental responsibility and regains his sense of identity by depicting the protagonist's sharing of public spaces, in this case the gay neighbourhood of Chueca, with Bernardo. *Cachorro* also reflects social concerns about same-sex parenting via the character of Doña Teresa, but the conclusion of the narrative does ultimately offer a progressive understanding of both the family concept, and the notion of a queer domestic space.

Furthermore, and as I will explore further in Chapter 6, the film unapologetically represents promiscuity and public sexual gratification as a valid option within both the ideology of the family, and the representation of the queer space of Chueca. Pedro's non-monogamous status and his sexual activities (whether in the privacy of his home or in the public spaces of cruising grounds, dark rooms, and gay saunas) are not detrimental to the character forming a familial space with Bernardo. *Cachorro*'s narrative, meanwhile, deals with the parenting ideology from a non-normative, non-traditional perspective, inscribing same-sex parenting within the concept of family, rather than rejecting it; and at the same time, it does so while avoiding criticism of the more sexualised, promiscuous elements of the gay community. Pedro's escapes to different cruising areas and gay saunas in the film are naturalised, and although they serve as blackmail material for Doña Teresa, the film's epilogue, again, points to a more progressive representation of homosexuality and the neighbourhood of Chueca.

Similarly, *Los novios búlgaros* offers an even-handed view of public sexual spaces, although it does perhaps present them as contrary to the idea of romantic love. Daniel seems to long a public romantic relationship with Kyril, and when he realises that this is not possible, he searches for sexual release in the gay saunas. The film limits romantic love to the privacy of Daniel's home, although this is not a criticism of same-sex relationships but the result of a narrative and the character of Kyril, who needs to hide his homosexuality activity and keep it separate from the home. Nevertheless, the film does seem to be built on a repetition of binary oppositions (Richmond Ellis, 2010: 69-71), in which case romantic love and sexual gratification can be read as another of those dichotomies. The film limits romantic love to the private space while sexual gratification is mainly sought out in public spaces, highlighting Daniel's inability to obtain both under the same space.

Interestingly, while *Cachorro* presents sexuality as part of one's identity (in this case, Pedro's), *Los novios búlgaros* goes further and also presents sexuality as an intrinsic part of

public gay spaces – and more specifically, the neighbourhood of Chueca. Unlike *Cachorro*, Eloy de la Iglesia's film does represent Chueca as over-sexualised – and although it does not criticise promiscuity and this sexualisation of gay space, it does hint at a correlation between this culture and the impossibility of finding romantic, long-lasting, monogamous love. In saying that, this could also be due to Daniel's predilection for unattainable heterosexual men, than as a critique of gay culture and gay spaces in general.

As I have argued, both films place an importance on the relationship / link between the protagonists and the space they inhabit, accentuating how through their interactions with and within these spaces shape their identities. *Cachorro* and *Los novios búlgaros* demonstrate how gay men subvert patriarchal and heternormative notions of domestic private spaces as a means of gay identity formation. Lastly, and most importantly, both films do not represent promiscuity and sexual encounters in gay saunas as morally dubious, unlike *Tú eliges*, which I will explore in Chapter 6.

PART II

GAY MALE BODIES

Although traditionally the body has been the object of medicine or biology, there have been a growing number of studies on the body in a number of other disciplines in humanities and the social sciences (Wood, 2004: 48; Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 1; Turner, 1996: 31). Disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, or cultural and geographical studies accentuated the sociocultural contexts and meanings of the body over the previously physical and biomedical examinations. Indeed, as Bryan S. Turner (1996) discusses in his analysis of the social changes that have given a special prominence to the body in contemporary social theory, we now live in a 'somatic society' where 'major political and personal problems are both problematized in the body and expressed through it' (1996: 1).

As Lisa Blackman (2008) summarises, there is a shift in these studies from the idea of the body as something that we both have and are, to perspectives that encompass what bodies can do, what they can become, what they can represent, and how they can answer our questions about 'life, humanness, culture, power, technology and subjectivity' (2008: 1). To be able to study this, Blackman argues that we need to move beyond thinking of bodies as just substance, 'as special kinds of *thing* or substance' (2008: 5; emphasis on original), to examine bodies 'as sites of potentiality, process and practice' (2008: 5).

Our current interest in and understanding of the body is a consequence of the prominence and pervasiveness of images of the body in popular and consumer culture in western societies (Turner, 1996: 2). In western post-industrial cultures, there is a commercial and consumerist interest in the body as a sign of the good life, as well as an indicator of cultural capital. Additionally, there has been a specific focus on the body beautiful, the denial

of the ageing body (and the rejection of death), and the disconnect with the 'other' which does not conform to the 'normalised' ideals of the body (1996: 3-5).

The body is, as sociology conceptualises, a system of signs, 'the carrier or bearer of social meaning and symbolism' (1996: 26). This tradition within sociology focuses upon cultural inscription, 'how social or cultural processes inscribe or speak through individuals' (Blackman, 2008: 16). Anthropologists, for example, have clearly examined the importance of the body in conveying culture and shared meanings, the human body as a source of metaphors 'about the organization and disorganization of society' (Turner, 1996: 26).

Within these accounts, the body is important for understanding the workings of ideology and power. As Turner (2006) explains, the human body is, and has been, a 'potent and persistent metaphor for social and political relations' (2006: 223), what Ricardo Llamas (1995) refers to as 'una estrategia recurrente de control y dominación' ('a recurrent strategy of control and domination') (1995: 153). The body is not simply defined as a body by its fixed human nature (by its biology), but it is defined according to 'the particular set of historical circumstances within which they are socialized' (Blackman, 2008: 17). To analyse the body, then, is to examine the social context, social practices, and ideological processes that produce it (2008: 17). Susan Bordo (1999) agrees that we need to think of the body not only 'as a physical entity' but also as a 'cultural form that carries *meaning* with it' (1999: 26, Bordo's emphasis). When we look at bodies, Bordo continues, it is not only the biological nature that we see, but also the values and ideals, the 'differences and similarities that culture has "written" so to speak, on those bodies' (1999: 26, Bordo's emphasis).

In the next two chapters I will examine what 'values and ideals' have been, paraphrasing Bordo, 'written on' the gay male body in contemporary Spanish cinema. I would argue that when gay male bodies have appeared on screen, they have more often than not taken the form of 'the other,' a process which positions these bodies as 'inferior, lacking, dangerous, deficient and abnormal' (Blackman, 2008: 60). Simon Watney (1995 [1991]) discusses how the essential process of identification occurs in two ways: understanding identification through difference and, on the other hand, through finding similarity or likeness (1995: 44). The homosexual body, Watney states, is an 'object' that can only be made 'publicly visible' when it is understood as different, when any possible identification with it is rejected (1995: 44). As Bordo herself references, in cinema 'the homosexual character has been continually marked by his or her sexuality' (1999: 157), unlike straight characters, whose sexual orientation is irrelevant. Similar to Rubin's (1999 [1982]) charmed circle and Kipnis' (1999) theory on body control I discussed in the introduction, the division between

'good' and 'evil' has drawn heavily on bodily metaphors (Turner, 2006: 224). There are those bodies that conform to normative ideologies which are inside the circle (just as 'normal', 'good', heterosexual sexuality is inscribed within the charmed circle), and those bodies which are deemed disruptive, 'abnormal', or 'bad', in the outer limits.

This division can also be extended to the body itself. I would argue that Mike Featherstone's (2001 [1982]) distinction of the inner and outer body categories are, when discussing gay male bodies in Spanish cinema, not only highly interconnected, but also fall within Rubin's (1999 [1984]) 'good' / 'bad', 'positive' / 'negative' dichotomies (inner / outer circle). Featherstone defines the inner body as that part concerned with the health and optimum functioning of the body in the face of, amongst other things, disease. The outer body, in contrast, refers to the 'appearance as well as the movement and control of the body within social space' (2001: 80). While the inner body is the 'normal' body every human being has, it depends in the 'outer' body, what you do with it, that will position the person within the circle, or outside of it.

Within consumer culture both bodies are conjoined: the maintenance of the inner body is a means to enhance the appearance of the outer one (2001: 80); and academics have extensively discussed the existence of the body ideal culture in the gay community (see, Llamas and Vidarte, 1999: 55-74; Bergling, 2007; Levesque and Vichesky, 2006: 46-47). Let us not forget either the centrality of the body in securing a visible gay identity (see Duncan, 2007), or that the topic of consumerism, queer space, and the gay market discussed in Chapter 1, is tightly connected to ideas of appearance and gay body perfection as well (see Mann, 1998; Duncan, 2007; Rohlinger, 2002).

In the next two chapters I want to move away from theories on body perfection in the gay community, to instead analyse how some Spanish films have represented and viewed the 'outer body' of gay male characters, and how their homo-identity has meant that, in the films' narratives, their inner bodies have suffered in return. The (homo)sexuality markings that Bordo (1999: 157) makes reference to are, in the films I will explore, expressed through the decomposing of the inner body.

Next, I will offer a brief summary of the representation of the gay body in Spanish cinema, which will serve as an introduction to Chapter 3, on the medicalization of the gay body, as well as Chapter 4, where I will explore the films in which Jordi Mollà (who has made his name playing the role of 'the other'), has played a gay character, and how the representation of gay bodies has evolved in the last fifteen years.

The Gay Body in Spanish Cinema

In his book *Escrituras torcidas* (2004), Alfredo Martínez Expósito argues that the representation of gay characters in Spanish films of the 1970s and 1980s is marked by connotations of illness (both mental and physical as a permanent correlation of their 'chosen' sexual identity), depravation (as sexual predators, trying to convert straight males) and by generally negative stereotypes – characters who meet an inevitable tragic fate. These films, born in the transitional period between the slow decay and subsequent dismantlement of the Francoist dictatorial regime and Spain's new-found democracy, established a representational canon (linked to the social and political ideology of the time) where the gay man could never be considered a 'normal', positive or, even, happy being. Instead, gay men were invariably portrayed as immoral, perverse, ill and/or socially isolated characters, in keeping with the predominant social concepts of sodomy and clinical homosexuality (2004: 243) (see also Rodríguez González (2007) for a chronology of the different stereotypes and nouns used to characterise and designate the gay male).

Martínez Expósito maintains that by the 1990s, homosexuality became an 'issue' that was slowly assimilated into and accepted by a society slightly more open to new sexualities and ideals:

> En los noventa asistimos a la práctica desaparición de los protagonistas homosexuales 'problemáticos' de nuestras pantallas, con lo cual resulta evidente que la coyuntura histórica que propició ese cine en los setenta y ochenta está ya superada.
>
> (Martínez Expósito, 2004: 240)

> In the nineties we see the fading of the 'problematic' homosexual protagonists from our screens, which evidences that the historical situation that gave way to that type of cinema in the seventies and eighties is now obsolete.

I would argue that in many films of the 1990s, a period that experienced what Santiago Fouz-Hernández and Chris Perriam call a 'modest explosion of gay-themed films' (2000: 96) in the Spanish film industry, and even the 2000s, there still persists a negative portrayal of gay male characters. Despite the presence of new, more positively portrayed gay characterisations, Martínez Expósito himself states that there was still a 'pervivencia de los motivos argumentales del suicidio, la muerte y la enfermedad'(2004: 242) ('survival of the suicide, death and disease leitmotifs'). Santiago Fouz-Hernández (2011) concurs adding that

although many gay characters gained a significant presence in Spanish film and media during the 1990s, these were 'often depicted unfavourably' (2011: 191). Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas (1998) add that during Francoist cinema, homosexuality was 'limited largely to images of comic ridicule' for example in the films of Alfredo Landa like *No desearás al vecino del quinto / You Will Not Desire the Neighbour from the Fifth Floor* (dir. Ramón Fernández, 1970), and oppositional cinema also reinforced its association with perversion and repression, an association that, they claim, still persists in contemporary cinema (1998: 147-148).

An overview of Spanish films from the last twenty years, reveals an extensive list of films that continue to represent gay characters with visual and / or thematic representations of disability, disease, illness, and death (for an analysis of earlier films, from the 1970s and 1980s, see Julian Smith, 1992: 127-162; Melero Salvador, 2004 and 2010a; or Mira, 2008).

In the 1990s, for example, we see characters such as Jaume (Josep Maria Pou), who suffers from a terminal illness and is also violently attacked in *Amic/Amat / Beloved/Friend* (dir. Ventura Pons, 1999), or Ramón (Andrea Occhipinti) who is involved in a traffic accident and confined to a wheelchair in *Amor de hombre / The Love of a Man* (dir. Yolanda García Serrano and Juan Luis Iborra, 1998). On its release, the latter film presented itself as a positive taboo-breaker, 'intent on "explaining" homosexual lifestyles to mainstream audiences' (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 125); yet it still depicts a gay character needing the care and attention of a straight woman, his friend, Esperanza (Loles León) in order to survive. Furthermore, the film insists, as Mira (2004) explains, on the 'estereotipo del homosexual suicida y en la bisexualidad para encontrar un terreno aceptable para la mirada hetero' (2004: 595) ('stereotype of the suicidal homosexual, and on bisexuality to find an acceptable point of view for the heterosexual gaze'). The gay characters in *Amor de hombre* are defined by (or 'marked by', using Bordo's (1999) phrasing) their sexuality, which is the only identifier of their characterisations.

Pajarico / Little Bird (dir. Carlos Saura, 1997) presents us with a family where, even when all the (heterosexual and homosexual) characters are flawed, it is, nevertheless, only Tío Fernando (Eusebio Lázaro), the only (closeted) gay family member, who tries to commit suicide. Interestingly, the suicide attempt is also overly exaggerated and caricaturised, heightening the comic ridicule of the situation. As Tío Fernando, a baker, tries to shoot himself, his face is completely covered in flour, looking strikingly similar to the image of a circus clown. The image is also highly metaphorical: Tío Fernando holds a phallic gun, while his face is covered in a white substance. Furthermore, the gun is, in fact, unloaded and he

bursts out comically crying, defeated. In a film that centres on the family, the idea of an unloaded gun used by the only gay character cannot but metaphorically signify his 'firing blanks.'

Later on, Tío Fernando is then confined to a wheelchair, and in the care of his wife, after suffering a heart attack. The heart attack occurs after Tío Fernando's secret male lover leaves him, once more linking the bodily aspect of the character (his heart) with his sexuality (the metaphorical broken heart from his failed same-sex relation). El Abuelo (Francisco Rabal), Tío Fernando's father, when faced with the sad news of his son's situation, exclaims: 'se ha quedado paralítico y ya no podrá tocar la gaita' ('he is now paralysed and will not be able to play the bagpipe'). The double entendre (gaita / bagpipe is another word used, colloquially, to designate the male sexual organ), is made all the more obvious by the fact that Tío Fernando actually played the cello.

In *Segunda piel / Second Skin* (dir. Gerardo Vera, 1999), which I will analyse in Chapter 4, Alberto (Jordi Mollà) dies in a motorcycle accident, after spending the whole film in a personal battle with himself, trying to deny his (homo)sexual identity. As Mira (2004) argues, by trying to de-problematise the 'gay issue', *Segunda piel* manages to make it, once again, invisible and sanitised (see Mira, 2004: 595-600 for a discussion of the film).

In the 2000s, this representational trend is still alive in films like *Valentín* (dir. Juan Luis Iborra, 2002), in which Ricardo (Lluís Homar) falls passionately in love with the eponymous Valentín (Iñaki Font). Jaime (Armando del Río), jealous of their relationship, manipulates Ricardo into killing Valentín. Shortly after, Ricardo also dies of a heart attack on his way to the police station (once again, there is a correlation between the bodily heart of Ricardo, and the metaphorical heart break from the same-sex attraction). As I analysed in Chapter 2, Daniel (Fernando Guillén Cuervo) gets beaten up in *Los novios búlgaros / Bulgarian Lovers (dir. Eloy de la Iglesia, 2003)* as a result of his relationship with Kyril (Ditran Bida), a fate also suffered by Germán (Juan Luis Galiardo) in *Clandestinos* in a similar situation. Julito (Juan Viadas) in *Báilame el agua / Fill Me with Life* (dir. Josetxo San Mateo, 2000), not only gets beaten up for being gay, but dies as a result, while Leo (Pepón Nieto) also suffers a violent assault at the end of *Chuecatown* and ends in bed unable to fend for himself.

Alfredito (Ramón Rivero) in *Madre amadísima / Dearest Mother* (dir. Pilar Távora, 2009) complains that he has suffered from depression since he was young and discovered he was gay, while he also lists a number of medications he takes daily, adding 'que yo no estoy buena con tanta medicación. Que me están volviendo loca con tanta pastilla' ('I am not well

with this amount of medication. They are making me 'crazy' with these pills'). Interestingly Alfredito not only refers to himself in feminine, but also uses the term 'loca' which means both 'crazy' and 'queer' in the Spanish argot. Alfredito is hinting towards his sexual orientation as the reason for his medical condition.

A similar situation to that of *Pajarico* occurs in *Tú eliges / Your Choice* (dir. Antonia San Juan, 2009), which I analyse in Chapter 5, in which the lives of a group of flawed individuals (in this case, both hetero and homosexual) are loosely interlinked. Nevertheless, it is only one of the gay characters, Flavio (Luís Miguel Seguí), an unhappy man who seems uneasy in his own body, who suddenly dies of cancer. As I will discuss in Chapter in 5, Flavio is not only gay, but he is also the only character throughout the film that rejects the idea of gay marriage and the family institution, even though he is gay himself.

In *Pa negre / Black Bread* (dir. Agustí Villaronga, 2010) (which is set in the years after the Civil War, and which I examine in greater detail in Chapter 3) Pitorliua (Joan Carles Suau) is chased by an angry mob and violently, publicly castrated. Even *Cachorro / Bear Cub* (dir. Miguel Albadalejo, 2004), – which broadened the spectrum of different gay bodies represented on screen and which is often viewed as a positive breakthrough in its representation of gay characters – still portrays its main character, Pedro, in a medicalising manner, as he has to live as an HIV-positive individual. Although this could also be seen in a positive manner, since Pedro is not generally victimised due to his HIV status, and the AIDS narrative is presented just as a reality that affects many gay men (see Fouz-Hernández, 2010), as discussed in Chapter 2, I would argue that even in its attempt to debunk the stigmatised negative representation of gay men on screen, the heterosexual characters in the narrative still use the correlation of gay identity and illness as a social weapon against the gay community. Arguably, this happens from the mistaken correlation between HIV and homosexuality (which I will explore further in Chapter 3). As Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito (2007) argue in their discussion of the HIV virus, 'despite the evidence of infection amongst the heterosexual population and the drug-related infections […] a body with AIDS became a homosexual body' (2007: 113). Furthermore, Fouz-Hernández (2008) also highlights that, within a more progressive conclusion to the narrative in *Cachorro*, there is still an 'implicit pathologization of gay lifestyles' in the film, contributing to the 'medicalisation of homosexuality' and shedding a 'negative light on gay representation' (2008: 52).

This does not mean that gay characters in Spanish cinema should not suffer similar fates to the heterosexual characters since, ultimately, gay or straight, people die, become ill or commit suicide. The issue arises when there is a constant linking of these issues (dying,

becoming ill, committing suicide) with the sexuality of the characters. In other words, these characters are not suffering because of external factors in the narrative, but they are suffering because of their sexuality. In Spanish cinema, there still exists a representational tradition that links gay characters to negative connotations and stereotypes; characters who are repeatedly repathologised as weak, physically or mentally ill, generally unbalanced and, dying on screen. As Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés (2000 [1997]) argue, there is 'una abundancia de muertes de homosexuales' ('an abundant number of deaths of homosexuals') in Spanish cinema. This, they argue, would not be worth mentioning or highlighting if these same gay characters were also portrayed in 'otras múltiples facetas de la existencia humana de forma digna y rigurosa' ('other multiple aspects of human existence in a rigorous and uncondescending manner') (2000: 76).

In Chapter 3, I aim to explore the representation of the gay male body in a number of films. Firstly, I analyse at the gay character of Tony (Mario Casas) in *Mentiras y gordas / Party, Sex and Lies* (dir. Alfonso Albacete and David Menkes, 2009), paying particular attention to how he is portrayed in a way that seems to continue this mode of representation that negatively equates male homosexuality with the diseased body.[30] Following from this, I will examine at two films of Agustí Villaronga, *El mar / The Sea* (dir. Agustí Villaronga, 2000) and *Pa negre*, and how these use the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War in order to construct a narrative around the homosexuality-as-disease discourse. In order to do this, I will first examine homosexuality in Spanish society and film history, focusing on the years between Franco's death and the consolidation of democracy in Spain.

In Chapter 4, and following Richard Dyer's (2002) theory of the sad young man, I will study the 'gay roles' actor Jordi Mollà has played in Spanish films, paying special attention to *El cónsul de Sodoma / The Consul of Sodoma* (dir. Sigfrid Monleón, 2009), a film that distances itself from the mentioned medicalised discourse.

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[30] Let us not forget that, as discussed in the introduction, the concept of 'homosexuality' was developed, to begin with, in the medical field (see Foucault, 1987 or Roberts, 2007).

CHAPTER 3:
Secrets, Sex, and Lies: Medicalising the Gay Male Body

> Cuando pienso en "homosexual", aparte de notar
> todavía el tecnicismo de "patología" sexual que
> lleva implícito, no puedo dejar de pensar en
> alguien con un conflicto social vivido con
> cierto dramatismo
> (Juan González, 2005: 30)[31]

In the year 2000, Jacky Collins and Chris Perriam concluded their essay on representations of alternative sexualities in Spanish film and literature of the 1990s by stating that 'cultural representations of gay and bisexual subjectivities appear to have attained a degree of acceptance in contemporary Spain' (2000: 221). Although arguably there exists more progressive representations of gay male characters in Spanish cinema, I would argue that in some cases the visual representation of said subjectivities are still attached to the stereotypes of the gay man as effeminate, the camp comic relief – or indeed follow the aforementioned tradition of disability and disease. While there may be some level of tolerance towards sexuality, for example, it does not mean that this tolerance is without limits or not subject to certain social regulations. Moreover, these subjectivities may be receiving more 'acceptance' but that does not necessarily translate into a progressive onscreen representation.

Spanish National-Catholicism operated (as any type of dictatorial mandate tends to do) through a model of binary categorisations – of superior / inferior pairings (categorisation that reminds us of Gayle Rubin's (1999 [1984]) discussion of the charmed circle binary, by which certain sexualities and acts seem to be more socially accepted than others). For the fascist political programme and ideology to succeed, these oppositional pairs have to remain well-defined and contained. Franco saw his political force as composed primarily by young men, thereby reinforcing patriarchal and male-centred social norms, which positioned passive and virtuous femininity on the other side of the dichotomy. Gema Pérez-Sánchez (2007) remarks that in one stroke, Franco's dictatorship 'fixed essentialising notions of [both] gender roles and gendered tasks' (2007: 11-12). But, in a context of male dominance and bonding –

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[31] 'When I think of "homosexual," apart from still noticing the technical term of sexual "pathology" that it implies, I cannot stop thinking of someone with a social conflict that is lived with a certain sense of dramatic flair'

this ideology where male homosocial gatherings were encouraged and women were relegated to the home – a certain fear arose: 'the fantasmatic possibility of a slippage from homosocial acts to homosexual acts' (2007: 12).

The reason for the Francoist obsession with criminalising, pathologising and containing homosexuals (and homosexual acts) lies in its intention of defining and containing social behaviours considered dangerous or amoral (such as homosexuality). As Pérez-Sánchez argues, same-sex male sexual relations 'literalised the underlying sexual potential at the heart of fascism's glorification of male camaraderie' (2007: 13). The irrational fear[32] was, then, that within homosocial acts there existed a potential for homosexual behaviour, a transmission (almost as if it were a viral disease) of homosexual feelings. As such, non-heterosexual practices and identities were positioned in binary opposition to heterosexual ones, homosexuality becoming a sphere where the Francoist hegemonic gender and sexuality discourse was corrupted.

The idea of homosexuality as a *je ne sais quoi* capable of being transmitted is at the core of the homosexuality as disease (and, also, as sin) ideology, an ideology that also alluded to the dangers of propagation, as exemplified by the judge (and advocate of the Francoist regime) Luis Vivas Marzal's 1963 text which reads: 'socialmente, de extenderse, puede impedir la propagación de la especie' ('socially, if it spreads, it might hinder the species' propagation.' Note the scientific vernacular used to highlight the medical and even biological urgency of his words) (Vivas Marzal cited in Melero Salvador 2010a: 19). As Alejandro Melero Salvador (2010a) notes, Francoist legislation made use of this, and many other scientific and medical texts of the period, to create new laws in the 1970s. La Ley de Peligrosidad y Rehabilitación Social, for example, was approved on the 4th of August 1970, and was not abolished until January 1979, four years after Franco's death.[33] Following the ideas of psychologist Dr. Valentín Pérez Argilés (1955), homosexuality was perceived as a 'social danger' and, as such, had to be penalised by law because of its 'contagious capacity' (Pérez Argilés cited in Melero Salvador, 2010a: 25). As an infectious illness, homosexuality and homosexual men had to be treated as diseased, extracted from society, and locked up. The treatment of homosexual men and women went even further, with the theories that, even if these homosexual men and women were not responsible for their 'homosexuality' (their disease), they still had to be treated as delinquents and / or patients (2010a: 25). In other

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[32] This fear is not particular to the Spanish case. See, for example, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1985) discussion on 'homosexual panic,' and its origins in a culturally imposed homophobia (1985: 83-96).
[33] It is worth mentioning that even then, 'Fancoist laws persecuting homosexual practices were applied until 1981' (Pérez-Sánchez, 2007: 15).

words, being ill was bad enough, but it was much worse to be ill and actively to seek out other men to infect – 'sin preocuparse de si la persona a quien se dirige es o no un homosexual, incluso en el fondo todo homosexual aspira a la conquista de un hombre normal' ('without taking into account if the other person is homosexual or not, deep down every homosexual wants to convert a normal man') (Pérez Argilés cited in Melero Salvador 2010a: 26). Dangerous words, since they perpetuate the myth amongst an already scared and submissive society that anyone can fall prey to the desires of the sinful, diseased, and, now, unlawful homosexual. Furthermore, it equates heterosexuality with normalcy by arguing that all gay men want to sexually convert 'normal' men, positioning homosexuality outside of the definition of 'normal' (and outside of Rubin's (1999 [1984]) inner charmed circle). Interestingly also, these arguments joined different social aspects into one same category, using the religious vocabulary of the 'sinner', the psychological and medical terminology of homosexuality as a 'disease', and the legal and moral sphere of the 'delinquent' and 'criminal'.

Such 'scientific' theories and social fears are also at play in the representation of homosexual bodies (both gay and lesbian) in cinema. Even after the death of Franco, some film directors like Mariano Ozores continued 'usando con éxito la ideología franquista' ('successfully using the Francoist ideology'), still making films in which gay men were seen as 'ill' and went to the doctor to get cured, or as sexual predators incapable of 'respetar a los heterosexuales' ('respecting heterosexual men') (Melero Salvador, 2010a: 46; for an in-depth look at both the historical facts and an overview of the films from this period, see Mira (2004), Arnalte (2003), Olmeda (2004), and Melero Salvador (2010a)). Importantly, Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés (2000 [1997]) argue that, in the cinema of the 1980s and 1990s,

> En lo que se refiere a la construcción de la figura del homosexual atrapado en la urdimbre de la *pulsión de muerte*, destructora para los demás y, a la postre, para sí mismo, la producción española literaria y cinematográfica de los últimos veinte años, salvo excepciones, no ha sabido articular un discurso novedoso y complejo, distinto del que abunda en el tratamiento de personajes en el cine de Hollywood.
>
> (Aliaga and Cortés, 2000 [1997]: 74)

> With respect to the construction of the homosexual figure trapped in the weave of the *death drive*, destructive to everyone else and, moreover, oneself, the Spanish literary and film production of the past twenty years,

exceptions notwithstanding, has not been able to articulate an original and complex discourse different to the one that appears in Hollywood cinema.

However, this social, theoretical, and representational trend that pathologises homosexuality is neither a new one nor one exclusive to the Spanish peninsula (see, for example, Sedgwick (1985: 20) for a discussion of the association between homosexuality and mental illness). Richard Meyer (1991), for instance, analyses similar trends in America's cinema and society when discussing the 'contamination' of Rock Hudson's body image from the perfection of his 1950s hetero virility, to the ill, 'anti-body' of the 80s, when he had to come out both as homosexual and as a person with AIDS. As Meyer himself remarks, 'the AIDS image not only figures the physical signs of illness' but also uses those signs as the 'evidence and horrific opening of Rock Hudson's closet' (1991: 275).[34] John Lynch (2003) also details how some newspapers in the United Kingdom presented AIDS as the price for promiscuous and hence immoral (homosexual) behaviour, and those suffering from the virus as both victims and guilty (2003: 179). It is also important to note Leo Bersani's (2010 [1987]) famous article *Is the Rectum a Grave?* that also deals with these issues and argues against the association of gay bodies with 'contaminated vessels', and the (homo)sexual act as the 'criminal, fatal, and irresistibly repeated act'. Promiscuity, he states, is seen not only as the act that increases the risk of infection, but as the sign of infection itself, making 'legitimate' the idea of homosexuality as 'intrinsically diseased' (2010: 17-18).

In his 2007 essay *What Do Gay Men Want?*, David M. Halperin further discusses the pathologisation of homosexuality, and he highlights how even in 1999, psychologists were still speculating in scientific publications about homosexuality leading to mental illness. Halperin summarises, in his introduction, how the queer body has been viewed less in terms of sexual difference and more in the context of diseases and / or abominations:

> For more than a century, any deviation from very strict standards of normative gender presentation and heterosexual behavior had been considered, and treated, as the sign of a psychological illness – as a symptom of a diseased state, variously described as "moral insanity",

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[34] See also Dyer (2002, pp. 159-174) for a discussion on the hetero / homosexual image of Rock Hudson pre- and post-AIDS.

"sexual perversion", "personality disorder", "mental illness", or "mal-adjustment", but characterized in any case as a kind of abnormal psychology.

<div align="right">(Halperin, 2007: 1).</div>

Robert McRuer (2003) also sees a shared pathologised past between homosexuality and disability, and discusses how these have been constructed as the antithesis of the heterosexual able-bodied identity. He agrees and expands on Lee Edelman's (1994) discussion that argues three responses to the homo-disease linkage, and how these differentiate them from the hetero-normal image. First, defining and labelling the 'deviant' person as a 'homosexual' meant it was easier for others to understand / view that person as distinct from the norm, a difference 'legible on the body' (McRuer, 2003: 80). Secondly, by making visible the 'homosexual' (by talking about the subject and bringing it to society's attention), there is a social need to visualise that person as sick or disabled (with mental and physical differences) to distinguish it from the 'healthy, fit and able norm', that is the hetereo-body (2003: 81). Thirdly, 'the spectacle of bodily or mental difference was preferable to that of a threatened masculinity or heterosexuality' (2003: 81), as this way could maintain intact both masculine and heterosexual identity by positioning the 'out of the norm' body and act as an other-abled body, a diseased and disabled one. Moreover, by presenting the homo-disability as a flaw, as a non-natural, non-normative identity, it was then possible to medicalise it, theoretically dissect it and, ultimately, treat it and correct it (see Cleminson and Vázquez García (2007) for a study on the history of male homosexuality in Spain from 1850 until 1939, and Cleminson and Vázquez García (2009) for an analysis on sexual identity and medical science from 1850 until 1960 in Spain).

I will analyse the 2009 Spanish film *Mentiras y gordas / Party, Sex and Lies* (dir. Alfonso Albacete and David Menkes, 2009) next, to determine how a pathologically diseased and disabled meaning is inscribed on the gay body represented in it.

3.1.- *Mentiras y gordas*: Gay Body and Sickness

Mentiras y gordas follows the lives of a group of teenagers that only seem interested in sex, drugs and Rock 'n' Roll (or, in this case, techno music). Amongst them is Tony (Mario Casas), who is secretly in love with his best friend, Nico (Yon González). Tony is the only gay male character of the group, and he eagerly follows Nico everywhere, agreeing to do things he would not normally be comfortable with, just to please him. After accepting to participate in a threesome with him and a girl they have just met at a party, they go to bed.

There, in the heat of the moment, Tony and Nico accidentally kiss. When Nico reprimands Tony for it, the latter leaves – but not before declaring his love for his friend, to which Nico only responds by reiterating a supposedly non-sexual friendship: 'pero si tú y yo somos amigos' ('you and I are friends'). Hurt and confused, Tony then descends into a night fuelled by drugs and alcohol. He ends up in a gay club (the first one seen in the film, compared with the various straight bars and clubs already seen) and meets a stranger, who takes him to the club's dark room and has what appears to be unprotected anal sex with him. Hours later, Tony, whose dehydrated body has been deteriorating due to substance abuse, dies. This narrative follows similar discourses from the 1970s and 1980s films and which Aliaga and Cortés (2000 [1997]) discuss problematises the gay character in a 'sentimiento de culpa […] que no asume' ('guilt […] which he cannot accept'), and whose only outcome seems to be their death (2000: 76). Furthermore, as Aliaga and Cortés highlight, it is not the abundance of gay characters that die in cinema that is problematic, but that these characters are not portrayed, as mentioned in the introduction to this section, also in 'otras múltiples facetas de la existencia humana de forma digna y rigurosa' ('other multiple facets of human existence in a dignified and rigorous manner') (2000: 76).

As mentioned in the previous section, until relatively recently Spain's cinematic and literary tradition has arguably opted to deal with alternative sexualities by either denying their existence (and thus perpetuating their invisibility, with characters hiding their queer identity in order to be treated 'normally' by peers), or by treating them as an illness (Collins and Perriam, 2000: 215-216). I believe there are a number of recent Spanish films that still subscribe gay characters within this tradition. Although it is a progressive fact that *Mentiras y gordas* depicts a range of sexualities (the film also has a minor lesbian narrative), inscribing homosexuality as another sexual option within contemporary Spanish youth circles, there is no denying the fact that Mario Casas' character, Tony, is still the only one stigmatised by his sexual preference.[35] While it is the case that one of the lesbian characters, Marina (Ana Polvorosa), also goes through some (homo)sexually-related identity issues, the resolution of her storyline, where she finds love, normalises her sexuality in the varied spectrum of sexual relations within the narrative, something that never happens with Tony.[36] Contrary to Tony's case, the heterosexual characters are also shown to suffer relationship-related issues, but not

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[35] There are however, and as I will discuss later on in the chapter, some positive connotations of having Mario Casas, considered one of Spain's current 'hottest' young actors, playing a gay character.

[36] It is worth pointing out that lesbian bodies have also suffered (just as much, or even more) a similar fate as those of the representation of gay ones (see, for example, Collins and Perriam (2000), or Chapters 2 and 3 of Melero Salvador (2010a)).

because of their sexuality, since their sexual choice is not a hindrance. Heterosexual sex and identities might lead to emotional heartbreak, but homosexual sex leads to disease, solitude, and death.

With Tony, on the other hand, we can see both strands of the 'tradition' mentioned by Jacky Collins and Chris Perriam (2000): the only way Tony can deal with his sexual identity is by denying it, so that his character suffers from an internal trauma which the film visually translates into his bodily decay. In fact, in a 2010 interview in the television program *La tarde en 24 horas / The Afternoon in 24 hours* (2010 – present), Alejandro Melero Salvador argues that the gay male character in *Mentiras y gordas* is involved in a 'complejo trauma' ('complex trauma') more akin to the narratives 'de la Transición' ('from the Transition'), than contemporary ones. The film, in the first instance, presents Tony and Nico on equal footing, Tony's homosexual body 'just like everybody else's.' However, this seems to only be true so long as he keeps his gay male identity in the closet, hidden from his heterosexual friend, thus fulfilling heteronormative roles. Raz Yosef (2005) in his analysis of Israeli film *Yossi and Yagger* (dir. Eytan Fox, 2002), argues that the film sells the normative fantasy of the gay male character being like anybody else, but it does so at the price of leaving the protagonists and their own gay male identity in the closet. It seems there is a distinction, in the film, between identity and sexual act, a topic which brings to the fore my discussion in the introduction about how in modern western countries, homosexual acts are socially and culturally related to a gay identity, a gay space, and a sense of group commonality (Rubin, 1999: 156). Although Tony does define himself – albeit in the closet, and unknown to Nico – as gay, he has yet to act upon his (homo)sexual urges. Jean-Ulrick Désert (1997) argues that an 'erotic engagement' does not need to occur in order to establish an identity (1997: 20). Similarly to Yosef's (2005) discussion, in *Mentiras y gordas*, Tony is able to feel like the rest of the group of friends, his (homo)sexual identity unproblematic, so long as he does not act upon his sexuality.

3.1.1.- Tony and Nico: The Line Between Friendship and Love

It is interesting to consider the visual representation of Tony. When he reveals his (homo)sexual identity, it is denied by Nico, and Tony's body is subsequently visually represented as sick, slowly deteriorating, until his tragic end. Let us turn our attention to the scene in which Tony expresses his true feelings for his friend. At a house party, Tony is led by Nico to a bedroom for the threesome with Carmen (Elena de Frutos). Although Tony's gaze is directed towards Nico, and they sit beside each other on the bed, Carmen soon comes

between them after she says 'para empezar creo que estamos mal colocados... la chica debería estar en medio que pareceis dos siameses' ('for starters, we are in the wrong order... the girl should be in the middle, you two look like Siamese twins like this'). At this point, closeted Tony is in fact holding Nico by the arm, and both are wearing similar clothes (jeans and a black vest), which makes them look almost identical. Both male bodies can be considered, at this point, equal, untainted by the (future) revelation of Tony's homosexuality.

Figure 7 – Tony and Nico in *Mentiras y gordas*

The moment is an echo of an earlier scene, at the start of the film, in which Nico and Tony are lying on the beach. Both are wearing only jeans, their torsos exposed. Their strikingly similar appearance (both are thin, of similar age, matching build and clothes) accentuates the assumed heterosexuality of their identities (see Figure 7). They both decide to swim nude, and the camera vertically pans Nico's body, from Tony's point of view, as he (and the audience) gaze at his undressing and subsequent total nakedness. While the audience is now aware of Tony's possible homosexuality and clear infatuation with Nico (since our gaze is momentarily aligned with Tony's perspective), Nico is still unaware of Tony's feelings, but he catches Tony's look, and breaks the moment by obliviously asking '¿qué pasa?' ('what's up?'). When Tony, now also free of clothes, runs besides Nico towards the sea, we, as the audience, still perceive (as Nico does) that both characters are equal. There is no fear (by Nico, nor the audience) of this homosocial act being perceived as a homosexual one, since not only has Tony's real sexual identity yet to be truly disclosed but Nico has regained the gazing power, and destabilised Tony's.

The concept of the ownership of the 'gaze' is very relevant here. Krin Gabbard (2001) echoing Mulvey's (1975) theory on 'the gaze' and classic Hollywood cinema, argues that

psychoanalytic film theory suggests that the active act of looking (he / she who holds the gaze) in films usually involves empowerment, while the passive act of being looked at, often involves the opposite (Gabbard, 2001: 8).[37] I would argue that in *Mentiras y gordas,* this is reinforced by Nico being made aware of Tony's gaze and questioning it. In two cases throughout the film however, the aforementioned moment and in a later scene, Tony is the one that (actively) looks and Nico is (passively) looked at, Nico's questioning – this second time, he asks him '¿pero, por qué me miras así?' ('why are you looking at me like that?') – disturbs the gazing act. Both times Tony sheepishly recoils, and denies any happening, thereby returning the power position to Nico. Although these scenes are relatively homoerotic in their depiction of the homosocial relationship (and where Tony's gay gaze could gain some power), they are constantly heterosexualised by Nico's actions and words, de-(homo)sexualising any moments of physical contact between the pair. As Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gammar (1995) discuss, we must be aware that Mulvey's 1970s gaze-theory assumed that the male figure could not bear the burden of sexual objectification (1995: 31); and Steve Neale (1993) offers a counterpoint to Mulvey's argument, observing that men in cinema may be the ones 'looked at' – like Tony looking at Nico – but this depends on the idea of same-sex desire being displaced or masked (1993: 16) – which is what Nico does with his words (displacing), and Tony with his actions (masking his same-sex desire for Nico).[38] Moreover, as Richardson comments in his reading of John Paul Pitoc's body in the film *Trick* (dir. Jim Fall, 1999):

> […] this, however, raises the question of whether a body objectified is necessarily a body disempowered? It should be remembered that the subject controlling the gaze is static and essentially locked in mesmeric control by the object at which he gazes.
>
> (Richardson, 2003: 236)

In *Mentiras y gordas*, although Tony is the bearer of the gaze which objectifies Nico, Tony's constant passivity and the fact that Nico tends to break the gazing act, never really allows him to have any power in the relationship.

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[37] See also Manlove (2007: 83-84) for a discussion of Mulvey's gaze theory in contemporary cinema, and gaze theory in relation to, not only, psychoanalysis, but also as a 'primary part of human subjectivity' (2007: 84).

[38] I would also like to highlight the importance of 'the gaze' as identity recognition among gay men (see Nicholas (2004)) or in gay cruising culture (see Stacey, 2005: 1925-1927), reinforcing today's use of Mulvey's gaze theory amongst academics not only discussing film theory but also gay male culture, and gay and lesbian film and media representations (see, for example, Evans and Gammar (1995), Drunkman (1995), Patterson and Elliot (2002), Drummond (2003), Wood (2004), or Bridel and Rail (2007)).

Returning to the threesome scene, and bearing in mind that both male bodies have thus far been equally represented in their interactions, Carmen asks them to get naked and join her in bed, which Nico and Tony do in sequence (Tony copying Nico's actions, all the while gazing at his friend). As before, both characters are seen performing the same acts (undressing from similar clothes), in sequence. Once they start kissing (taking turns kissing Carmen), Tony's gaze is firmly positioned on Nico's body. The camera then cuts to a close-up of their bodies, Nico and Carmen kissing and touching each other, and Tony's hand reaching to Nico's back, stroking it. Tony's gaze has now been transferred to Tony's touch, still transfixed by his friend's body. In the foreground, we hear the constant pounding of techno music (the beat is suggestive of masculinity in its potency, and the pounding of the heart accelerated), slightly speeding up as the physical action intensifies (an aural representation of their bodies heating up, of, even, their unseen penises hardening).[39]

As the camera cuts to a close-up of the three of them kissing (both males kissing Carmen, Tony's touch/gaze on his friend), Nico and Tony's lips suddenly meet and kiss for a few seconds. At this point, Carmen's head, which has hitherto been at the centre of the action, disappears, leaving a close-up which lingers on the homoeroticism of the kiss between the two young men. Rosalind Gill, Karen Henwood and Carl McLean's (2003) discuss how representations of masculinity in literature, film and photography commonly use the 'reassuring' presence of a woman as love interest to disavow homoeroticism (2003: 193) – something which seems to occur in this scene, with Carmen's presence. The view expressed by Gill, Henwood and McLean (2003) echoes Eve Kosofky Sedgwick's (1985) discussions of how, in fiction, 'directly sexual male homosocial bonds' require a woman (1985: 50) to reject the possibility of homosexuality in homosocial relationships. Furthermore, Sedgwick posits how it is through the bodies of females that men consolidate a partnership with other 'authoritative males' (1985: 38), and how 'male homosocial desire' can be expressed 'through the woman' (1985: 82). Arguably, this could be Tony's reason for agreeing to the threesome – to be closer to Nico.

As Nico pushes away, the music is then emphatically slowed down (suggesting Nico's rapidly cooling ardour) until we are left with silence. Nico (once again questioning Tony's gaze and, this time around, touch and kiss) asks '¿qué haces?' ('what are you

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[39] Interestingly, 'techno music' is also associated with gay male clubbing culture (see Fitzgerald (1998), Malbon (1999), Boeri, Sterk, and Elifson (2004) or Peterson (2011)), arguably heightening the scene's homoeroticism. Furthermore, as Tony goes to a gay club and has sex in the dark room in the next scene, the same type of music is playing. The music acts as an acoustic reminder of the correlation between both scenes, emphasing the 'action-reaction' relation between this scene, and Tony's sexual encounter in the gay club.

doing?'). Although Tony feebly responds 'todo vale, ¿no?' ('everything goes, no?'), he is left powerless by Nico's 'sí, pero con ella no conmigo' ('yes, with her, not with me'). Carmen's head then appears in shot once again in between them, dividing them and re-establishing the heterosexuality of the act, negating the homosexual moment and preventing any further development of it. Gill, Henwood and McLean contend that another way of denying homoeroticism is by means of humour or excessive violence (2003: 193), and Nico uses humour – 'este, que lleva un pedo que ni se entera' ('this one! He is so drunk he does not realise what he is doing!') – to deflate the momentary tension the kiss has created, and goes back to kissing and fondling Carmen. Tony, then, picks up his clothes – in a medium long shot, Tony is shown alone, in the corner of the bed, reinforcing his otherness and solitude. He pulls his boxer shorts on, and leaves the room. Nico follows him to the landing shortly after, fully naked – arms open, casual, non-chalant attitude to being naked, as if nothing to hide – a stark and telling contrast, as Tony himself, feeling out of place, is shown covering his naked (and now shameful) body with clothes. Nico berates him, asking why he left, and Tony finally reveals 'sabes que a mí no me gustan las tías, a mí quien me gustas eres tú' ('you know I do not fancy girls, I fancy you'). Verbally, Tony may be coming out of the closet, but visually he is going right back into it, using his clothes as a shield. It is clear that while there is neither embarrassment nor shame in the heterosexual (naked) body, the homosexual one is effectively placed under scrutiny for altering the established 'natural' order of things. Tony is making his body invisible once again, and his identity is being negated by Nico's words, who can only answer 'pero si tú y yo somos amigos' ('but, you and I are friends') and then back away to the bedroom with Carmen.

The line between friendship and love seems to blur: Tony asks for more from Nico, while Nico refuses to acknowledge Tony's feelings and sexuality. As Sedgwick's (1985) discusses, homosociality (or homosocial desire) is structured by a deep denial of any association between male bonding and homosexuality (1985: 54, 35 and 114), which is the line between friend and lover that Nico is referring to. As a curious aside, Mario Casas' (Tony) following film, *Carne de neón / Neon Flesh* (dir. Paco Cabezas, 2010) has a sequence where this idea of friendship and homosexuality (or lack of homosexuality in the homosocial sphere of friendship for that matter) is revisited. In a playful scene, pimp Angelito (Vicente Romero) scolds drug dealer Ricky (Mario Casas) for jokingly trying to hug him, saying 'déjate de mariconeo que tú y yo somos colegas, pero con el mariconeo no puedo. Dame un abrazo, ¡Dame un abrazo! Pero de hombre' ('stop acting like a fag, you and I are pals, and I do not like queers. Hug me. Hug me! But like a man'). In *Carne de neón*, Mario Casas'

character (who is not gay in the film, but likes to tease Angelito) is once again told where the line is drawn between friendship and homosexuality, and how embraces and feelings towards another man are not welcome.

The revelation in *Mentiras y gordas* that in Tony's eyes, Nico is actually aware of his sexual preference is also telling. 'Sabes que a mi no me gustan las tías' ('you know I do not fancy girls') – instead of 'a mi no me gustan las tías' ('I do not fancy girls') –, makes the audience aware of this, and that, all along, Tony has known (or a least suspected) that Nico knows. Both of them, however, have chosen to ignore this fact. As Amy Aronson and Michael Kimmel argue, heterosexual bodies can 'love the sinner and hate the sin' (2001: 49), separating the homosexual (the person) from homosexuality (the verbal representation of the sexual act). As such, while Tony's sexuality was left unspoken, Nico[40] has been able to treat Tony as his equal, but once homosexuality is openly acknowledged, there is no going back. As Aronson and Kimmel argue in regards to masculinity and homosexuality in contemporary cinema, 'the costs for gay men are simple: they can never fall in love or have sex' (2001: 49). For Tony to be 'normal' (to be part of the group and Nico's friend), in other words, he must not openly express or act upon his own sexuality.[41]

What is also interesting is that the conversation reveals a power struggle that has existed all along, a power struggle that Nico has used to his advantage all along (see, for example, Perriam (2013: 131-132)). While we have been made to believe that Nico and Tony are equals (they share the same mannerisms, the same body build, the same clothes, etcetera) there has always been, in fact, dominance from Nico (heterosexuality) towards Tony (homosexuality). As long as the unspeakable remains unspoken, Nico can treat Tony as his equal, arguably following the model which Collins and Perriam (2000) discuss in their study on alternative sexualities in contemporary Spanish film of 'perpetuating the invisibility' by 'denying its existence' (2000: 215-216). As Julia Jones and Steve Pugh (2005) argue, gay men have had to live their lives on heterosexual terms, with its implications of celibacy and disinterest in sex, since this is 'less of a threat to the heterosexuals with whom they live and work' (2005: 249). As such, the act of 'sodomy' (the idea of homosexual sex) only becomes visible and problematic when the person threatens the established social order (Weissberger,

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[40] Nico never reveals if he already did know about Tony's sexuality, and it is left to the spectator to interpret either way.

[41] The relationship between Tony and Nico is similar to that of Dani (Fernando Ramallo) and Nico (Jordi Vilches) in *Krámpack / Nico and Dani* (dir. Cesc Gay, 2000), where the heterosexual body is the one seen in phallic control in contrast to the passive 'other' (that is, homosexual) (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 55; Fouz-Hernández, 2007: 234). There are other films that seem to accentuate this dichotomy (see Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 36-61).

1999: 293). While Tony's silence and denial meant his acceptance, his honesty has destabilised their friendship.

Equally important is the framing and composition of the scene. An initial establishing medium shot of both men in the corridor, Nico coming out of the room and occupying two thirds of the screen (as mentioned, naked), relegating a half-clothed Tony to the right hand edge, blurred and in shadow. The shot ends with both men facing each other and an accompanying series of contrasting close ups of each as they talk: Nico dominates his frame, with no background distraction, while the shots of Tony show a heterosexual couple kissing behind him. After Nico leaves, Tony's weaker, dominated, outsider status is then consolidated with a further shot of the character alone and still consigned to the edge of the screen, while heterosexual peers dance in the background. These revellers are all clothed and, curiously, wearing dark sunglasses, a visual metaphor perhaps for their – and wider society's – blindness towards the incident and the pain it causes. The only semi-naked person now (he is just wearing his boxer shorts, covering his genitals) is Tony. He does not fit with the rest of them and is no longer an equal to Tony.

Martínez Expósito (2004) states that the silence, censorship and denial which characterised Franco's dictatorship eliminated homosexuality from what is perceived as 'moralmente correcto' ('morally correct'), de-sexualising many Spanish generations (2004: 12). In *Mentiras y gordas*, we feel how Tony's sexual identity is being denied and censored, how he is made to feel invisible. As Alberto Mira (2004) has argued, there still exists 'estrategias de representación conservadoras que siguen estructuras heterosexistas' ('conservative representational strategies that follow heterosexist structures') (2004: 593).

Throughout the film, and contrary to the stereotype of promiscuity within the gay male community, it is the male heterosexual counterparts who actually engage in casual sex: for instance, Carlos (Hugo Silva) is constantly cheating on his girlfriend, while Pablo (Maxi Iglesias) ends up in bed with an acquaintance, and afterwards steals money and drugs from her. Tony, on the other hand, is searching for the (as I will discuss in Chapter 5) 'supposedly heteronormative' ideal of a long term relationship, but this is denied to him and he is then left to play out the gay stereotype 'focused on anonymous, recreational sex with multiple partners' (Mutchler, 2000: 37). It is ironic, then, that once Tony behaves like his heterosexual peers, it is he who overdoses and ultimately dies. So the problem, it seems, is not that Tony is sexualised, but that he is homo-sexualised. In other words, and with Aronson's and Kimmel's (2001) aforementioned discussion on masculinity and homosexuality in cinema in mind, it is

not that Tony becomes a sexual being like the rest of the characters, but that he expresses his homosexuality.

3.1.2.- Homosexuality-as-Other: Tony's Death

A comparison of the straight and gay sex scenes also illuminates how the gay male character is constructed in accordance with the homosexuality-as-other and the homosexuality-as-disease discourses. Nico and Carmen are shown first with a panning shot that reveals Nico's naked body atop Carmen (see Figure 8); it then stops to show them in bed, making love (see Figure 9). The room is brightly lit, and both are clearly enjoying the experience. When two friends enter the room to find their coats, Nico and Carmen help them, with no sense of embarrassment or shame; they even continue making love while engaging in small talk and arrange to meet in a club afterwards. The friends then depart, leaving Nico and Carmen to finish. Heterosexual sex is normalised, trivialised even, and naturalised.

Figure 8 – Nico and Carmen in *Mentiras y gordas*

Figure 9 – Nico and Carmen in *Mentiras y gordas*

Figure 10 – Tony and the man in *Mentiras y gordas*
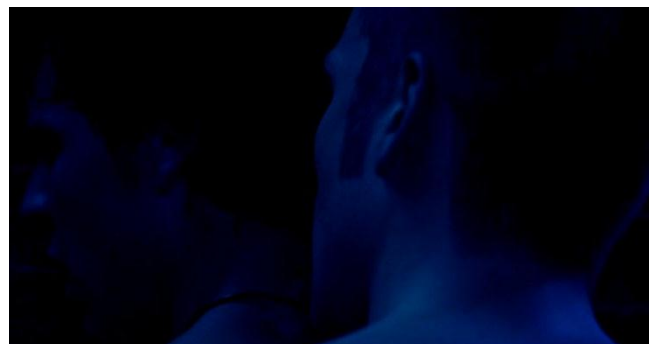
Figure 11 – Tony and the man in *Mentiras y gordas*

It is a real contrast to Tony's sexual experience, which immediately follows. He is standing alone in a dark, loud, disorienting nightclub, visibly intoxicated from alcohol and drugs. Halperin (2007) details how queer (and more specifically, gay) culture is prolific in creating 'escape-routes from self-analysis' (2007: 8), like gay bathhouses or gay nightclubs, similar to the one Tony has been to (mentally and physically losing himself in the moment, instead of reflecting upon what has happened). In his paper on internalised homophobia and health issues, Iain R. Williamson follows a line of study that sees a relationship between low self-esteem and riskier sexual acts (2000: 101). Some studies have suggested that greater levels of homo-negativity (that is internalised negative attitudes towards one's own homosexual identity), may be related to greater substance use and alcohol consumption which 'may impair decision-making processes' (Williamson, 2000: 100; see also Meyer and Dean, 1995 or Glaus, 1988). Tony, internalising Nico's feelings, and in reaction to the situation he has just experienced, finds himself in a spiral of risky sex and substance abuse. While this could be seen as part of the youth culture depicted in the film, a youth culture solely interested in recreational drugs and sex, it highlights Tony's erratic behaviour and inability to self-control, opposed to his composed image before coming out – it is this link between his coming out and the overdose that is important here.

Tony is spotted, still on his own, by a slightly older man, who takes him by the hand to the club's dark room. Homosexual sex is relegated to the anonymity of a dark room. Although the representation of public dark rooms as sexualised spaces is not, in itself, inherently seen as amoral (see, for example, my analysis in Chapter 2 of the public sexual spaces in *Cachorro* and *Los novios búlgaros*), in this scene in *Mentiras y gordas* the dark lighting, heavy music, and aggressively presented sexuality all combine to present the space as a dangerous one full of narrative foreboding. Tony, standing against a wall, receives oral sex, before the man turns him around and anally penetrates him. The scene happens in semi-darkness, their bodies never totally undressed, and they are seen taking drugs throughout their sexual interaction. The camera shots are a succession of close-ups (mainly on their faces – see Figures 10 and 11),[42] rarely still and never lingering on their bodies as a whole. While the depiction of heterosexual sex happens without visual restriction (warm lighting, a constant, steady long-shot – in a way, giving a sense of 'naturalised' romanticism to the scene)

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[42] Although the focus on their faces instead of body parts can humanise the sexual interaction, when we compare it to the rest of (hetero)sexual interactions in the film, we can see that the homosexual sexual act is more visually coded – through the use of close-up and medium shots, the techno music soundtrack, and the obscure lighting – than the heterosexual ones.

homosexual sex is denied this visual 'normalcy': it is shown in semi-darkness, sustained by substance abuse, with bodies partially hidden and shown only briefly by more edgy erratic camera-work and editing, as if their act, just like their identities, is something to be hidden. In comparison with the heterosexual sex scenes presented in the film, Tony's sexual encounter is by contrast much darker, not only visually, but in terms of mood – the atmosphere suffused with a sense of danger and foreboding.

Tony's next scene is in the nightclub, surrounded by people dancing. His body is exhausted as a result of drugs and overstimulation. He moves slowly, sweating, clearly mentally and physically damaged. He is unable to answer questions, his speech slurred and his facial movements slow. He accepts more drugs from people around him (which reinforces Williamson's study mentioned before), and gives away his own stash of drugs for free. In a slow-motion montage scene he is seen, amid a sea of dancing bodies, putting ecstasy tablets in people's mouths. Both his actions and the music[43] – a mix of techno, and operatic Gregorian chants, aptly titled *Tony, El Mesias / Tony, The Messiah* in the soundtrack – evoke a priest giving Holy Communion at church. The religious image is further exploited when he opens his arms, Christ-like, and looks dazedly towards the ceiling, his mouth slightly moving as if re-interpreting Jesus' last words 'Deus meus, deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me' ('My God, my God, Why have You forsaken me?') (Matthew, 27: 46). Here, however, the call may be interpreted as less a call for divine intervention as a wider plea after being forsaken by Nico.

It is difficult not to link the image of Tony handing out ecstasy pills as a visual representation of AIDS. Tony, whose condition has been rapidly deteriorating since he expressed and acted upon his feelings towards Nico and then his (homo)sexual urges can be viewed as spreading the symptoms of his 'illness' (drug abuse). This correlation is made stronger since Tony's dancing and drugs scene follows that of him having sex, as if one were a correlation of the other. Pérez Argilés' (1955) discussion of homosexuality's contagious capabilities springs to mind here.

We can read similar ideas into these images as those analysed by Michael Solomon (1999) in his article about the book *Lo Llibre de les Dones*: that sodomy and same-sex practices 'not only condemns the sinner' but that it "leads to pestilence and disease' (Solomon, 1999: 277), while those 'who engage in such [homosexual] acts become agents of

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[43] Music, Stephen Amico (2001) argues, can engender 'verbal communication in social settings', but is so loud in the club, that it obliterates any possible verbal communication, 'thus making the visual paramount' (Amico, 2001: 364), that is highlighting Tony's actions.

disease' (1999: 284). As such, the fact that Tony has had anal sex, and has embraced his homosexuality, seems to condemn his body to dissolution and imminent death. Furthermore, it also leads to 'pestilence and disease' (the dancer descending into a state of drug-fuelled frenzy), and Tony himself becoming an 'agent of disease' by sharing his drugs.

When Tony is taken outside for fresh air, the modern operatic / chant music starts playing again. Tony falls to the ground, and dies in Carola's (Ana de Armas) arms. Nico rushes to Tony, grabs his deceased body and holds him tight, screaming, in a scene very reminiscent both of La Pietà and the closing images of *La Ley del deseo / Law of Desire* (dir. Pedro Almodovar, 1987), a film which previously subverted the traditional associations of the Pietà itself (Morgan Tamosunas, 2000: 118). The last scene in the film sees Tony, in another religious image, resurrected as a ghostly, benevolent figure, smiling on the beach and embracing Nico, as if forgiving him and thus freeing him from any possible guilt.

It is perhaps the case that we can read Tony's death – the crucifixion-like pose, his 'resurrection' and the spiritual soundtrack – as a religious metaphor, with Tony a martyr dying less from the 'sins' of homosexuality as from the hedonism of youth. Perhaps the narrative points towards Tony's death as a 'wake up' call for the rest of the characters in the film, as a means to distance them from their 'sex, drugs and rock'n' roll' attitude. Although this could be the case, these metaphors are left unfulfilled, feeling more like cinematic gimmicks than conscious, meaningful, narrative decisions. Furthermore, there are, once again, a number of scenes throughout the film that present Tony's sexuality as outside the norm, or inferior to Nico's heterosexuality. Moreover, the characters do not seem to learn from their mistakes, the aforementioned final scene on the beach showing Nico, Marina and Carola discussing how they returned to the club where Tony died – if Tony's death is a lesson for the rest of the characters, they seem not to learn from it. As the camera pans upwards in a long shot, we see groups of adolescents drinking, taking drugs, and dancing on the beach – life, as they say, goes on. As Perriam (2013) states, Tony's end is 'unfortunately close to being a classic killing off of the queer as a tragic figure' and the final embrace between Nico and Tony 'does nothing to cement the realities of learning to be queer in contemporary Spain' (2013: 89).

3.1.3.- Mario Casas: Returning Tony to the Closet?

A brief extra-textual analysis of *Mentiras y gordas* and actor Mario Casas' film roles since his portrayal of Tony provides an illuminating context in which to consider the portrayal of homosexuality in Spanish cinema. Whereas the character of Tony is shy, passive and sexually

confused, all of Casas' subsequent cinematic characters are defined by an assertive masculinity perhaps defined by his portrayal of Ricky in *Carne de neón*: a powerful young drug dealer in charge of a brothel, whose macho swagger, hardened features and muscled body – Casas recently won a Spanish edition of *Men's Health* magazine 2012 Man of the Year award (Sur.es, 2012), and has, in several occasions, been in the cover of the same magazine – are matched by a self-assured awareness of his sexual charisma.[44] It's an image also created in the depiction of Ángel in *Grupo 7 / Unit 7* (dir. Alberto Rodríguez, 2012), and even more so in his portrayal of Hache, the protagonist of Spanish hit *Tres metros sobre el cielo / Three Meters From the Sky* (dir. Fernando González Molina, 2010) and its sequel, *Tengo ganas de ti / I Want You* (dir. Fernando González Molina, 2012). Hache – with his fitted leather jacket, tight jeans,[45] powerful motorbike and frequently half-open shirts (see Figure 12) – borrows heavily from Hollywood's back catalogue of masculine rebels such James Dean and Marlon Brando, and also recalls the earlier films of Javier Bardem. And while this dress code is not so different from Tony's, the alpha-male character created could not be more different. It is an impact also heightened by the framing of these characters, the predominance of bold close-ups used for Hache – his hyper-masculine persona filling the screen – contrasting again with the more medium-shot presentation of the sensitive, self-conscious Tony in *Mentiras y gordas*. The sheer virility, toughness and indeed highly (hetero)sexualied characters played by Casas in the wake of *Mentiras y gordas* raises the question of how consciously the actor selected these roles and whether they reflect a conscious desire (the actor has not discussed the topic) to distance himself from the role of Tony.

Interestingly, in a 2012 article on Mario Casas in the magazine *Fotogramas* entitled '7 estrellas para Mario' ('7 stars for Mario') he is paired with seven actresses that have worked with him, most of whom played his love interest. For the section on *Mentiras y gordas*, Ana de Armas (who plays Carola in the film) is interviewed, occupying the space that Yon González (Tony's actual love interest, Nico) should have. While the article alludes to the fact that the characters of Carola and Tony do not really meet on screen (S. R., 2012: 96), it nevertheless glosses over Tony's homosexuality in the film, focusing instead on Ana de

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[44] See, for example, his *La Revista 40* magazine cover in 2011 where he appears topless with a sharp barbershop razor knife in one hand, and 'Yo me afeito a navaja' ('I shave myself with a razor knife') written on his stomach (see Figueiras, 2011).

[45] See Bordo (1999: 136-141) for a discussion of Marlon Brandon's physique and visual attire in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (dir. Elia Kazan, 1951) which I see as the inspiration for the character of Hache, his attitude, and his clothes.

Armas' comments about his acting skills and his looks. The article positions Mario Casas as an object of female desire, entirely downplaying the fact that Casas plays a gay character in the film. In creating Mario Casas as a Spanish film and television star, the media seems content to ignore the sexuality of one of Casas' most well-known characters.

Figure 12 – Mario Casas as Hache in *Tres metros sobre el cielo*

It could be claimed, however, that there is significance in Mario Casas status as a heartthrob and the connotations of him playing a gay character, just as academics have rightly discussed Javier Bardem's gay roles as Diego in *Segunda piel / Second Skin* (dir. Gerardo Vera, 1999) or Reinaldo Arenas in *Before Night Falls* (dir. Julian Schnabel, 2000) in relation to his *macho* persona (see Perriam, 2003: 110-116). However, Casas' status, which the Spanish edition of *GQ* magazine recently described as 'el nuevo gran referente del macho ibérico español' ('the new reference of male Iberian Spaniard') (Díez Garde, 2012), had not been established when *Mentiras y gordas* was released. While Bardem's status was well established when he took the roles of Diego or Reinaldo Arenas, therefore acting against his *macho* typecasting, in Casas' case, any discussion of his star persona in relation to his role of Toni is done in retrospect – and, as aforementioned, oftenly downplaying the sexuality of his character in *Mentiras y gordas*.

Such exclusion reflects some of the issues surrounding the representation of homosexuality in Spanish film and in the film industry more widely. There is clearly some unease around the presentation of homosexuality on screen and how it is perceived by audiences – and indeed, how the industry believes it will be perceived by audiences. The media's reaction to seeing heterosexual actors Javier Bardem and Jordi Mollà play two gay men in the film *Segunda piel* is something I will explore further in Chapter 4, while in Chapter 5 I will examine the significance of Hugo Silva's comments about playing a gay

groom in *Reinas / Queens* (dir. Manuel Gómez Pereira, 2005). Both of these responses are illuminating in regard to contemporary social anxieties about homosexuality. In my view, ignoring the sexuality of Tony in the '7 estrellas para Mario' article only reinforces the 'homosexuality as disease / other' discourse, because it reaffirms homosexuality as that which shall not be spoken of, as something hidden or even denied.

3.2.- Diseased Homosexuals in the Spanish Civil War: *El mar* and *Pa negre*

Melero Salvador (2010b) maintains that 'the effectiveness of homosexuality as dramatic element in western narrative is well documented' (2010b: 144) – and as I have just explored in my discussion of *Mentiras y gordas*, there are still representations that use queerness and disability 'as two components of the same identity' (Barounis, 2009: 56). Medicalised images of the gay male character who are psychologically or physically diseased, representations of desexualised gay bodies, and the invisibility and denial of gay identities are still a strong narrative tradition in Spanish cinema.

As noted, these narratives exist in other European productions, not to mention those from North America and Latin America, thus highlighting the universality of the issues at play here. Notable examples can be found in French films *Le temps qui reste / Time to Leave* (dir. François Ozon, 2005), which depicts the last days of a gay fashion photographer diagnosed with cancer, and *Juste une question d'amour / Just a Question of Love* (dir. Christian Faure, 2000) in which Laurent (Cyrille Thouvenin) struggles with his (homo)sexual orientation and the bigotry of his conservative family following the death of his gay, cousin who suffered from hepatitis. In the film, Marc and Laurent's families, who have not gone to visit Marc in his last days, argue that it is AIDS, instead of hepatitis, that killed Marc.

These narratives also appear in Hollywood films. *Philadelphia* (dir. Jonathan Demme, 1993), for example, reinforces homosexual subordination and, furthermore, maintains a 'residual element of homosexual stigmatization' (Dean, 2007: 367);[46] or more recently, *Brokeback Mountain* (dir. Ang Lee, 2005). Another example can also be found in Peruvian film *Contracorriente / Undertow* (dir. Javier Fuentes-León, 2009) a poignant depiction of closeted life, in which Miguel (Cristian Mercado) sees and talks to the ghost of his dead lover, Santiago (Manolo Cardona), a visiting artist whose mortal presence was once seen as a threat by the villagers before being killed at sea. In the film the notion of the 'other' (the

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[46] See Dean (2007) for an analysis of gay representation in American films, or Boon (2003) who argues how the narrative of *Philadeplphia* is shaped by the 'unethical treatment of homosexual men into tragedy' (Boon, 2003: 61 in Melero Salvador, 2010b: 145).

outsider to the heterosexual community) is quite important, as it is the homosexuality-as-death discourse, with the male lovers meeting in the cemetery at the start of the film, or Santiago dying. The ending is also striking: Miguel carries the dead body of Santiago on his back, as if carrying his sins as Christ carried his cross. This striking metaphor will also be part of the religious allegories discourse that will be analysed later in this study.

As suggested by my analysis of *Mentiras y gordas*, these narratives are perhaps more historically and socially ingrained in Spain as a result of the country's Francoist and religious past (see Melero Salvador 2010a, Mira 2004, Cleminson and Vázquez García 2007). While these narratives do not in themselves define the cultural and representational landscape of Spanish cinema, in such a national context it is illuminating to explore how and why these narratives still tend to equate homosexual masculinities with disability and disease.

3.2.1.- History, War and 'Homosexual Bodies'

The 'homosexuality-as-disease' discourse can also be seen in the filmography of director Agustí Villaronga. His latest film, *Pa negre / Black Bread* (dir. Agustí Villaronga, 2010), winner of the Goya Award for Best Film in 2011, contains many of the aforementioned themes. Based on the novel by Emili Teixidor, the film charts the life of young Andreu (Francesc Colomer) in the years after the end of the Civil War and depicts the treatment endured at that time by homosexual men. As such, it is useful to consider the film in relation to the director's own *El mar / The Sea* (dir. Agustí Villaronga, 2000), which covers similar themes. In *El mar*, another literary adaptation on a novel by Blai Bonet (1958), the director brings to the fore homoerotic elements only implied on the page (Mira, 2004: 329). The film tells the story of three friends who, in 1936, witness the brutal killing of a classmate by a boy wishing to avenge the assassination of his father. Ten years later, the three friends meet once again in a tuberculosis sanatorium in Caubet (Mallorca):[47] Ramallo (Roger Casamajor) and Manuel (Bruno Bergonzini) are terminal patients, while sor Francisca Luna (Antònia Torrens) is a nun of poor health. Notions of nationalism, broken youth and the cruelties of war are prominent themes in both films, but it is the representation of the homosexual body that links them most strongly, as in both films these representations are clearly associated with disease, disability and death.

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[47] Perhaps, using Mallorca as the setting where the action occurs highlights how it is impossible for the characters to both, physically (since they are in an island) and metaphorically escape their situation and their doomed future.

Both films, and *Pa negre* in particular, can be seen as part of a wider boom in Spanish historical films – a trend beginning in the early 1990s which Pavlović, Alvarez, Blanco-Cano, Grisales, Osorio and Sánchez (2009) characterise as romanticizing the past and offering a view of history that is 'anachronistic and commercialised' (2009: 188).[48] Reig Tapia (1999) concurs with their view arguing that the Civil War has been represented in cinema with only a partial understanding of it, and that, furthermore, the films depicting the effects of the war often do so with excessive prudence, as if wary of causing offence (1999: 54-67).

Morgan-Tamosunas (2000) adds to this debate on history and nostalgia in contemporary Spanish cinema by concluding that the proliferation of historical films displays a seemingly obsessive concern with the past. Again, however, these films are largely depicted in a nostalgic mode which fails to examine the past in any critical or analytical way (2000: 111-112). She adds that, despite their narrative and thematic retrospection, these films 'inscribe perspectives and preoccupations which relate directly to contemporary cultural experiences' (2000: 112-113), suggesting that the popular appeal of the historical and nostalgic film signals it as an important barometer of the present (2000: 118-119). Moreover, and although both *El mar* and *Pa negre* are films set during the Civil War, they use this period of Spain's history as background, and not as, as Villaronga establishes in his interview of *Pa negre*, a 'película de ideología política' ('political ideology film') (Villaronga in Prieto, 2011). As Martínez (2010) states in his review of Villaronga's latest film, the themes discussed in *Pa negre* are not specific to the historical period the action takes place, but Villaronga's achievement is in transforming a historical fact, the Civil War, in a 'escenario mitológico desde el que leer cualquier historia possible de la humanidad. […] Esa misma historia con cualquier otro conflicto al fondo hubiese funcionado igual' ('a mythological setting from where to discuss any possible story in humanity. […] That same story with any other conflict as its background would have equally worked') (Martínez, 2010). Marín-Dòmine (2006) also argues how *El mar*, a film saturated with pastness, deals with the incorporation of the effects and events of the Spanish Civil War in latter generations though the representation of the suffering body (Marín-Dòmine in Perriam, 2013: 54). What Perriam calls 'the aftershocks of conflicts' inform the queer present, inflecting the queer image on screen, and repressed homosexuality between the two protagonists represents 'an effect of the past on the body of protagonists in the narrative present' (2013: 54).

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[48] For a recent discussion of the representations of the civil war in Spanish cinema see Maroto Camino (2011) or Archibald (2012).

As in *El espinazo del diablo / The Devil's Backbone* (dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2001) or *El laberinto del fauno / Pan's Labyrinth* (dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2006), the Villaronga films use the Civil War period as a backdrop in which to tell more intimate stories – personal tales that invoke themes of sexuality, social repression, and the loss of innocence. As Marvin D'Lugo (1997) states, Villaronga's films tend to transform the periods of 'the Civil War and immediate post-war periods into *mise-en-scène* of narratives that have little to do with politics or history in the conventional sense' (Marvin D'Lugo in Archibald, 2004: 77). As Pedraza (2007) argues, the films of Villaronga are not about the Spanish Civil War,[49] nor are they about war in general (2007: 16), these are just a background in which to tell his stories. His films, she states, 'no hablan de política ni de una guerra determinada, sino del mal y de su transmisión' ('do not speak about politics or a specific war, but about evil and its transmission') (2007: 18). So, while the focus in the aforementioned films of Villaronga and del Toro is the effect of war on children – and bearing in mind Pedraza's assertion that 'el cine de Villaronga es un cine de niños' ('Villaronga's cinema is a cinema of children') (2007: 21),[50] nevertheless parallels can be drawn between these and the effects of war on the adult soldiers and civilians of the time. Interestingly, both *El mar* and *Pa negre* start with the death of a child, a visual, metaphorical reference to the fate of those other truncated lives.

3.2.2.- The 'Homosexual' Body

Interestingly, neither film focuses on homosexuality, which is just part of a wider spectrum of themes. In *Pa negre*, the gay characters are secondary ones that help propel the narrative forward, while in *El mar*, Manuel (a repressed homosexual who hides behind religion to avoid facing his sexuality) shares the narrative spotlight with Ramallo and Francisca. In both films, the issue of homosexuality is rooted in the wider theme of repression, and my focus here is on how this repression visually affects the physical representation of the gay characters' bodies.

Pedraza (2007) acknowledges that in the films of Villaronga, bodies are fragile, 'continuamente amenazado[s], fácil[es] de romper. La enfermedad empobrece los cuerpos' ('constantly threatened, easy to break. Illness impoverishes the bodies') (2007: 37), thus highlighting the link between homosexual bodies, illness, weakness and, ultimately, death.

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[49] Tellingly, the volume edited by Feenstra and Hermans (2008) does not include neither of Villaronga's or del Toro's films in their studies of films about the Spanish Civil War. Similarly, Fernández Prieto's (2005) analysis of the representation of the Spanish Civil War in cinema and literature mentions neither the films, nor the book on which *El Mar* is based.
[50] Which is the case for both *El Mar* and *Pa negre*, where Villaronga uses children / teenagers.

She also highlights that even if his cinema makes homosexuality an explicit theme, Villaronga does not place this particular theme at the core of his films. As Pedraza explains, Villaronga tends to make 'un cine discreto y quizá autocensurado desde el punto de vista sexual' ('discreet cinema and perhaps self-censored from a sexual point of view') (2007: 38).

Mira (2008) neatly summarises the ideology behind the presentation of the gay male body in *El mar*: 'el cuerpo es fuente de placer homoerótico, que se niega y conduce a la muerte' ('the body is the source of homoerotic pleasure, which is then negated, and leads to death') (2008: 496). In the film, the first naked body we see is that of Pau's (Tony Miquel Varell) father who has been killed by pro-Franco villagers for not sympathising with the dictator – that is, for transgressing the norm. From then on, the only naked bodies shown in the film are those of the tuberculosis patients at the hospital who are either dead or dying, including Ramallo and Manuel (both destined to die because of their illness – although, ultimately, it is their homosexuality the cause of their deaths). Nakedness in the film is linked to death (or imminent death), disease, and difference (or the negation of difference by murder). The (naked) body in these narratives, as Mira (2008) asserts, tends to truncate any homoerotic pleasure, denoting instead negation and death.

In *Pa negre*, the image of the naked body is also linked to death and disease. We only see the naked bodies of two characters, Pitorliua (Joan Carles Suau) and Tísic (Lázaro Mur), both gay. Tísic (we never know his real name – Tísic being the Catalan word for tuberculosis) is cloistered in a monastery, quarantined due to the disease (just like Ramallo and Manuel in *El mar*). He sometimes escapes to the woods, and runs naked, to feel free and alive, an irony since he is destined to die of his illness. Interestingly, TB is also linked to homosexuality (furthering the link with disease), as we see when Quirze (Jordi Pla) comments that 'el vicio' (vice) is the root of the TB plague (he claims that the TB patients at the monastery have sex with each other at night). Andreu argues that they are all men, to which Quirze responds 'hay hombres que se ponen del revés y hacen de mujeres, ¿o es que no has oído nunca hablar de maricones?' ('there are men who turn the other way and adopt the female role. Or have you never heard of faggots?').

It is difficult not to read TB as an AIDS allegory at this point, as in the case of Villaronga's other film, *El mar*. As Melini (2000) asserts in his article about *El mar*:

> Es como si Villaronga hubiese preferido la tuberculosis al Sida, o como
> si hubiese querido hablar del Sida por medio de una metáfora, la
> tuberculosis, por medio de la sangre del pecho y del alma de otros

enfermos que igualmente languidecen, que se deshacen en medio de la higiénica asepsia de un retiro forzoso, apartados del mundo, de la vida, en la antesala de la muerte.

(Nicolás Melini, 2000: 148)

It is as if Villaronga had preferred TB to AIDS, or as if he had wanted to talk of AIDS through a metaphor, TB, through the blood in the chest and the souls of other patients who languish, who melt in the aseptic hygiene of a forced retreat, aside from the world, from life, on the threshold of death.

Pedraza (2007) also highlights the relation between TB and AIDS, noting that the constant presence and reference to blood in the film, 'constituye una clave que resitúa la enfermedad (tuberculosis) en una realidad contemporánea (SIDA)' ('constitutes a key argument that posits the illness (TB) in a contemporaneous reality (AIDS)') (2007: 20). If we look back to the point of the medicalisation of the homosexual body and the discourse on contagion and legal attitudes of the Francoist period mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, it is worth remembering Pérez Argilés' (1995) words comparing homosexuality with conditions such as leprosy and TB (Pérez Argilés in Melero Salvador, 2010b: 148). As Melero Salvador (2010b) highlights, Pérez Argilés argued that 'the comparison [with homosexuality] would be fairer if I said: the tuberculosis patient is not guilty of causing his own condition' but, he continued, he is responsible when he '(culpably) proceeds to spread his germy spittle' (Pérez Argilés, 1995: 26 in Melero Salvador, 2010b: 148, his translation).

Interestingly, Helminiak (2006) defines three characteristics of AIDS that also apply to TB, and these are that AIDS is 'transmissible, terminal, and stigmatised' (2004: 13). The three characteristics can be seen in the gay male and ill characters of both *El Mar* and *Pa negre* (in *Pa negre*, for example, Tísic admonishes Andreu for getting too close to him, scared that he might transmit his illness; while in both films, the gay characters are stigmatised due to their illness). Helminiak also maintains that traditionally, 'people have explicitly related AIDS to religion and called it the scourge of God, especially when it is associated with homosexuality' (2006: 13-14), a theme that Kowalewski (1997) also mentions in his study of religious constructions of the AIDS crisis. The definition of AIDS 'as a disease affecting "sinners"' (1997: 366) due to 'God's punishment for moral failing' (1997: 367) is an interesting point which I shall refer to later in my discussion of the relationship between religion and the homosexual body in both films by Villaronga.

Historically, AIDS did not enter the public discourse until 1981 (González, 2010: 82-83), and it was not until 1986 that the virus was given a medical term (Sáez, 2005: 67), but it is indeed clear that TB can serve as a metaphor for the AIDS epidemic in both films. Sick characters are treated in the same way as those who had AIDS in the 1980s.[51] If we take into consideration the fact that AIDS affected the re-medicalisation of the homosexual body, and that there still exist traces of the discourse that sees HIV and AIDS as 'the totalising sign of homosexuality' (González, 2010: 101), this understanding of TB as a metaphor for AIDS becomes even clearer.

3.2.3.- *Pa negre*

While, as discussed, Tisic's naked gay body is linked to AIDS and disease, Pitorliua's nakedness, on the other hand, is seen in a brutal scene in which he is castrated. In the film, Andreu learns that his father (whom he holds in great esteem, and who is currently facing the death penalty for treason) was one of the two members of the gang who castrated Pitorliua. Andreu then goes to the cave where the act took place and in a juxtaposition of flashback shots of the act and fantasy scenes imagined by Andreu, we see what happened the night Pitorliua was attacked.

The scene opens with Pitorliua taking off his shirt in front of his lover, who disappears as we hear, off-screen, the villagers arriving. What starts as an act of passion then turns into a nightmare of violence. It seems that the homosexual naked body is always associated with violence or disease, something that becomes even more apparent when we compare this scene with the presentation of two preceding heterosexual sex scenes (both of which are witnessed by Andreu himself). In the first of these scenes, Andreu's parents make love on the kitchen floor; and in the second, his mother allows the head of the police force to sexually abuse her. In both scenes, the heterosexual characters are fully clothed.

Pitorliua is grabbed by the group of men, thrown to the floor and violently stripped. He is the only naked character in the scene, while the rest of the mob stands tall around his shivering body. It is very telling that in *Pa negre*, the villagers decide to castrate Pitorliua as a punishment for his sexuality, thereby emasculating him. Lehman (2007) has argued that the penis has been given a great cultural importance in defining masculinity, sexual competence and desirability (2007: 114). In earlier work (1993, 2001) he had also proposed that images of men and the male body are caught within a polarity that contrasts the powerful, awesome

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[51] See Llamas (1995) or Sáez (2005) for an overview on the social impact of the AIDS pandemic.

spectacle of phallic masculinity with its vulnerable, pitiable collapse (Lehman 2001: 26). The villagers who are about to castrate Pitorliua are all fully clothed and in their hands they carry an array of torches and farming tools, an image reminiscent of the frightened villagers pursuing Frankenstein's monster in the 1931 Universal classic *Frankenstein* (dir. James Whale, 1931) (another subtle metaphor linking homosexuality with difference and monstrosity).[52] The group of men position themselves as the epitome of masculinity and decency as they overpower and mutilate Pitorliua, who does not fit in with the dominant view of normality.

Frosh (1994) argues that the phallus is a function, something that 'happens and makes things happen' (1994: 74), and whatever veils are used, the phallus is 'surely a male symbol', built on the anatomical model of the penis (1994: 76). Lacan (1977) contends that power, authority and control are predicated on having – or not having – the phallus (Lacan in Potts, 2000: 85-86). Although Lacan himself cautions that equating the phallus and the actual penis is, in many ways, illusory, Annie Potts (2000) maintains that Lacanian theory 'reinforces masculine sexuality that focuses on the phallicised penis' (2000: 87). Moreover several feminist psychoanalytic theorists, as Potts highlights, dispute the denial of a direct association between both penis and phallus. Jane Gallop (1988) argues that the phallus 'always refers to *penis* […] it is hard to polarise synonyms' (Gallop in Potts, 2000: 88; italics in original); while Jean-Francois Lyotard (1978) also undermines the neat distinction between symbolic and referential (that is phallus and penis), as does Judith Still (2003) in her introduction of *Men's Bodies* (2003: 11). Greg Tuck (2003) succinctly adds that 'it is one thing to avoid the pitfalls of biologism; it is another to disconnect meaning from matter' (2003: 274), and closes the issue by highlighting that Lacan himself seems to insist on a material effect 'of giving reality to the subject in this signifier' (Lacan in Tuck, 2003: 273). Besides, as John Ellis (1992) points out, the penis (or the lack of it) still operates as the 'inadequate physical stand-in for that signifier which institutes the play of signification and difference: the phallus.' (1992: 165). If the concept of the phallus is constructed around the penis, Pitorliua's castration at the hands of the village mob is symbolic not only of their view that he is not a man (and therefore does not deserve a penis), but that he is also powerless and undeserving of a phallus. As Lehman (2001) concedes, the actual sight of the physical male organ threatens to 'deflate and make ludicrous' (2001: 27) the symbolic phallus. The group of men, by

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[52] In his article about homosexuality and 'the monster' Benshoff (2004) highlights how the story of Frankestein is a 'counter-hegemonic classic', and summarises the book's core idea as 'that of a mad, male, homosexual science giving birth to a monster' (2004: 69).

physically touching and then castrating Pitorliua's penis, are highlighting the fact that Pitorliua himself is not worthy of having the same phallic power they possess: he is not a man.

Although we could assume that the attack on Pitorliua is a special, unique, case (there is nothing in the film that suggests otherwise), Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García (2007) have discussed the relationship between the social construction of masculinity and national identity in Spain from 1850 till the end of the Civil War in 1939. During the Francoist regime national identity was traditionally viewed as being shored up 'by masculine values,' which at the time were equated with 'bravery, sacrifice, strength and willpower', and any decline in those values was seen as an 'attack on the substance of the nation' (2007: 175; see also Cleminson and Vázquez García (2007: 175-215)). At a time when Franco was instigating nationalistic, phallocentric and heteronormative ideals, then, Pitorliua (and other 'homosexuals' like him), had to be exterminated. Even if Pitorliua appears only briefly during the castration scene,[53] it is interesting to note how he is characterised physically, as it helps understand how the body of the 'other' is represented. In *Pa negre*, and to an extent in *El mar* as well, gay male characters are not only linked to disease and death, but they are also feminised. By making Pitorliua effeminate, the narrative establishes him as different, 'other'.

Figure 13 – Pitorliua in *Pa negre*

In her discussion on horror films and masculinity, Creed (1993) comments that the monstrous male body assumes 'characteristics usually associated with the female body' such as bleeding, becoming penetrable or castrated (1993: 118). In the process of being constructed as 'monstrous' the male figure is 'feminised' (Davies, 2006: 140), and the

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[53] Elsewhere in the film the character of Pitorliua is only talked about or shown in photographs.

monster then becomes the 'other' that needs to be defeated and exterminated. The Frankenstein imagery becomes more evident then: the 'other', the monster, that which has been 'feminised,' needs to be eradicated. Conventionally, as Judith Still (2003) states, the male body is seen as hard while the female body is associated with softness (2003: 7). Aesthetically different to the rest of them, Pitorliua is then visually coded as feminine. In contrast to the village mob, Pitorliua has soft facial features, his hair is slickly combed, he is clean shaven and his shirt is an immaculate, well-pressed white (see Figure 13). The villagers on the other hand, have rugged features and are unshaven, while their dark clothes are dirty and torn. This distinction between Pitorliua's softness and the villagers' ruggedness is also made evident by the scene's editing and camera work: while Pitorliua is firstly framed in a slow, panoramic single medium-long shot (an etheral lighting surrounding him, softening further his facial features), as soon as the villagers arrive they are framed with shaky camera work and a fast editing of close ups, medium shots, and long shots, their rough manners equalled by the roughness of the hand held camera work. Given that the film depicts an older model of gender and power division in a Spain where women were seen as inferior to men,[54] a man with such effeminate qualities was deemed inappropriate, anti-nationalistic, and anti-patriarchal.

In *El mar*, Manuel, too, is coded as both feminine and 'other'. Indeed he is even verbally castrated at the start of the film when, as a child, he is admonished by Ramallo who tells him 'parece que no tengas nada entre las piernas' ('it looks like you have nothing between your legs'). From the beginning of the film, he is portrayed as different, more sensible and feminine, since he acts as 'if he has no penis' (no phallic power either) and, therefore, must have a vagina instead (or at least, that is what Ramallo is alluding to). This difference is also represented in a later scene when a grown-up Ramallo arrives at the TB sanatorium. During the scene, he is told by a group of male patients that the only people who get a private room are those who are about to die. The exception, of course, being Manuel, who, while not yet terminally ill, is nevertheless considered by one of the younger patients to be sufficiently different to the rest of them to require one. As one of the patients tells Ramallo: 'mira si es raro que lo han puesto en una habitación a él solo' ('he is so weird that they placed him in a separate room, all by himself').

Judith Still (2003) discusses that the male body has had, during the Classical period, two dominant forms: on the one hand, the active, heroic form which 'epitomises adult

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[54] See Brooksbank-Jones (1997) or Graham (1995) for a study on the role of women during the dictatorship.

virility'; and on the other the passive, sometimes boyish, suffering form, like that of Christ and the saints (2003: 6). The relation between homosexuality and religion is difficult to miss in both films, especially *El mar* (let us not forget the aforementioned view of AIDS as a holy scourge).[55]

3.2.4.- *El mar*

In *El mar*, Manuel kills Ramallo, before committing suicide. When sor Francisca Luna (Antònia Torrent), in the final scene, goes to the mortuary to see the bodies, she stops to check Manuel's wounds, which are like those of Christ (Pedraza, 2007: 35). Throughout the film, Manuel is attracted to Ramallo, and physically wants him, but he castigates himself from those 'impure' thoughts by physically stigmatising and punishing himself with a cilice. As Thumma (2005) asserts in his discussion of how some gay evangelicals negotiate a religious identity, there is often a need, felt by those holding a gay Christian identity, to resolve the tension between 'being a conservative Christian and having homosexual feelings' (2005: 69). He writes that his tension can be understood in terms of cognitive dissonance theory, which posits that 'an amount of internal dissonance may be produced by holding two inconsistent cognitive elements' (Festinger, 1957; Prus 1984 in Thumma, 2005: 69). When this inconsistency becomes intolerable (because of the tension, guilt and confusion that results from attempting to hold these two incongruous identities together, as we see in the case of Manuel), the individual might seek 'dissonance reduction' (Thumma, 2005: 70) in some form, whether mild or extreme (Manuel, for example, tries to negate and suppress his homosexual feelings, and acts against them, by murdering Ramallo). Peterson's (2005) analysis of spiritual experiences in the leather community posits that some gay men have found a means of reclaiming both masculinity and spirituality through the rituals of leathersex (that is, rites of sadomasochism amongst other practices) (2005: 337). It could be argued then, that Manuel,[56] by physically castigating himself, is not only indulging in some

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[55] Kowalewski (1997) argues how religion not only has established AIDS as the punishment of God but how, even those religious responses that operate under an apparent more open-minded infrastructure, are still ambivalent over their medical reaction towards the illness. As Kowalewski summarises there are two ways, either 'caring for sinners or curing the sick' (1997: 370). In *El Mar*, we see Ramallo and Manuel (homosexual characters) being cared for, while other (heterosexual) characters are treated for their illness.

[56] Peterson (2005) speaks of the two roles at play in the leather world, and the different names these pairings have: top / bottom, dominant / submissive, sadist / masochist (2005: 341). While the pairing top / bottom refers to the physical sex act (who penetrates and who is penetrated), dominant/submissive refers to the 'mental attitude', while sadist / masochist to the 'bodily experiences of pain and pleasure' (2005: 341). Following the pattern of those opposites, we can also place the male relationship in the film as Ramallo / Manuel.

form of pleasure seeking and spiritual release, but he is also punishing himself for his homosexuality.

The link between Christ, death, and homosexuality is quickly established, as the words evoke Christ's Passion, and the narrative brings death to the fore (the men, the children, Manuel's own suicide in the bath) and homosexuality (Manuel as a child adoringly looking at Ramallo, and Ramallo questioning Manuel's manhood). The film starts with a voiceover from Manuel stating 'Esta obsesión por la sangre de Cristo, por la Pasión, por Satanás […] comenzó aquel año en el mes de agosto…' ('this obsession for Christ's blood, for the Passion, for Satan, began that year in the month of August…'). Although Manuel does not specify the year he is talking about, the audience can guess it is 1936, as he mentions 'that year,' in reference to the start of the Spanish Civil War which began in July 1936. But Manuel is also making reference to what happened to them when they were young: the murder of their (Ramallo's, Sor Francisca's and his own) friend which haunts them throughout the narrative. This voice is heard over the image of an adult Manuel, who is presented nude, in the bath, after he has already killed Ramallo (something which the viewer is not yet aware of) but prior to his suicide. The film then returns, in flashback, to the start of the narrative, and that summer of 1936.

The link between the theme of religion and the display of the gay and diseased male nude body is a recurring one in the film.[57] Long (2004) outlines how Plato argued that 'in a man's appreciation of the beauty of a younger man lies a path to God' (2004: 42), and how, even if Plato condemned sex between men later in life, he still saw in the homosexual romance 'the seeds of religious maturity' (2004: 41). As children, Ramallo and Manuel exchange bodily fluids in a short sequence where they make a pact, spit in their own palms (foreshadowing a future sexual encounter), and then shake hands (shortly afterwards they witness the execution by firing squad of a group of Republicans, while hiding in a cemetery surrounded by multiple crosses – moreover, one of the Fascists in the firing squad is the village's priest, reinforcing the religious angle). As adults, Ramallo violently penetrates Manuel,[58] who kills Ramallo midway through the sexual encounter. As suggested by the

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[57] Furthermore, the figure of Christ himself can be read in homoerotic terms, from the moment, as Buxán Bran asserts, that there exists a special attention to the male body (that of Christ) and its carnal beauty, marked by the scars he suffered in life (2007: 179).

[58] Pedraza (2007) defines this sequence as a 'valiente escena de amor homosexual' (2007: 62) ('courageous scene of homosexual love'). Although, visually, it is striking how the mise-en-scene fully reveals the nakedness of their bodies, and the camera work allows the spectator to contemplate the whole scene without coding or hiding it (as in the homosexual sex scene in *Mentiras y gordas*), the scene could hardly be viewed as one of romantic 'love' but of abuse and ultimately murder and death.

answer Ramallo gives Manuel when asked why he is about to rape him - 'Para que lo pases tan bien que sufras hasta el día en que te mueras' ('so you can enjoy so much that you suffer until the day you die') – there is, in this instance, a clear association between homosexual intercourse (and the enjoyment of it) and death – just like that of *Mentiras y Gordas,* where Tony dies after having sex with a man, or *Pa negre*, in which Pitorliua is castrated and killed just as he is about to meet with his lover.

Manuel murders Ramallo while still being penetrated by him. He grabs a knife from the bedside table and fatally stabs Ramallo in the neck (in itself an act of penetration).[59] On the bedside table we also see the remains of an apple – a Biblical reference for the fall of man. Thus we once again see the correlation between death, religion, and the exchange of sexual fluids between men. Furthermore, the pleasure that Manuel might have found in being dominated by Ramallo (an act that he loathes and longs for in equal measure, as expressed throughout the film) brings us back to the idea of sadomasochism and spiritual release; and how this act contradicts the re-affirmation, in Manuel's mind, of his own masculinity.

Religious fervour is also linked to homosexuality through the character of Manuel. According to Griffith (2005), psychoanalytic theory contends that religion sublimates 'mundane desires into a desire for a divine beloved' (2005: 375). Manuel's love and yearning for closeness to Ramallo can also be seen as a yearning to be closer to God, as there are several instances which parallel Manuel's feelings towards Ramallo and his feelings towards Jesus. At one point he steals Ramallo's sweaty shirt and masturbates with it in his own bed, but is then so shocked and disgusted by his own desires (and the fact that he has fallen to temptation), and starts praying while mutilating himself with a cilice.[60] The scene is cross-cut with one of Ramallo being x-rayed at the doctor's office. He is naked, his manhood covered by a white loincloth, similar to that of Christ's on the cross. Later on, Manuel nails Ramallo's clothes to his bedroom's wall, the arm sleeves in a Christ-like pose; naked, he passionately hugs the figure. Ward (2004) notes that in religion there lies a need 'to be made one with Christ' (2004: 72). This idea is reinforced by Sullivan's (1997) when he states that 'the physical communion with the other in sexual life' (something that Manuel wants, but punishes himself for wanting) 'hints at the same kind of transcendence as the physical

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[59] In all three films discussed in this chapter, it is the character who has the receptive role in the sexual encounter who dies, although in *El Mar*, it is the penetrator who gets murdered.

[60] Manuel's actions are similar in concept (if not in execution, since Manuel takes it to extremes) to Sullivan's (1997) own personal account of his dealings with sexuality and religion: 'my faith propelled me away from my emotional and sexual longing, and the deprivation that this created required me to resort even more dogmatically to my faith' (1997: 241).

Communion with the Other that lies at the heart of the sacramental Catholic vision' (1997: 240).

As Boisvert (2005) claims, gay religion is rooted in desire. It represents, accordingly, a form of 'spiritual practice that draws its inspiration from the erotic and emotional needs that men have for other men' (2005: 366). It might be, then, that Manuel, in his attempt to deny or rise above his same-sex feelings, is in fact tapping into the 'wholly and unalterably transcendent' (2005: 366) that is homoerotic desire. But, just as Eve was deceived by the snake into eating from the Tree of Knowledge (which she was told would bring her closer to God and immortality), Manuel, after sexually consummating his love for Ramallo, does not find himself any closer to God, nor immortality. The last shot in the scene, a high angle from the upper corner of the room, shows Ramallo dead on the floor and Manuel slowly walking to the bathroom. The high camera angle makes them both seem small, insignificant and powerless, as if seen and judged from high above.

As mentioned, the film starts with an image of Manuel in the bath (once he has killed Ramallo). He is submerged in the water, eyes closed. Allegorically, this image could be seen as a baptism of sorts, water being a purifying symbol. Bradshaw (1999) emphasised that baptism involves a death, a death to self and sin (Bradsham in Stuart, 2007: 67). Stuart (2007) adds that baptism changes people and that this change is brought about through a death to sin, and the creation of a union between the baptised and Christ (2007: 67). Submerged in water, Manuel is trying to rid himself of all sin – the (homo)sexual act, the murder of Ramallo – and get closer to Christ. Ultimately, when we see the water turning red from his own blood (his suicide, in itself a cardinal sin according to the Catholic Church), we realise that he is still bathed in sin, and his baptism (his attempt to unite himself with Christ) is still marked as impure and sinful. He does not seem able to escape his infected homo-self.

3.3.- Conclusion

In contemporary Spanish cinema, images and narratives that represent or define gay male characters as psychologically and / or physically weak still persist, reinforcing the invisibility and denial of gay identities (see Melero Salvador, 2010b). While such representations do exist in the cinematic output of other countries – highlighting the globalism of the issues at play here – I have argued, via my analysis of *Pa negre*, *El mar*, and *Mentiras y gordas*, that such narratives are perhaps more strongly rooted in Spain as a result of the nation's historical and social development, with Franco and religion playing a key role (see Melero Salvador (2010a), Mira (2004), Cleminson and Vázquez García (2007)). These narratives do not in

themselves define the cultural and representational landscape of Spanish cinema, but it is clear that these are persistent stereotypes and discourses. In *Pa negre*, for example, Pitorliua is castrated (and killed) for being homosexual, while it is implied by the children in the film that Tisic becomes mentally and physically ill because of his sexuality. Of course I am not suggesting that gay characters in Spanish cinema should only be presented positively, or should not be presented as suffering in any way, since characters do obviously die or become ill, whatever their sexuality. The problem arises when there is a constant association between homosexuality and illness, suicide and death generally, associations which present homosexuality and infirmity as components of the same identity. As mentioned, Aliaga and Cortés (2000 [1997]) concur that gay characters particularly face a distinct likelihood of death in Spanish cinema. This would not be so remarkable were it not for the fact that these same gay characters tend not to be portrayed in 'otras multiples facetas de la existencia humana de forma digna y rigurosa' ('other multiple aspects of human existence in a rigorous and uncondescending manner') (2000: 76).

As I argued in the introduction, studying the representation of the gay body highlights the often 'sexualised' nature of the gay community, with such representations sometimes making homosexuality the only defining aspect of a character's identity. By analysing the depiction of Tony's coming out narrative in *Mentiras y gordas*, or the reason behind Pitorliua's physical mutilation in *Pa negre*, for example, it is possible to argue that Spanish cinema seems at times unable to distinguish the gay character from what Mark Casey, Janice McLaughlin and Diane Richardson (2004) call the 'private "sexual actor"' (2004: 388) – the (homo)sexual act. Pitorliua is defined by his homosexuality – and punished because of it – while Tony's descent into drug and alcohol abuse occurs as a result of 'coming out' to Nico and its subsequent rejection. These characters are defined by their sexuality, and the films visualise their sexual difference in the representation of their bodies. Although, as discussed in the introduction to *El mar* and *Pa negre*, both films use the Spanish Civil War as the background of their storylines, and therefore the representation of homosexuality in both films are also highlighting how homosexuality was lived during this period, the representations of the protagonists inform the 'queer present' (Perriam, 2013: 54), and the films setting act as 'mythological setting' to narrate contemporary realities (Martínez, 2010). Both *El mar* and *Pa negre* act, not as a criticism of homosexuality, but as a critique of how society reinforces the discourse of homosexuality as a disease. That both films, as well as *Mentiras y gordas*, were produced at a time when same-sex relationships are more accepted both socially and legally highlights, perhaps, an awareness of contradictory discourses within

Spanish society regarding the same-sex legal changes in Spain (which I will discuss in-depth in the Chapters 5 and 6).

The narratives in the three films analysed in this chapter, in fact, can be considered as 'coming out' stories, the films then heightening the sexual aspect of the character's homo-identity. Manuel is having problems accepting his homosexual feelings for Ramallo; Tony has to accept his sexuality, his feelings towards Nico and Nico's rejection; while Pitorliua is castrated as a direct result of the villagers discovering his homosexuality. Similarly, in the films I mentioned in the introduction to the gay male bodies section, many of the narratives that medicalise gay male characters deal, in one way or another, with a character's 'coming out', or the discovery of a character's sexuality – examples can be found in *Pajarico / Little Bird* (dir. Carlos Saura, 1997), *Valentín* (dir. Juan Luis Iborra, 2002), or *Madre amadísima / Dearest Mother* (dir. Pilar Távora, 2009) amongst others. As I will analyse in Chapter 4, this discourse of homosexuality as a disease also occurs in, for example, *Historias del Kronen / Stories from the Kronen* (dir. Montxo Armendáriz, 1995) and *Segunda piel*.[61]

As mentioned, Melero Salvador (2010) observes in *La tarde en 24 horas* that these cinema narratives are more akin to those of the Francoist and post-Franco periods than contemporary ones. While this is true, I would also argue that negative presentations of the gay character still persist in Spanish cinema. In the next chapter, therefore, I will further discuss the stereotypes placed upon gay male characters, paying particular attention to Richard Dyer's 'sad young man' stereotype. Dyer argues that there are some constants in different representative traditions (including, romantic poetry, Freudianism, or Christianity amongst others) that help explain the existence of the sad homosexual character stereotype (1993: 77). Arguably, the characters of Tony in *Mentiras y gordas*, Pitorliua in *Pa negre*, or even Ramallo and Manuel in *El mar,* can be analysed using Dyer's theory. Before looking at these stereotypes, however, it is helpful to consider how the gay body is still treated in Spanish cinema today as different or diseased. I intend to do this by examining the films of actor Jordi Mollà.

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[61] See also Perriam (2013: 48-50) for a further discussion of contemporary 'coming out' narratives.

CHAPTER 4:
The Four Bodies of Jordi Mollà: Homosexuality and Otherness

> It's not always like it happens in plays. Not all
> faggots bump themselves off at the end of the story!
> *The Boys in the Band*
> (Dir. William Friedkin, 1970)

As I have analysed in Chapter 3, the discourse of homosexuality as a disease is still found in the narratives of a number of contemporary Spanish films, whether set in the present day (like *Mentiras y gordas*), or in the past (*El mar* and *Pa negre*). These films follow a specific pattern that not only define the gay male character as diseased or disabled, but also identify him as a sad individual, 'condemned to a form of suffering' (medicalised suffering in the Chapter 3 case studies) from which 'there does not seem to be any means of escape' (Melero Salvador 2010b: 144) – indeed, death is the only possible outcome for the characters previously discussed. I would also apply the words of Alejandro Melero Salvador in his reading of *Diferente / Different* (dir. Luis María Delgado, 1962) to my analysis of the films studied in Chapter 3: 'the events portrayed in the plot lead to a dead end, which invalidates any possibility of escape beyond tragedy' (2010b: 155). As previously discussed, these narratives are not only the product of Spanish culture but, as Melero Salvador states, 'the effectiveness of homosexuality as a dramatic element in Western narrative is well documented' (2010b: 144).

Richard Dyer (1993 and 2002) in his study of the gay male character in Hollywood cinema of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s theorises that there are three axis on which the construction of the gay male character operates: namely that homosexuality 'condemns the individual to be (1) lonely, (2) misunderstood and (3) different' (Dyer in Melero Salvador, 2010b: 142). Dyer explains that women tend to represent the 'sexual alternative to the sexuality troubling the gay character' (2002: 122), even offering themselves sexually in the hopes of showing him that 'he is capable of heterosexual sex' (2002: 122). Interestingly, various Spanish films seem to have used this idea at the chore of their narrative, like the film *Sobreviviré / I Will Survive* (dir. Alfonso Albacete and David Menkes, 1999), which I analysed in Chapter 1, or the Spanish-Peruvian co-production *No se lo digas a nadie / Don't*

Tell Anyone (dir. Francisco J. Lombardi, 1998) where the character of Alejandra (Lucía Jiménez) constantly tries to have sex (and at points succeeds) with Joaquín (Santiago Magill) in order to prove to him that he is not gay (for an in-depth analysis of *No se lo digas a nadie*, see Subero (2006)). As I will discuss in Chapter 5, this situation where a female character sleeps with a gay man in order to 'cure' him of his homosexuality also happens in *Reinas / Queens* (dir. Manuel Gómez Pereira, 2005), demonstrating the extent to which this narrative stereotype is used in cinema to problematise sexuality and create tensions within the film's storyline.

According to Dyer's theory of the sad young gay man, gay characters also have a downcast gaze, the sign of melancholy, bearers of the sadness in store for them (like social opprobrium amongst others) (2002: 128). The narratives of the films with this type of gay male characterisation, usually stress the 'inevitable hatefulness' of the homosexual character's destiny. Sometimes, the film might allow the image of a fantasy (always stressing the fictitiousness of this image): that they might meet someone like themselves and live 'in bliss for the rest of one's life' (2002: 129), highlighting the improvable nature of this situation. Finally, Dyer argues that there are only four resolutions that the world offers the sad gay man, 'death, normality, becoming a dreadful old queen or […] finding "someone like oneself" with whom one can settle down' (2002: 132); the last resolution being the only relatively 'optimistic' option for the gay character.

Looking back to the films studied in Chapter 3, the characters of Tony, Pitorliua, and Tísic draw on the 'sad young man' image, and the resolution of their storylines seems to only allow for their death. These traits are similar to those argued by John M. Clum (2000 [1992]) on his analysis of stereotyping and identity formation in British theatre between 1737 and 1968. Clum argues that in order to replicate homosexual identity on stage, without specifically representing homosexuality due to prohibition laws, a repertoire of stereotypes would be used like pederasty, foppishness, sensitivity, effeminacy, or isolation amongst others. Isolation was always the homosexual's fate, if the character remained alive at the end of the show (2000: 77). Similar studies on the use of certain traits and stereotypes to signify homosexuality have been done by Alberto Mira in *Miradas Insumisas* (2008), with respect to gay and lesbian stereotyping in cinema, or Vito Russo's *The Cellulod Closet* (1981), as well as Richard Dyer's *The Matter of Images* (1993), amongst numerous others.

In this chapter I will study the 'homosexual roles' Spanish actor Jordi Mollà has played on screen, paying special attention to the most recent, *El cónsul de Sodoma / The Consul of Sodom* (dir. Sigfrid Monleón, 2009). The medicalised body stereotypes I have

studied in Chapter 3 also play an important role in the narratives I will study in this chapter. Contrary to the other two sections in this thesis, space and the family, the representation of the gay male body tends to be placed, more often than not, outside of Gayle S. Rubin's (1999 [1984]) charmed circle, perhaps because the representation of the physical body in cinema is closely linked to sexuality, while space or the family may not be. Although as argued in Chapter 2, space can also be highly sexualised, inscribing gay male characters inside established concepts and identities which are already placed within the charmed circle – like the family institution, as I will discuss in Chapters 5 and 6 – means that these outer limits sexualities can be also inscribed inside the charmed circle. Analysing the gay body outside of other frameworks of reference means that these bodily representations tend to be outside the charmed circle as well, and therefore viewed as, in Rubin's words, 'abnormal' or 'bad' (1999: 152).

Before continuing, it is necessary to clarify two issues: firstly, the reductionist terminology I have just used by naming 'homosexual,' instead of 'gay characters,' those roles that Jordi Mollà plays in *Historias del Kronen / Stories from the Kronen* (dir. Montxo Armendáriz, 1995), *Perdona bonita pero Lucas me quería a mí / Excuse me Honey, but Lucas Loved Me* (dir. Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso, 1997), *Segunda piel / Second Skin* (dir. Gerardo Vera, 1999) and *El cónsul de Sodoma*; and secondly, the use of Dyer's theory based on the representation of homosexuality in cultural texts from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and what it can reveal about the representation of homosexuality in contemporary Spanish cinema.

On the use of 'homosexual roles' instead of 'gay character,' as discussed by José Miguel G. Cortés and Juan Vicente Aliaga (2000 [1997]) in the prologue to their second edition of *Identidad y Diferencia*, in regards to a television news piece announcing Jordi Mollà's Goya award nomination for his portrayal 'of a homosexual' in *Segunda piel*,

> El vocablo «homosexual» sonó equivalente a un oficio, a una profesión, como quien anuncia «Jordi Mollà hace de carnicero, policía, o traficante». Así, convertir la tendencia sexual en la esencia misma de un personaje, cosa que nunca habría sucedido para describir a un personaje que fuera, entre otras características humanas, heterosexual – además de hacer caso omiso de la pluralidad vital de la comunidad gay – acarrea un reduccionismo que uniforma.
>
> (Aliaga and Cortés, 2000: II)

'The term «homosexual» sounded the same as a job, a profession, similar to saying «Jordi Mollà plays a butcher, a policeman, o a drug dealer». To turn the sexual tendency into the essence of a role, something which would have never occurred when describing a character that was, amongst other human characteristics, heterosexual – and, furthermore, ignoring the plurality of identities within the gay community – leads to a standardising reductionism.

Throughout the chapters, and as mentioned in the introduction, I am discussing how gay male characters are portrayed in contemporary Spanish cinema, acknowledging (and implying) that these characters have identities other than just being 'gay.' In the films I am going to discuss in this chapter, however, I would argue that Jordi Mollà's roles have been based precisely on their gay identity as the essence of the character, 'gayness' being the main identifier within the narrative. In *Historias del Kronen*, for example, Roberto (Jordi Mollà) wants to be accepted within the (heterosexual) group of friends, and not identified as 'the other' (the homosexual) like Pedro is (Aitor Merino). As I will discuss, the reductionist and stereotypical *Perdona bonita, pero Lucas me quería a mí*, positions gay sexuality within the realm of the fantasy, while heterosexuality and heteronormativity is the daily reality the three gay flatmates have to contend with. *Segunda piel* narrates Alberto's (Jordi Mollà) struggle to come to terms with his sexuality, and the narrative is a constant fight to inscribe Alberto's sexuality within the hetero / homosexual binary, without considering that, perhaps, he might bisexual. The narratives in these three films make of homosexuality the important (and only) trait of Jordi Mollà's characters, reducing the roles to their sexualities, becoming one-dimensional. On the other hand, Mollà's lastest gay character to date, *El cónsul de Sodoma*, decentralises homosexuality by positioning sexuality as just part of the identity spectrum of the main character. Jaime Gil de Biedma (Jordi Mollà) in the film is not defined only by his sexuality, but also by his political alliances, his work as a poet and in the family business, his relationship with his family, etc. Therefore, I would argue that while as Jaime Gil de Biedma Mollà plays a character that happens to be gay, in the other roles he is just playing gay archetypes / stereotypes whose unique selling point is that of being gay. Defining Mollà's roles as 'homosexual' only reinforces the hetero / homosexual categorisation, positioning homosexuality (Mollà's characters) as opposites to the heterosexual (and heteronormative) norm.

On the second issue, I believe that Richard Dyer's 'sad young man' theory works as an analytical tool for the discussion of these four films for a number of reasons. Although

Dyer was writing about earlier films and in a context where 'veiled' representations of homosexuality were the norm, these films reinforce similar stereotypes and ideologies to the ones discussed by Dyer, and that position, as mentioned, homosexuality in opposition to the heterosexual norm. While the representation of homosexuality in these films may not be 'veiled' (something which is questionable, at the very least, in the case of *Historias del Kronen*). Relocating the image of the 'sad young man' in these films offers an insight into how at points the representation of gay male sexuality and identity is construed in these films to create, and reinforce, homosexuality as 'the other' in a contemporary heterocentrist society. This places the blame not on the gay character, but on society in general that oppresses him. As Christine Ramsay (2002: 198-200) in her study of the films by gay-filmmaker John Greyson argues, Greyson's films suggest how in facing the 'sad young man' image, the characters are able to overcome the idea that they are unhappy not because of their sexuality, but because of social repression (2002: 199). A similar idea occurs in the films that I will analyse next. Discussing how the films I will analyse in this chapter draw on the 'sad young man' image highlights how the characters are socially oppressed as 'others' – Roberto in *Historias del Kronen* does not accept his (homo)sexuality out of fear of exclusion, Toni's sexuality in *Perdona bonita pero Lucas me quería a mí* is only acted upon in his own imagination, and Alberto in *Segunda piel* feels constrained in a heteronormative relationship that does not allow him to openly navigate his homosexuality. Their characters can be viewed as a criticism of the heteronormative society that oppresses difference. That these characters are, on the other hand, also problematic in their representation of homosexuality is something that I will also explore throughout the chapter.

Gilad Padva (2005) further discusses the sad young man ideology on the representation of homosexuality in Laurie Lynd's short film *The Fairy Who Didn't Want to Be a Fairy* (dir. Laurie Lynd, 1993), arguing how the representation of the stigmatised body of the fairy who attemps to annihilate his 'authenticity' by removing his wings serves as an examination of the cultural mechanisms of normalisation and masculinisation. That the fairy character is depicted as both 'the in-between' and the sad young man highlights 'two of the most popular gay types in contemporary popular culture' (2005: 73). At the same time by using Dyer's theory she critiques how as the 'sad young man,' the character of the fairy is visualised with soft features, 'yet [to] achieve assertive masculine hardness, and […] physically less than a man' (2005: 74). Padva's (2004) study of melodramatic coming-out narratives in the mid-1990s and early 2000s argues that although these films position supportive and optimistic visualisations of eroticised queer politics, typifying the main

characters as 'sad young men' highly supports the notion of a fixed and stable sexual orientation (2004: 355). Similarly, I would argue that the Jordi Mollà's characters consolidate an understanding of sexuality based on the homo / heterosexual binary cementing heterosexuality as the norm, and homosexuality as a fixed sexual orientation defined as 'the non-heterosexual' – as an opposition to the norm, rather than a celebration of difference.

Further studies that relocate the 'sad young man' image into contemporary texts support the claim that Dyer's theory is to this date, a valuable analytical tool. Berry's (2000) study of sad young men in East Asian cinema, Lahti's (1998) discussion on how the gay body politics in Tom de Finland's work replaces the passivity placed upon homosexuality confined in the 'sad young man' stereotype, Stewart's (2007) analysis of *Brokeback Mountain* (dir. Ang Lee, 2005) and how Ennis del Mar (Heath Ledger) reworks the sad young man syndrome, or Poole's (2007) analysis of the 'sad young man' characteristics that exist in the characterisation of Jack (Kerr Smith) in American television series *Dawson's Creek* (1998-2003), cannot but foreground how Dyer's theory are still at play in today's representation of gay men not only globally, but also in different media like, amongst others, cinema, television, or paintings (see also Camille (1994), Dreisinger (2000), Soar (2000), Brennan (2002), Cover (2004), Williams (2006: 165-167), or Pullen (2007b, and 2008) for further examples). Finally, the stereotype of the 'sad young man' in the narratives that I will analyse helps produce a sharp opposition between the gay characters and the heterosexual ones, mainaining clear boundaries between them, and maintaining the hegemony of the dominant group (heterosexuality).

In this chapter, I will analyse *Historias del Kronen*, *Perdona bonita pero Lucas me quería a mí*, *Segunda piel* and *El cónsul de Sodoma*, examining how these films place gay identities as sexualities that exist outside of Rubin's charmed circle, and their bodies are represented as similar to those discussed by Dyer in his theory of the sad young gay man stereotype. I will also examine how *El cónsul de Sodoma* offers a more 'normalised' (using Rubin's terms), inner charmed circle representation of homosexuality, where the work of Jordi Mollà in this film helps to somehow decentralise the discourse of homosexuality as a disease. Before this, and making use of Chris Perriam's Spanish male stardom studies (understanding the restrictions that affect stardom in Spain, as noted by Pavlović, Perriam and Triana Toribio (2012: 319-322, 326) and Perriam (2013: 64-66)), I will offer a brief context in which to situate Jordi Mollà's work on screen – a filmography filled with outcast characters.

4.1- Jordi Mollà: Creating 'The Other'

Chris Perriam (2002) suggests that there has been a boom in the interest of 'actores renombrados de aceptar (¿o buscar?) papeles que requieran la representación y la dramatización de la homosexualidad masculina' ('renowned actors to accept (or search for?) roles that ask for the representation and dramatization of male homosexuality') (2002: 127), in the last twenty years. Amongst the group of men who have done so, Perriam mentions Antonio Banderas (early in his career, under the direction of Almodóvar) or Juan Diego Botto (in *Sobreviviré*, which I analysed in Chapter 1). He also argues that these 'homosexual' roles are 'momentos aislados' ('isolated instances') in the actors' filmographies that seem 'una continuidad hecha de tipologías de masculinidad estándar' ('a continuum made up of standard types of masculinity') (2002: 129), and then goes in-depth in the analysis of the named actors' roles. He does not include Mollà, however, perhaps due to the fact that the actor's career cannot be seen as a succession of roles representing 'standard' masculinities.

An overview of Jordi Mollà's career highlights two constants in the roles he chooses: firstly, that he seems to be attracted to peculiar or unusual characters, those that act outside the norm and that are positioned as 'anti-heteronormative' (Perriam, 2013: 68); and secondly that these characters tend to either be in crisis or function as the catalyst for some other crisis in the narrative. I will look at these two characteristics of Mollà's roles in order to understand how the gay characters he has played in the aforementioned films, fit into Mollà's filmography and star persona.

Mollà's star / actor persona – an image that has largely emerged from press interviews and television appearances – has seen him labelled as 'raro' ('odd'), someone usually interested in playing more outsider figures than romantic leads, and with no clear preference for any particular genre or style of film (Perriam, 2003: 126). In a 1997 interview for the magazine *Fotogramas*, he is described as a chameleon with an 'afortunado físico, casi tan cambiante como sus personajes' ('lucky physique, that changes almost as often as the characters he plays') and 'un espíritu inquieto y disperso' ('of a restless and scattered nature') (Ponga, 1997: 40). Even the interview heading reads 'Jordi Mollà: No soy complicado' ('Jordi Mollà: I am not complicated') (Ponga, 1997: 40) alluding to the common notion of the actor as difficult, different and, '*raro*.' A 2002 interview in the same magazine discussing his directorial debut *No somos nadie / God Is on Air* (dir. Jordi Mollà, 2002), defines him as 'el artista inquieto' ('the restless artist') (Castells, 2002: 102), suggesting an endless state of inner turmoil. Furthermore, in another piece also in the magazine *Fotogramas* in 2010, Jordi Mollà, describes himself as 'una estrella de muchas puntas' ('a star with many end points'),

full of 'incoherencias' ('incoherencies'), with a film trajectory that does not follow 'una aritmética coherente' (a coherent arithmetic') (Montoya, 2010: 84); the actor's own words referencing both his multifaceted persona and diverse filmography.

Perriam (2003), in his book about stars and masculinities in Spanish cinema, subtitles the chapter on Jordi Mollà with the caption, 'performing crisis' (2003: 121), and describes the actor's screen persona as 'associated from the outset with troubled masculinity' (2003: 127; see also Perriam (2013: 68-71)). A summary of some of Mollà's main roles bears witness to these facts and highlights just how Mollà has refined a filmography based on playing the role of 'the other' – and also how his roles as 'the sexual other' (that is, the gay characters) fit perfectly with the number of misfits and delinquents that form his '*rareza* (oddness)' (2003: 126). In fact, as I will discuss next, several of his non-gay roles share striking similarities with discourses I have previously analysed, such as the medicalised or the monstrous narratives. It is important to note, however, that these offbeat roles have done nothing but cement Jordi Mollà's rising profile, and he has been cited as 'one of the industry's principal box-office draws' (Perriam, 2003: 121).

In *Jamón, jamón* (dir. Bigas Luna, 1992), Mollà's first film, his character José Luis fights with Raúl (Javier Bardem) for the attention of Silvia (Penélope Cruz). The film positions both male bodies as two sides of the male spectrum: Raúl is rugged, hard bodied and 'the clichéd, excessive embodiment of (heterosexual) male "Spanishness"' (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1994, in Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 21), while José Luis is presented physically and psychologically as the polar opposite. As Perriam (2003) observes, Raúl represents the 'physical and mental brutalities of patriarchal masculinity' and José Luis 'the masculinity's other' (2003: 130). Interestingly, while Raúl is 'initially associated with typically Spanish symbols', José Luis is often linked to 'non-Spanish, globalizing symbols of capitalism' (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 20), a similar dualism we encountered between heterosexual and gay space in Chapter 1 in my analysis of both *Los novios búlgaros / Bulgarian Lovers* (dir. Eloy de la Iglesia, 2003) and *Chuecatown*.[62]

In *La buena estrella / The Lucky Star* (dir. Ricardo Franco, 1997) Daniel (Jordi Mollà) is the outsider in a love triangle with Marina (Maribel Verdú) and Rafael (Antonio Resines). Daniel, a drug-addict recently released from prison, visits Marina, his ex-lover, and finds her living a 'normal', reformed, life with Rafael. Daniel ends up living with them, and forming a

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[62] See also Perriam (2003: 130-133) for an analysis of *Jamón, jamón* and the dualism between the two male protagonists.

'pseudofamilia atípica' ('atypical pseudo-family') (Huerta Floriano, 2006: 158). In the last third of the film, Daniel is jailed once again and it is revealed he also has a 'terminal, AIDS-related illness' which instils in the character 'a new sharpened consciousness of futility and ending' (Perriam, 2003: 136). Although Daniel is not gay, the film's narrative seems to follow a similar pattern to that of the 'homosexuality as disease' model, which places the (diseased) outsider as a threat (to the Marina-Rafael relationship), and one headed for a doomed ending (death) (curiously, Mollà's character dies at the end of the film in both *Jamón, jamón*, and *La buena estrella*).

Even Mollà's Hollywood roles see him typecast as an evil 'other' who exists only to be defeated (and killed) by the American hero. The US studio system frequently casts foreign actors as the villain / outsider and Mollà's Spanish heritage, as well as his screen / public persona, have seen him cast as several drug lords in Hollywood films, such as Diego Delgado in *Blow* (dir. Ted Demme, 2001); Hector Juan Carlos 'Johnny' Tapia in *Bad Boys II* (dir. Michael Bay, 2003), Antonio in *Knight and Day* (dir. James Mangold, 2010), or Marco in *Colombiana* (dir. Olivier Megaton, 2011). He has also been cast as outcast Texan Juan Seguin in *The Alamo* (dir. John Lee Hancock, 2004), and King Phillip II of Spain in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (dir. Shekhar Kapur, 2007), where he sets the Spanish Armada against the English (only to be defeated), foregrounding his roles as the non-normative identity within the films' narratives, and his outsider persona.

Within this framework, then, Jordi Mollà's gay male characters seem very much an extension of his screen persona and his preference for playing social and sexual outcasts without hope. As stated, I will next use Richard Dyer's theory of the young sad homosexual man discourse, and how gay characters are condemned to be represented as lonely, misunderstood and different, to comprehend how these films place gay identities as sexualities existing outside of Rubin's (1999 [1984]) charmed circle. Using the theories I explored in Chapter 3, I will study how these films represent the gay body, which at points reassert the liminal status of homosexuality within Rubin's theory. I will start the analysis by considering Jordi Mollà's role in *Historia del Kronen*, and how the sexuality of his character is never fully explored, nor his sexual identity developed. In the section on *Perdona bonita, pero Lucas me quería a mí*, I will concentrate on how the film reinforces gay male misconceptions, and how the gay characters are presented as in theory sexually charged, but in reality asexual bodies. In *Segunda piel*, I will centre on how the film perpetuates negative connotations of earlier gay-themed narratives, even when it tries to expose the reality of many closeted gay men in contemporary Spain. Finally, I will pay special attention to *El*

cónsul de Sodoma, which takes place in Spain and Manila from the 1960s until the 1990s, highlighting how the film subverts traditional narratives, placing heterosexuality and normalcy as 'the other', instead of homosexuality. The dichotomy in the film is not so much the hetero / homosexual binary explored in the other films, but Jaime Gil de Biedma's (Jordi Mollà) own strangling contradiction of being a bourgeois and executive for his family's multinational business by day, and communist and gay male poet by night.

4.2- *Historias del Kronen*: Undefined Homosexuality

Much has already been written about *Historias del Kronen* (see Deveny (1999: 212-217), Fouz-Hernández (2000), Ballesteros (2001: 256-267), Faulkner (2004: 67-72), or Pope (2007: 115-225)), but these discussions tend to focus on themes of youth, urban space, violence, and disappointment in Spain's new social and political order; issues of homosexuality and the construction of the characters' masculine identities, however, have been barely touched upon (notable exceptions being Moreiras Menor (2002: 214-229), Smith (2006: 75-100), or Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito (2007: 43-48)).

Thomas G. Deveny maintains that director Armendáriz toned down the 'stronger homosexual overtones of the novel' (1999: 214) on which the movie is based, and Roberto's (Jordi Mollà) sexuality 'remains a mystery for the audience' (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 44) until the end. I agree with Deveny in that the representation of Roberto's homosexuality is more veiled but there are subtle pointers throughout the film to Roberto's sexuality. For example, Roberto is constructed as a weaker version of manly and heterosexual Carlos (Juan Diego Botto) and more similar to effete Pedro (Aitor Merino) (who is also coded as gay – in both the novel and the film). As Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas (1998) suggest, the film's narrative is stressed by the shaping of male emotional relations and the definition of male identity (1998: 99), a male identity constructed by oppositions (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 43-44). The main contraposition between best friends Carlos and Roberto is their sexual identity, although Roberto's sexuality is, as aforementioned, veiled, and hidden from Carlos. This sexual opposition is reminiscent of the Tony / Nico friendship in *Mentiras y gordas*, which I studied in Chapter 3. In fact, I would argue that *Mentiras y gordas* tries to do for the 2000s what *Historias del Kronen* did for the 1990s: represent the Spanish youth of the moment. The similarities are evident, with both films focusing on a group of young people, during one summer, without much to do but drink, take drugs, party, and have sex. Furthermore, both films end with the death of a gay character from an overdose (alcohol in *Historias del Kronen*, drugs in *Mentiras y gordas*),

arguably killed by the group as a whole: literally in Pedro's case, since he is forced-fed alcohol; metaphorically in Tony's case, since peer pressure and the coming out process takes him in a spiral of self-destruction.

The presentation of homosexuality, in the film, is defined by the medicalised discourse mainly through the character of Pedro, a (supposedly)[63] gay member of the group and 'prototipo del débil, "perdedor"' ('prototype of the weak, "loser"') (Ballesteros, 2001: 259). Pedro is physically marred by his diabetes establishing a link between illness and lack of manhood (see Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito (2007: 46-47) for an analysis of Pedro and homosexuality) similar to the discourse of homosexuality as a disease – furthermore, his physique is thinner and more petite that the rest of the group, visually heightening Pedro's difference from his friends. But this presentation also occurs through closeted Roberto, who is positioned as the weaker (needy and affection-seeking, feminised) version of Carlos. This weakness is highlighted throughout the film by Carlos himself, although visually Roberto's physique is similar to Carlos'. Earlier on, Carlos calls Roberto a 'queer' because he drives his car conscientiously (instead of aggressively – or 'macho-style' as Carlos would have it). In another scene, when Roberto complains that he wants more from life, like affection and friendship, Carlos laughs and asserts that 'la amistad es para los débiles' ('friendship is for weaklings'). It is difficult not to understand this longing for 'friendship' as a longing for intimacy with Carlos for Roberto: Carlos views friendships similarly to his relationships with women, disposable. Roberto highlighting the need for more 'friendship' with Carlos suggests the need to be more than disposable for his friend, more than how Carlos' treats his sexual conquests. Roberto is coded as different from the group and from Carlos (who is coded as the 'macho' heterosexual) particularly – but it is a difference not readable in his physique, but his actions. A similar gazing act to that of Tony and Nico in *Mentiras y gordas* occurs in *Historias del Kronen*: As Carlos leaves after a fight with the rest of the group, the camera stays on Roberto's face, in a medium close-up, longingly staring at Carlos.

There are two moments in the film when the homoerotic tension between Carlos and Roberto is addressed. The first is in a sequence which has both characters running naked around an outdoor swimming pool and then boisterously rolling around the ground. This scene that in Jose Ángel Mañas' novel has both characters wearing swimming trunks, occurs in the film with both Roberto and Carlos fully naked, heightening the homoeroticism of the

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[63] Pedro himself never reveals his true sexual orientation, although we are led to believe he is indeed gay.

moment, as they run around the swimming pool and then, in a medium long shot, fall to the ground, wrestling. As Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito explain, the nakedness and drunkenness of the instance allow Carlos to compliment Roberto's penis, a comment that is then defused of any homosexual meaning by Carlos' reference to 'Roberto's female neighbours – the ones who, for Carlos, would be impressed by such a sight' (2007: 460). As Dyer asserts, the sad young gay man is seen as desirable by heterosexual women (2002: 122), and Carlos words seem to highlight this by praising Roberto's (physical) appeal to the opposite sex.

The second instance takes place at Pedro's party, where the two men masturbate each other, an act that ends up recorded on camera, and which the audience only sees through the video camera's LCD monitor (diminishing any sense of visual pleasure between the film and the audience – as the scene is mediated). Although this scene seems to cross the 'heterosexual/machismo line' (Deveny, 1999: 214), when Roberto tries to kiss his friend, Carlos' reaction is negative: he pushes Roberto away. Shortly after, Carlos (intoxicated by drugs and alcohol) forcefully pours a whole bottle of Whisky down Pedro's throat, killing him. This act is also recorded on the same camera as before – visually and metaphorically linking both the masturbatory (homo)sexual act and the violence perpetrated against gay Pedro. Homosexuality and death are, therefore, doubly linked in this scene: firstly as it is Pedro who is killed, and secondly, by placing the killing right after the (homo)sexual exploration between Carlos and Roberto (see also Fóuz-Hernández (2000)).

As mentioned, Richard Dyer puts forward four possible resolutions for the sad gay man: death, normality (negating one's own homosexuality), becoming a dreadful old queen or the fantasy of finding 'someone like oneself' (2002: 132). I would argue that each of the Jordi Mollà films analysed in this chapter follows one of these four possibilities. In *Historias del Kronen*, for example, the outcome for Roberto is 'normality' – by denying his sexuality, Roberto is reinserting his sexuality within Rubin's charmed circle. In the final scene, a guilt-ridden Carlos wants to take the video recording of Pedro's death / murder to the police but Roberto refuses, aware that the masturbation incident is also on the recording and that it would reveal his sexuality. As Isolina Ballesteros points out, 'es Carlos el que propone afrontar la realidad de sus hechos y Roberto el que prefiere ocultarlos' ('it is Carlos who wants to face the reality of his actions and Roberto who would rather hide them') (2001: 258). Although Carlos refers to Pedro's death, Roberto is aware that on that same recording is their masturbation incident, and showing it would mean revealing his homosexuality. As Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito summarise Carlos is aware of his friend's

(homo)sexuality and he compares his refusal 'to show the video evidence to the police with his refusal to accept his attraction to men' (2007: 48). Roberto is refusing to come out (refusing to accept who he is), trying to code himself as 'normal' (that is, non-gay, within the charmed circle). Dyer explains that the sad young man narrative sometimes stops at the moment before 'becoming' or 'knowing that one 'is' a queer', the narrative stressing the inevitable 'hatefulness of this destiny' (2002: 128-129). In *Historias del Kronen*, this is evident in the open-ended conclusion: off-screen, Carlos and Roberto fight over the videotape, leaving Roberto's narrative frozen exactly at that point where he has to face who he really is, leaving his identity unresolved, as mentioned at the start of the analysis, undefined.

4.3- Homosexuality is the Comedy: *Perdona bonita pero Lucas me quería a mí*

Two years after *Historias del Kronen*, Jordi Mollà's played another gay character, Toni, in the 1997 film *Perdona bonita pero Lucas me quería a mí* (henceforth *Perdona bonita…*). Making use of an exaggerated camp mise-en-scene – in an attempt, as I will shortly explore, to appeal to the gay market which I discussed in Chapter 1 – the comedy narrates a murder mystery that occurs in the flat inhabited by three openly gay flatmates, Toni, Carlos (Pepón Nieto) and Dani (Roberto Correcher). Unlike *Historias del Kronen*, the characters in *Perdona bonita…* are established as gay from the outset. Santiago Fouz-Hernández and Chris Perriam (2000) note that the film, also set in Madrid, engages with 'Pedro Almodóvar's Spanish-specific camp style', deploying 'humour and transgression to challenge patriarchal values' (2000: 96);[64] on the surface, a radical difference from *Historias del Kronen*.

In reality, *Perdona bonita…* follows a similar ideological heteronormative discourse to that of *Historias del Kronen*. Fouz-Hernández and Perriam point out that the film reinforces 'misconceptions and myths of homosexuality constructed from a heterosexual (perhaps even heterosexist) viewpoint' (2000: 108), the camp style,[65] although arguably transgressing some patriarchal and heterosexist values, used as a vacuous means to attract the aforementioned gay market (see also Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 120-125 for an in-depth analysis of the film's problematic narratives and representational values).

A similar mediation of the visual pleasure from the homosexual act to that of *Historias del Kronen*, occurs in *Perdona bonita…* As mentioned, in *Historias del Kronen* the

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[64] For a similar use of comedy as a transgression of patriarchal values, see also Chapter 5, and the analysis of *Reinas / Queens* (dir. Manuel Gómez Pereira, 2005).

[65] Understanding camp as Jack Babuscio (1993 [1977]) defines it, with the four primary features of 'irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and humour' (1993: 20).

image of Carlos and Roberto masturbating each other is presented through the distancing medium of the LCD monitor, placing a barrier between film and audience. In *Perdona bonita…*, the gay men's sex lives exist 'only in conversation, their vivid, screened, accounts of their relationships with Lucas being revealed as wishful fantasies' (Fouz-Hernández and Perriam, 2000: 105). Throughout the film, the three flatmates all claim to have had an intimate relationship with Adonis-like Lucas (Alonso Caparrós), their heterosexual new flatmate who is found dead in the flat. But in reality, the trio's sexual claims are never proven to be more than fantasies; and Lucas is never seen having sex (or even kissing) any of them. Gay male sexuality is only represented as make believe, as a 'hilarious' fantasy that is never fulfilled, and the three gay flatmates are nothing but the target of the film's comedic elements.

Dyer's assertions of solitude, misunderstanding and difference associated with gay representations is clearly visualised in *Perdona bonita…* Homosexuality in the film is played for laughs, pointing, as Fouz-Hernández and Perriam highlight, to an 'exploitative use of gayness as 'laughable'' (2000: 103). While we are constantly reminded of their (homo)sexual identity, their 'onscreen sexual inactivity' is juxtaposed with an 'overexposure to silly, absurd situations' (2000: 103), reinforcing a collection of heterosexist stereotypes. The three flatmates, who at times seem like over-the-top gay versions of *The Three Stooges*, are presented in a constant state of hysteria and unhappiness, misunderstood by society (which labels them as 'maricones,' 'fags,' as different)[66] and by each other (with each fighting for Lucas' affections).

The fantasy of finding someone similar with whom to settle down is the second of Dyer's four endings for the 'sad young [gay] man' (2002: 132), and is very much the main narrative theme between Lucas and the three flatmates. Each of the gay flatmates has fantasies of a future with Lucas, at the expense of confronting reality: that they are, in fact, alone (a fact highlighted by each of them at some point). At the end of the film, once they have cremated Lucas' body so no one can find it, the main characters go their separate ways. The camera pans out from the group, and we see them go in entirely separate directions, until the street is left empty. The fantasy is broken, Lucas never loved any of them, and they never found someone to share their lives with. Interestingly, it is assumed that the three flatmates will go back to living together the next morning, and pretend that nothing has happened, as

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[66] They are constantly referred in these terms by the rest of the cast. For a re-appropriation of the term 'maricón' see González, 2005: 19-31.

their departing words testify. The three flatmates have found in each other 'someone like oneself,' flawed individuals, at the expense of sexual gratification and a lasting relationship.

As highlighted in both *Historias del Kronen* and *Perdona bonita…* the gay roles are characterised with similar attributes to those defined by Dyer: solitude, misunderstanding and difference. By representing the gay characters stereotypically as physically weaker camp men, filled with inner turmoil, *Perdona bonita…* offers a controversial reading of the male gay male body. The summary by Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés (2000 [1997]) of the representation of the gay character in Spanish cinema and literature seems very pertinent to the representation of the gay characters in *Perdona bonita…*: 'el afeminamiento y la contrafigura […] del homosexual depredador y/o victima infeliz' ('effeminacy and its counterpart […] the predatory homosexual and/or the unhappy victim' (2000: 13). Toni, Carlos and Dani are presented as camp and predatory, fighting for the attention of Lucas, while at the same time, they are the unhappy victims of Lucas' (hetero)sexuality.

Perdona bonita…, as well as *Historias del Kronen*, although viewed as 'part of a move towards greater visibility and acceptance' of Spanish gay representations and the gay community (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 121), still do so by reinforcing stereotypes and negative assumptions, without really subverting norms and thus prolonging damaging narratives and ideologies.

4.4.- Physical or Mental? Nausea and Anxiety: *Segunda piel*

There is already extensive literature on the 1999 film *Segunda piel* (see, amongst others, Perriam, 2002: 132-137 and 2004: 151-163; Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito 2007: 126-139), and the consensus is that the film revisits and perpetuates negative elements of earlier gay-themed narratives, even when trying to expose the reality of many closeted homosexuals in Spain, and the 'rampant homophobia that remains in certain sectors of contemporary Spanish society' (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, 2007: 126). The acting, particularly Mollà's, was criticised by the media at the time, although paradoxically, he was nominated for a Best Actor Goya award in that year's ceremony. As Mira (2010) emphasises, Mollà's interpretation was a 'misguided effort in a misguided film', his character suffering from an 'unfocused combination of charm and psychopathy' that was, on the whole, 'hard to enjoy' (2010: 211).[67]

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[67] I would like to stress Mira's use of the word 'psychopathy' in his description of Mollà's acting (and character), very much in line with the discourse of homosexuality as a disease discussed in Chapter 3.

For the purpose of this analysis, and with regards to *Segunda piel*, there are two points that are worth considering in more detail. Firstly, the film does seem to positively broaden the (homo)representational spectrum and openly show on screen the sexual act between two men, something which, as Perriam (2002) highlights, had at the time, 'pocos precedentes en España y menos aun en Hollywood' ('was almost unprecedented in Spain, let alone Hollywood') (2002: 135). Indeed, he goes on to state that 'se agradece la ausencia de los estereotipos, muy del cine español (entre otros), de los homosexuales como locas' ('[I] appreciate the lack of stereotypes, ingrained in Spanish cinema (amongst other cinemas) of homosexuals as gay queens') (2002: 135). Nonetheless, this contrasts with the negative characterisations and narrative arcs used to present both gay male characters: married man and closeted Alberto (Jordi Mollà) and his lover Diego (Javier Bardem). The film certainly shies away from the stereotypical, often feminised image of gay men as camp, hysterical and over-the-top – as seen in *Perdona bonita…* – but the image presented here is equally misguided.

As pointed out by Chris Perriam, Daniel's attempts to look 'normal', his lack of gay friends and his lifestyle generally present him as being so detached from the homosexual scene and culture that his homosexuality 'desaparece esterilizada' ('disappears in an sterilised manner') (2002: 135). His characterisation perhaps follows the ideology described by Juan Carlos Alfeo Álvarez (2000) of the 'modalidad integrada' ('integrated category'), in which 'los personajes aparecen perfectamente integrados en un universo donde lo sexual no es, en sí, diferenciador' ('the characters appear perfectly integrated in a world where sexuality is not, on its own, a differential factor') (2000: 145). This type of characterisations, as Alfeo Álvarez explains, does not represent the reality encountered by gay men in contemporary Spain (2000: 146); rather, it offers a bland view of gay life in Spain. Daniel seems detached, on the margins of, and isolated from the reality lived by many gay men, living outside, and unaware of, the gay community (and the gay lifestyle discussed in Chapter 1 and exemplified by the characters in, for example, *Chuecatown*). It is an idealised representation in which his sexuality is so insignificant (even if it is crucial to the film's narrative), that it erases any trace of self. If it were not for Daniel's love for (and sex scenes with) Alberto, the audience would not know of Daniel's homosexuality. As Perriam (2004) describes him, Diego is the 'unconvincing but nonetheless excluded and victimized gay man of the piece' (2004: 162).

On the other hand, Alberto perfectly fits Dyer's definition of the sad gay man. He is socially misunderstood by his wife Elena (Ariadna Gil) that never really comprehends what is going on with him (as he misses their son's birthday, or gives excuses for his random

actions); as well as by Daniel, from whom he is hiding his married life. Although loved by Daniel and Elena, he is alone because he cannot share his true self with anyone, and therefore does not let anyone get close to him, constantly avoiding opening up. He is continuously coded as different: different from Daniel (and his supposedly open sexuality), different from Elena and the life they have. Interestingly, this sense of difference is highlighted by Elena's mother, María Elena (Mercedes Samprieto), in a scene that once again links homosexuality with the ideological discourse of the 'other' and the 'monstrous' discussed in my analysis of *Pa negre* in the previous chapter. Sitting in her living room, María Elena is watching television with her daughter. On screen famous TV-presenter Ana Rosa Quintana is about to talk about cellulite and draws comparisons between this 'women's evil' with other famous monsters, like Gozilla, the Loch Ness monster or the Wolfman. At this point, María Elena, suddenly tells Elena that she never liked her husband, thus indirectly linking monstrosity with Alberto.

As noted by Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito (2007), the narrative also 'subtly conveys' the idea of homosexuality as illness, since Alberto and Elena are both seen ill at different points in the film and always in relation to the discovery of Alberto's homosexuality. Alberto becomes physically sick when confronted by his wife about his sexuality, and Elena herself confesses that the discovery of Alberto's homosexual activities made her vomit (2007: 126). Moreover, Aberto offers to leave the family home and return once he is 'well' (that is, 'cured'), 'implicitly associating his homosexual inclinations with an illness' (2007: 127). As the narrative progresses, Alberto's anxieties are externalised – unshaven, tired-looking, and bloodeyed, the camera frames him in close-ups that heightened Alberto's own claustrophobic anxieties. As he cannot escape himself – visually represented by the close-ups – by the end he becomes erratic and aggressive, exploding away from the spaces he inhabits (his house with Elena, Daniel's flat…) and escaping with his motorbike.

Furthering the image of Alberto as a sad gay man, Jordi Mollà's conveys Alberto's lack of inner stability and subsequent disintegration with a constant repetition of facial tics and expressions, similar to Dyer's downcast gaze, which he calls 'the sign of melancholy' (2002: 128). Whenever Alberto is confronted by Elena or Daniel, his face tilts ever so slightly downwards, his eyes in a constant flutter from one point to another, as if seeking refuge from the inquisitive gaze of his lovers (see Perriam (2003, 123-124) for more examples). This trait is employed to an exaggerated extent, and at times feels like 'childish moment[s] of rage' (Perriam, 2003: 123) combined with the traditional histrionics found in some stage play acting. The framing compositions also highlight Alberto's relationship with both Elena and

Daniel – as the narrative progresses and Alberto's struggles with his sexuality are heightened, he is framed on the background and to the the sides of the two-shots, while Elena or Daniel are framed in in the foreground and centre. If he is framed in a single shot, he is framed in close ups that leave a lot of empty space around him, signalling the metaphorical distance he creates between himself and both Elena and Daniel (see Figure 14).

Figure 14 – Alberto, framed alone, in *Segunda piel*

Dyer also argues that the sad gay man is generally repulsed when confronted with his first contact with the gay scene (2002: 128). Although no actual queer space is shown during the film (even Diego's apartment could be considered heteronormative, empty as it is of any homosexual coding, apart from their love-making), Alberto displays a similar reaction when Diego introduces him to colleagues at a medical conference as a friend. Alberto's reaction conveys anger, a sense of loss, the aforementioned downcast gazes and also disgust at being theoretically 'outed' as gay to Eva (Cecilia Roth), Diego's colleague and confidante. Alberto seems unable to deal with a world in which he might be perceived and known as gay, and in reaction he ends up flirting and going clubbing with a woman he meets at the conference, re-asserting his heterosexual façade.

Just like Roberto in *Historias del Kronen* exhibits some qualities that present him as irresistible to women, so do Alberto and Diego. Alberto's wife, Elena, still wants him even after discovering his affair and sexuality (trying, even, to 'convert' him back to heterosexuality), while Eva makes her love for and interest in Diego quite explicit, telling him to live with her, since she is 'el mejor chico que puedas tener' ('the best man you could ever have'). Even after Alberto's death (the third of Dyer's resolutions to the narrative of the

sad gay man), Diego and Elena bond together and become friends, Elena unable to hide some kind of interest in and attraction to her husband's lover. The final scene sees both of them going to pick up Adrián (Adrian Sac), Elena and Alberto's son, as if a new family relationship has formed. Although this could be read as a queering of the family institution (institution which I will analyse in Chapters 5 and 6), the film's final images are ambiguous. Elena and Diego are seen chatting and walking together in number of medium long shots on their way to the school. The final image fades to black as they are both seen crossing to the other side of a street: to be from 'la acera de enfrente' ('the sidewalk on the other side') is Spanish slang for 'gay' (see Ortega Román (2007) for a study of Spanish gay slang). It is interesting how a film that narrates the problems a man faces with his own sexuality, ends in an ambiguous image of a straight woman and a gay man crossing to the other side of the road. Is Diego metaphorically crossing to the 'heterosexual side'? Or is he helping Elena cross to the 'homosexual side' and in that way make peace with her husband's sexuality?

The film's vague and sterilised homo-representations seem to contradict the naturalness in which the film represents the same-sex sexual act. Short of showing Diego's and Alberto's penises on screen, the film has no reservations about displaying the sexual act between Alberto and Diego, the camera lingering in their naked bodies and facial expressions. In contrast to *Mentiras y gordas*, the lighting, camera angles, and mise-en-scene in *Segunda piel* do not shy away from a more open representation of the (homo)sexual moment. This positive identification with the same-sex reality, however, is undermined by two factors.

The first is related to the media attention these scenes received at the time of the film's release. As Perriam (2002) explains, a number of television and magazine interviews focused on the perceived difficulty for heterosexual actors of shooting gay sex scenes. Javier Bardem provided an interesting response, stating that the scenes were not problematic because he and Jordi Mollà were friends before making the film, and that filming the scene was 'divertido y nada traumático' ('fun and non-traumatic') (2002: 135). While intended as a positive underplaying of any such media interest, it is of course a choice of words that implies it could have been traumatic. By reinforcing that it was not a problem, Bardem's response inadvertently highlights the reality of social anxieties linked to the gay sexual act. As I will explore in Chapter 5, similar comments were made by Hugo Silva when discussing *Reinas* and having to kiss Raúl Jiménez, his male on-screen partner, once more underlining that these social anxieties are still very much alive nowadays. The second factor undermining the positive image of homosexuality in *Segunda piel* is that neither of the gay characters'

penises is shown during their sex scene. This would be inconsequential were it not for the fact that we do see Rafael (Javier Albalá) fully naked after his sexual encounter with Elena, naturalising heterosexuality while codifying homosexual sexuality. Alberto and Daniel are visually castrated, as if their sex scenes are make-believe – or just too much for audiences to deal with (further emphasised extra-textually by Bardem's comments).

4.5- Roberto, Toni and Alberto: Repressed Sexuality

Christopher Pullen (2009), in his book on gay identity and the media argues that all 'storytelling involves the placement, or displacement, of myths, and potentially the context of stereotypical representation' (2009: 16). Throughout this chapter I have argued how a number of films still place the gay character in a number of narratives that reinforce traditional and negative stereotypical discourses. Ultimately, these create what Roland Barthes defines as the problematic nature of myths: that the myths produce a form of knowledge which, even when not necessarily connected to the original source, is highly influential and enduring (Barthes, 1963 in Pullen 2009: 17). Since these socially constructed assumptions become 'naturalised,' they are culturally and socially left unquestioned. As every cultural product has a meaning, and this meaning is conditioned by the ideology behind it, ideologies that are based on traditional and stereotypical discourses become naturalised and 'the norm.' These discourses, what Barthes refers as 'myths,' define pathways in storytelling through repetition, and may lead to a distancing of 'gay identity from authority in narrative' (2009: 17), and a re-establishing of archetypal tones and narratives.

As Robin Wood (1985) summarises, when dealing with ideology 'it is always necessary to ask not only what it *ex*presses but what it *re*presses' (1985: 653; his emphasis). In this case, I would argue that the ideology expressed in the three films analysed is that homosexuality might be an accepted form of identity so long as the sexual side of it is repressed. Roberto and Carlos in *Historias del Kronen* seem to get along just fine, as long as Roberto does not ask more from Carlos (friendship, a kiss…). When the line between homosociality and homosexuality is crossed, problems arise. In *Perdona bonita…* Toni (and by extension Carlos and Dani) are represented as sexually repressed, their fantasy retellings of their (sexual) interactions with Lucas being their only escape. As mentioned, homo-sexuality in *Perdona bonita…* is represented as comedic make-believe from a heterosexist viewpoint, the gay identity of the characters expressed verbally (and visually through the use of camp), but never fulfilled. Finally, the narrative in *Segunda piel* deals with Alberto's repressed sexual identity, while Diego's homosexuality is sanitised, devoid of any connection

with the gay community at large. Although the (homo)sexual act is represented in *Segunda piel,* as argued, Alberto's problematic acceptance of his sexuality ends with his own death and an ambiguous finale that perhaps even re-inscribes Diego into heteronormativity.

The films analysed in this chapter have mainly followed the discourse of homosexuality as a disease, as well as the 'sad young gay man' narrative, recreating and fostering the more negative portrayals of both the gay male body and gay male identity. In *El cónsul de Sodoma,* some of the characteristics of these discourses are present, but I believe that they exist here in order to disavow some of the stereotypes previously discussed, to subvert the 'myths' and stereotypes. If homosexual identity is imagined as 'other' and 'deviant' (if homosexuality is in the 'bad' liminal area outside of Rubin's socially constructed charmed circle), then a balance between 'the potential to make new space and the recognition of situation' (Pullen, 2009: 54) needs to be found. As Pullen states, 'to address issues you have to name them, even if you provide solutions' (2009: 19).

El cónsul de Sodoma – starring Jordi Mollà as real-life poet Jaime Gil de Biedma – is, first of all, notable for the way it largely eludes the discourse of homosexuality as a disease, showing a more progressive representation of homosexuality. This is even more surprising given the fact that Biedma himself died of AIDS and suffered from tuberculosis earlier in life. I will argue that in *El cónsul de Sodoma* Jamie Gil de Biedma's (homo)sexuality is decentred until this is not a differential factor amongst the characters. In fact, in my opinion, the film subverts Rubin's charmed circle placing within the confines of the circle those ideologies and sexualities which are, theoretically, subversive. In the final section of the chapter, I will analyse the film structuring the analysis in light of Dyer's (2002) traits of the sad gay man condemned to loneliness, incomprehension and difference, and considering how the film's representation of the gay character breaks free from the analysed discourses, towards a more progressive representation of homosexuality. Before that, I will offer an overview of the film, and some observations on the real-life poet Jaime Gil de Biedma.

4.6- *El cónsul de Sodoma*: 'I am not ashamed of you'
Born in 1929, Jaime Gil de Biedma was a gay poet who lived through the dictatorship years and the democratic reconfiguring of Spain after Franco's death. Before dying of AIDS in 1990, Gil de Biedma published in 1974 a book entitled *Diario del artista seriamente enfermo* ('Diary of the artist seriously ill'). Jaime also spent some time secluded in his family's country house due to tuberculosis. During his life, Gil de Biedma was aware of the discourse of homosexuality as a disease in Spanish literature and cinema, which he discussed in

published interviews (see Pérez Escohotado, 2002: 93-112). It is interesting, then, that the film *El cónsul de Sodoma* avoids this disease discourse by ignoring the TB incident and, also, by portraying his final months suffering from HIV as a time where he was surrounded and loved by his (mainly heterosexual) friends, rather than as punishment for his promiscuous (gay) life. Moreover, the film could easily have tried to portray the difficult social conditions gay men suffered during Francoist Spain, but instead it decentres homosexuality as Jaime's only identity, broadening the narrative.

In the film, Jaime Gil de Biedma (Jordi Mollà) is not characterised as someone in constant inner turmoil because of his sexuality (like Roberto in *Historias del Kronen* or Alberto in *Segunda piel*, for example); rather he is portrayed as struggling against time, the volatile nature of youth, and the fear of growing old – concerns and themes no different to those of his friends, all of them poets and writers, and none of them gay. His struggles, then, are more related to the changing social structure of Spain during and after the dictatorship, as well as basic human mortality worries, rather than his sexuality.

The discourse of homosexuality as a disease is disavowed in the film by not dwelling on his HIV-positive condition as something that marks him as different (similarly to Pedro's HIV status in *Cachorro,* studied in Chapter 2). Furthermore, although he does try to commit suicide (which, as discussed, can reinforce the discourses of disease, disability, and weakness), he does so not because of his (homo)sexuality but because of his anguish at the death of his female lover Bel (Bimba Bosé). Halfway through the film, Jaime is shown falling in love with Bel (he even considers marrying her), a free-spirited and adulterous mother of two. This relationship questions Jaime's sexual identity, and might be read as exemplifying a point advanced by many queer theorists: the fluidity of sexual desire, 'capable of acting outside stable identity categories such as gay or straight,' furthermore 'resisting those categories by refusing to be restricted to them' (Moddelmog, 2010: 166; see also Tatchell, 1996: 35-54).

In *El cónsul de Sodoma*, Biedma's sexuality is decentred from the narrative. Whilst transient representations of difference, rejection, and isolation do appear, these are expressed in the context of a repressive society, and not as part of a problematic (medical) condition (like in, for example, *Historias del Kronen*) or a psychological concern (as in *Segunda piel*). I will next explore how the film represents the topics of loneliness, incomprehension, and difference, and how these break from the conventions discussed by Dyer. The subversion comes from understanding that loneliness, incomprehension, and difference are not linked to Jaime's sexuality, they are not intrinsic parts of the gay character – like they are, for example,

for the characters of Alberto in *Segunda piel*, or Roberto in *Historias del Kronen.* This poses an aesthetic and discursive dynamic which moves from visualising the gay male as one with a disavowed life, to displaying the potential to reveal Jamie's individuality. This reveals the construction of Jamie's identity in *El cónsul de Sodoma* as a site of contestation.

When looking at 'difference' I will analyse how Jaime is not the one thought of as different, but someone else is − be it different race, different class, or different nationality. Jaime's fears of death and growing old relate to the topic of 'incomprehension,' which is shared by his group of friends − therefore not presenting Jaime as misunderstood. Finally, in the topic of 'loneliness' I will look at how, even when Jaime tries to see himself as alone, the people around him are in fact supportive of him, by his side at all times.

4.6.1.- Denying Difference and Incomprehension

There are several examples of a progressive representation of homosexuality in the film that do not centre Jaime Gil de Biedma within the discourse of 'homosexuality as disease' nor follow the sad young man trait of 'difference.' Although Jaime is seen as 'different' or 'the other' at certain points, this is not directly because of his sexuality. During his time in Manila, as part of his work at his father's tobacco factory, he is seen not as sexually different, but as nationally different – this, however, is not presented as undesirable or a hindrance.

Back in Barcelona, he takes his American friend, Jimmy Baldwin (Othello Rensoli) to an isolated, gipsy bar. On the way, some local children, excited at the presence of a black man in their area, exclaim 'que viene un negro' ('a black man is coming!'). This illustrates racial and national difference, but, again, not difference due to sexuality. Furthermore, Jaime himself is not the one who is highlighted as 'different,' but Jimmy.

There are a few instances where Jaime is highlighted as 'different' due to his sexuality, but these are minor circumstances that reinforce a broader positive discourse. Don Luis does not understand – highlighting the topic of incomprehension – his son and wishes he was 'normal' (non-homosexual, non-reactionary), but, as I will examine, Jaime is still a respected and loved member of the family. Moreover, his father is willing to listen to Jaime's ideologies, and try and understand them, but it is Jaime himself who is not able to talk to his father. The police also remark on his sexual difference, but are more interested in his joining of an illegal communist group. Similarly, the army demotes him because of his reactionary writings, and not his homosexuality. In these instances, ideological difference is emphasised, not sexual. Furthermore, as the film progresses and moves into the 1980s and *la movida*

period, Jaime and his friends left-wing 'reactionary' ideologies are then reinstated as the norm.

The only instance in which his homosexuality is highlighted negatively, as an undesirable difference, is at his father's factory. In a meeting to discuss and select a successor to Don Luis (who wishes to retire as the company's director), Jaime is dramatically excluded from the selection after some compromising photos of him with another man are revealed (heightened by the fact that the man is also a 'racial other' – see Perriam (2013: 144)). As all the members of the committee leave the room, he is left on his own, the camera lingering on a medium close up of Jaime, off-centre and alone – it is the only scene where Jaime is visually alone because of his sexuality, because of his 'difference.' The scene could seemingly reinforce Dyer's three traits (of loneliness, incomprehension, and difference), but the film's narrative does not dwell on this moment, instead focusing on how the company reacts to the exclusion of Jaime from the selection process: Víctor (Marc Martínez) – Jaime's rival for promotion and the person who deliberately distributed the personal photos in order to gain competitive advantage – is fired because of his underhand tactics. Additionally, later in the film, the new company director, a former colleague and friend of Jaime's, helps him fund his HIV treatment, reinforcing that they (the company) are there to support him. Such representations of Jaime being treated as an equal and a valued part of family / work life highlight that although Jaime's sexuality might be different, as supported in the next section, he is not alone because of it.

4.6.2.- Rejecting Loneliness

In his book *Up from Invisibility*, Larry Gross (2001) argues that the more progressive representantions of gay characters on screen are still at times reminiscent of the familiar 'sad young man' stereotype, with one notable difference, they do not tend to be alone, but instead have a group of close relatives that are supportive (2001: 176). This is certainly the case in *El cónsul de Sódoma*, as of the three traits, loneliness is the one that it predominantly contests. There are a number of people throughout the film that support Biedma, mainly Bel, his father Don Luis (Juli Mira), and Biedma's group of friends. Although Jaime and his father have a difficult relationship because of Jaime's sexuality (and Jaime's communist ideologies) Don Luis does not treat Jaime as 'the other' or as an outsider. In an early conversation, after he visits Jaime and finds him half naked with his lover, a prostitute, and a naked black American friend he states that, even though he might have liked things to be slightly different, 'no me avergüenzo de ti. Eres un Gil de Biedma' ('I am not ashamed of you. You are a Gil de

Biedma'). Thus Don Luis reinforces their familial bond and that he sees their family as a unit, with Jaime's place within it – this not only demonstrates how Jaime is not alone, but also re-inscribes homosexuality within the family institution, a topic that will be explored in-depth in the final section of the thesis. Moreover, it does not define Jaime as 'different' to the rest of the family, but as part of it.

Bel is also supportive of Jaime's identity and is in fact with him because of it – because of who he is – and not in spite of it. As discussed, Dyer establishes that the 'sad gay man' discourse also tends to involve a female character falling in love and trying to change (and even convert) the gay protagonist. Although Bel's character could be seen as a way of 'hetero-normalising' Jaime's identity on screen – that is, in order to make it more appealing to a wider non-gay audience, and as a 'softening' of the real life Jaime Gil de Biedma's homosexuality for the screen – the character of Bel never judges Jaime for his actions, accepting him exactly as he is. In their last conversation, after she declines his proposal of marriage, she tells him that she loves who he is and their relationship. Bel is not condemning his lifestyle and trying to 'de-homosexualise' him but, on the contrary, wants him to stay who and how he is. The last time they see each other, Bel reinforces that he is not alone. As she is about to leave, Jaime tells her 'no quiero estar solo' ('I do not want to be alone'), to which she replies 'pero si estoy contigo, ¿no te das cuenta?' (I am with you, don't you realise?').

According to Richmond Ellis (1997), the real life Jaime Gil de Biedma actually insisted that such a marriage would have been hypocrisy and that the poet expressed revulsion at the 'spectacle of married men secretly pursuing male lovers' (1997: 61). It is therefore interesting how the film allows for poetic licence when it comes to the representation of Bel and Jaime's relationship. In the film, it is not Jaime who berates the institution of marriage, but Bel. In doing this, the film reinforces the idea that Jaime does not need to change and conform to normalcy in order to be accepted and loved (as he thinks he has to, since he wants to marry Bel). Jaime's fear of ending alone (one of the narrative endings for the sad gay man according to Dyer's theory) is one that, Bel tells him, would not occur if he accepted things as they are, instead of trying to change them. Although it could be argued that this reversal of reality (denying the fact that the real-life poet knew this marriage would have been hypocrisy) makes the character seem momentarily weaker (he is willing to get married to a woman and ignore his homosexuality), I must highlight two factors. Firstly, that the relationship between Bel and Jaime is presented not as a means for Jaime to be accepted into society and be considered as 'normal' and, secondly, that Jaime is wanting marriage out of fear of being alone, something he shares with his group of friends and

colleagues. It might present a negative idea of the institution of marriage (marriage due to fear, rather than love), but it does not present Jaime as a weaker man, since the rest of his (heterosexual) writer friends share this fear. They are all preoccupied with the passing of time, growing old, and mortality, and Jaime's fears of ending up alone only mirror those of the group of people he surrounds himself with. Even within his fear of being alone, he is not alone.

The music score highlights the film's key themes of death, the passing of time and the fleeting nature of youth, all of them worries that populate Jaime's and his friends' conversations. Sara Montiel's *La flor del mal* ('The Flower of Evil'), is used over the images of Jaime lustfully looking at an athletic young builder in his flat, and then at a young rent-boy dancing with an older man in a clandestine nightclub. One of Jaime Gil de Biedma's poems is also heard in a voiceover (read by Jordi Mollà), with the sentences 'me recuerdas el pasado, y dices que envejezco' ('you remind me of the past, and you say that I am growing old'), following shortly after Montiel's verse 'y por mi eterna tristeza' ('and because of my eternal sadness') is heard. It is not homosexuality that is being analysed here, nor presented as the cause of the 'eterna tristeza', rather it is the simple human sadness at time running out – that he is growing old ('envejezco'). These themes, as he discusses with his group of friends, all writers, are not part of his (homo)identity, but are a shared feeling.

Figure 15 – Biedma, in the foreground, surrounded by his friends in *El cónsul de Sodom*

Visually he is never alone either, the camera generally framing him in a medium two-shot with Bel, his friends, or his family. Unlike, for example, in the analysis of *Los novios búlgaros* in Chapter 2, when Daniel visits Kyril's family in Bulgaria and the camera frames Daniel to the sides – as an outsider to Kyril's family. In *El cónsul de Sódoma* Jamie is more

often than not framed at the centre of the action, with everyone else around him (see Figure 15). Interestingly, it is the character of Jaime who is more inclined to portray himself as alone – symbolically, and in the voice over, but not visually or thematically. His father does not leave his bedside after the poet tries to commit suicide, his friends visit him when he is convalescing; and Bel wants him as he is.

Jaime also has a number of partners throughout the film who also want to be with him, but it is in fact Jaime himself who pushes them away. Towards the end of the film, after a visit to the doctor, he tells his last partner, Pep (Isak Férriz) 'moriré solo' ('I will die alone'), to which Pep responds 'no pienso dejarte solo' ('I won't leave your side'). Even though Jaime is dying of AIDS, he is still not alone, and the disease is not seen as the cost of his (homo)sexual identity (contrary to the portrayal of disease and homosexuality in the films analysed in Chapter 3). The last section of the film takes place in the late 1980s, when the spread of the HIV virus made news headlines across the world, and Jaime seems just one of the many infected. No connections are made between his life choices and the disease, focusing on the sadness of the situation rather than on the reasons why he has caught the HIV virus.

In the final scene, he rents a room in a hotel and pays a very young prostitute to be with him. The boy undresses and asks him '¿y ahora qué?' ('and now what?'), to which Jaime responds, 'ahora nada' ('Now? Nothing'). The boy then, starts dancing to the tune of the Pet Shop Boys' *Always on my Mind*. We see Jaime, sitting on the edge of the bed, while the naked boy dances around him, both bathed in the flickering blue and yellow light from a neon sign outside the window. At first glance it could be assumed that the scene is portraying Jaime as a lonely character, although he has not been portrayed as such beforehand. Arguably, this final image of Jaime can be seen as fitting the 'dreadful old queen' stereotype (Dyer, 2002: 132), the last one of the four resolutions of the 'sad gay man' narrative, but I would argue that this, too, is disavowed. The final image is not related to Jaime's sexual identity – he will not a die alone – but in fact highlights Jaime positively accepting and calmly dealing with the aforementioned fear of death and longing for eternal youth that has populated his thoughts throughout the narrative.

The song choice reinforces both the idea of youth and indeed the mind (or memory). It is worth noting here the music video for *Always on my Mind*, which opens with an older man entering a taxi cab being driven by the Pet Shop Boys. 'I smell youth!' the older gentleman says to the young band members / drivers. The song (a cover version of Elvis Presley 1972 song of the same name) is considered, alongside *Go West*, to be one of the pop

duo's best known gay anthems and the lyrics also refer to past failed relationships. The song and the image of the naked boy dancing in *El cónsul de Sodoma* conjure up Jaime's state of mind, effectively conveying his fear of what lies ahead of him (death), his longing for what now lies behind him (youth) and his memories of past relationships.

His final words, 'ahora nada' ('now? Nothing') emphasise Jaime's acceptance of his fate and bring the film full circle. At the beginning of the film, Jaime is asked '¿y ahora qué?' ('and now what?') following the publishing of his book and he answers, 'ahora todo' ('now? Everything'). He has his whole life and a world of possibilities ahead of him. It is a deliberate contrast to the ending, in which he stoically acknowledges that he is dying, that he will never be young again. The camera pans forward until it stops in a medium close-up of Jaime's face, which is smiling, with a tear of sadness, joy, and resignation rolling down his cheek.[68]

4.7.- Conclusion

As I have shown, the film subverts through narrative choices the previously analysed discourses. It does not reinforce the discourse of homosexuality as a disease, presenting us instead with a positive, very human individual who happens to die of HIV but is never defined by it. Furthermore, *El cónsul de Sodoma* also breaks away from the stereotype of the 'sad young gay man,' presenting a more decentred sexual identity. Moreover, even when we find some of the sad young gay man traits, the narrative finds ways of overcoming the stereotypes and representing sexual difference as part of a number of other everyday differences. Jaime's homosexuality is not denied or treated as an illness or weakness (like *Segunda piel*, *Mentiras y gordas* or *El mar*), but accepted for what it is, a mere facet of his wider, individual identity.

However, as argued throughout the chapter – as well as Chapter 3 – negative stereotyping, archetypes, and discourses concerning the gay male body and identity still exist. As Juan Carlos Alfeo Álvarez (2000) summarises, it is evident that the gay character 'sigue muriendo cuando el guión lo exige, y lo exige siempre que aparece la culpa o el remordimiento por un deseo que, en principio, no debería necesitar otra justificación que su mera existencia' ('continues to die when the screenplay demands it, and it demands it whenever guilt or remorse appears over a desire which, in first instance, should not need other justification than its mere existence') (2000: 146-147). The analysis in the previous chapter of *Mentiras y gordas*, *El mar* and *Pa negre* testify to this occurrence, with the deaths

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[68] Interestingly, Perriam (2013: 144-145) argues that the film does downplay its queer potentiality, by representing Jaime as 'less queer, more gay, less disruptive of heteronormativity' (2013: 145).

of Tony, Manuel, and Pitorliua respectively. The discourse of homosexuality as a disease, as I have argued, is still an intrinsic part of some of the narratives used in contemporary Spanish cinema, just as much as the representation of power struggles and the inequality between homo and heterosexual characters is still evident in some narratives.

Through the analysis of the gay roles played by Jordi Mollà I have also analysed how the 'sad gay man' theory established by Richard Dyer is also very much at work in many of the films currently being made in Spain. By considering how the gay male character is often presented as someone condemned to loneliness, incomprehension and difference, I have explained how these representations in contemporary Spanish cinema may end up re-establishing and reinforcing negative stereotypes without focusing on the possible causes for the appearance in the first instance of those stereotypes. Both the medicalised discourse and Dyer's theory demonstrate a widespread, stereotyped image of the gay man. Films like *Segunda piel* or *Historias del Kronen* prove that homosexuality is still used as a dramatic element in western narratives, as an element that 'induce[s] catharsis and [generates] the tragic climax' (Melero Slavador, 2010: 144). The aforementioned films follow a specific pattern that identifies the gay characters played by Mollà as sad, lonely individuals who are condemned to a form of sexually-related suffering from which 'there does not seem to be any means of escape' (2010: 144).

However, the analysis of *El cónsul de Sodoma* has demonstrated that there also exists another type of narrative which consciously tries to broaden the representation of the gay male body. Using the same analytical tools I used to analyse the previous films, I have demonstrated how Jaime's sexuality has been decentred, allowing for an understanding of the character that is not limited to his sexuality. The narrative does not follow the discourse of homosexuality as a disease, and presents a stable gay character progressively integrated into his social environment. Jaime's fears, ideologies, and characteristics are not only informed by his sexual identity – they are clearly presented as the result of a wide array of different factors. His multi-dimensioned, rounded character is a stark contrast to Alberto in *Segunda piel*, for example, or Toni in *Perdona bonita…*, creations whose only identity-identifier seems to be their sexuality.

Discourses and myths inevitably offer narrative tension, and are, as Christopher Pullen (2009) suggests 'powerful components of narrative construction', yet they do not necessarily reflect every expression of social reality (2009: 19). Even when some of the analysed debates are evident in *El cónsul de Sodoma*, they are utilised to frame the discussion, and provide possible solutions or alternative modes of representation. Pullen

argues that new methods of storytelling need to reinvent the discursive myth, not by ignoring the past and problematic discourses but by producing new narratives and creating new associations (2009: 19-20). I believe that *El cónsul de Sodoma* does just exactly that: it creates new associations and reinvents discourses, offering a broadened view of established representational modes.

Finally, Alfeo Álvarez (2000) finds it remarkable that, despite the number of films produced in modern-day Spain, certain social issues are still not tackled like, for example, marriage and adoption. This chapter has demonstrated that in contemporary Spanish cinema the gay male body is frequently defined only through sexual identity – as 'the other'. While there are some exceptions – films that are opening up the representational spectrum – there are still, as Alfeo Álvarez highlights, a number of issues absent from Spanish film, such as the 'efectos de la ausencia de legislación en materias de parejas, problemas de adopción, el miedo al sida, etc.' ('the effects of the absence of legislation in regards to same-sex couples, adoption problems, the AIDS scare, etc.') (2000: 146). Since same-sex marriage was legalised in Spain in 2005, recent narratives revolving around marriage and / or same-sex parenting have appeared more frequently in Spanish films, broadening the representations of gay male characters. Thus in the next section I will study the family institution and the concept of marriage in Chapter 5, and the ideology behind same-sex parenting and the evolving role of the father in Chapter 6.

PART III

SAME-SEX FAMILIES

> El Estado reconoce y ampara la familia como institución natural
> y fundamento de la sociedad, con derechos y deberes anteriores
> superiores a toda ley humana positiva
> (Francisco Franco, *Fuero de los Españoles*, Artículo 22, 1945
> in Dolores Ramos and Aguado Hicón, 1994: 386) [69]

> Formar una familia perfecta es el sueño del ser
> humano desde el principio de los tiempos
> (Kirk Royale, 2012: 54) [70]

Family and homosexuality: two concepts which, in popular vocabulary, seem to be at polar opposite extremes of the spectrum. As Paula L. Ettelbrick (2001) discusses, 'gay or lesbian family' has been, until fairly recent, an oxymoron, 'a legally impossible and functionally undesirable notion' (2001: 905). Through time, and more specifically in recent decades, politicians, academics and religious leaders have all used the term 'family values' in order to either separate or integrate ideas of sexual difference and the familial space. Right-wing politicians and members of the clergy commonly use it as a semantic mantra with which to attack 'all things homosexual', in an attempt to divorce gay men and lesbians from what they view as the morally correct nuclear family. Recent statements made by former Pope Benedict XVI, for example, highlight the old-fashioned staunch defence of the family concept, arguing that 'policies that undermine the family', such as, he mentions, same-sex marriage, 'threaten human dignity and the future of humanity itself' (Park, 2012).

As Raquel Platero (2007a) states, those conservative opinions 'defienden la construcción del sujeto gay como "diferente" y por tanto con necesidad de una legislación distinta y que no usurpe los derecho naturales de la familia' ('defend the construction of the gay subject as "different" and therefore in need of a separate legislation which will not usurp the natural rights of the family') (2007a: 87). Interestingly, the conservative views on the family institution also draw from the ideology of homosexuality as 'different', as 'the other',

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[69] 'The State recognises and protects the family as a natural institution and foundation of society, with rights and duties which are superior to all positive human law'
[70] 'Forming the perfect family has been the dream of every human being from the beginning of times'

which I have already discussed in chapters 3 and 4 in reference to the male gay body. Furthermore, the former Pope also mentions the 'naturalisation' of the institution, stating 'marriage and the family are institutions that must be promoted and defended from every possible misrepresentation of their *true nature*' (Park, 2012, my emphasis). As I will argue in the next sections, understanding the heteronormative family institution as having 'natural rights' can be highly contestable.

On the other hand, queer activists and academics are submersed in a sea of definitions and semantics, at the same time attempting to deconstruct what Harry M. Benshoff (2008) defines as the 'traditional nuclear family's outmoded and oppressive heteronormative formulations' (2008: 223), while also theorising and demonstrating how queer people cannot be separated from their (physical) families or the (theoretical) family framework; as Robert Dawidoff (1999) asserts 'lesbians and gay men have always been at the heart of family life' (Dawidoff in Benshoff, 2008: 223; see also T. Richard Sullivan and Albert Baques, 1999: 79). Christopher Pullen (2009) agrees, stating that the problem is not that gay men and lesbians are not, or have not been, part of families (which they have), but that traditional representations have involved 'denial of potential through rejection from family' (2009: 139); that is, they have been represented as outsiders of the family framework, instead of centring the 'homosexual identity within [the] family' (2009: 139). Moreover, as I will explore in Chapter 5, there is also the issue that inside the gay and lesbian community there are some people who may not approve of the idea of family, which is still a conventional concept even in its reinvented form (and therefore, creating a family, or being part of one, may not be their aspiration). Additionally, the situation is complicated even further by the fact that queers and families are themselves highly variable concepts. As Tracy Skelton and Gill Valentine (2005) warn us, we need to be wary of the term 'family' itself 'because it often hides the complexity and diversity of this particular social institution' (2005: 219). As I discussed in the introduction, I would argue that the same could apply to the term 'queer' (understanding that queer is not an institution but family is).

Since it has been illegal in Spain to punish consensual sex between same-sex adults for some time, the struggle in gay and lesbian activism regarding equality has become more family-oriented, focusing mainly on the subject of same-sex marriage. As Benshoff (2008) argues, getting married and raising children might perhaps be, paradoxically, one of the more radical things that 21st century queers seem to be doing (see Goss, 1997: 3-20). While on one level these new same-sex family formations appear to be mimicking the heterosexist institutions on which they are based, the very act that these family formations are being

formed by lesbian and gay men cannot help but queer the idea of family itself (Benshoff, 2008: 224). By presenting a family that is outside what some theorists call the 'heterosexual hierarchy' (Pullen, 2008: 54), they challenge the meaning of family altogether.

Before discussing what the family is, there are two important points that need clarifying. Firstly, that the family institution has experienced enormous changes in recent decades in western societies. Most importantly, the concept of family is in a constant process of debate and transformation, and these changes have not occurred (and do not occur) suddenly (since it has always been and is in a constant state of change throughout history), but have evolved due to a number of different factors; the discussions surrounding same-sex marriage being just one of them. Social change, Ettelbrick (2001) highlights, does not just happen, but it is a 'dynamic process' involving 'theory, strategy, advocacy and the story of human lives. Nothing ever stays the same – even the role, function, and definition of family' (2001: 905). Secondly, the study of the institution of family has a vast tradition in social anthropology (amongst others) and it is nearly an impossible task to attempt to summarise, or chart, the evolution of the term through time (José Ignacio Pichardo Galan, 2009: 27).

As Raquel Platero (2007b) affirms, the concept of 'the family' is crucial for understanding not only history (and Spanish history in this case), but also 'the framework of our rights and struggles' (2007b: 330).[71] Even further, the Spanish State relies (just as the majority of, if not all, western nations) on the family as a 'social and economic institution' from which it organises the social, legal and economic spheres (2007b: 330). As such, it is important to understand what the concept of family stands for, and how same-sex relationships fit in. It is not the intention of the chapters in this section to analyse the changes that have occurred through time on the conceptions of family,[72] but to discuss how Spanish cinema[73] has represented these changes in reference to not only the family but, more importantly, same-sex marriage and adoption. An overview on the nature of family, therefore, will help to centre the debate. In the next sections, I will first look at the concept of family in western society, and then move to an overview of the family in Spain and in Spanish cinema. This will give me a background from which to discuss same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting, which will form the main concepts in my case studies of contemporary Spanish films.

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[71] That is, LGBTQ.

[72] See Pichardo Galán (2009) for an analysis and a more in-depth overview on this.

[73] As Santiago Fouz-Hernández (2007) summarises, the family setting features prominently in Spanish cinema due to is 'multifunctional narrative potential' (2007: 225), and that the family allows for discourses of 'power submission and trangression' (Trenzado Romero, 1997 in Fouz-Hernández, 2007: 225) to take place on screen.

The Family: A Question of Semantics?

There exists a debate within studies of the institution of family as to whether we should pluralise the concept instead of discussing family as a single unit. Juan Ignacio Pichard Galán (2009), for example pluralises the word 'concept' (into 'concepts of family') highlighting the idea that we should not talk about one unique notion / concept of family, but multiple ones. If we mention 'family concept' (instead of 'family concepts', 'family notions', or 'families'), any other family formation we discuss, he reasons, would seem secondary to a main heteronormative and heterocentrist view of the concept. María Hernández-Sampelayo Matos and María Crespo Garrido (2005) for example, are of the belief that the term family should be singular since pluralising the concept creates an unnecessary ambiguity, inscribing in the word 'family' realities that have little to do with 'the family' as a basic mainstay of society (2005: 15). Hernández-Sampelayo Matos and Crespo Garrido clearly understand the concept of family only as that of the heteronormative and heterosexual nuclear family, while other types of family interactions are not valid. As the authors claim:

> La familia, en sí misma, está fundada sobre el matrimonio entre un hombre y una mujer, donde ambos se complementan mediante un vínculo formal y estable, libremente contraído y abierto a la transmisión de la vida. Esta clara delimitación del término no tiene por qué herir a los defensores de otras formas de vida en común, ya que lo único que se pretende es delimitar con nitidez una institución básica en cualquier sociedad.
> (Hernández-Sampelayo Matos and Crespo Garrido, 2005: 16)

> The family is based on the marriage between a man and a woman, where they both complement each other through a freely contracted, formal and stable bond and which is open to the transmission of life. This is a clear delimitation of the term and should not hurt those who defend other forms of life in common, since the only thing that it tries to do is to clearly delimit a basic institution in any society.

This view prioritises the heterosexual hegemony in western societies, which, as I will explore shortly, comes from a narrow biological and natural understanding of the institution of family. What María Hernández-Sampelayo Matos and María Crespo Garrido are ignoring (or over-simplifying) is that this 'basic institution', this heteronormative view of the

institution, is not a biological entitlement but a social construction, which evolves through time, and which is not as tightly defined as they argue it is.

Discussing families instead of family, or concepts of family instead of a singular concept, dispels the traditional idea of a unique and valid notion of 'family' which makes all other family formations invalid, correlated to, mirrored or defined by this heteronormative notion of family. It is important to highlight, though, that this hetero-hegemonic understanding of family is in fact the most common one in western society even when new definitions of the term family/ies are becoming more mainstream.

Another point to take into consideration before trying to understand how we have come to see the heteronormative family as the definition of the institution of family, is whether we should understand same-sex families as similar to / distinct from the heteronorm. Michael Bettinger (2005) in his article about 'polyamory' argues that it is not a good strategy to understand gay male families (and by extension other non-heterosexual families) and relations from the perspective of the western model of heterosexual family since, he claims, 'gay families and relationships differ in characteristics and values in significant ways' (2005: 97). Likewise, he adds that 'gay male and heterosexual mating patterns are different' (2005: 97), quoting some sources from the 70s and 80s which have since been contested due to their generalising and time-specific discussions. Throughout his discussion, however, he fails to define what his understanding of family is and, likewise, how these characteristics or 'mating patterns' differ. Even when academics and critics alike argue that we cannot look at same-sex families under the same perspective as we do heterosexual ones, it seems that they are failing to see that they are implying heterocentrist notions of family formations as the base to define what same-sex family formations are not. To claim, as Bettinger does, that we should not understand gay and lesbian families through the perspective of what he calls the 'western model of the heterosexual family' is incorrect, largely because heteronormative notions of the family are extensively embedded in western society. In the next section, I will look at how and why this heteronormative notion of the institution of family has come to exist, paying particular attention to Juan Ignacio Pichardo Galán's work on new family formations.

The Family: Theoretical Framework

In his analysis of homosexual relationships and new family models, Pichardo Galán (2009) notes that the concepts of family appear as an intersection of three other areas of anthropological knowledge: kinship, gender, and sexuality (2009: 27). Of the three, historians and anthropologists have placed an emphasis on the importance of kinship, since this has

been identified as a fundamental element for the organisation of western societies. Moreover, kinship as an area of study not only attempts to define, but it creates and recreates what it also studies (Franklin and McKinnon, 2001, in Pichardo Galán, 2009: 29). This forms the ideology of family as being a 'natural' social construction, which situates the notion of family and kinship not only 'como relación natural o anterior a lo social' ('as a natural relation and before the social') but also as 'inmutable y necesariamente establecida en la base misma del sistema social' ('immutable and necessarily established at the base of the social system') (2009: 29).

Understanding the concept of family in relation to a natural or biological reality presents the heterosexual nuclear family as the ideal method for social organisation, since it naturalises the institution. As such, it is also seen as the reason for the family institution to be protected by State law. Even if ideological representations are neither 'natural' nor biological but constructed (as the institution of family is), they create models for social interaction which propose what is allowed and what is not; what is viewed as 'normal' (if such claim does in fact exist) and what is seen as outside of the 'norm' (2009: 31).

The heterosexual nuclear family has solidified itself (through a centuries-old process of legitimation by the State, the Church, education and, nowadays, the media (2009: 34)) in western society, as the strongest model of representation, as well as of social organisation. This has meant that a specific heteronormative social construction on reproduction, procreation, sexuality, gender, and kinship has been heralded as the only valid option in the formation and normalisation of the institution of family. This universality-seeking model is based on an organisation of the family as a 'núcleo formado por la pareja heterosexual y sus descendientes (madre-padre-hijos/as)' ('core formed by the heterosexual couple and their descendants (mother-father-sons/daughters))' (Pichardo Galán, 2009: 37). This model is presented as one which has emerged from the 'imperativos de la naturaleza humana y, por tanto, como el único válido' ('imperatives of human nature and, therefore, as the only valid one') (2009: 37). Other models of family formations or kinship relations thus, will either be considered imperfect, incomplete, or recognised only in relation to the 'norm', if at all.

If kinship, then, is seen as one of the main means of social organisation (see Firth, 1971; the collection of articles in Cohen, 1982; or Goody, 1976, amongst others, for further discussion), then it can also be seen as a means to control how sexuality and gender are understood, since these constructs are also mutually implicated in the construction of family as a natural and biological concept (Pichardo Galán, 2009: 40-41). Sexual difference is one of

the fundamental elements of kinship organisation in western societies. It is at the core of the affiliation system and, as Pichardo Galán argues:

> hace nombrar y relacionarse a cada individuo con sus parientes de forma distinta no solo según el grado de cercanía o lejanía lineal o colateral, sino también según sea hombre o mujer. Para ello es necesario, por un lado, que exista una diferencia sexual y por otro que esa diferencia se establezca de un modo claro en dos únicos sexos: hombre y mujer.
>
> (Pichardo Galán, 2009: 41)

> it names and relates each individual with his / her relatives in a different way, not only according to the degree of proximity or not, and be it lineal or collateral, but also according to them being a man or a woman. To that effect it is necessary, on the one hand, that sexual difference exists and, on the other hand, that this difference gets clearly established in two genders: man and woman.

With gender difference defining the traditional heteronormative nuclear family, gender roles are then assigned, as well as the heteronormatisation and normalisation of the sexual act for biological means, that is, reproduction. Sexuality then also becomes an organising model which, at the same time, is controlled around the monogamous marriage between man and woman whose aim is reproduction. Sex as reproduction then becomes normative, and any type of sexuality (and / or sexual activity) outside of this framework is understood, as mentioned, as invalid, imperfect or incomplete. The institution of family not only defines but it is also defined by heteronormative concepts of gender, sexuality and kinship.[74]

As explored, the institution of family has been defined through time as limited to that of the heterosexual nuclear family, and new family models (same-sex, single parents, etc.) are being defined in relation to this generalisation. As Peter M. Nardi (2010) summarises: 'the traditional, nuclear family has been the dominant model for political relations' and it has 'structured much of the legal and social norms of our culture' (2010: 317). Conceptually (if not always in reality), the very definition of a family has been defined in terms of heteronormative gender division and procreation, organised around hegemonic desire (Vicari, 2011: 108). No matter how much the look and composition of a family may be changing, 'the

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[74] For further in-depth study on the evolution of family and its heteronormative hegemony see Pichardo Galán, 2009: 27-59 or Grau Rebollo, 2002: 23-48.

basic idea of family still remains conservative, tradition-bound, and hostile to sexual experimentation' (2011: 109).

The Family in Spain

Mary C. Burke and Kristine A. Olsen (2006) indicate that the concept of family consolidated in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries as the model of social organisation, becoming a central economic and political institution (2006: 419). Aurora González Echevarría (1994) agrees, adding that this cultural ideal of the family was used to designate the basic social unit formed by a husband and a wife (with their offspring), who lived under the same roof (González Echevarría, 1994 in Pichardo Galán, 2009: 44).

In his 1996 historical study of the family in Spain, David S. Reher states that 'es difícil exagerar la importancia de la familia para la sociedad española' ('it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the familia in Spanish society') (1996: 13). Definitions of the Spanish family have been constantly challenged in the late 20th century, mainly as a rebuke to Franco's government.[75] From the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 to Franco's death in 1975, Samuel Amago (2011) states that the Spanish family, 'which was always an important institution in traditional Spanish society, became enshrined in the dictator's ideological "reformation" of the country' (2011: 93). The family became a 'microcosm of the state, reflecting in miniature the power relations and beliefs of its leadership' (Evans, 2000: 79), emphasising the need for the traditional heteronormative patriarchal family to reflect the values of the nation (Difrancesco, 2009: 50-52; Platero, 2007b: 329-330). This patriarchal model of the family came into crisis in Spain after the transition to democracy, as the country sought integration within the European and global communities, modernising (and perhaps even, erasing), some elements of Spain's national traditions and icons (Leonard, 2011: 159).

Nevertheless, as Jorge Grau Rebollo (2002) states, 'la imagen decimonónica de la familia franquista parece enquistada en nuestra memoria histórica' ('the old-fashioned image of the Francoist family seems to be deeply-rooted in our historic memory') (2002: 97). During the Francoist post-war period, the configuration of the family-model was left to the Catholic Church. Due to the long Christian tradition in Spain (and the power the Church has had over the Spanish State for centuries), the family has been understood and defined as that which is born from the conjugal partnering of a man (husband) and a woman (wife). The

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[75] See de Ussell, 1998: 15-64, for a study of the evolution of the family through Spanish political changes; Alberdi, 1999: 55-80 for a look at the family and law reform; or Reher (1996) for a historic-sociological study of the family in Spain.

origin lies on the marriage-regulation laws imposed by the Catholic church, which sees the Christian marriage and the Spanish family as 'monógama, patriarcal, indisoluble, sexualmente exclusiva, procreativa y con una marcada segregación de roles sociales y de género en su interior' ('monogamous, patriarchal, indissoluble, sexually exclusive, procreative, and with a clear segregation of social and gender roles at its core') (Grau Rebollo, 2002: 97. See also pp. 88-89).

Even when, in the 70s and 80s, the ideological and theoretical foundations of the family left behind the theological origins of the family definition, it never eliminated the essentialist heterocentrist component. The Spanish family as a concept is still built around the same heteronormative cultural ideologies which created it (2002: 97). Spanish society might not agree with how the family institution came to have such a patriarchal definition, but as Inés Alberdi (1999) discusses, after the anti-family years that occurred during these decades, 'se han hecho las paces con la institución [familiar]' ('peace has been made with the [family] institution') (1999: 140), at least socially and culturally. Arguably, Spanish society might not question the heterocentricity of the family institution on a day to day basis, as Alberdi hints at; but this does not mean that the family institution in Spain is not a heteronormative one. Theoretically, the ideology surrounding the family is constantly studied and re-defined by academics, but its social day-to-day meaning is not (Grau Rebollo, 2002: 102).

The Family in Spanish Cinema

As mentioned before, the family setting features prominently in Spanish cinema (Ballesteros, 2001: 271-296; Fouz-Hernández, 2007: 225; Begin, 2011: 129). The institution of family features so prominently in cinema due to the wide-raging ideologies that can be attached to it. Discourses on power submission, transgression, sexual initiation, or the confrontation of old and new customs and / or generations (amongst others) can all come together in the familial space (Trenzado Romero, 1997: 100-101).

During Francoism, Peter William Evans (2000) explains, Spanish films could draw on the idea of family as an institution that educates its members for their social roles (2000: 81) as, for example, the films *La gran familia / The Big Family* (dir. Fernando Palacios, 1962) and *La familia y… uno más / The Family Plus One* (dir. Fernando Palacios, 1965) did. These films emphasised the importance of the family in Francoist ideology, projecting a comic, but never satirical, image of its ideological significance (2000: 80). The films that presented the family in a glowing light received state support (Begin, 2011: 129), highlighting the

importance of the family institution for Franco's political agenda.[76] The family, Feenstra (2011) argues, was representative of a 'totem for order and stability,' an 'enclosed space' that was idealised in its representation (2011: 40). Notwithstanding, there were films which used family representations not as a means to extol the Spanish nation, but to criticise it. As Marsha Kinder (1983) states in her article regarding the portrayal of young characters in the 1970s, the relation between family and cinema in Francoist films is evident, and reactionary cinema used a symbolic network with which the representation of patricide was seen as the ultimate solution to the national family's ills, while incest represented the corruption of the state (1983: 57-59; see also Martin-Márquez, 1999: 218-248).

In the 1980s, directors like Pedro Almodóvar subverted the figure of the traditional patriarchal family, using the absence of the central father figure (or underlining its ineffective or perverse role) as a critique of patriarchism (Begin, 2011: 129-130). On the other hand, Almodóvar also used family deviancy as a method of 'engaging critically with a historically repressive Spanish patriarchy' (Amago, 2011: 95). The character's difference or deviancy (the gay son, or lesbian wife, for example) is not a negative attribute, but holds the constructive potential for proposing democratic alternatives to the Francoist family traditions (Amago, 2001: 95; Hardcastle, 2007: 79-93).

The 1990s is characterised by a string of films that present an alternative to the traditional family and patriarchy (Begin, 2011: 130), while contemporary films still make use of the family institution as a metaphor for the Spanish nation (see, for example, Ballesteros, 2005). The films analysed in the next two chapters certainly tap into these alternative family discourses. They do so, as I will discuss next, from the perspective of gay-oriented family formations, arguably due to the social and political changes occurring in Spain in the 2000s.

Queer Families: Same-Sex Marriage & Same-Sex Parenting

Definitions of family, as I have shown, 'currently lie at the heart of passionate scholarly and public controversy' (Powell, Bolzendahl, Geist and Carr Steelman, 2010: 201). These studies agree that family, no matter what is understood by the term, is a universal institution and a base for social functioning. Moreover, family is an ever-changing, ever-evolving institution, a concept that has survived over 'centuries, in a variety of social, political and economic circumstances' (Varnell, 1996: 260). As Julio Iglesias de Ussel (1997) points out:

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[76] See Fouz-Hernández and Martínez Expósito (2007: 83-84) for further analysis of the family institution and Spanish cinema under Franco's regime in films like *La gran familia*, or *El cochecito / The Wheelchair* (dir. Marco Ferreri, 1960). See also Stone (2002: 42-48), or Pingree (1995).

> pocas instituciones sociales han hecho frente a cambios tan profundos
> […], cambios que inciden en el núcleo central de la institución, [y] que
> han generado un proceso de readaptación sin quiebras significativas.
>
> (de Ussel, 1997: 7)

> not many social institutions have faced such profound changes […],
> changes that affect the main nucleus of the institution, [and] which have
> generated a process of re-adaptation without significant cracks.

Jane Drucker (1998), in her study of lesbian and gay families, argues that there is no one grouping capable of adequately embracing all that we mean when we refer to family (1998: 34). Nevertheless, the heteronormative nuclear family remains the most widespread and culturally assimilated model of social organisation. At the most basic level, family is a site where 'laws and norms regulate behaviour' (Burke and Olsen, 2006: 421), an institution which serves to legally and culturally organise society. Queer family formations challenge these hegemonic heteronormative family assumptions, questioning the seemingly natural ideology of the family concept. The notion of family itself, as Robert E. Goss (1997) states, 'has been hotly contested within queer communities' (1997: 4), with queer relations, through presenting a family-formation system outside the heterosexual hierarchy, challenging the meaning of family itself (Pullen, 2008: 54).

As Andrew Gorman-Murray (2011) also mentions, home and the heterosexual nuclear family are widely synonymous (2011: 437). The dominant representation of the home (in the media, popular culture or public policy) is one which portrays 'belonging and intimacy amongst members of a heterosexual nuclear family' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006 in Gorman-Murray, 2011: 437). This relates to concepts I discussed and analysed in Chapter 2, when I analysed how gay men queer the private space of the home. As I mentioned, the notion of home is informed by the normative heterosexuality of the patriarchal nuclear family, marginalising non-normative sexual practices and identities (Gorman-Murray, 2007: 197; Bell, 1991: 325). Gay men and lesbians, therefore are rendered 'improper' for the home and the domestic space (see Valentine, 1993 or Kirby and Hay 1997), and thus outside of the patriarchal nuclear family's environment. Similarly to their sexuality being on the outer limits of Rubin's (1999 [1984]) charmed circle, non-normative identities are outside the 'charmed circle' of the home. As the use of domestic spaces in the films I will be analysing in Chapters 5 and 6 become important spaces of identification and identity re-affirmation, it would be important to bear in mind the themes discussed during the analysis of *Cachorro* in Chapter 2.

The home being the primary space for family relations, I will study the representation of gay characters in relation to not only their family members, but also to the space in which these interactions occur.

The two chapters that follow will explore the relationship between gay men and families in contemporary Spanish cinema. These representations of queer men and families are constructed within heteronormative parameters, similar to those Harry M. Benshoff (2008) discusses in his study on queer families in American cinema. Chapter 5 discusses same-sex marriage and familial relationships, using the films *Tú eliges / Your Choice* (dir. Antonia San Juan, 2009) and *Reinas / Queens* (dir. Manuel Gómez Pereira, 2005) as its main case studies. Chapter 6 will study gay parenting and same-sex family formations, analysing, primarily, *Fuera de carta / Chef's Special* (dir. Nacho G. Velilla, 2008). The reason for selecting these films, rather than any commercial or critical success, is that the family and its structure is an important theme in all of them. Furthermore, I am concentrating in films where the families represented closely relate to, or speak of, those I have previously discussed, that is, the nuclear family. In doing this, I am analysing the meaningful changes within the family institution. I am aware that there are certain options of family formations that I am leaving out on purpose, mainly both the family as friends ideology and the rainbow kinship of gay and lesbian sexual cruising which can be seen in films like *Cachorro / Bear Cub* (dir. Miguel Albaladejo, 2004) or, to certain extent, *El cónsul de Sodoma / The Consul of Sodom (*dir. Sigfrid Monleón, 2009) (see Stacey (2010) for an analysis of these types of alternative family formations). In saying that, the next two chapters are exploring how same-sex relationship are re-shaping the traditional nuclear family institution, while at the same time, as I will explore, following a similar pattern. Polyamory or rainbow kinship re-shape the family ideology from completely alternative perspectives than that of same-sex parenting or same-sex marriage, which do so from within the institution itself. As I will explore, this relates to Rubin's (1999 [1984]) charmed circle and how, as I mentioned in the introduction, certain sexualities and identities that are in the outer limits are slowly moving towards being inside the circle, losing their liminal status.

Additionally, there is a shift of focus in the chosen films for this section from the gay individual to the gay couple, a shift that, I would argue, has slowly occurred from the mid-2000s. This could be due to similar reasons to those Todd W. Reeser (2008) explores in his paper on gay male domesticity in French films of the late 1990s. Reeser argues that as part of an increasing cultural recognition of same-sex couples, a crop of films from the time mirrored, as well as interrogated, the cultural shift (2008: 36). These films not only

questioned, but also naturalised configurations of stability for adult gay masculinity, representing coupledom as a normalising and potentially available option of adult domesticity (2008: 37). Similarly, as Richard Richmond Ellis (2010) remarks in the Spanish case, Spanish filmmakers have begun to represent same-sex practice in the framework of matrimony and the bourgeois, nuclear family (2010: 67). *Tú eliges*, *Reinas* or *Fuera de carta*, for example, represent gay-couples as another option of domesticity and family-formation, quite possibly due to the legal and social changes in Spain in the past ten years, and the 'cultural and social ferment generated by the Spanish government's ratification in 2005 of the historic law legalizing same-sex marriage' (2010: 67).

Finally, both in academia and public discourse, debates surrounding queer family formations have focused on two main areas, those of marriage or partnership, and adoption and the capabilities of lesbian and gay men as parents (Platero, 2007b: 330; Burke and Olsen, 2006: 416-417; Pullen, 2007a: 189). There has even been a shift in the emphasis in queer politics, concentrating the efforts in 'domestic issues such as marriage and childrearing' instead of 'championing a new sexual ethos, as did many gay liberationists and queer activist' (Benshoff and Griffin, 2006: 269). Nowadays, politicians that had once complained that 'queers were orgiastic heathens', are appalled that so many in the gay and lesbian community want 'the same things they want: white picket fences [and] Sunday church services' (2006: 269).

As Amago (2011) summarises, the family still remains a central feature of contemporary Spanish life and 'it continues to enjoy a rich and wide-ranging presence in the country's narrative culture' (2011: 94). At the same time, the familial identities of less traditionally formed families world-wide are scrutinised and challenged more than those families which follow the traditional patriarchal model (Breshears, 2011: 265). As such, it is important to look at how these family formations have been represented in contemporary Spanish cinema, and how they re-define what a family is.

CHAPTER 5:
I Now Pronounce You…: Same-Sex Marriage and *Reinas*

> Ha llegado el momento de poner fin, de una vez, a las intolerables discriminaciones que aún padecen muchos españoles por razón exclusiva de su preferencia sexual. Lo diré con claridad: homosexuales y transexuales merecen la misma consideración pública que los heterosexuales y tienen el derecho a vivir libremente la vida que ellos mismos hayan elegido. Modificaremos, en consecuencia, el Código Civil para reconocerles, en pie de igualdad, su derecho al matrimonio
>
> (José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, 15th April 2004)[77]

On the 30th of June 2005 the Spanish Parliament approved an amendment to the Spanish Civil Code which allowed for same-sex marriage. This meant, legally, that gay men and lesbians had the same marital rights (and duties) as their heterosexual counterparts. Socially, it was a big step forward for equality in Spain, becoming the third country in the world to grant same-sex marriage at a national level (after the Netherlands in 2001 and Belgium in 2003) (Calvo, 2007: 295; Llamas, 2005: 114; Montesinos Sánchez, 2006: 159; Pérez, 2010: 141).

Yuval Merin (2002 and 2008) defines four different models of legal status same-sex partnerships in Europe and some states in the United States of America. The first two models, cohabitation and domestic partnerships, have only been implemented at a state or provincial level, depending on the country (2002: 57-60), and they afford limited recognition and legal scope. As I will shortly explain, some regions in Spain started to allow same-sex domestic partnerships (*parejas de hecho*) before the same-sex marriage law came into place.

The other two models are same-sex marriage and registered partnership (Merin, 2002: 55-57). The difference between domestic partnership and registered partnership, as Kerman Calvo (2010) points out, is that while domestic partnerships are implemented by provincial, state or regional laws, registered partnerships are legalised by the country's central government, and act as a legal contract similar to that of marriage (Calvo, 2010: 44), which is

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[77] 'It is time to end, once and for all, the intolerable discrimination that many Spanish people suffer from just because of their sexual preference. I will speak clearly: homosexuals and transsexual people deserve the same public consideration as heterosexuals do, and they have the right to live freely the life they have chosen. We will modify, therefore, the Civil Code so we can recognise their right to marriage'

the case in countries like the United Kingdom. On the other hand, same-sex marriage is legally the same as heterosexual marriage, with the same rights and duties.

There is no denying that the political and social debate on same-sex marriage has evolved rapidly (Calvo 2006: 23; Calvo and Escudero, 2009: 39), but despite the pace of legal and political changes, the passing of this law in Spain was at the time, and continues to be, a very controversial subject. For example, immediately after the approval of the new law, right-wing Partido Popular politicians and Catholic authorities lodged an appeal against it for being, they claimed, anti-constitutional (Calvo and Escudero, 2009: 39). In June 2012, seven years after the Partido Popular appealed the passing of the law, the Constitutional Court claimed that they would endorse same-sex marriage (Lázaro, 2012), with the final vote by the members of the jury endorsing same-sex marriage drawn on the 5th of November 2012 (Peral, 2012).

More than five years after the passing of the law change, same-sex marriage still makes headlines in Spain. On the 22nd of June 2012 the Real Academia Española, RAE (Spanish Royal Academy), the official royal institution responsible for regulating the Spanish language, updated the definition of marriage in the DRAE (the Spanish Royal Academy's Dictionary – the most authoritative dictionary of the Spanish language). This definition was revised to include same-sex unions, and the three biggest national newspapers *El Mundo*, *ABC*, and *El País* reported the changes with attention-grabbing headlines like 'La RAE canoniza el matrimonio homosexual' ('RAE canonizes gay marriage') (Madrigal, 2012), 'El matrimonio gay llega al Diccionario de la Real Academia para quedarse' ('Gay marriage comes to the Dictionary of the Royal Academy to stay') (*ABC*, 2012) and 'La Real Academia admite 'Matrimonio' para la unión de personas del mismo sexo' ('The Royal Academy accepts 'marriage' for same-sex unions') (Sabogal, 2012). Interestingly, the headline for Sabogal's article in the online edition of *El País* also went through several revisions. Following the belated acceptance noted by the first headline, the second and third headline changes, '"Sí, quiero" de la RAE al matrimonio homosexual' ('RAE says "I do" to same-sex marriage') and 'La Real Academia bendice el matrimonio homosexual' ('The RAE gives its blessing to same-sex marriage'), points to the difficulty the media still faces when discussing same-sex marriage related subjects.

Kerman Calvo (2006) argues that the path to legal recognition of gay and lesbian marital rights in Spain was possible because 'el debate político activa un tema que combina lo universal y lo colectivo, lo nuevo (los derechos homosexuales) con lo tradicional (la definición de familia)' '(the political debate activates a topic which combines universal and

community ideals, the new (gay rights) and the traditional (the definition of family))' (2006: 28). But the inclusion of same-sex marriage rights into the political and legal sphere was part of a slower, decades-long process of same-sex political and social movements. Calvo also contends that, from the end of Franco's regime to the 2005 legislation change, the discussion, social visibility and evolution of gay and lesbian rights has gone through five clear stages, as I will discuss in the next section.

Sue Wise and Liz Stanley (2004) point out that there exists confusion and a number of varying assumptions as to what marriage actually is (2004: 333). As Elizabeth Peel and Rosie Harding (2004) highlight, 'there is an assumption that marriage operates as a universal institution' (2004: 592), and that the responsibilities associated with it (be it same-sex marriage or not) transcend national boundaries. This is not strictly the case as there are different rights and responsibilities attached to marriage in each legal system (2004: 592). Kath Browne (2011) emphasises a similar issue in her study of gay marriage in England and Wales. She pinpoints that universal (trans)national discussions on the subject arise mainly from the United States or United Kingdom, and that these discussions often fail to recognise or identify geographical specificity (2011: 105). This fact brings into question the universality of the discussions on same-sex marriage and / or civil partnerships. When discussing same-sex marriage, we also need to be aware that we are concerned with civil marriage and not religious marriage.

I must differentiate the two types of discourses I will be using. Firstly, there will be those authors who discuss the specific case of same-sex marriage in Spain, and from this perspective I will consider the legal, political and social context, as well as conceptual discourses on the topic of same-sex marriage. Secondly, those authors whose literature does not specifically concern the Spanish case, but from whom I will obtain (pseudo)universal or world-wide views, concepts and discussions on the institution of marriage, and same-sex marriage particularly.

In the next section, I will first examine how political and social LGBT discourses evolved in Spain after the dictatorship, and how same-sex marriage came to be legalised. This will provide a useful context from which to consider the representation of same-sex civil partnerships in *Sobreviviré / I Will Survive* (dir. Alfonso Albacete and David Menkes, 1999) and what these representations indicate about the social acceptance of same-sex marriage in Spain. As part of this exploration of cinematic representation, I will analyse the film *Tú eliges / Your Choice* (dir. Antonia San Juan, 2009), in particular the contradictory and conflicting views regarding same-sex marriage (both in the film and in Spain), held not only by those

outside the LGBT community but, more importantly, by those within it. Finally I will analyse *Reinas*, and how the film juggles a number of topics like heteronormativity, patriarchism, family and marriage.

5.1.- Paving the Way for Same-Sex Marriage in Spain: *Sobreviviré*

As aforementioned, Kerman Calvo (2006) discusses four stages in the evolution of social visibility and gay and lesbian rights in democratic Spain. The first of these stages occurred from 1976 to 1979, period that Calvo calls 'de la transición' ('the transition period') (2006: 26). During this time, the nascent gay and lesbian movement fought for what it saw as its main priority: the abolition of the Ley de Peligrosidad y Rehabilitación Social, as mentioned in Chapter 3. Once the law was reformed, and homosexual relations became legal, the second stage began. The period between 1980 and 1985 is what Calvo calls 'fase del reflujo' (the ebbing phase), a period of 'estancamiento, decaimiento y desinterés general por los temas políticos homosexuales' ('stagnation, despondency, and general apathy towards gay-related political topics') (2006: 27). Social and political interest in certain social issues occurs only when there is a level of conflict attached to the problem (2006: 27). Once the conflict is resolved (in this case, with the abolition of the anti-homosexual law), interest declines, even when other social injustices might still be present.

The third stage, 'fin del aislamiento' (end of isolation) (1986-1993), was characterised by the eruption of the AIDS pandemic discussed in Chapter 3, and 'la malévola asociación que se hace entre esta enfermedad y la homosexualidad' ('the malicious association between this illness and homosexuality') (2006: 27). During this period a new social interest in the re-emerging LGBT activism started to appear. An important factor in the renewed interest in gay and lesbian issues was the birth of a new political group, Izquierda Unida. The party, organised in 1986, was a coalition of several smaller left-wing, republican, socialist and green political organisations, and its first manifesto included a whole section devoted to the legal and social problems experienced by the gay and lesbian community (Calvo, 2007: 300).

But it is not until the fourth stage (1994-1999) 'de la entrada en la agenda' (entering the political agenda) (2006: 28) that social and political debates about the gay and lesbian community were included in the manifestos of different political parties. This was due, amongst other factors, to the approval of same-sex civil partnerships in different regions of Spain, the first being Vitoria in February 1994 (Calvo, 2003: 305). Over the period between 1998 and the arrival of the national law on same-sex marriage, 12 out of the 19 Spanish regions had same-sex partnership laws.

As a very clear example of the fourth stage it is important to discuss the film *Sobreviviré*, which I also considered in Chapter 1 in the context of space and the evolution of the queer neighbourhood of Chueca. I explored how the film reflects a number of characteristics found in Alan Collin's (2004) definition of the 'emergence stage' of the evolution of a queer space, with Chueca gaining more visibility. In particular I highlighted the scene at Marga's parents' house when they are watching on television a newscast of the 1998 gay parade – which is interesting because of both the newscast and the reaction to it. The broadcast shows gay men protesting that 'queremos el derecho de ser pareja de hecho' ('we want the right to same-sex civil partnerships'). It is framed in a close-up which foregrounds family photographs and other memorabilia around the TV, highlighting both the gay protest and the importance of the family institution in relation to the subject of same-sex couples. The fact that the family is also seen discussing same-sex relations during dinner is also interesting, not only for the conversation depicted but the setting: as Anne Nowak (2010) mentions, the dinner table is the space where family disputes 'commonly take place both in film and in real life' (2010: 120). The television occupies a central space at Marga's family dinner; it is almost like another member of the family, with the mise-en-scene presenting the dinner table set up around it. As such, the discussion of same-sex civil rights is placed, metaphorically, as an intrinsic part of the family institution.

The reactions to the newscast differ according to generation: Marga's parents, Carmen (Maite Blasco) and Fernando (José Manuel Cervino), react badly not only to the idea of same-sex civil partnerships but also to homosexuality in general, with Fernando shouting 'maricones' ('fags') and Carmen protesting that she would rather have a mentally disabled son than a gay one (once again, a link between homosexuality and illness or disability). Marga's sisters Rocío (Marta Suárez) and Elena (Carmen Arbex), on the other hand, are more open minded, although they too demonstrate a limited understanding and tolerance, for while they lecture their parents that gay men and lesbians are 'gente normal' ('normal people'), and that same-sex civil partnership should be recognised, one of the sisters draws the line at child rearing, when she dismissively questions 'pero, ¿cómo van a tener hijos?' ('but, how are they going to have kids?'). The question can be read less like a criticism than as an example of the lack of general LGBT knowledge at the time. Meanwhile, the *abuelo* (granddad) (Carlos Lucas) is oblivious to what is happening on screen, and what the family is discussing, perhaps a comical hint at older generations turning a deaf ear to modern issues.

The topic of same-sex civil rights permeates the media of the time, not only represented by the televised news piece in *Sobreviviré*, but also in the narrative of the film

Sobreviviré itself where the couple formed by José and Carlos (Marga's gay friends), in a secondary storyline, are looking to get married themselves. José and Carlos decide to celebrate their relationship with a same-sex civil partnership ceremony as soon as the legislation changes. In a speech that feels more like a lecture to the audience, José defends the institution of marriage and the inclusion of same-sex relationships into it. Later, when presenting Marga with their civil partnership invitation, Carlos also clarifies that it is not a wedding invitation, since 'técnicamente, no se puede llamar boda. No es más que una firma simbólica para acreditar nuestra unión' ('technically, you cannot call it a wedding. It is only a symbolic signature to confirm our union'). José then contests this, claiming that the name given to this type of union does not really matter – what is important, he argues, is not whether the ceremony is celebrated in a church or in the civil registry, but that they are in love: 'Lo que importa es el sentimiento. Y si nosotros estamos enamorados y queremos pasar el resto de nuestras vidas juntos, entonces es una boda' ('What is important is what we feel. And if we are in love and we want to spend the rest of our life together, then it is a wedding').

The camera work in this scene also helps to accentuate the overly didactic feeling of the conversation. In a slightly low angled, medium-long shot, we see the three characters sitting in Marga's sofa: Marga in the middle, José and Carlos at each side. The effect almost suggests a conference panel set to discuss a topical issue and the resulting conversation not only feels directed at the audience, but also hints at the topic of same-sex marriage versus same-sex civil partnerships which, as we will shortly see, was very much at the centre of the discussions that occurred during Calvo's (2006) fifth and final stage.

The civil partnership ceremony itself is represented in an aseptic environment (an impersonal lawyer's office), with a very formal and minimal exchange of words between the legal representative and the couple: '¿Han traído los papeles?', 'Sí', 'Muy bien. Firmen ahí. Enhorabuena', 'Gracias' ('Do you have the documents?', 'Yes', 'Very good. Sign there. Congratulations', 'Thank you'). This is due, perhaps, to a lack of real understanding of how the newly introduced same-sex civil partnerships were actually carried out in Spain at the time. The civil partnerships celebrations, on the other hand, are coded very similarly to how heterosexual weddings have been usually portrayed in cinema: the couple is showered with rice when they come out of the building with cries of '¡que vivan los novios!' ('three cheers for the newlyweds!'), they have a banquet with a top table where the couple and their parents sit, and they have a wedding cake.

The same-sex civil partnership celebration in *Sobreviviré* is represented in a very heteronormative manner. Aside from the aforementioned awkward scene of the legal civil

partnership ceremony, where there are no 'I, do', 'I pronounce you…', or 'you may kiss the bride' pronouncements, the rest of the celebrations are the same as one would encounter in a heterosexual wedding (the cake, the top table, the first dance). This is perhaps due to, as mentioned, a lack of real knowledge of same-sex civil partnership celebrations (by both the directors and society in general), or an attempt to (hetero)normalise José's and Carlos' relationship, to illustrate to the audience that same-sex civil partnerships are, at the end of the day, the same as heterosexual weddings. Portraying same-sex couples in a similar manner to those of heterosexual relationships de-stigmatises gay desire. By coding a same-sex civil partnership celebration similarly to that of a wedding (which at the time could only occur between different-sex couples), *Sobreviviré* normalises same-sex relationships to the audience. By highlighting the similarities, and normalising the relationship, the film is breaching the separation of Rubin's (1999 [1982]) 'charmed circle'. Using the narrative of monogamous, law-abiding, loving relations, *Sobreviviré* positions same-sex civil partnerships, paraphrasing Rubin's words, 'in the direction of respectability' (1999: 152).

Sobreviviré is but one example reflecting how same-sex relationships became a hot topic socially, politically and in the media in Spain. As Kerman Calvo explains, the ruling on civil partnerships paved the way for the debate on same-sex marriage, and raised the profile of same-sex relationships (Calvo, 2003: 305), as well as giving way to the final stage, 'consolidación en la agenda' (consolidation in the political agenda) (2000-2004) (Calvo, 2006: 28). Winning the right to marry had not always been sought after by the gay and lesbian community or the gay and lesbian political movement, but it did not emerge 'out of the blue' either (Platero, 2007b: 331). It was in fact, the culmination of a series of equality demands (like the aforementioned civil partnerships) throughout the years, based on a 'long struggle for partnership rights from social movements on the left' who saw a 'window of political opportunity' (2007b: 331).

Raquel Platero (2007a: 91) argues that there is a worldwide pattern in the fight for LGBT equality rights. Firstly there is a period where homosexuality is decriminalised. This is followed by a second phase in which the LGBT community demanded anti-discriminatory legislation, and finally a third stage wherein they seek legal recognition of same-sex relationships. In relation to the Spanish case, Platero (2007b) considers a similar historical division in the discussion of gay and lesbian debates in Spain. She believes that, from a spectrum of potential LGBT demands, we can distinguish two broad periods. The first period occurs from the beginning of the 1990s to 2001 (a period of time that overlaps with three of Calvo's stages) when partnership rights emerged as a key demand, even if there was no real

consensus of what these were amongst the LGBT organisations. While some LGBT organisations continued to ask for partnership rights, other organisations, led by the National Federation LGBT organization (FELGT) moved towards demanding same-sex marriage (2007b: 334). During the second period, starting after 2002, those political parties and LGBT organisations that supported same-sex marriage had an increasing political impact, which ultimately led to the law change (2007b: 334). Spanish cinema also mirrors Platero's division. Films from the 1990s, such as the afore-analysed *Sobreviviré,* would discuss same-sex civil partnerships. On the other hand, from 2002 onwards, films started to problematise and discuss same-sex marriage. As will be seen later on, *Reinas / Queens* (dir. Manuel Gómez Pereira, 2005) and *Tú eliges* are part of this second period, where same-sex marriage (and not civil partnerships) are at the fore of the debate.

In 2001 the Socialist parliamentary group (allying itself with Izquierda Unida and smaller regional parties) introduced for the first time a bill demanding the legal recognition of same-sex marriages (Calvo 2007: 304). During this period, different political sides debated and fought over the definition of and issues around family, same-sex equality, visibility, and ultimately marriage. After several bills were introduced in 2001 and 2003, it was not until 2005, under the Socialist government of the PSOE, that the law was finally changed and same-sex marriage approved. As mentioned above, although the new law has been applied since it was passed, the Constitutional Court was asked to test the constitutionality of the law by the right-wing party Partido Popular and the Church (Calvo, 2007: 304).

I would add a new, very recent, stage to Kerman Calvo's theory. Currently, Spain seems to be undergoing what I would call a 'fase de re-reflujo' (re-ebbing phase). Since same-sex marriage has been legally recognised, political parties and social movements alike seem uninterested once again in new debates surrounding gay and lesbian rights, as if this legality is an end point to the fight for equality. Raquel Platero (2007a) rightly highlights this in her observation that, although discrimination against the LGBT community does not end with legal recognition (2007a: 103), the LGBT-rights movements do seem be winding down. Nieves Montesinos Sánchez (2006) also concurs that 'el debate acerca del matrimonio y la familia no se cierra con la aprobación de la Ley' ('the debate on marriage and family does not end with the passing of the Law') (2006: 179), as same-sex marriage is still socially, politically and culturally debated.

As I will explore in the case studies, we can observe this 'fase de re-reflujo' in both *Reinas* and *Tú eliges*. In *Reinas* it seems that there exists an almost total acceptance of same-sex marriage, and that gay men and lesbians are completely assimilated into Spanish society,

as if marriage was the only legal right missing. The film does not discuss issues of social inequality, and it glosses over any political topic that might arise over same-sex marriage. *Tú eliges*, on the other hand, also sees same-sex marriage as the only possible area of discussion regarding same-sex rights, the film ending with, as I will analyse shortly, an image of the gay community celebrating as if, once same-sex marriage has been legalised, all the injustices and worries are a thing of the past.

5.2.- Same-Sex Marriage: The Legal Changes

I will now consider briefly the actual changes in the Spanish Civil Code that enabled the inclusion of same-sex relationships into the institution of marriage. Following this, I will explore the different debates and polarising views surrounding same-sex marriage by academics and the LGBT community.

In the Spanish Civil Code, it was never explicitly stated that marriage had to be formed by a man and a woman, but it was implicitly assumed in the text. Article 44 states that 'el hombre y la mujer tienen derecho a contraer matrimonio' ('men and women have the right to get married'). What the law did not specify was with whom they had a right to get married to. The law reform added a new paragraph in article 44, clarifying that, 'el matrimonio tendrá los mismos requisitos y efectos cuando ambos contrayentes sean del mismo o de diferente sexo' ('the marriage will have the same requirements and effects when both parties are same-sex or opposite-sex'). Minor changes have also been made to articles 66 and 67, in relation to the rights and duties of the wedded couple. The references to 'el marido y la mujer' ('husband and wife') in both articles were changed to 'los cónyuges' ('the married couple'), erasing any heterosexual criteria (see Montesinos Sánchez, 2006; Etxazarra, 2007 or Pichardo Galán 2009: 132-134 for a further analysis of the Civil Code and the impact on the gay and lesbian community).

As Raquel Platero (2007b: 335-336) highlights, some activist and authors claim that getting married in the first few months after the legal changes came into force was not easy. This was due to resistance from conservative judges and city halls, both frequently vocal in their objection to the ruling and refusing in some cases, even today, to officiate or hold same-sex weddings (see Lorca, 2009; Lázaro, 2009 or Junquera, 2011 for further information).

In the film *Tú eliges*, the first time that the film's protagonists, gay couple Flavio (Luís Miguel Seguí) and Obdulio (Alex Jardón), appear together with their lesbian friend Paula (Paula Andrés), they are presented discussing a newspaper article about a town mayor refusing to conduct a gay wedding. Obdulio, disgusted, retorts 'estamos igual de

desamparados que siempre, entonces ¿para qué nos sirve la ley?' ('we are as defenceless as we've always been. What is the law for?'). The conversation, as I will examine in the next section, exemplifies some of the problems that still persist in Spain regarding same-sex marriage, even after the legal change.

It is also necessary to explore resistance to gay marriage from within the LGBT community, which I will discuss after the analysis of *Tú eliges*. While many celebrate it as an advance towards equality, there exists a debate amongst the queer community and academia world-wide on the benefits of same-sex marriage. Platero observes that the institution of marriage has not been as attractive to gays and lesbians as first thought (2007b: 336) and that some perceive it as an 'obsolete or even damaging institution' (2007b: 338). Peel and Harding (2004) also maintain that the same-sex debate within the LGBT community is sharply polarised, the terms of the debate often conflated to the extent that 'what actually constitutes a "pro" and an "anti" position varies between authors' (2004: 588). Either way, the entrance of gay men and lesbians into the institution of marriage does not signify the transformation of dominant heteronormative ideologies, as I will explore in my subsequent analysis of the film *Tú eliges*, which reflects these differing views on the institution of marriage. Afterwards, I will study the polarised views on same-sex marriage (and the institution of marriage in general) in both academia and the gay community, for which *Tú eliges* is a perfect introduction to the subject matter.

5.3.- *Tú eliges*: Flavio's Choice

Antonia San Juan's 2009 directorial debut, *Tú eliges*, tackles many social issues but never fully explores them: the role of women in contemporary Spain, the failure of the patriarchal father figure, LGBT rights, and the fear of growing old, are just some of the superficially addressed themes in a number of parallel storylines. The only one somewhat resolved is the story of Flavio and Obdulio, a gay couple who have been together for three years and whose relationship seems to be going through a rough time.

The characters have opposing views on the subject of same-sex marriage and in two of the three scenes in which they appear together, they end up fighting over it. Obdulio is pro-marriage, would like to get married and finds it appalling that gay couples are having problems getting married even after the 2005 law change. Flavio, on the other hand, does not believe in marriage generally and he defends his stance by arguing: 'yo no estoy en contra. La sociedad ha querido igualarnos, y vamos a caer en lo que caen todos los heterosexuales: en casarnos, en pagar la hipoteca, en no llegar a fin de mes… en hacernos igual que a ellos.

No hemos ganado, nos han ganado' ('I am not against it. Society wanted to make us equal, and we are going to fall into what all heterosexuals fall into: getting married, paying the mortgage, not having enough money at the end of the month… making us the same as what they are. We have not won, they beat us'). As Amy L. Brandzel (2005) summarises in her article on queer citizenship and the nation, many critics of same-sex marriage argue that marriage is 'inherently patriarchal and oppressive', and rather than obtaining marriage rights, gays and lesbians should 'try to abolish the institution of marriage altogether' (2005: 189). Both views on same-sex marriage do co-exist in the gay community, as we will explore shortly, but it is first interesting to examine how the film seems to vilify Flavio's point of view, which it does in two ways. The first is the narrative arc through which the character progresses and the second is the way Flavio is coded as alone (physically and, by extension mentally and thematically, in his viewpoint) through the use of camera angles and mise-en-scene.

When (homo)sexuality seems not to be an issue (once gay men seem to have an equal legal standing to their heterosexual counterparts), the problem lies in not behaving like a 'positive homosexual' who searches for a 'normalising', stable, monogamous relationship, which is what the institution of marriage champions, as Ettelbrick (1997 [1989]) explains. The extension of marriage rights act as a form of social control, creating and then maintaining the boundary of acceptable (the 'good' homosexual) and unacceptable (the 'bad' homosexual) homosexuality (Ettelbrick in Clarke and Finlay, 2004: 20). Gay rights organisations, discusses Brandzel (2005), have advocated for the right to marry, while at the same time have neglected the rights of others to reject marriage (2005: 196). In pressing for the right to marry, the gay and lesbian community now seems to discriminate against those who do not want or cannot join the institution of marriage (Wise and Stanley, 2004: 338). Sheila Jeffreys (2004) has a similar view as she considers how, as long as marriage exists, those who are not married will be seen to occupy some sort of lesser category (2004: 330).

In *Tú eliges*, the narrative seems to punish Flavio with cancer (and, ultimately, death), for not wanting to get married. This seems to follow the discourse of homosexuality as a disease I analysed in Chapter 3. In this particular case, it is not that he is ill because he is gay (there are other gay characters in the film who are healthy, like Carlos or Obdulio, for example), but it could be that he is ill because he is perceived, within the narrative and by the other characters, as a 'bad-homosexual' (in Rubin's model, an outer charmed circle individual), one that does not agree with the gay community wanting to be part of the institution of marriage (marriage and monogamy being, as discussed, some of the values

inside the 'charmed circle'). Although, as I will explore in the next section, there are those in the gay community that do not agree with same-sex relations being part of the institution of marriage (those who, perhaps, would argue that Flavio is in fact a 'good-gay'), within the narrative of *Tú eliges*, Flavio seems to be alone, outside the predominant ideological group.

It is as if Flavio's choice not to embrace the institution of marriage means that he chooses to become a non-conformist 'homosexual,' and therefore his cancer comes as punishment. Even his sister Victoria (Mala Rodríguez), upon being told he has cancer, replies 'si tu has decidido morirte, muérete' ('if you have decided to die, then die'): dying of cancer being Flavio's own choice for being both gay and anti-marriage. The concept of the gay character 'choosing to have a disease' resonates with Lynch's (2003) discussion of homosexuality and AIDS mentioned in Chapter 3: that those suffering from the virus are both victims and guilty of the promiscuous and immoral behaviour (2003: 179).

There are other ways in which Flavio is punished for being gay and not wanting same-sex marriage. He is presented as the only gay character in the film interested in anonymous sex encounters, as he goes to a sauna on his own. As Martin Holt (2004) explains in his study of lesbian and gay relationships and migration, gay men are amongst those challenging the idea that being committed to another person does not necessarily entail sexual exclusivity (2004: 33), something which Flavio agrees with, but the institution of marriage denies (as, socially, marriage tends to mean monogamy). In *Tú eliges*, open relationships are not presented as a valid option, as these are shown as damaging to the same-sex marriage institution.

As Judith Stacey (2010) suggests, the gay male cruising culture of recreational sex certainly disrupts conventional family norms and practices but, in addition, it creates bonds of kinship and domesticity (2010: 451). As I studied in the analysis of *Cachorro* in Chapter 2, Pedro de-heterosexualised his domestic space by introducing gay male bodies into his bedroom (that is, non-normative, Rubin's outer-circle, sexuality). At the same time, the three men clearly established a non-traditional familial-bond, or kinship relationship (as discussed in the introduction to the same-sex families section). Opponents of the gay cruising culture (gay or straight), believe that this type of recreational sex culture threatens 'mainstream "family values"', challenging norms of 'heteronormativity, monogamy and premarital chastity' (2010: 456). Raquel Platero (2007a) highlights how article 68 of the Spanish Civil Code, reinforces the principles of monogamy and cohabitation for the married couple (2007a: 98). Even when, as Peel and Harding (2004) argue, the concept of monogamy may not be world-wide 'as firmly cemented to same-sex marriage as it is to heterosexual marriage'

(2004: 590), as aforementioned, in *Tú eliges* non-monogamy and cruising is certainly seen as counterproductive to the same-sex marriage institution.

In the film, Flavio is the only character uninterested in a monogamous relationship. Obdulio wants to be exclusively with Flavio, while in another storyline, Carlos (Félix Navarro) a gay, single, actor and stand-up comedian who once had a fling with Flavio, is looking for a relationship and is seen acting as putative father to his sister's children. It is interesting that even though he is not married nor in a stable same-sex relationship, Carlos is coded as more adept and interested in family life than Flavio is – Carlos is coded as able to be part of the family institution, namely, because he is represented with 'vanilla' (Sender, Sender, 2003: 333) or respectable (Rubin, 1999: 152) values placed in Rubin's inner charmed circle. In a film where the traditional patriarchal figure of the father is criticised,[78] it is indeed interesting how heteronormative gay men are presented as more capable of fulfilling the father-role.

Flavio's and Obdulio's single lesbian friend and work colleague, Paula, is also depicted as a proponent of monogamous, committed relationships. In one scene she calls Flavio a misogynist and sexist ('machista'), concluding that 'si tú has decidido ir de cuerpo en cuerpo, bueno… pero al final estarás solo' ('if you have decided to go from one body to the next, fine… but you will end up alone'). It seems that gay men should either look for a stable (and married) monogamous relationship or end up alone. Interestingly, Paula's words contradict the stereotype that gay men and lesbian are more open-minded when it comes to monogamy and sexual relations. As Martin Holt (2004) pinpoints, although one-on-one relationships might be the most common amongst same-sex relationships, gay men and lesbians have been amongst those who challenge 'the idea that a commitment to another person necessarily entails sexual exclusivity' (2004: 33). *Tú eliges* does not appear to subscribe to or endorse this latter view, however, with only Flavio championing it.

This is further emphasised by the camerawork and mise-en-scene. The screen composition constantly positions Flavio as alone, separating or isolating him (reminiscent of Dyer's (2002) theory of the sad young gay man's trait of loneliness that I explored in Chapter 4). In the initial conversation about same-sex marriage between Paula, Obdulio and Flavio, there is an establishing shot that shows the couple's living room, with Paula and Obdulio (pro-marriage / monogamy) sitting in a sofa together, while Flavio is on an armchair, slightly

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[78] Carlos' father, for example, is said to be a lazy man who never wanted to work and provide for his family; his brother-in-law is in prison and cannot provide for his wife and children; and Flavio's father abandoned his own family.

further away from them (see Figure 16). After the initial establishing shot, the camera moves to a string of two-shots of Obdulio and Paula on the sofa together, and a reverse shot of Flavio, on the armchair, on his own. Likewise, when the three of them are, once again, arguing in their dressing room (they work as performers in a cabaret), the camera shots are identical: Obdulio and Paula in a two-shot, Flavio on his own. Similarly, in one of his last scenes, Flavio is seen talking with his mother, Rosa (Antonia San Juan). After an initial establishing two-shot of them sitting on the sofa, the camera moves to a succession of shot and reverse shot of them talking to each other. Only after Flavio insults her and she slaps him across the face, the scene reverts to the establishing two-shot. Seconds later, still in the two-shot, he mutters 'adios, mamá' ('goodbye, mum') and departs without further contact, leaving an empty space besides Rosa. The character of Flavio seems physically incapable of sharing the screen with anyone for more than a couple of seconds. His conversation with Rosa and the camerawork emphasise his outcast status, and how Flavio is coded as an outsider of the familial space.

Figure 16 – Flavio, framed to the side of Paula and Obdulio in *Tú eliges*

When Flavio is walking the streets of the city, he is invariably seen alone, usually in a wide shot or wide angle shot – a small figure against the background of tall buildings (notably the outside of the hospital). It is as if everyone else disappears when Flavio takes a stroll. Only when cruising at the gay sauna is he presented in the same shot as others, no longer separated by screen composition or editing. Here, for example, he is shown swimming towards two young men relaxing by the side of the pool, before a still camera shot depicts Flavio in the centre of the screen, with each of the young men jumping into the pool to

embrace Flavio, one at either side. The short scene suggests that Flavio can only connect (can only share the shot) through anonymous sexual interaction, the camera work reinforcing his position as someone who challenges the idea of monogamy.

Flavio's final moments are also very telling. He is in a hospital bed, asleep or in a coma, a faceless doctor standing by his side (the audience only sees this anonymous doctor from the neck down), and patting Flavio's arm with a hand (complete with a wedding ring). The camera zooms towards Flavio's face as the doctor leaves his side, and he dies alone. The close up with which the scene ends highlights Flavio's solitude in his last moments, something which Paula warned him on when she told him 'al final estarás solo' (the meaning 'you will end up alone' can be understood as Paula warning him about Obdulio breaking up with him, but it can also be literally translated as 'at the end, you will be alone', reinforcing the idea of finality and solitude at the deathbed). The scene then cuts directly to Obdulio and Paula happily dancing on a busy open-top bus, shaking pompons in a wide-shot of Madrid's gay parade: the gay community who fought for same-sex marriage and equal rights and which they are part of.

Even though *Tú eliges* presents and endorses an open minded and normalised view of homosexuality and same-sex relations as another option in the sexual spectrum, it does so within Rubin's (1999 [1982]) terms of the inner charmed circle. As I will explore in the next section, monogamy has been constantly challenged in the gay community (see, for example, Worth, Reid and McMillan, 2002; Klesse, 2007; or Parsons, Starks, DuBois, Grov and Golub, 2011),[79] but *Tú eliges* seems to reinforce the idea of monogamy and marriage as the best and most forward thinking option for gay relations.

5.4.- The Two Sides of the Same-Sex Marriage Debate

As mentioned previously, the same-sex marriage debate in the LGBT community is polarised, to the extent that what constitutes 'pro' and 'anti' positions varies between authors (Peel and Harding, 2004: 588). Nevertheless, an understated point of commonality amongst those in the LGBT community is that, even those most critical of same-sex marriage agree that lesbian and gay men 'should have access to the practical benefits which are conferred on married […] heterosexual couples' (2004: 589). Kevin Bourassa (2004) affirms that marriage should be a matter of choice, with those in favour of it (whether same-sex or opposite-sex) free to make that choice, 'instead of having it made for us' (2004: 60).

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[79] See, as well, Baker and Langdridge (2010) for a study of non-monogamy in heterosexual relations, pointing towards a less monolithic understanding of sexual and affective relations in modern heterosexual couples.

Within the LGBT community, Suzanna Danuta Walters (2001) identifies two debates in regards to same-sex marriage: the debate between heterosexuals and lesbians and gay men about equality (the 'pro' argument), and the debate about accommodation and resistance in the lesbian and gay men community (the 'anti' argument) (Walters in Clarke and Finlay, 2004: 18). Wise and Stanley (2004) concur with Walters, dividing the two sides in these terms: those with assimilationist views (pro) and those with liberatory views (anti) (2004: 334). As Kath Browne (2011) highlights the two views are usually pitted against each other, those that argue that same-same marriage is assimilationist and normalising, against those who believe it is desirable and progressive.

For many LGBT opponents of same-sex marriage, the institution of marriage and the concept of family represent conformity to heterosexual standards. Embracing marriage, Patrick Paul Garlinger (2004) speculates, runs the risk of reinforcing the message that some relationships are more valuable than others (2004: 66). The idea is similar to those previously addressed, with marriage acting as a form of social control (Ettelbrick in Clarke and Finlay, 2004: 20) and unmarried parties occupying a lesser status (Jeffreys, 2004: 330). Maria Bevacqua (2004) states that once same-sex marital rights are achieved, the question lies in whether gay men will participate in what many consider to be a flawed institution (2004: 38).

Lori Jo Marso (2010) remarks that critics of the heteronormative institution of marriage point to the institution's tendency to 'reproduce and solidify a gendered division of labour, norms of dependency and protection, and mandatory monogamy' (2010: 145-146). Marso highlights that the concern for feminists is that, by arguing in favour of same-sex marriage, 'we are replicating the state's logic, rather that fighting against it' (2010: 150). Marriage, Marso asserts, participates in a set of anchored and stable values: practicing legitimate and appropriate sex, and providing a suitable home for children (and therefore, having to have children) amongst others (2010: 148-149). Marso maintains that by supporting same-sex marriage as a civil right, we are reinforcing marriage as the institution that confers legitimacy on this 'choice' of relationship, over the rest of possible choices out there (which are then seen as suspect in relation to the 'correct option' of marriage) (2010: 152).

Similar views are considered by Martin Holt (2004) who states that the marriage institution reinforces the idea that a heterosexual marriage is 'the standard against which all other relationships should be judged' (2004: 33). As Brandzel (2005) summarises, by asking for same-sex rights, gay men and lesbians are forced to ask for 'equal rights on the basis to their similarity to heterosexuals' (2005: 190). This line of thought, she argues, is tantamount to conceding that homosexuals deserve what heterosexuals have, only as long as they act like

them. J. Roy Gillis (1998) also maintains that for some LGBT community and political activists the legislation of same-sex marriage is a 'denial of the goals of feminism and radical gay, lesbian, and bisexual liberation' (1998: 262); although he does state that for others in the community, same-sex marriage is not so much a political act but simply an expression of love (1998: 263). This last view is often shared by those who are in favour of same-sex marriage, such as Andrew Sullivan (1996 [1989]), who believes that, even if arbitrary, marriage provides an anchor, a mechanism for turning chaos into some sort of order (1996: 254). The way to go about it, he reasons, is not to undermine 'straight marriage' but to legalise 'old-style marriage for gays' (1996: 255). Same-sex marriage places more responsibilities upon gays; it means that gay relationships, for the first time, are neither better nor worse, but the same as straight relationships (1996: 255).

Brandzel (2005) also observes that most arguments in favour of same-sex marriage claim that same-sex marriage has the potential to transform the institution of marriage altogether, ending 'its history as a form of gender discrimination' (2005: 188). Wise and Stanley (2004) agree, noting that those in favour of same-sex marriage believe that same-sex marriage will not only bring true social equality, but also alter the institution by 'demonstrating that gendered inequality is not a necessary feature of marriage' (2004: 334). Same-sex marriage rights also validate same-sex relationships in the eyes, not only of family and friends, but also the nation as a whole. The state acceptance and approval of same-sex marriage would enhance the affectional ties of the relationship, by placing a 'public' seal of approval on this type of relationships (2004: 335).

As aforementioned, Browne (2011) pinpoints that the two views on same-sex marriage within the LGBT community are usually set in opposition between, as we have just seen, those that argue that same-same marriage is assimilationist and normalising, in contrast to those who believe it is desirable and progressive. In reality, however, recent studies and discussions of both same-sex marriage and civil partnerships have found a 'messiness that is not easily reducible' to just two sides of the debate (2011: 103). Currently, there exist a number of unanswerable questions on the issue of same-sex marriage. Does same-sex marriage then succumb to heteronormative ideologies of marriage, family and relationships? Or, on the contrary, does same-sex marriage re-formulate and open up the institution of marriage? Can same-sex marriage and opposite-sex marriage co-exist as completely equal understandings and definitions of what marriage truly is? Or is same-sex marriage always going to be second to heteronormative marriage?

Same-sex marriage undoubtly queers the institution of marriage, in so far as it brings into the heteronormative institution of 'marriage' non-heteronormative identities (Gimeno, 2007: 40). As I mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, queer identities both interact and are yet resistant to heteronormative social, cultural, and political structures; while also claiming equality and difference (Kooijamn, 2005: 74). As such, same-sex marriage cannot but queer marriage at, at least, the most basic level: by interacting with it and resisting to it, by claiming equality and difference. On the other hand, gay men and lesbians that get married are heteronormatised due to the intrinsic nature of marriage, which has been socially, culturally, and legally only-heterosexual. Whether one is in favour or against same-sex marriage, it is clear that same-sex marriage does 'normalise' non-heterosexual sexualities in society, and it should not be a question of same-sex marriage being 'good' or 'bad' for same-sex couples, but of gay men and lesbian want or do not want to get married. It is a personal choice, but a personal choice that gay men and lesbian should be able to legally make, and not be made by them. Just as heterosexuals can accept or reject marriage, so should (and now 'are' in Spain and other 12 countries)[80] gay men and lesbians be able to get married or not. Furthermore, are not those same-sex marriage dissenting voices from within the gay and lesbian community not reiterating a 'them vs. us' dichotomy? People within the gay and lesbian community may not want to get married (just as many heterosexual couples decide not to get married either), but disregarding same-sex marriage altogether reinforces the idea that gay men and lesbians are not worthy of the same legal rights than their heterosexual counterparts.

In the Spanish case, only time will be able to uncover some of the answers to these questions, as same-sex marriage becomes more normalised both in society and on the media. Moreover, as Jorge Pérez (2010) points out regarding the normalising versus resistant views on same-sex marriage in Spain,

> el impacto mediático de las posturas que han fomentado políticas de normalización del colectivo LGBT en la sociedad española ha ensombrecido a otras posiciones cuestionadoras que buscan variantes a los modelos legitimados institucionalmente.
>
> (Jorge Pérez, 2010: 141)

> the impact from the media over those sides that promote normalising politics of the LGBT community in Spanish society has overshadowed

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[80] See Peregil (2013) and Tajitsu (2013) for news on Uruguay and New Zealand becoming the 12th and 13th countries in the world to legalise same-sex marriage.

other questioning sides that search for other types of models to those legitimised by the institutions.

In Spain, both socially and in academia, the voices in favour of same-sex marriage and queer family formations within the LGBT community have been more vocal than those against it. In the next section, I will analyse the representation of same-sex marriage in the 2005 comedy *Reinas*, Spain's first film to deal with a same-sex wedding scenario. Although the film is not able to resolve these unknowns, it does help to understand some of the views in Spain with relation to same-sex couples and marriage in general. Throughout my analysis of the film, I will discuss topics such as heteronormativity, patriarchy and family relationships, how gay men's relationships are represented and coded, as well as some of the media attention received by the film.

5.5.- May You Kiss The Groom? The Case of *Reinas*

In discussing the film, it is useful to begin in the context of the media attention that surrounded the film and its themes. I will follow this with an overview of the comedy elements used in *Reinas*, which both problematise and normalise the topic of same-sex marriage. I will then move on to the analysis of how the film groups the characters into three archetypes (mother, gay son, and father), and finally study the main characters, and the relationships between them.

In the April 2012 edition of the Spanish magazine *Fotogramas*, actor Hugo Silva wrote a brief piece about the 2004 shooting of the film *Reinas*, which was of course before the legalisation of same-sex marriage. In the article, he states:

> …recuerdo que me emocioné mucho en el momento que rodamos la boda gay multitudinaria, porque tuve la sensación de que estábamos haciendo historia al normalizar la homosexualidad en pantalla, aun siendo una comedia, algo hecho para divertirse, y sin profundizar en el tema político y social.
>
> (Silva, 2012: 34)

> …I remember I was very moved when we shot the mass gay wedding scene, because I had the feeling we were making history normalising homosexuality on screen, even if it was a comedy, something just to make people laugh, and without going in greater depth into political or social issues.

It is worth noting the implication that homosexuality can only be normalised in relation to same-sex marriage. Even when Silva has previously played a gay character in the Mexican film *Ladies' Night* (dir. Gabriela Tagliavini, 2003), he claims to feel overwhelmed by 'normalising homosexuality on screen' by shooting the same-sex wedding scene in *Reinas*. Not merely – and perhaps more accurately – normalising same-sex marriage, but homosexuality as a whole. Although he correctly identifies that they were making history – *Reinas* is, after all, the first Spanish film to show a same-sex wedding; and same-sex marriage was indeed legalised shortly after its release – the implication of his words cannot seem to shake the institution of marriage's heternormativism.

In his article, Silva also comments on having to kiss a male colleague in the film, remarks that bear a striking resemblance to those made by Javier Bardem and Jordi Mollà in 1999 while filming *Segunda piel* and discussed on Chapter 4. When asked in television and magazine interviews on the perceived difficulty for heterosexual actors to act in gay sex scenes in a film, Bardem answered that the scenes were not problematic to shoot, since both Jordi Mollà and himself were friends before making the film. Furthermore, he emphasised that filming the scene was 'divertido y nada traumático' ('fun and non-traumatic') (Javier Bardem in Perriam, 2002: 135), inadvertently underlining the reality of social anxieties linked to the homosexual act. Although in the case of *Reinas* it is not a sexual act, but just a couple of same-sex kisses, Silva affirms:

> Había dos o tres escenas de besos entre Raúl Jiménez, que era mi pareja, y yo, pero ninguno de los dos tuvimos el menor problema con ellas, porque creíamos en nuestros personajes y hasta nos hacía gracia y lo pasamos muy bien. Lo importante es que la historia y tu personaje te motiven.
>
> (Silva, 2012: 34)

> There were two or three scenes where Raúl Jiménez, my on-screen partner, and I, had to kiss, but none of us had any problems with them, because we believed in the characters and it even made us laugh and we had a lot of fun. What is important is that the story and your character motivate you.

While the comment, just like Bardem's previous one, is a well-intentioned attempt to minimise any media sensationalism over the kiss, it nevertheless implies that the actors themselves (or others) could have had a problem with it: by reinforcing that it was not a

problem (and in fact was fun and made them laugh), Silva's observation is, just as Bardem's was, unintentionally highlighting social anxieties linked to same-sex affection between men.

In her review of the film *Reinas*, film critic Nuria Vidal (2005) pinpoints how the film uses the celebration of the same-sex wedding as a starting point to tell 'las pequeñas historias personales de cinco madres, dos padres y seis hijos' ('the small personal stories of five mothers, two father and six sons') (2005: 18). While she concurs with Hugo Silva's remarks about the film not engaging fully with the political or social implications of same-sex marriage, Vidal argues that what is important about the film is not just that the film treats homosexuality and same-sex marriage as an everyday fact, but that the characters and their development are treated no differently to those in other types of screwball comedy (Vidal, 2005: 18). This also appears to be the intention of director Manuel Gómez Pereira, who clarified in a promotional interview:

> No se trata de desmitificar pero sí de darle una ligereza a un hecho que se está produciendo a nuestro alrededor y que creemos que puede dar juego para recrear situaciones típicas, de toda la vida.
> (Gómez Pereira in Pando, 2005: 126)

> It is not about demystifying but about giving some lightness to a reality that is happening around us and which we think can have an effect on everyday life situations.

Although not problematising same-sex marriage can be seen as an important step forward in the representation of homosexuality and same-sex relations in Spanish cinema – indeed it is a considerable advance from the stigmatisation and medicalization of the gay body – we may question whether the choice is less a positive reinforcement of same-sex relationships than a misguided belief in relations and marriage being exactly the same for heterosexual couples as they are for same-sex ones. Is the heteronormative assimilation view on same-sex marriage in evidence here? Or, on the contrary, is it a more progressive and conscious presentation?

The answer appears to lie somewhere between both perspectives. Just as Browne argues that there exists a 'messiness that is not easily reducible' (2011: 103) to just two sides of the debate on same-sex marriage, so we can say *Reinas* navigates, problematises, and engages with different ideologies regarding same-sex marriage, and marriage in general. The film can be understood as an ambivalent text. Although it does of course deal with same-sex

issues, and reveals a shame-free gay community (or, at the very least, shame-free identities), these aspects, as I will point out throughout the analysis, are framed around a heteronormativist (but not homophobic) point of view and understanding of marriage and family relations.

In this regard, the film is similar to Pullen's (2007a) view on the documentary *Tying the Knot* (dir. Jim de Sève, 2004), in which the text strongly relies on heterosexual narratives (accepting the institution of marriage without questioning it; having to surpass heterosexual parenting skills) (2007a: 199). *Reinas* similarly relates to the heterosexual experience (of marriage, relationships and family relations) as a narrative device, while at the same time it promotes and normalises the gay counterpart. There exists, thus, an important difference between *Reinas* and other films where same-sex and opposite-sex marriage is implicitly or explicitly compared: in the film, the heterosexual couples, as I will foreground in the analysis, are shown with just as many flaws as same-sex couples (see also, Fouz-Hernández, 2010: 95; or Richmond Ellis, 2010: 72-74 for a similar analysis of marriage in *Reinas*).

The narrative in *Reinas* follows three gay couples and their respective parental relations in the run-up to the first same-sex marriage ceremony in Spain, which in fact involves all three couples marrying at the same time: Jonás (Hugo Silva) is getting married to Rafa (Raúl Jiménez), Hugo (Gustavo Salmerón) to Narciso (Paco León), and Argentinian Óscar (Daniel Hendler) to Miguel (Unax Ugalde). Their relationships are tested to the limit by their mothers, which is what provides much of the comedy and drama: Nuria (Verónica Forqué) is Narciso's nymphomaniac mother; Magda (Carmen Maura) is Miguel's controlling mother and owner of the hotel where the marriage ceremony will take place; Reyes (Marisa Paredes) is a selfish actress and mother of Rafa; Helena (Mercedes Sampietro) is Hugo's disenchanted mother and the judge who is asked to officiate at the wedding against her will; and Ofelia (Betiana Blum) is Óscar's interfering mother, who has flown all the way from Argentina. Jonás does not have a mother but maternal complications still arise via his father Jacinto (Lluís Homar) who is Reyes' gardener and with whom Jacinto is in love. Two more fathers appear in the film, although they too are largely defined by their relationships to the matriarchs: Hugo's father Héctor (Tito Valverde) a policeman and separated from Helena; while Magda's husband Marc (Joan Crosas) is only ever seen through the videoconference screen in Magda's office, as he is always away on business. He is also unaware of the fact that his wife is cheating on him with César (Jorge Perrugoría), their hotel's chef.

In order to deepen my study of *Reinas*, I will divide my analysis into three sections. Firstly I will discuss the comedic elements used in the film, in order to understand how it tries

to both please gay and lesbian, and heterosexual viewers alike. Secondly, I will analyse the archetypal roles used throughout the film, concentrating on those pertaining to the family, specifically the roles of the mother and the father, and their relationships. Finally, I will focus on the storylines and gay characters in the film, exploring how they interact with each other, and how the heterosexual characters constantly intrude into their spaces, lives and relationships.

5.5.1.- *Reinas*: A Comedy of Errors

Director Manuel Gómez Pereira developed the idea of a comedy about same-sex couples getting married with screenwriters Yolanda García Serrano and Joaquín Oristrell. He states that 'el enfoque de comedia surgió desde el principio' ('the comedy angle was there from the beginning') (Gómez Pereira in Pando, 2005: 126). What is interesting is that the resulting story and casting focused more strongly on the mother figures than on the gay characters that are nominally at the centre of the premise. Pereira declares that he and his screenwriters knew from the beginning who they wanted for the roles of the mothers, and that 'configura[mos] las familias empezando por las madres' ('[we] shaped the families around the mother characters') (2005: 126). As the completed film makes clear, these women are indeed at the centre of the action, displacing the gay characters who are getting married, and who we might expect to have more pivotal roles in this type of romantic comedy narrative.

In her study of romantic comedy and same-sex desire, Debra A. Moddelmog (2010) observes that the structure of the romantic comedy is fairly predictable: 'boy meets girl, and they work through a series of complications and misunderstandings until they are finally joined in marriage or a union presumed to be headed for the altar' (2010: 163). She continues, that the union-as-spectacle scene 'shores up the genre's premise of heterosexuality' while at the same time visually prioritising the view that 'heterosexuality, and a particular kind of heterosexuality at that (monogamous, affluent, predominantly white) is the only acceptable choice for anyone looking for love' (2010: 163).

Reinas borrows its narrative arc from the 'courtly love' tradition, where 'an emotional history is created through the placing of obstacles in the path of the protagonists' (Smith, 2006: 37). The film tries to subvert the archetypal ideology of the romantic comedy by putting gay men at the centre of it, and basing the union-as-spectacle in same-sex desire instead of heterosexual one. But as Moddelmog (2010) has pinpointed 'introducing gay content into the romance script is not enough to subvert or rescript this narrative' (2010: 164). Although the overall narrative thread is the organisation and celebration of a mass same-sex

wedding (and whether it will happen or not), same-sex desire and identification is problematised by the actual focus of this narrative being on the heterosexual characters. We cannot disregard what Peel and Harding (2004) conclude in regard to the romantic discourse and same-sex relationships: that it makes same-sex partnerships more visible within heterosexist society (2004: 592).

The film's narrative feeds constantly on two social (and filmic) stereotypes. The first is that mothers always interfere in or try to take charge of wedding plans (in this case, the fact that the weddings are same-sex seems to be of little importance) not to mention the relationships of their offspring. The second stereotype is that of the bond between a gay man and his mother (see, for example, González 2005: 96-98): director Manuel Gómez Pereira himself states, 'no hay que olvidar que la relación de una madre con su hijo homosexual es para toda la vida' ('we should not forget that the relationship between a mother and her gay son is forever') (Gómez Pereira in Pando, 2005: 126). Both of these stereotypes dominate the film's narrative, and the relationships between the gay characters are very much secondary to these thematic conventions.

In fact, the title of the film is a word play referring not only to the gay characters – the term 'reina' ('queen') is gay slang for a camp gay man – but to the mothers, who very much act like queens (of their own houses and their families). As Vidal (2005) points out, the five mothers are indeed the 'auténticas reinas' ('genuine queens') (2005: 18). The title can also be seen as a playful reference to the lead actresses – all big names in the Spanish film industry – and their status as cinema royalty. Lest we forget, as a commercial film, *Reinas* partly relies on the popularity of its major stars.

Perhaps, part of the reason for the film's ambivalence is possibly not just a creative decision, but a result of the film's commercial compromise. The very desire to make *Reinas* a mainstream and commercial romantic comedy, highlighted by the use of some of the biggest names in the Spanish star-system, means that the gay characters are shadowed by the actresses who play their mothers.[81] A consciously well-meaning and progressive attempt to bring normalised representations of gay lives and characters into the mainstream is at the

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[81] Of the actors playing the gay sons, only Hugo Silva is currently considered a major heartthrob in the Spanish star system, playing the lead in light comedies like *Lo contrario al amor / The opposite of love* (dir. Vicente Vilanueva, 2011) or in the hit TV Series *Los hombres de Paco / Paco's Men* (2005-2010). At the time of *Reinas*, Silva did not have the same star power as he has nowadays, while the rest of the actors were either quasi-unknown (as is the case of Raúl Jiménez, or Argentinian Daniel Hendler) or established but not as popular as they are nowadays (Paco León, or Unax Ugalde).

expense of becoming second best to the narratives and characterisations of the mother figures: all of them 'reinas de la comedia española' ('queens of Spanish comedy').

Part of the comedy in this film, in fact, comes from small, light-hearted nods to the general audience and to gay viewers in particular. For example, Reyes, a famous actress in the film, is confused with real actress Carmen Maura, who plays the role of Magda, owner of the wedding venue. Moreover, Reyes is played by Marisa Paredes and the character at one point retorts '¡Por Diós! Si yo he trabajado con Almodóvar' ('Please, I've worked with Almodóvar!') – one of many in-jokes since Paredes has indeed worked with Pedro Almodóvar on several occasions, as has Maura. Other such intertextual references include Paco León's role as Narciso, a gay politician with a passing resemblance to real-life gay activist, lawyer and politician Pedro Zerolo (also mentioned in my analysis of *Chuecatown* in Chapter 1). Zerolo participated in the negotiations between the government and its opponents over the inclusion of same-sex marriage into the Spanish Civil Code and, soon after its introduction, wed his boyfriend, Jesús Santos, in October 2005. There is also a word-play with the character's name: Narciso – Narcissus in Greek mythology being the hunter renowned for his beauty, and the origin of the term narcissism. Perhaps the name's word-play is both a nod to the character's role as a self-centred politician, and a critique to the old cliché according to which gay people are seeking the self / the same, rather than boldly embracing difference (see Weir, 1996; Simpson, 1996; Mann, 1998; or Duncan, 2007).

There are also several word plays and double entendres in the dialogue. When Jacinto is admiring a painting at Reyes' house, her son Rafa asks if he likes the painting, to which the gardener replies 'yo… es que no entiendo…' ('I… do not understand…'). Jacinto is referring to the fact that he does not understand art, but in Spanish, the verb 'entender' is also used in the gay community as 'those in the know', those who are gay. Rafa, teasingly, replies 'no hace falta entender… es dejarse llevar' ('you do not need to understand… Just let yourself go'). Although the joke is lost on Jacinto, both Rafa and his boyfriend Jonás (Jacinto's son) smile knowingly at each other. Later, when Magda and her husband Marc are discussing, via videoconference, staff-related business problems they are having with their gay-oriented hotel chain, Marc admonishes Magda: 'aquí no cabe el orgullo Magda, esto es un negocio' ('no time for pride, Magda, this is a business'). Although Marc is trying to pacify Magda, who refuses to give in regarding a small problem they currently have with their kitchen staff due to her pride, the remark can also be read in the context of the idea of a gay-oriented hotel. While his remark refers to personal pride in relation to the staffing problem, it can also be read as a comment on the commercialisation of gay spaces and of what gay pride stands for,

namely the gay community fighting together for equal rights and against prejudice. It is an ironic statement, which seems to say that there is no pride (or gay pride for that matter) in business matters; even when there is much business to be made from the gay market and the commercialisation of gay spaces (as I examined in Chapter 1). While many of the in-jokes attempt to broaden the comedic appeal of the film – Tito Valverde's role as a policeman, for example, is a nod to his 10-year stint on the popular Spanish television series *El Comisario / The Police Superintendent* (1999-2009) where he played the title role – those such as the former two examples are clearly aimed at gay viewers. Interestingly, they are subtle enough that perhaps only those with some awareness of gay culture might appreciate them.

Although the film cannot be said to be a queer film (even if its narrative attempts to queer marriage ideology), and although it tries hard not to alienate a mainstream audience, *Reinas* also tries to market itself to a gay-friendly cinema audience (this in itself reflects the aforementioned ambivalence of the text). It does so by tapping into the 'assimilationist' 'identity potential' identification ideology Pullen (2008: 51) discusses in his analysis of the films of French filmmakers Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau. *Reinas* does not focus on 'queer theory' ideas and representational values, but instead relates the identities of the gay male characters to those of the heterosexual majority. The film's comic tone also thwarts any serious commentary on queer politics or observations on contemporary Spanish society or its attitudes to gay issues such as the fight for marriage equality or homophobia. By simplifying the complexities the gay characters are faced with – their problems essentially the comic result of meddling matriarchs – the film largely restricts the narrative to that of the family arena.

This wider familial focus, which prevents a more detailed exploration of the supposedly central gay characters, relationships and issues, is evident from the opening scene. Here, we have a title sequence dominated by the colours of the rainbow flag, establishing from the outset that this is a gay-themed comedy. But instead of focusing on the (gay) couple – as most romantic comedies do and as seen in *Chuecatown* – the film begins with scenes of family life and interaction, thus deflecting attention from the intrinsic erotic / romantic theme of gay male characters committing to one another. It is an approach which fits with Peter William Evans' (2000) analysis of *La gran familia*, wherein 'the intensity of the couple-centred narratives of romantic comedy is replaced in family comedy by focus on the resolution of questions related to patriarchal authority and the socialisation of the children' (2000: 84). This is very much what we see in *Reinas*, which substitutes the

traditional couple-centred narrative for a wider look at the relations between these men and their parents and, more widely still, between the parents themselves.

As I will examine in the next sections, the use of comedy in *Reinas* subverts dominant assumptions with regards to gender and sexuality, while at the same time critiquing sexual stereotypes, and society's views on marriage. Comedy in the film does not ask the audience to laugh at the gay characters, but with them, homosexuality not being the joke in the film (but, instead, relationships in general). In saying that, I would argue that at points, this over-emphasis on marriage and relations in general does come at the expense of over-simplifying the reality of same-sex relations in contemporary Spain.

5.5.2.- *Reinas*: The Mamas & The Papas

As previously noted, the narrative in *Reinas* is largely built around its mother figures, not the gay characters which are ostensibly at the centre of the story. Nowhere is this more evident than in the film's credit sequence, which also reflects the narrative and thematic insignificance of its father figures. Even before the appearance of the film's title, or the director's name, the credits begin with the names of its leading ladies, each accompanied by a smiling, confident image of the actress, fully exploiting the film-stars' personas. Only then does the audience see the title card, which is followed by the names of the actors playing their sons. This time, the screen is divided half way, two actors at a time. They look towards the camera, and then at each other, in a sequence very reminiscent of the title sequence of American television series, *The Brady Bunch* (1969-1974). It is a stylistic choice which perhaps emphasises the fictional pairing – and therefore sexuality – of these male characters, but also consciously puts them in the shadow of the female stars. Finally, under a 'special collaborations' heading, the name of the fathers / actors emerge. These are the only characters whose image does not appear in the title sequence, the message being quite clear: in this story the father figure is not important. Criticism of the patriarchal role in the family is, as I have mentioned, also highlighted in *Tú eliges*, as well as in Almodóvar's films of the 1980s, such as *Laberinto de pasiones / Labyrinth of Passions* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1982) and *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios / Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1988), and more recently as *Todo sobre mi madre / All About my Mother* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 1999) or *Volver* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 2006) which subvert the figure of the traditional patriarchal family by underlining the ineffectiveness or absence of the central father figure (Begin, 2011: 129-130). If same-sex marriage can be seen as a subversion of

patriarchal ideology within the concept of family, *Reinas* clearly subverts this even further by diminishing the importance of the father.

Brandzel (2005) argues that criticism of same-sex marriage stems from an understanding that marriage is 'inherently patriarchal' (2005: 189). The credit sequence of *Reinas* – and the decision not to provide images for the actors who play the father roles – may therefore be seen as an attempt to distance the idea of same-sex marriage from traditional, patriarchal views of both the family and marriage. The unusual title used to introduce these actors, 'special collaborations', can similarly be seen as a distancing, ironic comment on the traditional role of the father, as well as a way of diminishing their role in the narrative.

For a film that ostensibly celebrates marriage, it problematises the institution in general, presenting it in a negative manner. There is a lack of family harmony and togetherness, although interestingly, and in a reversal of many cinematic representations of gay relationships, it is the heterosexual relationships – those of the gay characters' parents – that are problematic; the same-sex relationships are all shown to be more resilient. In saying that, even if the film problematises marriage in general and subverts the representation of the traditional family structure, same-sex marriage is not presented as the best solution and, moreover, marriage is presented as an invalid alternative for some of the heterosexual characters, as I will shortly explore. Additionally, even when the narrative in *Reinas* is set around the days before a wedding, the film does not seem to advocate for the institution of marriage, with the characters disregarding many of the values associated with the institution (mainly that of fidelity). The families in the film are all dispersed, emotionally distant, suffer from communication problems and are defined generally by a lack of real cohesion. The patriarchal ideology of the family institution, where the husband works and the wife takes care of the home, is constantly disavowed. The role of the mother in film, Evans (2000) remarks, personifies the home, 'the "angel in the house" who provides its comforts, making a safe haven for the family' (2000: 81; see also Gámez Fuentes, 2004 and Zecchi, 2005, for an analysis of the mother figure in Spanish cinema). In *Reinas*, however, it is the exact opposite. None of the women need their husbands to take care of them, and neither are they relegated to the home space.

Ofelia and Nuria live in different cities to their sons (we first meet them in the train on their way to Madrid), and Helena does not want to attend her son's wedding, and has booked herself a holiday away to avoid it. Reyes, the fourth mother who is also divorced, is constantly travelling around due to her work as an actress. Magda, the fifth mother is the only one still married, but even here her relationship is remote, conducted largely by impersonal

teleconferences with her travelling husband. At one point, angered, she asks Marc '¿tú y yo somos un negocio?' ('are we a business?'), emphasising the lack of closeness between them.

Magda's wardrobe is also telling of her role within the family: she is always seen in a dark-coloured suit; she is the one who 'wears the trousers' in the relationship, literally and metaphorically. Magda is almost always presented in a business environment (primarily, the hotel where the same-sex wedding will take place), and is shown only once in the familial space of the home, which she shares not with any family member but her lover, César, who we see waiting in the marital bed. Even when she is being disrobed by César, she is still barking orders and discussing business matters. A close up shows Magda sitting on top of him, her head above his. She is not assuming the submissive role of a housewife, she is on top.

On the other hand, Reyes is seen within the confines of her family house, but she is not presented in a housewife role at any point. For example, she does not do any house work as she has a number of staff to take care of that. Amongst them is Jacinto, the gardener and father of Jonás (her son's boyfriend). After Reyes invites Jacinto and Jonás to join them for dinner, in order to get the two families together, she tries to adopt the role of the traditional matriarch, but it soon ends in disaster, as she is unable to relinquish her active role.

As aforementioned when discussing the dinner scene in *Sobreviviré*, Anne Nowak (2010) mentions that the dinner table is the space where 'disputes commonly take place both in film and in real life' (2010: 120). In *Reinas*, the dinner set-up is the battleground between Jacinto and Reyes, with each trying to assert the dominant active role within this new, larger family. Reyes organises the dinner table in a very patriarchal manner, ordering Jacinto to sit at the head of the table, while she sits at the other end. Rafa and Jonás are then asked to sit at either side. Although by doing this, Reyes is acknowledging the patriarchal ideology bestowed upon the father figure, she soon subverts this by dominating the table, while embarrassing and undermining Jacinto by, for instance, asking if the widower is able to use chopsticks.

The film further subverts patriarchal archetypes of masculinity and femininity through the characters of Helena and Héctor, the divorced parents of Hugo. Manuel Trenzado Romero (1997) contends that, in cinema the classical archetype of masculinity usually adopts the form of 'the police officer,' a modern equivalent to that of the Classic warrior (1997: 100). In contrast, the archetype of femininity tends to be that of housewife or, if she is given a role outside of the home environment, that of nurse or servant, both of which are caring and nursing jobs (1997: 100). In *Reinas*, although Héctor is in fact a police officer, his ex-wife,

Helena, represents The Law in her role as a renowned and aggressive lawyer. Héctor might be a policeman, but his role is not above The Law. This power-play is also asserted in their relationship, with Helena presented as more intelligent, better paid and more powerful than her erstwhile husband. The character of Helena herself is no traditional mother figure: never even seen in her own home, she refuses to go to her own son's wedding and disagrees with the institution of marriage in general (due to her own failed attempt). It is also interesting to consider how the parental characters in *Reinas* view same-sex marriage. Helena is used to voice dissenting views on the subject: both she and Reyes reject the impending marriage of their sons (and, by extension, their sexuality). Yet the two women embody two different discourses regarding same-sex relationships and marriage: Reyes taps into bourgeois respectability discourses, while Helena symbolises the law and the voices of discord that occurred in Spain around the time (both in the legal sphere and in society in general).

In her study on marriage, Lori Jo Marso (2010) argues that the most troubling aspect of this institution for feminists is – as Simone de Beauvoir also (1952) highlights in her influential work *The Second Sex* – that marriage automatically confers bourgeois respectability on its participants (2010: 146). The idea of legitimisation through marriage, Marso says, is tempting to gay couples 'who have long suffered from the effects of shame, secrecy and delegitimization of their intimate partnership' (2010: 147). Marriage is undeniably attached to bourgeois respectability in society's minds. As Marso explains, to be married is 'to practice legitimate and appropriate sex,' as well as 'provide a suitable home for children' while, at the same time, participating 'in the promise of a bright future anchored in secure and stable values' (2010: 148-149).

Reyes understands the institution of marriage in this manner, complaining that not only is her son marrying another man, but he is marrying her gardener's son, alluding to the class difference she sees between her son Rafa and her future son-in-law, Jonás. She fears a financial motive and exclaims to Jacinto: '¡me pregunto si estaría con él si fueramos pobres como ratas!' ('would he be with him if we were poor!?'). The camera work and mise-en-scene seems to reinforce the class difference: Reyes is sitting in a slightly elevated armchair, while Jacinto is sunken in the sofa, his stature lower than hers. Reyes is framed on a level-eye close up of her face, while Jacinto is in a tilted close up, looking up. She has the money and therefore she stands taller than him.

As Marso asserts, whatever we think of marriage and the (hetero)norms attached to it, 'we have to consider that they have a special appeal to underprivileged and vulnerable people' (2010: 152). And even if Jonás is in fact marrying for love and not money, it is clear

that Reyes cannot shake the ideology of bourgeois respectability and privilege that comes attached to marriage. This theme is further developed in *Reinas* when César, chef at the wedding venue, is interviewed by a gay-themed television station about a strike at the hotel by kitchen staff over pay; César, who is also sceptical about the institution of marriage and the imminent same-sex wedding, is pointedly asked if this is a wedding and an establishment for all gay men and lesbians, or just those with money. This echoes Marso's point about the risk of joining or re-creating an institution that celebrates 'upper-class, heterosexual, and white privilege' (2010: 152).

The hetero-bourgeois ideology, on the other hand, is used to subvert the traditional patriarchal family, as well as that of the institution of marriage. The film seems to suggest that financial power is related to sexual power, as well as power within the familiar structure, which in *Reinas* is acted by the mother figure, instead of the father one (or male characters in general). It is clear in Magda's relationship with César and her own husband, for example, or Reyes and Jacinto (as well as Reyes and her son and son-in-law), while Helena mentions she earns more money than her ex-husband, Héctor. One of the film's main criticisms of traditional marriage then, comes from the patriarchal nature of the institution, which all the women in the film subvert. In criticising patriarchy, the film seems to suggest that same-sex marriage – which by its own definition theoretically overturns patriarchy – might make for a more egalitarian and progressive system.[82]

While Reyes exemplifies the hetero-bourgeois marriage discourse, Helena's lawyer represents both the process of change in the Spanish legal system, and the wider contradictions and fears expressed within the legal community at the time. At the start of the film she refuses to go to her own son's wedding: she does not share any excitement about it, resentful after the collapse of her own marriage, is unwilling to condone a same-sex union for Hugo and is anxious about the building media frenzy. Moreover, she is mistrustful, confiding her doubts about the man she married and her belief that Hugo was converted into homosexuality by his partner Narciso (which echoes the discourse of homosexuality as a disease in its fear of transmission, discussed in Chapter 3). Although Helena does end up officiating the same-sex ceremony, she does so forced by her superiors.

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[82] As the film does not show how these newly married same-sex couples evolve, the narrative finishing in the actual ceremony itself, the audience is left without knowing the fates of the newlyweds. Recent studies on same-sex relations, marriage, and parenting argue that these tend to be more egalitarian, since 'the lack of expectations about gender, and the lack of history of the institution of marriage, allow gay and lesbian couples more freedom in ordering their lives together and more chance to do so in an egalitarian manner' (Moller Okin in Case, 2010: 1202; see also Maureen Sullivan, 1996 or Auchmuty, 2004).

James R. Keller (2002) argues that, in the popular opinion, 'all gay friendly discourses must include an alternative disapproving voice' (2002: 166), as it creates narrative tensions as well as obstacles for the protagonists to overcome in their path to happiness. He makes an interesting comment in his analysis of two US movies, *The Birdcage* (dir. Mike Nichols, 1996) and *The Object of My Affection* (dir. Nicholas Hytner, 1998), arguing that, by alluding to some of the fears of the negative counter-discourse (that is, the objections of the heterosexual majority), the films are able to overcome these damaging presumptions (2002: 156- 166). By showing or addressing negative stereotypes, the films can debunk them by providing an ultimately positive opposite and an equally positive narrative outcome for the opposite. This also happens, for example, in the film *Cachorro*, which I analysed in Chapter 2 and will look at again in the next chapter, with the grandmother character being the voice of the negative counter-discourse, and Pedro having to prove his fathering capabilities because he is gay.

In the case of *Reinas*, the disapproving voices (of Reyes, Helena, Héctor and Jacinto, amongst others) are silenced by the actions of the gay characters: their unquestioned love for each other and their ability to overcome anything highlights the weaknesses in their parents' relationships. The film is inferring, as I have discussed, that modern same-sex couples are stronger and more mature than those of their older heterosexual counterparts.

5.5.3.- *Reinas*: The Importance of Being Gay?

Having analysed the comedic elements of *Reinas* and the characterisation of the film's mother and father figures, I will now focus on how the relationships of the gay characters are presented. In particular, I will analyse how same-sex affection is represented, and how the heterosexual characters mediate the audience's gaze and identification in the narrative, rather than the gay protagonists. I will then consider the climatic same-sex wedding scene and conclude with some final remarks on what we can extract from a film that, as much as it tries to be progressive, inclusive and open-minded, is only able to do so from the perspective of heterosexual familial characters.

For a film that deals with gay men getting married, and which supposedly depicts their loving relationships, *Reinas* withholds any real physical representation of same-sex love. This is limited to a few tender glances, a few kisses mediated through the gaze of heterosexual characters, and one failed attempt at sex scene. Mostly, however, there is no physical chemistry to denote that these couples are lovers rather than good friends. One scene in particular exemplifies where the film's focus truly lies. In the aforementioned dinner

scene, Reyes – mother to Rafa and figure of adoration for gardener Jacinto – makes a grandiose entrance. To the tune of Michael Bublé's rendition of *Fever*, Reyes, in a long light dress, comes down the stairs into the open-plan living room. In slow motion, the camera pans up, revealing first her legs, and upwards over her full figure. Jacinto, Rafa and Jonás have their eyes on her, unable to stop staring; Reyes / Paredes effectively commanding the gaze of the heterosexual characters, the audience, and even the gay characters. As viewers, therefore, we are being asked to identify with the heterosexual gaze, one which even momentarily conquers Rafa's and Jonás', who are entranced by Reyes entry.

Although Rafa's and Jonás' gaze could also be read as camp, as a gay gaze in awe of what is, ultimately, a diva coming down the stairs à la Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in *Sunset Boulevard* (dir. Billy Wilder, 1950) (let us not forget the stereotypical image of diva worshiping by gay men – see, Harris, 1996; Farmer, 2005 and 2007), the lingering camerawork (that starts by scanning her majestic legs, then follows her sumptuous curves and ends in her radiant face) and the music that accompanies her entrance accentuates her representation as a sexual object of desire for the viewer (and Jacinto specially, whose gaze the audience is asked to identify with) over other possible readings.

This is not the only instance of 'the gaze' falling on the female and heterosexual characters instead of the gay protagonists. The first time we see Nuria, Narcisco's highly-sexed mother, she is shown attracting the attention of a man (named in the credits only as Pasajero Tren – Train Passenger) on a journey to Madrid. The camera stays on her as she seductively crosses her legs and flicks her hair. As she 'accidentally' drops her book and bends to pick it up, there is a close-up of her cleavage, followed by a close-up of Pasajero Tren's (José Luis García Pérez) eyes gazing lustfully at it. She then stands up and goes to the bathroom, where she is promptly joined by the man. Clearly it is the women who are objectified in the film, although, paradoxically, this empowers them rather than coding them as submissive. In *Reinas*, women knowingly use their bodies to get what they want, when they want it. Indeed, they are shown to control when they are willing to accept the heterosexual man's gaze: upon bumping into the same man she met in the train in a restaurant, and him trying to take advantage of her in the toilets, Nuria punches him and breaks his nose. The moment to look at her, she seems to be affirming, is over. This emphasis on heterosexual promiscuity on the other hand – and not forgetting how promiscuity was placed outside of Rubin's (1999 [1984]) charmed circle (1999: 153; see also Sender, 2003: 359) – can also be read as a clear effort in the film to break with stereotypes associated with gay men, further blurring the divide between homo and heterosexual sexual experiences.

When the gay characters show affection, their actions tend to be mediated through the eyes – whether approving or judgemental – of their heterosexual parents. The gaze is not coded as that from one gay character to another, but from a heterosexual character presiding over the actions of two gay men. This mediates the gaze of the audience, which is asked to identify not with the same-sex couple, but with the heterosexual characters who are witness to their (limited) displays of affection. Nowhere is this clearer than in the final scene, at the wedding, as the camera lingers over the (joyful) reactions of the parents, rather than the kisses between the happy, newlywed same-sex couples.

Whenever there is a hint of same-sex desire, this occurs in front of (or at least is secretly watched by) one of the heterosexual parents. The first gay kiss in the film happens between Jonás and Rafa, but the audience actually sees it from Jacinto's point of view – through the venetian blinds in a window. Their second kiss is briefly shown in an extreme close up (see Figure 18), which is more akin to those shown between heterosexual couples in more conventional romantic comedies. This use of the close up momentarily queers the usually heteronormative camera angle in romantic comedies, but the image rapidly cuts to a medium close up of Reyes, peeking judgementally from behind a curtain (see Figure 17).

Figure 17 – Reyes looking down on the men kissing in *Reinas*

Figure 18 – Jonás and Rafa kissing in *Reinas*

A quick peck on the lips between Argentinian Óscar and boyfriend Miguel happens in front of superficially smiling mother Ofelia, who has wreaked havoc in their relationship since arriving from Argentina. It is Ofelia who interrupts the only gay sex scene in *Reinas*, which occurs after an argument between the couple over her presence in the house (Miguel feels that his mother-in-law will inhibit their privacy and freedom to have sex). Still angered by this, a surprised Óscar asks '¡ah! ¿Te apetece follar? Follemos' ('oh! You want to fuck? Let's fuck then'). Both fall to the bed passionately, shirts coming off, until they are in their underwear, kissing and finally smiling after the tension. At that moment Ofelia enters the room, and coolly apologises for disturbing them: the dog needs to be taken for a walk. In a long shot, we see both Miguel and Óscar in bed, embarrassedly trying to hide their near-naked bodies, their passion ended by the intrusion. By way of contrast, heterosexual affection is explored, openly visualised and perhaps even normalised through a number of un-mediated close ups and long shots. Several kisses between Jacinto and Reyes, for example, are shown, the camera rejoicing in a long and lingering close up of their actions. Furthermore, the audience is shown a relaxed post-coital scene between these two characters (who have obviously been able to enjoy sex uninterrupted).

The extent to which the mothers dominate the film and the (sex) lives of its gay characters – almost breaking the three couples up in the process – is all but acknowledged in another argument between Miguel and Óscar, when the former retorts: '¿Qué? ¿Vamos a entrar en una competición de madres?' ('is this a mother's competition?'). The irony here is their rivalry – not only as to whose mother is best, but whose is most interfering.

The narrative convention of mothers intruding on the wedding plans and relationships of their children is, as mentioned previously, part of the wedding comedy genre; but the extent to which they chaotically alter (deliberately or otherwise) their sons' relationships in *Reinas* is primarily driven by the sexual orientation of these sons. Reyes dislikes the idea of her son Rafa marrying a man, and even blackmails Jacinto into accepting money to send Jonás abroad; Helena and Héctor, as I have analysed, contest Hugo's sexuality; while Nuria (who is in treatment for her nymphomania) actually beds Hugo, his son-in-law. (Homo)sexual identity is questioned, challenged and threatened, but this is not treated as an identity-crisis (or a queer existentialist moment) but as the source of some offbeat, light humour.

It is positive to see that *Reinas* does not criticise or vilify gay identities or same-sex relations, and that the narrative of the film has come a long way from those discussed in Chapter 3, but we must also be aware that the film does simplify the reality of same-sex

couples in contemporary Spain. Although the happy ending scene and the failure of the heterosexual questioning and intrusion can be read as a challenging of heteronormativity and a reaffirmation of same-sex relations, the reality of same-sex weddings and family life is oversimplified and whitewashed in favour of the comedy genre's light entertainment.

Ultimately, the mothers in *Reinas* realise their mistakes (or at least the negative impact that their interference is having). This is in keeping with the resolution of many romantic comedies, in which those impeding the course of a happy resolution have a change of heart. Here, the mother characters join forces to save the day – reconnecting the distressed couples and helping organise the climactic ceremony. With Magda's kitchen staff on strike, Ofelia has the idea of getting all the mothers into the hotel kitchen to prepare the wedding banquet. In a panning shot of the kitchen, the scene shows a number of well-dressed but happy women, cooking and baking. The camera focuses on Magda and Ofelia. Magda jokingly asks '¿has visto cómo son los hombres? Da igual que sean gays. Al final siempre acabamos trabajando para ellos' ('see how men are, even if they are gay? We always end up working for them.').

In a film where women have de-patriarchised the institution of family, and which promotes same-sex marriage as a valid (albeit challenged and challenging) model of family formation, it is somewhat shocking that *Reinas* resolves its narrative by re-patriarchising the family institution. Not only are the women once again in the kitchen, fulfilling the archetypal roles of housewife, carer and family harmoniser – despite being everything but for most of the narrative – but gay men are compared to straight men. This scene points to the possibility of gay men being as gender-oppressive as their heterosexual counterparts, since women are once more, relegated to the domestic kitchen space. The comment highlights the perceived heteronormative and patriarchal qualities of marriage, which same-sex marriage might not be able to eradicate. A same-sex wedding, the scene seems to suggest, just repeats the same pattern that traditional marriages perpetuate.

Curiously, the actual same-sex ceremony, which has been the narrative thread throughout the film, perplexingly happens off-screen. Instead, the film prioritises a happy resolution of the various familial issues that have been developed throughout the film. This takes place at the same-sex stag party. It is supposed to be a gay-only event, but the narrative contrives to have all the mothers, as well as Héctor and Jacinto, there as well, providing again a focus on the wider family relationships rather than those between the gay protagonists themselves. As the stag-party organiser asks all three gay couples to come to the stage, he shouts '¡telón arriba!' ('curtains up!') and a red curtain is lifted, which provides a cut to the

wedding ceremony itself – though, yet again, the focus is not on the gay couples but a medium close-up of Helena, who is officiating at the same-sex ceremony – women in charge one last time. On the other hand, Helena officiating can be seen as a critique of the power given to men in some religious ceremonies, further subverting the heteronormative (and patriarchal) image of men officiating marriage ceremonies, and further critiquing gender issues.

The stylistic choice of lifting curtains also imbues the same-sex ceremony with a feeling of artificiality and theatricality, as if the ceremony is nothing more than an illusion or a spectacle. This is reinforced by several comments made throughout the film, where the same-sex ceremony has been referred to as a 'circus' and a 'show' by Helena, who also claims marriage in general to be a farce, 'la mayor mentira del mundo' ('the biggest lie in the world'). The curtain lifts add a double meaning to the scene. On the one hand they can be read as a fun, camp attempt to imitate the theatricality of films like *Moulin Rouge!* (dir. Baz Lurhmann, 2001). On the other, it might be hinting towards a 'theatricality' of same-sex marriage; as if this is nothing more than a simulation of heterosexual marriage, a 'show'.

As mentioned, the ceremony itself – supposedly the climax of the narrative – is not shown, preventing the audience from any gaze – direct or otherwise – on the six gay characters and their reactions. Instead, the curtain lifts on Helena, who is already concluding the (off-screen) ceremony by stating 'por la autoridad que me confiere el estado Español, y en nombre de su majestad el Rey, yo les declaro unidos en matrimonio.' ('by the authority invested on me by the Spanish State, and in the King's name, I now declare you united in marriage'). She then pauses, unclear as to the protocol of same-sex weddings (it is, after all, the first officiated, according to the film) and unsure of how to approach the traditional, 'you may kiss the bride'. Instead, she merely announces 'Pueden… ¡Pueden!' ('You can… You can!') which can also be read as an optimistic reference to the fact that gay men can finally get married.

Even when the film has problematised same-sex relationships – with the gay characters' sexuality repeatedly questioned, intruded upon and indeed de-sexualised, among other things – *Reinas* nevertheless presents a positive and encouraging image of gay relationships and gay-marriage. As Pullen (2007a) observes, placing the relationships of homosexuals within the ritualistic institutional framework of heterosexual marriage 'is both powerful and provocative' (2007a: 191). By positioning same-sex couples engaging with institutional ideals, rather than rejecting them, it therefore presents the relationship aspirations of gay men as contiguous to heterosexuals, as able to connect to traditional ritual,

make similar vows and show similar dedication. Although this view can be challenged by those who understand that same-sex partners should not participate in an institution which promotes heteronormativity and patriarchal structures – and although the film certainly does this – I would contend for the above reasons that the representation of same-sex marriage in *Reinas* does help 'normalise' same-sex relationships and desires (even when the audience identifies with the heterosexual characters). Peel and Harding (2004) reach a similar conclusion in their discussion of the romantic discourse and same-sex relationships: namely, that it makes same-sex partnerships more visible within heterosexist society (2004: 592). *Reinas*, after all, does not wish to break with the institution of marriage, but instead embrace sexual minorities into the family concept.

5.6.- Conclusion

It is beyond possible doubt that the films I have analysed in this chapter reflect, as Richmond Ellis (2010) summarises 'the real social triumph that the legalization of same sex marriage makes possible' (2010: 68). As part of an increasing cultural recognition of same-sex couples, films of the last decade are mirroring and interrogating this cultural shift. These films critique and question established conventions and ideologies, while at the same time they help naturalise configurations of stability for adult gay masculinity (Reeser, 2008: 37), representing coupledom as a normalising and potentially available option of adult homo-domesticity. In saying that, I have demonstrated throughout the analysis of *Reinas* the film reduces same-sex life to a similar formula to that of numerous heterosexual mainstream narratives; mainly that marriage is the goal for everyone, and that the nuclear family formation is still the best option. Sexualities and individuals outside of the marriage institution, or that are contrary in their beliefs to this institution, are seen as problematic. This is clearly the case of Flavio in *Tú eliges* who, by rejecting same-sex marriage, it is implied is shunned by the gay community in the last frames of the film.

Significantly, *Reinas* does subvert traditional romantic comedy narratives, as well as social discourses on the family and family relations. The film reinforces that gay couples are part of the family institution, and that gay men are able to, from within the institution, navigate the same situations and problems. That is, so long as they are inside Rubin's inner circle; so long as they are domesticated into the monogamous, reproductive family model. The image that *Sobreviviré* or *Reinas* promote is important, and although it is significant that these gay characters are presented in a 'rosy and often cloying portrayal of Spanish life' (Richmond Ellis, 2010: 77) instead of the tragic gay male character I studied in Chapters 3

and 4, they still ignore the more subtle forms of discrimination against gay men and lesbians that continue nowadays. Richmond Ellis argues that *Reinas* (and in fact, *Fuera de carta*, which I will analyse in the next chapter) is 'mildly transgressive,' its alignment with contemporary social norms reflecting how current Spanish cinema is not only echoing today's society but also attempting to control difficult social issues (2010: 76). *Reinas* does present a *queering* of the institution of marriage by acknowledging same-sex couples as part of this institution, but it does also present same-sex marriage from a heteronormative perspective. If, as Doty (1993) argues, queer is an attribute that is related to any expression that can be marked as 'contra-, non-, or anti-straight' (1993: xv), then *Reinas* cannot be said to *queer* marriage, since same-sex couples are not in opposition to heterosexual ones, but alongside them. In a sense, in the film *Reinas* the institution of marriage is not challenged (nor is the centrality of the family in today's society), but the heteronormativity of the institution of marriage is put into question.

Paradoxically, a more queer understanding of modern relations and family formations appears briefly in a conversation between Álex (Leonardo Sbaraglia) and Roberto (Joaquín Climent) in *Ocultos / The Hidden* (dir. Antonio Hernández, 2005), a film in which there are no gay characters. In *Ocultos*, which was released the same year as *Reinas*, Álex and Roberto, two heterosexual men, are having lunch in a restaurant. Upon seeing a slightly flustered couple with their children, Álex mentions that he is surprised that marriage is still the most sought after option for couples everywhere, and then the conversation proceeds as follows:

> *Roberto: ¿Por qué te sorprende que la gente quiera… no sé…?*
> *Álex: ¿Formar una familia?*
> *Roberto: Sí.*
> *Álex: ¿Comprometerse?*
> *Roberto: Sí… también.*
> *Álex: ¿Ser fieles?*
> *Roberto: Exacto.*
> *Álex: ¿Ser todos muy contentos y felices? Porque no funciona, Roberto,*
> *   ¿no lo ves?*
> *Roberto: ¿Qué dices? Si siempre ha funcionado.*
> *Álex: No, no ha funcionado nunca y ahora menos. Yo estoy seguro que*
> *   en el futuro las relaciones van a ser de otra manera.*
>
> *Roberto: Why are you surprised at people… I don't know…*
> *Álex: Wanting to build a family?*

Roberto: Yes
Álex: Get engaged?
Roberto: Yes… that too.
Álex: Be faithful?
Roberto: Exactly
Álex: Everyone joyful and happy? Because it doesn't work, Roberto. Can't you see?
Roberto: What are you taking about? It has always worked
Álex: No, it has never worked, and now even less. I am sure that, in the future, relationships are going to be different.

Peter Tatchell (1996) in his paper on the evolution of the heterosexual / homosexual division discusses how sexual categorisations will disappear in the future, creating a society with sexual and sexual identity freedom. This is due, Tatchell claims, to the 'intrinsic human capability and potentiality for greater sexual diversity' (1996: 40), and societies' values and norms, which change (and have changed) over time. As he claims, what makes 'this sexual transformation a possibility is the fact that sexuality is like any other cultural artefact' which is 'influenced by social and personal judgments' and which 'can and does change from era to era' (1996: 36). Álex's words in *Ocultos* point towards this understanding of sexuality and social relations; a future where sexual classification will not be important, and where the values placed upon the family ideology differ from those that exist nowadays. To do this, Tatchell (1996) claims that, in order to move towards that future beyond sexual classification, there is a need first to secure 'the social validation of same-sex love' since it is 'impossible to create a society where the differences between straight and gay no longer matter' (1996: 45) so long as one sexuality has been deemed more valid than the other (as I examined in Chapter 3). Until then, films like *Reinas*, *Sobreviviré* and *Fuera de carta* (which I will analyse in Chapter 6), help to normalise same-sex desire, inscribe same-sex relationships within the family concept, and blur the existing hetero / homo divide.

CHAPTER 6:
All About my Father: Same-Sex Parenting in *Fuera de carta*

> - Qu'est-ce tu veux de plus?
> - Je veux etre papa totu simplement…
> - Putain, Manu! On est pédés!
> - Alors quoi? Ça nous empêche d'être parents?! C'est ça?
> - Oui, exactement.
> - Pour quoi?
> - Parce que un home et un home ça fait pas un enfant,
> ça forment pas une famille. C'est contrenature.
> *Comme Les Autres*
> (dir. Vincent Garenq, 2008)[83]

For many men, becoming a father is part of their 'gender project' (Connell, 1995: 72), an important step closely related to their masculine identity. As Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine (2005) discuss, fatherhood is taken as proof of heterosexuality. It is a powerful symbol 'reinforced through popular culture in diverse ways' which contributes to hegemonic ideals of masculinity (2005: 209).

At the start of *Spinnin'* (dir. Eusebio Pastrana, 2007), for example, Gárate (Alejandro Tous), a gay man in a long-term relationship with Omar (Olav Fernández), is asked by his own father if having children would not turn him heterosexual. Although the father seems to accept his son's homosexuality, he wishes Gárate would attempt to have a child, in order to 'turn' heterosexual. Fatherhood and homosexuality are socially seen as incongruent, and the heterocentric view of the family still prevails.

Nevertheless, the definition of fatherhood, as well as the idyll of a father, is changing. This is due, largely, to the diversification and recognition of a wider range of family types than the heterosexual nuclear family. As I have pointed out in the introduction to section three, the social construction and definition of family is ever changing, and now includes, amongst others 'intentionally childless families, families of separated parents, single-parent families, step-families, blended-families, families of same-sex parents' (Short, Riggs, Perlesz, Brown, and Kane, 2007: 4). One of the reasons for this diversification is the emergence of same-sex parenting.

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[83] 'What more do you want?' 'I just want to be a dad' 'Fuck, Manu. We are gay!' 'So we can't be parents?' 'Yes, exactly' 'Why not?' 'Two men can't have a baby, they don't constitute a family. It's not natural!'

The academic and social discussions on same-sex parenting divides the topic into two groups. Firstly, those who have children within a heterosexual relationship, and afterward identify as gay or lesbian. According to Adam L. Benson, Louise B. Silverstein, and Carl F. Auerbach (2005), this original body of research had two major themes; on the one hand, it explored how gay fathers integrated their gay identity after their fathering identity had already been established. At the same time, this research served to dispel negative stereotypes about gay men as fathers (2005: 2). The second group are those children born directly into a same-sex family, whose parents identify from the start as gay or lesbian, which is quite a recent development. As Stephanie Jill Schacher, Carl F. Auerbach, and Louise Bordeaux Silverstein (2005) state, while gay men have always fathered children through heterosexual marriages, 'it is only recent that openly gay men have chosen to become fathers through means other than a traditional heterosexual union' (2005: 32). This is due, in part, to the fact that these 'other means' have not been available until recently as they are the result of technological progress, or law changes.

This group of gay fathers has been described as the 'new' gay fathers (2005: 32), to differentiate them from those gay parents who had children in the context of a heterosexual marriage and subsequently established a gay identity. These fathers do not face the task of coming out or attempting to integrate their gay identity into their pre-existing self-image as a father, but instead chose to be fathers after disclosing their sexual identity (and many of them, within the context of a committed same-sex relationship). These gay parents are expanding the definition of fatherhood. As Gregory Wells (2011) examines in his study of same-sex male couples creating families through adoption, these gay fathers no longer define their father-identity by their role as the breadwinner; they also do it 'by their role as caregivers to a child' (2011: 176), that is, the role of father is not only that of provider but also of nurturer.

In this chapter, I will analyse *Fuera de carta / Chef's Special* (dir. Nacho G. Velilla, 2008), in which the gay protagonist, Maxi (Javier Cámara), has two children from a previous, heterosexual marriage. I will study how Maxi is able to re-connect with his children after the death of their mother (his ex-wife), and how he is able to become a better father by accepting and openly living his gay identity. Beforehand, I will offer an overview of same-sex parenting in Spain and discuss how it is viewed in the film *Cachorro /Bear Cub* (dir. Miguel Albaladejo, 2004), which was released before the passing of the same-sex marriage law in 2005. I will follow this with a discussion of paternal identity and its connection to masculinity, gay male identity, and marriage. I will then apply the concepts examined and

analyse the evolution of Maxi in *Fuera de carta* from that of a work-obsessed, self-isolating and somewhat selfish individual to a more rounded and caring father figure and family man.

6.1.- Same-Sex Parenting in Spain

There is an anecdote in the book *Identidad y Diferencia* by Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés (2000 [1997]) which I believe summarises the issue of same-sex parenting in Spain. Aliaga and Cortés discuss how in 1996, the media highlighted the fact that Iglesias 'tiene dos hijos' ('has two children') (2000: 72) as a way of clarifying that actor Carlos Iglesias – who had played the gay character Pepelu in the late night show *Esta noche cruzamos el Mississippi / Tonight we Cross the Mississippi* (1995-1997) - was not actually gay. In the late 1990s, the notion of gay men and lesbians being parents seemed incongruous and, as seen in the aforementioned example in *Spinnin'*, children were generally taken as proof of someone's heterosexuality.

The corresponding scarcity of information regarding same-sex families, and same-sex parenting in particular, is noted by several studies which essentially highlight the fact that, even by the late 2000s, same-sex families are still a great unknown both socially and in academia in Spain (González and Sánchez, 2003: 208; Ocón Domingo, 2006: 173-174; González and López, 2005; 2; Ramirez, Moliner, and Vicent, 2011: 4). Many studies also stress not only this dearth of empirical work, but also the inconclusiveness of the findings due to the overall lack of data (López, 2004: 351-360; González, 2004: 361-373; de Lucas, de Miguel, Montserrat, Muñoz, de Prado, Rallo, and Valvarce, 2004: 345-350). As María del Mar González and María Ángeles Sánchez (2003) conclude, 'no es extraño que en nuestra sociedad se tengan muchas más preguntas que respuestas con respecto a estas familias' ('it is not surprising that there are more questions than answers in our society in regards to these families') – given that same-sex families do not appear in official statistics by the I.N.E. (Instituto Nacional de Estadística – National Institute of Statistics), nor in recent sociological, psychological and / or paediatric studies; not to mention the lack of any clear agreement on the terminology used to describe same-sex parents in Spain (2003: 208).

María Dolores Frías Navarro, Juan Pascual Llobell, Héctor Monterde i Bort, and Silvia Montejano Sánchez (2006) argue that there exists a greater social acceptance of gay and lesbian couples and same-sex families (2006: 2), perhaps due to the passing of national legislation allowing gay marriage, which I discussed in Chapter 5. This legislation also enabled same-sex partners to adopt, something which had previously only been possible in

the Navarra region, following changes to the law in June 2000 (Pastor, 2000: 40).[84] Nevertheless, same-sex adoption is relatively new in Spain at a national level and it remains a 'compleja y delicada materia' ('complex and sensitive issue') (Ocón Domingo, 2002: 93) with relatively few studies conducted due to lack of evidence and data from which to extract any meaningful conclusions (Ocón Domingo, 2006: 173-174).

Despite this, José Ignacio Pichardo Galán (2011) makes the important point that a lack of studies on same-sex formations do not, of course, mean that these types of families did not exist previously, even before the 2005 law change (2011: 382). María del Mar González and Francisca López (2005) also refer to the reality of an indefinite number of Spanish same-sex families who had children from previous heterosexual marriages, or lesbian couples who had their children through in-vitro pregnancies (particularly after the 1988 law allowing single mothers to get pregnant) (2005: 1). What the 2005 law did was allow for two people of the same sex to be formally recognised as the legal parents of the same child, whether through adoption, in-vitro pregnancy, or the adoption of a partner's biological child. It is worth mentioning that currently in Spain there appears to be a bigger number of lesbian same-sex families than gay male ones. This is due, mainly, to the long process that it takes to adopt in Spain (around four to six years), and how lesbian couples have generally chosen the in vitro option, instead of adoption, to speed up the process of having a child (Barrios Flórez, 2012: 20; see also 2012: 20-23 for the legal changes in Spain in regards to the adoption process).

6.2.- Same-Sex Parenting in Spain: The Case of *Cachorro*

The film *Cachorro*, which I analysed in Chapter 2 in relation to the queering of protagonist Pedro's (José Luís García Pérez) flat, presents a perfect example of this context. Not only does the character of Doña Teresa (Empar Ferrer) embody this wider social ignorance, it also exemplifies the divide between traditional and modern understandings of the concepts of parenting and same sex families – not to mention the trepidation with which same-sex parenting issues are represented on screen at a time when same-sex marriage was not legally recognised.

In the director's notes in the *Cachorro* DVD, Miguel Albaladejo discusses how the film departs from portrayals of gay men in 'contemporary gay cinema' which are 'bent on satisfying a few comfortable stereotypes.' In the film, Albaladejo argues, no one has 'any

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[84] The first gay couple to adopt in Spain was just a year after the same-sex marriage law came into place, in October 2006 (Europa Press, 2006).

particular difficulty in assuming and accepting Pedro's sexual orientation […] and AIDS is there, but it is not depicted as that awful scourge.' I would agree with Albaladejo that the film does not generally problematise Pedro's sexuality or HIV status, and that in fact the film is (as per my analysis of the film in Chapter 2) very progressive and taboo-breaking in its portrayal of gay sexuality and the gay community. As Santiago Fouz-Hernández (2008) mentions, however, *Cachorro* is still 'unable to escape some of the tropes that have characterized much gay representation on screen to date (emphasis on sexual activity, health narratives and so on)' (2008: 53). Indeed, it is Pedro's health (AIDS in particular) and sexual orientation which Doña Teresa uses against Pedro in her fight for legal guardianship of Bernardo (David Castillo), her grandson / Pedro's nephew.

From the beginning of the film, *Cachorro* presents same-sex relationships within the family institution. As discussed in Chapter 2, the initial sex scene with which the film opens not only serves to queer Pedro's home, but it visually and thematically places same-sex sexuality within the confines of the family institution. As the camera pans over a couple of family portraits, the image of the two men having sex is clearly reflected in the glass of one picture frame, superimposing their image over that of the family. As I discussed, and not forgetting Gill Valentine's (1993: 397) analysis of the home's spatial organisation as a way of reinforcing the nuclear family's own structure, Pedro's non-normative sexual act also occurs in the master bedroom, thus queering the heteronormative space of the house while also re-inscribing same-sex relationships within the family, positioning them at the top of the family structure. Within the first sequences, then, *Cachorro* confidently establishes gay men and (homo)sexualities within the family structure (visually and symbolically), rejecting the idea that family and homosexuality are concepts which cannot share the same space.

Cachorro also presents some interesting questions around both gay relationships and gay families through dialogue, plot, and visual technique. While dropping Bernardo off, Pedro's sister Violeta (Elvira Lindo), asks Pedro why he never visits them in the country. He replies that there is nothing outside the city that could interest him, which highlights the urban gentrification of / within the neighbourhood of Chueca (which I analysed in Chapter 1) and the gay community more widely. Violeta argues that there are gay men in her village, specifically a gay couple, to which Pedro – framed in a medium shot behind her, arms crossed defensively – retorts: '¿Ves? Una pareja. A ver que pinto yo ahí' ('You see? A couple. Where does that leave me?'). Throughout the narrative, Pedro sees himself as being outwith the 'constraints' of a monogamous relationship (he also rejects Manuel's (Arno Chevrier) offer of a stable relationship), but this carries no criticism of gay men's ability to

form long-lasting monogamous relationships, nor any suggestion that this is detrimental to his role as a father figure to Bernardo. Instead it points towards an opening up of the family concept, a possible option within the non-traditional family formation they embody. In a later scene for example, when Pedro and his lover, Manuel, take Bernardo to the fun fair, the scenes are shown as if shot with a grainy hand-held camcorder, accentuating the family on holidays feeling of the images.

The film depicts how Pedro learns to cohabit with Bernardo, accepting both his own gay identity and his father-like role, even when he needs to make changes to his private space to accommodate his nephew. Although Pedro is initially shown as being displaced in his own domestic space by Bernardo, throughout the film he learns to embrace his parenting role without denying his homosexuality. In fact, the opposite occurs: Pedro learns how to be a good surrogate father by sharing aspects of his life in the gay community with his nephew, as well as openly discussing the child's concerns and questions about Pedro's sexuality. Pedro's evolution as a character can also be seen in his visual presentation: as the film progresses, and he is able to regain control over his personal space, Pedro is no longer framed behind different objects or marginalised in the screen by other characters like Violeta and Bernardo. As the relationship between Bernardo and Pedro develops, Bernardo starts to act and look more like his uncle, the hair cutting scene mentioned in Chapter 2 being a key example (see Figure 19).

Figure 19 – Pedro and Bernardo in *Cachorro*

As mentioned in Chapter 5, James R. Keller (2002) argues that all gay-friendly discourses tend to include an alternative disapproving voice which the protagonists must overcome in their path to happiness (2002: 166). Alluding to some of the fears of the negative

counter-discourse, the films are then able to overcome the damaging presumptions (2002: 156- 166). By showing or addressing negative stereotypes, the films can debunk them by providing a positive narrative outcome for the opposite. In this case, Doña Teresa represents the traditional view on parenting, disagreeing that Pedro can be a positive role model for Bernardo. By threatening to reveal both his HIV status and his sexual activities, she represents two of the biggest fears in contemporary Spanish society with regards to same-sex parenting: that of the discourse of homosexuality as a disease (and fear of contagion) I explored in Chapter 3, and the fear of over-sexualisation within the gay community, which she sees as counterproductive for the positive upbringing of her grandson Bernardo.

Although Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito (2007) view the conclusion of the film as pointing towards a more progressive representation of homosexuality on screen (2007: 129), I would argue that this 'happy ending' is slightly unsatisfactory in terms of what the film has to say about same-sex parenting. Although *Cachorro* positively explores how Pedro is able to adapt to his parenting role without the need to reject his active (homo)sexual identity, both he and Bernardo must wait until Doña Teresa dies to be reunited. This suggests the need for traditional views and concepts of family to move on – or be erased, as older generations pass away – in order for newer, alternative family models to be accepted and become viable. As I will later explore, this is something that *Fuera de carta* rejects, in its contrasting view of same-sex parenting as an equally viable and no less desirable alternative to traditional models or concepts of parenting and family. Nevertheless, *Cachorro* does progressively reinforce that a father and gay identities are compatible, and that one identity (homosexuality) is not contrary to the other (parenting). Interestingly, the film also points to same-sex parenting as not needing to occur within a monogamous relationship, with the character of Pedro shown to be resolute in his preference for being single and promiscuous rather than monogamous. Pedro's decision is not criticised, in contrast to Flavio's choice of rejecting the institution of marriage in *Tú eliges / Your Choice* (dir. Antonia San Juan, 2009) which I explored in Chapter 5.

In the next sections I will study the relationship between male, father, and gay identities and then analyse *Fuera de carta*, the first film produced / released in Spain after the introduction of legislation recognising same-sex marriage and adoption to tackle the issue of same-sex parenting. *Fuera de carta*, contrary to *Cachorro*, does inscribe same-sex parenting within the traditionally monogamous understandings of the family concept.

6.3.- Fatherhood: Man Identity and Father Identity

Kerry Daly (1993) in her study on reshaping the father-model, analyses the different theoretical approaches that have dominated the research on fatherhood identities. Becoming a father, she argues, involves the 'internalization of a set of role prescriptions and requirements for what a father should be' (1993: 512). These prescriptions are rooted in heteronormative cultural values and stereotypes which have reinforced the role of breadwinner within the family formation (1993: 512).

Fatherhood has been conceptualised as a progressive transition in the lives of those men that decide to become a parent; an integration of the 'father-identity' with an 'already-established aspect of one's self-concept' (Cowan, 1988: 24). The experiential time of becoming a father, Gregory Wells (2005) argues, occurs at a different time to the actual birth of the child, unlike that of motherhood. Arguably, motherhood does not start at birth either, but before birth, during the pregnancy months, as the mother is able to create a bond with the fetus.

For many men, being a father means being a good material provider for the children (2005: 6). As Brent C. Miller and Donna L. Sollie (1980) argue, there is a point in time when 'parental roles are abruptly acquired', that is, when the baby is born. Here, Miller and Sollie are differentiating between the role of father (which is acquired as the baby is born), and the skills, behaviours and attitudes of parenting, which, as they mention, is a more 'gradual transition into the skills and routines of parenting' (1980: 459).

As aforementioned, until recently, fatherhood had been defined by the roles of breadwinner and disciplinarian; but the social construct has been evolving to include those roles of nurturer and caretaker (Schacher, Auerbach and Silverstein, 2005: 32). According to the data gathered by Michael E. Lamb, Joseph H. Pleck, Eric L. Charnov and James A. Levine (1987), the level of paternal involvement in the caretaking of the father's offspring is influenced by four factors (1987: 131-134).

(1) The motivation factor relates to the level of day-to-day personal organisation of work and family time, and which one they rather spend more time doing (1987: 131).

(2) Skills: even when they want to be involved, their involvement might be hampered by a perceived or real lack of skills (1987: 132).

(3) Support, from family, friends and work colleagues, since 'high paternal involvement is unlikely to occur and be maintained unless significant others […] approve of this behavior' (1987: 132-133).

(4) Institutional Factors: men's employers may (consciously or not) prevent parents from being as involved in the children's care as they would like to be (1987: 133). Financial factors, as well as the economic reality of the country in which the couple live (which might mean that, financially, it makes more sense for the couple if the father focuses on work rather than family time), would also come under the 'Institutional Factors' group.

Wells (2005) argues that there is little (or no) evidence to suggest that one sex is more nurturing that the other (2005: 11), but these parenting roles tend to follow a heteronormative ideology.

Stuart C. Aitken (2005) in his article on the spaces of fathering highlights that studies on fathering suffer from a presumption of a false parallelism between mothers and fathers (2005: 223). This position, he claims, upholds fatherhood ideology that defines a father's relationship and involvement with his children as a form of co-parenting independent from (and in opposition to) that of mothering (2005: 223). In this respect, Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine's (1987) four factors of paternal involvement are gender-biased, as they assume that fatherhood is secondary to motherhood. The role of father is first and foremost as a breadwinner, since it is presupposed that the nurturer will be the mother. The second of the four factors, for example, the fact that fathers may have hampered or a lack of skills, is assumed to be in contrast to those of the mother, whose skills are not questioned. And the Institutional Factors assume that men will be the ones in employment, while women will not be hampered by employers, since they will have no other job but that of mother and housewife.

Modern understandings of fathering, then, are evolving from those that Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1987) discuss. The definition of fatherhood as the role of breadwinner and disciplinarian is now changing. As Aitken (2005) contends a central problem of contemporary work 'should be to highlight how much of the institution of fatherhood hinges on an "idea" that does not embrace the "fact" of fathering' (2005: 223).

6.4.- Fatherhood: Gay Identity and Father Identity

With respect to gay men and their father-identity, Charles F. Brinamen and Valory Mitchell (2008) argue that in choosing fatherhood, gay men 'must reconcile and integrate the identities of father and of gay man' (2008: 522). These two identities have been held as dichotomous and contradictory (similar to those of family and homosexuality previously discussed), by both parts of the gay culture (who may understand parenting as an implied connection to

heterosexuality), and the heterosexual majority (2008: 522; also Wells, 2011: 160-161; Schacher, Auerbach, and Silverstein, 2005: 42-44).

Brinamen and Mitchell proposed a six stage model of identity evolution. The six stages develop from a coming out experience that assumes being gay means not parenting, through a confidence and recognition of the gay self and the possibilities of constructing a family, to finally an integration of the gay and father components of identity (2008: 529-536). As Wells (2005) highlights, while same-sex parenting may share many experiences with heterosexual adoptive families, gay fathers also face challenges specifically related to their unique family formation (2005: 157), in relation, primarily, to their (seemingly distinct, but interrelated) identities of male, father, and gay.

As gay, homosexual men face the challenge of developing a healthy self-image, in spite of the negative messages they receive from a variety of sources (Wells, 2011: 171). Hetero and gay men somehow internalise the ideals of what it means to be a man, that has 'some degree of stoicism and emotional detachment' (2011: 172), while at the same time they are expected to be strong and career driven. Finally, there are certain socially constructed beliefs about what it means to be a father. In western societies, as already mentioned, fatherhood has meant taking a secondary role in child rearing. The role of father is to be the provider of financial stability for the family (2011: 172).

Earlier research centred on men who were fathers in a heterosexual relationship before acknowledging their gay identity. As mentioned, these studies looked, primarily at how identity integration (that is, how to integrate a gay identity to their father identity) was a source of challenge and difficulty. For the new generations of gay fathers, identity integration seems not to be a 'significant developmental task' (Wells, 2011: 172). Sexual identity for this group of men is something which they came to terms with in their adolescence, spending many years as openly gay men prior to becoming fathers. Gay men who choose to parent as primary caregivers, Brinamen and Mitchell (2008) discuss, violate a widely held cultural belief, 'that it is mothers who raise children' (2008: 524). While gay men may also require adjustment to assume the socially assumed 'mothering role', they are choosing it rather than 'accommodating to unforeseen circumstances' (like widows or divorced heterosexual men) (2008: 524). By eschewing traditional gender roles, these gay men who decide to parent are 'expanding the concept of father and caregiver' (Wells, 2011: 172; see also, Benson, Silverstein and Auerbach, 2005: 3; Schacher, Auerbach, and Silverstein, 2005: 32-34).

As Schacher, Auerbach, and Silverstein (2005) argue, masculinity, according to profeminist men's studies, is evolving from a more traditional stance 'that emphasized

achievement, aggression, and restricted emotionality' to a more progressive one, 'that advocates a balance between work and family roles, collaboration and power-sharing, and emotional responsiveness' (2005: 42). In the case study, I will analyse the fathering role of Maxi, questioning how his different identities (male, gay, and father) are not only able to co-exist but how through, their interconnection, are able to create a bond between Maxi and his children.

In the next section I will discuss how same-sex fatherhood and marriage, examining how the institution of marriage, which I defined in Chapter 5, intersects with the father ideology.

6.5.- Marriage and Fatherhood

In his study on the meaning of marriage and homosexuality Patrick Paul Garlinger (2004) emphasises that one of the most prevalent arguments against same-sex marriage 'turns on the biological imperative of procreation' (2004: 57). This argument centres on the idea that marriage exists to support child bearing and raising of families. For example, in her article on modern families, academic and columnist Breda O'Brien (2008) defends the vision of marriage as fundamentally child-centred (2008: 23). Some argue that marriage should be shifting from a 'fundamentally child-centred institution' to the expression of 'an intimate, committed loving relationship' (2008: 24). O'Brien disagrees, arguing that marriage is tightly regulated not only because stable marriages lead to a stable society, but because of its child-rearing qualities. If this was not the case, then children would be reduced to 'an incidental of marriage, rather than one of the most fundamental reasons why the institution exists' (2008: 27). For the State, promoting marriage signifies promoting the continuation of the State through child-rearing. O'Brien states that society discriminates constantly 'in the interest of the common good' (2008: 25), and therefore marriage should only be between a man and a woman, in order to maintain its procreation argument.

Garlinger (2004) is able to dismiss those theorists (like O'Brien) who defend the procreation argument, by stating that this type of claim overlooks the fact that even if heterosexuals are capable of reproduction through procreative sex, 'heterosexual identity does not evaporate in the absence of procreation' (2004: 57). Those married couples who do not reproduce are not any less heterosexual for it, since procreation and child rearing are not tied in any essential way to sexual orientation. Therefore, Garlinger argues that if it were true that marriage is heterosexual, and procreation is not 'fundamental to the status of being

heterosexual', then procreation cannot be 'the fundamental rationale for exclusively heterosexual marriage' (2004: 58).

While O'Brien (2008) seems to be tapping into the more traditional view of family and marriage, Garlinger (2004) discusses a more modern understanding of both institutions. This dichotomy is similar to those I studied in the fifth chapter, with the differing views on the definitions of marriage. O'Brien and Garlinger are extending those discussions on the institution of marriage to include ideas on fatherhood, procreation, and child-rearing. As Raquel Platero (2007a) summarises, it seems that the main debate on same-sex marriage tends to be centred on the most conservative and 'family-orientated' terms. The discussions have shifted from the 'derecho individual del ciudadano y ciudadana a formar una pareja' ('individual right of the citizen to form a couple'), and for this union to be recognised by the State, to an interest on the marital union as capable of becoming 'buenos progenitores' ('good parents') (2007: 100).

Anna Gavanas (2002) in her article on the centrality of marriage, work, and male sexuality in the construction of fatherhood argues that, no matter what the view on marriage is (and here she is discussing heterosexual marriage and not same-sex marriage, like O'Brien or Garlinger), there are a number of commonalities when it comes to the topic of marriage which relate to the importance of procreation. Firstly, as I explained in the introduction to this section on same-sex families, marriage carries a view of the family as fundamental for society. Secondly, there is a concern for child well-being: marriage being the means to create a family, and family being the institution which cares for the children's welfare. Furthermore, there is an attribution of importance to the role of the father, a role which is, currently, in a constant state of redefinition from primarily a financial provider, disciplinarian, and breadwinner role to include a notion of an emotionally involved, nurturing mentor (Gavanas, 2002: 222). The construction of fatherhood, Gavanas argues, occurs within shifting economic, legal, moral, and social conditions (2002: 222). Nicholas W. Townsend (2002) identifies four elements within the modern construction of fatherhood: 'emotional closeness, provision, protection, and endowment' (2002: 53). Of the four elements, Townsend specifies that the identification of fatherhood and providing is crucial, 'reflecting the central place of employment in men's sense of self-worth' (2002: 53).

Townsend (2002) observes that since holding a job and earning a living are so important to men's identity (2002: 53), the other elements can sometimes seem secondary, even though these clearly merge and overlap and none of the elements are able to be achieved in isolation. Protection and endowment, for example, are highly dependent on being a good

provider (2002: 53). In the next section I will start by considering the relationship between Maxi and his son Edu (Junio Valverde), questioning the 'predator' stereotype. I will also analyse how Maxi's man, gay, and father identities co-exist, and how the role of father evolves from that of provider to that of nurturer. I will study how this evolution occurs as he starts a loving and sexual relationship with his new neighbour, Horacio (Benjamín Vicuña). Through an examination of their relationship, as well as their relationship with Maxi's children, I will also study how Maxi navigates his old hetero-image as a married man and father, to a fully-fledged gay and father identity, thanks to, not only his interactions with his own children, but his own acceptance as a gay man capable of falling in love with another gay man.

6.6.- *Fuera de carta*

Maxi is a chef in a top hyped restaurant in Chueca, and his biggest achievement would be getting the restaurant rated by the Michelin guide. An openly gay man, Maxi has to take charge of his children, Edu and Alba (Alejandra Lorenzo), whom he has not seen in over seven years, and born from a previous heterosexual marriage to Marta (Cristina Marcos), who has recently passed away. At the same time, he falls in love, and starts a relationship with his closeted neighbour, Horacio, a retired famous Argentinian footballer, who now has a football-specific television programme.

6.6.1.- *Fuera de carta*: Exposing The Fear of the Gay Father Figure

One of the main themes that seems to constantly re-emerge throughout the film, in regards to Maxi's relationship with his son Edu, is that of the unfounded stereotype and belief that gay men will sexually abuse their own offspring. Ruthann Robson (2001) in her study on sexual minority rights posits that much of the rhetoric against minority sexualities has drawn from themes of disease and seduction (as I explored in the third chapter), portraying gay men and lesbians as predators who target children (2001: 915). Robson maintains that the conservative's view on same-sex parenting construes the children in these relationships as victims in need of rescue (2001: 916). These children, she argues, are presumably viewed as akin to 'abused children who will suffer more from contact with their parents than from a deprivation of them' (2001: 917). Furthermore, according to those against same-sex parenting, exposure to homosexuality will breed homosexuality (2001: 924).

Phillip Duffey (2007) discusses a similar concern critics of same-sex parenting have; whether a child 'being exposed to "homosexuality" would themselves become homosexual'

(2007: 92). Duffey contends that such an assertion suggests that children in same-sex families would themselves identify as same-sex attracted, due to what is presumed to be the 'negative outcomes of a child's "inability" to develop "gender appropriate" behaviours', something which is purported to be 'an outcome of being raised without opposite-sex role models' (2007: 92). As both Duffey (2007: 92) and Robson (2001: 924) agree, this type of criticism is a clear assertion that being gay or lesbian is in itself undesirable, since the idea of a child identifying as gay or lesbian 'is only problematic if identifying as same-sex attracted is itself seen as inherently bad' (Duffey, 2007: 92), which pathologises, once again, same-sex desire. Furthermore, empirical studies have proven that children of gay parents are not more likely to be gay themselves, and there are no relevant differences in outcomes between children raised by heterosexual versus gay and lesbian parents (see Allen and Burrell, 1996: 19; Frías Navarro, Pascual Llobell, and Monterde i Bort, 2003: 3-4; Tasker, 2005: 238; Herek, 2006: 613; or Redding, 2008: 109-111).

James R. Keller (2002) also discusses how this wrongful assumption about the gay community argues that gay parents are more likely to molest their children than heterosexual parents (2002: 153). In his analysis of *The Birdcage* (dir. Mike Nichols, 1996) Keller argues that the film reveals the 'necessary connection between the positive gay friendly discourse and the objections of the heterosexual majority' (2002: 156). Something similar occurs in *Fuera de carta*. In order to reveal that Maxi is a good father, there are allusions to the fears of the counter-discourse which constructs gay men as threats to (their own) children. Thus, Maxi has to navigate the most damaging presumptions about gay parenting, in order to negate them, and emerge as a loving father. Maxi's relationship with his son is constantly challenged, amongst others by his best friend, Alex (Lola Dueñas) and his own mother, Celia (Chus Lampreave). At different points throughout the film, they highlight the fear that Maxi might be sleeping with his own son. In the film, by making reference to the stigma, and then denying the existence of any sexual possibility between Maxi and Edu, Maxi is able to demonstrate his capacity as a good father (regardless of his sexual orientation).

The first time Alex meets Maxi's children, she finds Maxi and Edu sleeping in the same bed, in a visual representation of the fear of gay men bedding their own offspring.[85] The scene opens with Alex getting up from the sofa where she has spent the night passed out, and opening the doors to Maxi's bedroom. Her reaction is similar to that of a wife who discovers her husband in bed with another woman, framed by a close up of her surprised and angry

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[85] See, for example, Jeremy Irons' recent comments on how same-sex marriage could lead to parents marrying their own sons (Ward (2013) and Battersby (2013)).

face. The camera then shifts to Alex's point of view, revealing Maxi in bed with a sleeping Edu, with Alex exclaiming '¡pero si podría ser tu hijo!' ('it could be your son!'). Although Alex and Maxi have been friends for over seven years (since he moved to Madrid), she did not know he had had two children from a previous heterosexual relationship.

Celia, Maxi's mother, also embodies the counter-discourse, twice questioning the relationship between a gay father and his straight son. Upon meeting Edu, she says 'Yo comprendo que es vuestro padre. Pero, oye… no te tocaría por las noches, ¿verdad?' ('I understand he is your father. But, listen… he did not molest you, did he?'). By making explicit the unfounded social fear that a gay father would molest his own male son, the film is able to refute the stigma of gay parenting, constantly negating the possibility by means of Edu dismissing the claims, or Maxi himself.

Interestingly, in the film it appears to be women who raise this issue, perhaps as a subtle, unconscious, defence of motherhood, or at least a traditional belief in women's ability to care for children better than men, and gay men in particular. While men in the film might joke or be uncomfortable with Maxi's sexuality, women seem more interested in his role as a father. Curiously, the film also presents an unflattering image of women, Alex being dippy, slightly neurotic, and obsessed with finding the right man (and then sleeping with married men), and Celia as an old fashioned, narrow-minded grandmother, blind to the modernity of the new world (represented by Celia wearing a big pair of glasses that distort reality). Although neither of them is portrayed as capable of fulfilling the mothering role, it is they who still question Maxi's ability to be a good father.

This criticism of gay fathering is finally rejected once again at the end of the film. As Maxi and Edu reconcile and embrace in a father-son hug, Celia comes into the room and exclaims '¡Pero por Dios, que es tu hijo! Es que lo sabía yo, lo sabía. ¿Pero qué he podido hacer mal contigo, Maxi? ¿Qué?' ('Oh my God, he is your son! I knew it, I just knew it. What have I done wrong with you, Maxi? What?'). Both Maxi and Edu burst out laughing at Celia's words. Even if, once again, she implies that Maxi as a gay man is seducing his own son, Maxi and Edu are able to laugh in the face of homophobia. Celia's words also reflect the old fashioned idea that homosexuality is the result of the parents failure at properly raising their children. Showing not only Maxi, but also Edu (who previously had problems with the fact that his father is gay) laughing at the counter-discourse is just one of the examples from *Fuera de carta* which demonstrate that the new generations in Spain are not as narrow-minded as those that have preceded them.

Even when, as I have just analysed, Maxi is constantly questioned as a capable father figure due to his sexual orientation, the film still reinforces that gay male parents may be more suitable to fatherhood, insinuating that heterosexual males do not necessarily make the best fathers. Jaime (Luis Varela), Maxi's father, is depicted as a homophobic and alcoholic old man, unhappy with life, and in a loveless relationship with Celia. He is also wheelchair bound, highlighting his incapacity to fend for himself, as he needs to be taken care of (just like a child). Santiago Fouz-Hernández and Alfredo Martínez-Expósito (2007) argue that disabled bodies have become, in contemporary Spanish cinema, one of the most 'versatile tools […] in the formulation of alternative, decentred, non-hegemonic masculinities that reflect changes' within Spanish society (2007: 83). I would argue that in *Fuera de carta* Jaime's disability represents the changes in the concept of family and his roles as a patriarch (see Prout (2008); Minich (2010); or Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito (2007: 83-110) for a discussion of disability in Spanish cinema). The lack of any type of familial relationship between Maxi and his parents, Jaime and Celia, points towards a criticism of the Spanish traditional family model, trapped in the past and unable to communicate. Maxi has not seen his parents for over seven years, when he left the (unnamed) oppressive family and village they live in, and Jaime's constant joke at the expense of Maxi's sexuality and lifestyle reinforce the lack of role model Maxi had when growing up. Interestingly, the film does not play to the stereotype of the gay man having an extremely close bond with his mother (which I touched on at the start of the analysis of *Reinas* in Chapter 5), Celia lacking in mothering skills as much as Javier lacks in fathering ones.

Similar to Jaime, the other straight protagonist in *Fuera de carta*, Ramiro (Fernando Tejero), Maxi's and Alex's work colleague is also portrayed as unable to fulfil the father role. In his article on Spanish family comedy, Peter W. Evans (2000) discusses the role of Juan (José Luis López Vázquez) in the film *La gran familia / The Big Family* (dir. Fernando Palacios, 1962), arguing that although Juan in the godfather role is marginalised, he remains an important component of 'the project to legitimise the authority of the father' (2000: 81). Juan in *La gran familia* is too wild, like Ramiro in *Fuera de carta*, and his failure to 'be seduced by the joys of parenthood make him a comic but unacceptable alternative' (2000: 83) to the father role. Juan is 'unreliable and unattractive', while he is 'tolerated, even desired, almost-black sheep' of the family formation in *La gran familia* (2000: 84).

Likewise, Ramiro is also seen as the comic character in *Fuera de carta*, tolerated both in the restaurant, and as the babysitter of Maxi's children. Ramiro's relationship with Edu and Alba helps to reinforce Maxi's ability to parent them. These interactions happen all in the

familial space of Maxi's home, which allow for the comparison between Ramiro's and Maxi's parenting (or parenting-like in the case of Ramiro) skills. As Ramiro offers the children marihuana, teaches them the lyrics to hard-core Rock & Roll songs, allows them to stay up late and is unable to read Alba a bedtime story, Maxi is seen acquiring parenting skills, and fulfilling his nurturer role. He learns to patiently read bedtime stories, he tidies Alba's toys, he makes breakfast with his children, and he also disciplines them as required. Ramiro's interactions with the children serve as a counterpoint to Maxi's relationship with his son and daughter, dispelling the notion that gay men cannot be good fathers. The film seems to side with those early studies on gay fathers which, as Benson, Silverstein, and Auerbach (2005) summarise, focused on dispelling the heterocentric, and at times homophobic, bias that gay fathers are inferior to non-gay fathers (2005: 3).

In the next section, I will analyse how the relationship between Maxi, Edu and Alba evolves. I will explore how Edu and Maxi are able to reconcile both narratively and cinematographically, through the use of different camera shots. This reconciliation, in turn, helps Maxi to confront his father identity, and integrate it in his previously established gay identity.

6.6.2.- *Fuera de carta*: The Kids are All Right

Some scenes of Maxi and his children present a mundane image of family-life, a sense of normalcy. As the narrative progresses, and as the bond between Edu, Alba and Maxi grows, so does the time they spent together framed in the same camera shot. The first time Edu and Alba are in Maxi's home, Maxi is seen alone in a low-levelled medium close-up, from the chest up, occupying more than half of the frame. Edu and Alba, on the other hand, are seen sharing together the counter-shot, an eye-level medium long shot. They are standing in the middle of the frame, all of Maxi's living room furniture around them. Visually, it is clear: Maxi owns the home (owns the screen), while Edu and Alba are intruding in Maxi's territory (home).

As in *Cachorro* (analysed in Chapter 2), Edu and Alba act as de-queering agents in Maxi's queer space. Their presence in the home shifts Maxi's space from that of a single, gay man's queer environment, to that of a familial space. Although at the beginning, Maxi's children instantly de-queer the home, by the end of the film, Maxi will be able to re-queer the space, by moving in with his boyfriend Horacio, as well as accepting both his father role and gay identity. By the end of the film, both a gay space and familial space are unified. Maxi is able to integrate both his father identity and his gay one. As Benson, Silverstein, and

Auerbach (2005) explain, gay men experience a personal transformation as a result of having children, and are able, through an interaction with the children and a reciprocal learning between the fathers and the children to assimilate both identities, and establish a new gay, father identity (2005: 15).

Before this occurs, Maxi and children need to overcome their differences, as well as coming to terms with their new living arrangements. This happens slowly, as the film develops. After the initial first scene in the house, the next time the three of them are seen together, Edu and Alba are doing their homework in Maxi's desk at the restaurant, while Maxi is barking orders to his kitchen staff. Maxi is clearly unable to take time off from work (bringing the children into his workplace), or to put his fathering abilities ahead of the provider-role traditionally assigned to the patriarchal father figure.

When Maxi tells Edu to take Alba home and go to bed (and Edu angrily retorts back) the conversation is shown in a series of medium shots and counter-shots. They are clearly in opposition here, and are not able to find a middle ground (or share the same screen shot). When Alba asks to be read a bedtime story, Maxi reluctantly crouches down, in order to level with her. The shot has Edu on the background, occupying half of the frame and looking down on them, while Alba is in the centre, and Maxi is left only one fourth of the screen. He feels trapped, being kicked out from his home and now his workplace, visually represented by the children occupying the majority of his office and screen space. As the narrative progresses, Maxi, Edu and Alba are seeing sharing more and more time together, Maxi spending more time with his children than at his work. Maxi and Alba are seen making breakfast together, while dancing to music on the radio – the scene sees both of them enjoying their time in the flat's kitchen, instead of at the restaurant's one. They are also seen sharing Alba's bed while he reads a bedtime story to her, in comparison to the first time he does this, where he is sitting in a chair beside her bed, putting some distance between them two. The framing in both scenes is also quite telling. The first time Maxi reads Alba a bedtime story they are both seen in a long shot, Maxi to the sides and in the shadows, while Alba is in the centre of the frame (see Figure 20). The long shot creates a sense of detachment between both Maxi and Alba, which is also heightened by the mise-en-scene – the dark wallpaper, and 'dull' decorative ornaments contrast with the next bedtime story scene, where the room is painted in light colours, and there are many pictures of animals around the characters. The second time, Alba and Maxi are side by side in a medium two-shot, both sitting in the bed. As Maxi and Alba discuss the book, Edu comes into the room and joins them, also sitting in the bed, the

three of them sharing the familial intimate moment, the space they are sitting in (the bed), and framed together in a medium close-up three shot (see Figure 21).

Figure 20 – Maxi and Alba in *Fuera de carta*

Figure 21 – Maxi, Edu, and Alba share a bedtime story in *Fuera de carta*

Edu and Maxi, also start to bond and share the frame, after a crucial scene of a football match where they compete against each other in a 'father vs. son' game. Horacio invites Maxi to the father-son football game, as a means to get them to connect. Maxi seems at first unwilling to go: as a gay man, he argues, he is not interested in sports. Maxi himself is at times incapable of seeing beyond his gay identity (and gay stereotypes for that matter), but Horacio reminds him that, since the children have moved in with Maxi, he has not stopped performing his father identity. Horacio blurts out: 'Primero lo abandonas, luego lo desprecias, no le das ni una muestra de cariño y, por último, le cruzas la cara de un cachetazo. Para, loco, que te van a nominar como padre del año' ('first you abandon him, and then you despise him, you don't show any affection towards him, and finally you slap him. Stop it, you crazy man,

or they will nominate you as father of the year'). Edu might only see in Maxi the gay man who abandoned them, but Maxi can only see this as well. As Horacio tells him, he has already been fathering these children, just in the wrong way.

Maxi is still not convinced, highlighting that apart from being related by blood, Edu and Maxi have nothing in common. Horacio answers: 'Bueno, ahora me tenés a mí' ('Well, now you have me'). Maxi can only see himself as what Gabriel Albiac (2002) describes as the 'operador biológico' (2002:243), that is, the 'biological operator'. Albiac states that 'padre es una función simbólica. No un dato biológico' ('father is a symbolic function. Not biological data') (2002: 241). Maxi cannot see himself as the father (the symbolic function), but just as the 'biological operator', the physical actor in the reproduction. Now, with Horacio as a link between Maxi and Edu (as I will explore in the last section of the analysis, acting in the role of the mother, the nurturer who unites them), Maxi is able to fulfil his parenting role with Edu by appealing to one of Edu's passions: football.

What is interesting in the film (and innovative with respect to the representation of gay fathers) is that as Maxi has to start accepting his father role, he does not need to do so in detriment to his gay identity. In fact, as Horacio is the link between Maxi and his children, his gay identity (the fact that he is in love with Horacio, and wants to be with him) is what allows him to accept his paternal identity as well. During the football game, Maxi and Edu are framed in a medium or long shots with other members of the football game but are hardly seen in the same shot together. When they do appear together, and Maxi and Edu are shot in the same frame, Edu is seen hitting Maxi with the ball, tripping him or pushing him aside. The message is clear both narratively and visually: Maxi and Edu are not able to share their lives, or the same space (highlighted by the framing of the scene, where they are never shot in the same camera angle). It is only when Edu sends a ball straight into Maxi's face, and Edu (feeling guilty) runs to help Maxi (who has fallen down), that they appear together in the shot. In a medium two-shot close-up, Maxi is seen on the left hand side of the screen, clumsily trying to rise from the floor, while Edu, on the right hand side of the screen tries to help while exclaiming '¿Papá, estás bien?' ('Are you ok, dad?'). It is the first time Edu calls him dad, and it is the first time they are seen sharing the same shot. The fighting is over. Interestingly, it is through the stereotypically masculine arena of a football match that Edu is able to accept Maxi as his father, at the same time as Maxi is able to feel like a father to Edu.

After this crucial scene, where both Maxi and Edu start to finally bond, Maxi is able to see himself fulfilling the fathering role. Schacher, Auerbach, and Bordeaux (2005) argue that once gay fathers are able to integrate their father identity, which traditionally sees them

as detached breadwinners, and their gay identity, they are able to rid themselves of 'the stereotypical absent uninvolved, emotionally distant father' role, and become emotionally committed to undertake their parenting role (2005: 48). Maxi is able to connect with his son, who until recently only saw him as the gay man who abandoned them, and they both start building a father-son relationship.

Peter Evans (2000) also argues that in comedy, the children are usually a 'positive force' that help cement the relationship of the parents, 'strengthening the bonds of the family' (2000: 86). In *Fuera de carta*, the arrival of Edu and Alba allows Maxi not only to realise that his life is not just his work as the chef of his restaurant, but is also that of a father, and a gay man in love. It is through Edu that Horacio and Maxi are able to connect, just as much as it is through Horacio, that Maxi and Edu bond. It is the interlinking of Maxi's gay and father identities which propels the narrative forward.

Alba also helps her father deal with his identity as father and gay, as well as helps him realise his true feelings for Horacio. Interestingly, this is done in the home environment, during the time Maxi spends reading bedtime stories to Alba. By constantly questioning all of the fables and classic stories her father reads, Maxi extrapolates the answers he gives her to his own life. While trying to explain the meanings in the books, he resolves his own insecurities with Horacio. It is through his actions as a father (performing the parental role of bedtime reading), that he is able to deal with his gay identity. Once again, the father and gay identities are not placed in (heterosexist) opposition but, instead, interlinked, demonstrating that both identities can coexist.

While reading *Cinderella*, Maxi is able to process the kiss he shared with Horacio (who is 'in the closet', pretending to be straight due to his job as a television presenter) the night before in a nightclub. As he explains to Alba, The Prince and Cinderella might not be in love (at least not yet), but they kiss because they like each other. Maxi, clearly relating Cinderella's kiss to the one he shared with Horacio the night before, realises that Horacio was not just drunk, but in the closet. Later on, while reading *The Ugly Duckling*, Maxi realises that he cannot push Horacio out of the closet, that Horacio needs time to accept his homosexuality and stop pretending to be who he is not. Just like the duckling needs to learn in his own time that he is actually a swan.

Discussing gay identity issues (albeit slightly concealed under double entendre) normalises the relationship between Maxi and his children, at the same time as it normalises homosexuality and the familial space. Alba and Edu initial negative reaction to their father, it turns out, is not his sexuality (which does not seem to be much of a problem and, furthermore

they really like Horacio and accept him as part of their family easily), but his paternal identity: they feel Maxi abandoned them, the problem being him not performing his father function, instead of him acting on his sexual identity. Through slowly sharing and openly discussing the issues they might have regarding his homosexuality (his relationship to Horacio, the gay-stereotypes, etc.), they are able to construct a stronger familial bond, accepting him not only as a friend, but also as a parental figure.

As Benson, Silverstein, and Auerbach (2005) discovered through their analysis of gay fathers, those parents who disclose their homosexuality to their children were able to become more intimate with them (2005: 4). Their gay identity, they state, is not an impediment to a positive relationship with their kids (2005: 14) and, in fact, the majority of the men studied found an increased father-child intimacy. In *Fuera de carta*, Maxi's openness about his sexuality helps them to create a stronger family bond which, ultimately (as seen in the last scene of the film), means that Edu and Alba accept Horacio as their other father.

In the final section of the analysis of *Fuera de carta*, I will study the fluidity of gender roles, and how Horacio and Maxi constantly change fathering roles when it comes to their relationship with the children. I will finish the analysis by looking at the last scene in the film, which conceptualises same-sex relationship inside the family institution, instead of on the margins of it.

6.6.3.- *Fuera de carta*: Fluctuating Gender Roles

Schacher, Auerbach, and Silverstein (2005) found out in their study that gay fathers described a particular type of gender role strain, which the researchers labelled 'heterosexist' role strain, related to the fact that gay men 'violate masculine gender norms as defined by heterosexuals' (2005: 42). These gay men are not only 'battling against' homosexual stereotypes, but also against the cultural bias of seeing women, rather than men, in caring roles (2005: 43). Since these same-sex couples are men parenting without female partners, Schacher, Auerbach, and Silverstein question if there is no ability to 'avoid all things feminine', one of the major prescriptions of traditional masculinity (2005: 47). A way of unconsciously fighting against this heterosexist role strain, the men in the study articulated a belief system where parental roles and duties are not ascribed by gender (2005: 44). Phillip Duffey (2007) agrees, suggesting that most same-sex relationships are not bound by such forms of gender inequality 'and are therefore more likely to result from negotiations between individuals', instead of simply adhering to the social norms which govern marital and parenting relations (2007: 94).

Interestingly, in *Fuera de carta*, the roles that both Horacio and Maxi perform are not prescribed by their gender, but according to the situation. Summarising, it would be impossible to claim that either Horacio or Maxi perform just one 'parenting-gender' role (either that of father or mother) throughout the film, but instead their roles are in constant flux between those presupposed to be mothering or fathering features. On the enactment of certain social roles, it is imperative to refer to Judith Butler's (1990) discussion on gender performativity, which argues that gender is not biologically defined but believed to be task-related. As Butler discusses, gender is taken to be an unavoidable feature of human identity, since 'for the most part people who work in a "sexual difference" framework actually believe in some kind of symbolic position of the masculine and the feminine' (1994: 67; emphasis in original). For example, Jane Flax (1990) argues that 'through gender relations two types of person are created: males and females, each posited as an exclusionary category' (1990: 23). Although what it means to be male or female may be historically and culturally variable, what is constant is the opposition between male and female. In this sense, gender is understood in 'constative terms': to be one is not to be the other one (Lloyd, 1999: 196). This account of gender emphasises the idea of an 'internal essence or presence', that there is a 'something' which is regarded as fundamental to female or male identities prior to 'engendering (the acquisition of feminine [or masculine] characteristics)' (1999: 196). Judith Butler proposes an alternative conception to gender identity, the idea of gender performativity.

Butler argues that no identity exists behind those acts that are said to express gender, but in fact identity is 'performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (1990: 25). That is, gender is a performance; it is what you do at particular times, instead of who you are at all times, universally. She argues that gender is not an expression of what one is, but gender is something that one does, it is 'the stylized repetition of acts through time' (1990: 141). Repetition, for Butler, is central to performativity: this means that performative expressions are not the result of a singular event, but rather performativity operates through the 'reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains' 1993: 2). Repetition, on the other hand, is not an identical re-enactment but, a reiteration. Gender does not exist outside what Catherine Nash (2000) names 'its 'doing'', but its performance is also a 'reiteration of previous 'doings' that become naturalized as gender norms' (2000: 655). As Judith Butler explains it:

> In the place of an original identification which serves as a determining cause, gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self.
>
> <div align="right">(Judith Butler, 1990: 138).</div>

Butler argues then, that there is no single modality of embodiment that stands for a specific gender (or sexuality for that matter), rather, there is a fluidity, an openness, an 'endless possibility of de-determination and re-citation (with 're' understood both as repetition and as a different citation)' (Lloyd, 1999: 197). Gayle Rubin argues that binary models seem to work better for gender, due to the fact that 'our usual understandings posit gender as in some ways binary.' Since even the 'continuums of gender differences often seem structured by a primary binary opposition' (Rubin in Butler, 1994: 70). In *Fuera de carta*, the gender role of mother or father (that of nurturer and provider) is a performance which both Horacio and Maxi undertake repeatedly at certain points in the narrative, but it is not just the fixed father role that their gender would, socially, ascribe them. Horacio and Maxi's parenting roles are a performance within a continuum of gender differences (based on a binary opposition), which does not ascribe to either of them a fixed gendered parenting role.

When Ramiro makes fun of Maxi's homosexuality at the start of the film, Maxi defends himself by clarifying 'te advierto que soy activo… muy activo' ('I warn you I am active… very active'), in reference to his sexual role. He is letting Ramiro know that he is the penetrator, not the penetrated, while at the same time re-affirming his masculinity according to heterosexist stereotypes of same-sex sexual relations. This conversation occurs after Maxi has had to take his children home for the first time (which has put in jeopardy his sexual identity, as the father and gay identity at this point in the narrative are still to be fully integrated), and while Maxi is working at his restaurant, the 'provider environment' of his father persona.

In his first interaction with Horacio, in the nightclub, Maxi defends his own homo-'macho' persona, burping and half-drunk, recounting the story of a past lover whom he left sexually satisfied, once again highlighting his 'active' role in the encounter. Maxi's character seems to need to re-affirm his masculine identity after he has been entrusted with the care of his children. His newly acquired father-identity puts into question his gay identity, which he seems to need to defend in heterosexist terms of the active/macho man, and not the stereotypical effeminate gay.

The next night, after Maxi's and Horacio's first kiss, Maxi goes to Horacio's house in order to clarify the situation, and question Horacio's presumed heterosexuality. Maxi questions Horacio's feelings, and Horacio, using the famous (heterosexist) proverb, retorts 'ya sabes a un hombre se le conquista por el estómago, ¿no?' ('you know the way to a man's heart is through his stomach'). The double meaning of this comedic answer is not lost in the audience. Although Horacio is making reference to Maxi's job as a chef, the use of the heterocentrist proverb is also assuming Maxi's role as a housewife, the one who stays in the house, with the children, and cooks dinner for the husband. Subtly, Horacio is now positioned as the alpha-male in the relationship, the 'man's role', while Maxi's role in the relationship is being feminised. Further, during the conversation, Horacio defines Maxi with the socially stereotypical feminine (and sexist) insults of 'histérico' (hysterical) and 'energúmeno' (lunatic, maniac), reinforcing Maxi's female role.

The heterocentrist meaning of Horacio's proverb is reinforced by Alba's voice-over at the start of the film. The film is divided into a number of segments, each one of them beginning with a voice-over from Alba, who gives a title to the section. The first segment starts under the heading 'un señor que cocina' ('a gentleman who cooks'). Instead of using the word 'cocinero' (chef or cook), the heading seems to make reference to the fact that we are not dealing with a cook or a chef, but with a man who cooks, a man who performs the heteronormative female action of cooking, of nurturing the family. Nevertheless, the roles are once again reversed shortly after, Horacio assuming the nurturer role. After Edu and Maxi fight due to Edu being expelled from school, Horacio bumps into Edu, and asks how he is feeling after his mother's death. The scenes serve to pinpoint Horacio's and Maxi's relationships with the children. While Maxi is the cold, distant father who does not understand Edu's actions, Horacio is portrayed as nurturing, understanding, the traditional mothering role. Furthermore, asking about Edu's mother highlights his potential position in the family dynamic if Maxi and Horacio end up together (as they subsequently do).

It is Horacio also who helps Maxi connect with Edu, inviting him to participate in the aforementioned father-son football game; as well as telling Maxi what to buy for his son's birthday, demonstrating a closer bond between himself and Edu (again, fulfilling the nurturing role), than that of Maxi and his own son. But it is through Horacio's actions that Maxi learns to also be a nurturer to his own children, evolving from the traditional father / provider role, to a more modern father / nurturer.

Horacio and Maxi's fluctuating gender roles demonstrate that same-sex family formations are more progressive than traditional ones. Benson, Silverstein, and Auerbach

(2005) point out that, precisely because gay fathers are positioned at the margins of conventional family life, they have the potential to reconstruct masculinity and transform the fathering role beyond the traditional providing father, towards a more nurturing father model and, furthermore, a model of 'intimate fathering' (2005: 3). By the end of *Fuera de carta*, the audience can see that the new family formed by Horacio, Maxi, Edu, and Alba are completely at ease with each other, both Horacio and Maxi fulfilling their parental roles, not in heterocentric terms, but de-gendering the family institution.

The last scene exemplifies same-sex parenting as a valid and positive part of the family concept. The newly formed family has moved to the outskirts of Madrid, leaving the gay-centred Chueca neighbourhood, to a supposedly more family-focused area. Jon Binnie (2004) discusses that the most common scenario of queer migration is from 'rural to urban [spaces] within the same country' (2004: 90), in order to escape the heteronormative restrictions of rural society (see Gorman-Murray, 2007b for a critique of queer migration and the rural-urban dichotomy). In *Fuera de carta*, Maxi does mention he moved to Madrid from the village he is originally from, to escape the heteronormative lifestyle he had had imposed on him (not only by himself, but by 'society', that is, his parents and neighbours).

Once Maxi has been able to navigate his gay identity and has found a stable relationship with Horacio, they all move back to the countryside. Maxi is returning to the village not as a single gay man, but as a father and family figure, someone who has been re-inscribed into the family ideology. As Robert Aldrich (2006) argues, and as I pointed out in my discussion on queer space in Chapter 1, the city offers a number of qualities that attract gay men and lesbians (2006: 91), and cities are spaces more likely to nurture the formation of gay male and lesbian identities and the political empowerment of gay men than the suburbs, villages, or towns (see, for example, the aforementioned Binnie, 2004: 90; or Hodge, 1995: 41-43; Collins, 2004a: 1789 and 2004b: 1631; Aldrich, 2006: 91-96). It is interesting how Maxi, once he has fully accepted his gay identity and is able to embrace his father identity, he moves from the city (space of gay and lesbian identity formation) back to his village. Once his identity is established and strengthened by his new family, Maxi is able to return to the place where he ran from, not as a closeted gay, but as part of a same-sex family.

As Maxi leaves his new family-oriented restaurant – where, instead of the experimental and high cuisine menu, they serve traditional, homemade dishes –, he is met by Horacio, Alba and Edu, and the four of them playfully (they are excited to go on holidays – see Figure 22) get into their new family car, almost imitating the stereotypical happy (hetero)-family image found in car commercials. The car then drives away, into the sunset, as

the screen fades to black. Same-sex parenting might be a modern occurrence, but this occurs inside the traditional ideology and representation of the family concept (within the parameters of the family urban space, and traditional cooking). Same-sex fathering is not outside the family ideology, instead it can positively re-define and enhance it.

Figure 22 – A happy family: Maxi, Horacio, Edu, and Alba at the end of *Fuera de carta*

6.7.- Conclusion

In a 2010 interview to the television program *Tengo una pregunta para usted / I Have a Question for You* (2007- present) the president of the Partido Popular political party in Cataluña Alicia Sánchez-Camacho defended her political party's view that every child 'necesita un padre y una madre' ('needs a father and a mother') (dosmanzanas, 2010). Similarly, after the endorsement by the Spanish Constitutional Court of same-sex marriage on the 5th of November of 2012, the Conferencia Episcopal Española (Spanish Episcopal Conference) sent an open letter to the Constitutional Court advising to retract their endorsement, arguing that they are worried for the future of Spanish children, who will not be able to be part of a 'familia estable' ('stable family') unless brought up by heterosexual parents, who on the other hand would be able to teach them how to become good husbands and wives:

> Pensamos, en particular, en el derecho de quienes contraen matrimonio a ser reconocidos expresamente como esposo y esposa; en el derecho de los niños y de los jóvenes a ser educados como esposos y esposas del futuro.
>
> (Europa Press, 2012)

> We are thinking, in particular, that those who get married have the right to be recognised as husband and wife; and that the children and

> teenagers of today have the right to be educated as husbands and
> wives of the future.

It seems that, on the other hand, if that child turns out to be gay, he or she does not have the right to be a wife or a husband, a mother or a father. Even when same-sex parenting has been formally legalised in Spain since 2005, traditional ideologies regarding the family concept still prevail, positioning homosexuality outside of parenting and the family concept.

By applying Butler's theories on performativity and gender fluidity, I have demonstrated how *Fuera de carta* de-genders and queers the family ideology. Although the film ultimately accentuates the importance of the family in today's Spanish society, it does so without subscribing to the traditional patriarchal family formation. More importantly, it is through the family that Maxi is able to fully accept his sexuality, positioning homosexuality within the family concept. The most progressive element in *Fuera de carta* is its narrative, which does not hinge on the stereotypical coming out story in which a gay character de-stabilises the family by announcing his homosexuality; instead, it re-inserts homosexuality within the family boundaries, the problem being not sexuality but the acceptance of Maxi's parenting role. It could be said that *Fuera de carta* is a 'coming in' (or 'coming into the family') narrative, and not because Maxi has to hide his sexuality in order to be a family member. What is innovative in regards to the representation of gay fathers on screen is that it is through Edu and Alba, his children, that Maxi is able to navigate his father role and not in detriment to his gay identity. It is through his children that Maxi is able to accept his parenting role and his sexuality: in a reciprocal way, it is through his gay identity that he is able to accept his parenting role, in as much as his parenting role is what allows him to accept his gay identity. Horacio and Maxi are able to navigate their relationship not in spite of the family, but thanks to the family: forming a family is what unites them.

In saying that, and similarly to my analysis of *Reinas* in Chapter 5, *Fuera de carta* still reinforces the notion that the nuclear family formation is still the best option, instead of rejecting the idea of family altogether, or presenting an alternative view of kinship relations (something which *Cachorro* points to, with Pedro's group of friends becoming his family – see Nardi (1992: 108-120), for a discussion on the 'friends as family' kinship concept). As I mentioned in Chapter 5, Robert Richmond Ellis (2010) argues that these narratives are 'mildly transgressive,' aligning with contemporary social norms and reflecting how current Spanish cinema is both echoing today's society and attempting to control difficult social issues (2010: 76). Nevertheless, *Fuera de carta* helps to bridge the hetero / homo divide, and

normalise same-sex desire and same-sex parenting, without the need to inscribe gay identities in the traditional hetero-patriarchal ideology. In fact, as Richmond Ellis points out, *Fuera de carta* presents homosexuality as sexual and affective dynamic 'through which the bourgeois, nuclear family will continue to prevail' (2010: 68).

CONCLUSION

> In order for these 'positive images' of gayness to
> be easily understood by the 'straight' world, all
> 'difficult' aspects of homosexuality are glossed over,
> and those whose lives place them slap in the middle
> of these difficulties are marginalized accordingly
>
> (Toby Manning, 1996: 100)

The Road Behind

This thesis has examined the representation of gay men in mainstream Spanish cinema from the mid-1990s onwards, and the interrelations between these representations and the social context in which they are formed. Films like *Chuecatown*, *El cónsul de Sodoma*, *Reinas* or *Fuera de carta* signal an increasing propensity for contemporary mainstream Spanish cinema to address and reflect specific and unambiguously gay subject matter, and to construct progressive new public images of gay men. These attempts help to minimise the negative stereotypes of the past, and although not all of them succeed in doing so – such as *Mentiras y gordas* – they nevertheless support (and possibly reflect) increasing social tolerance in Spain through their presentation of more open, gay-friendly discourses, characters, and imagery.

This study highlights the contrast between negative portrayals of gay characters and more recent and challenging modes of representation – what James R. Keller (2002), in his study of American queer television and film, calls the 'subtle interplay' (2002: 199) between progressive or subversive representations and regressive or contained depictions; between stable categorisations and fluid ones. Film, and in particular national cinema, is invariably shaped by, and in turns shapes, the social, political, and legal contexts in which they are forged. Throughout my different analyses, I have addressed social, political, and cultural issues that are relevant to the struggle of the gay community, and how these have not only been mirrored on screen, but what these representations reveal about the wider social situation in Spain regarding same-sex topics. I have identified how issues of oppression and exclusion are still at play in contemporary cinema and how these compare with more progressive depictions that speak, however subtly, for openness and equality. With each analysis I have highlighted different modes of social and gender construction that help shape the evolution of the gay male character in contemporary Spanish cinema.

My choice of case studies enables me to widen the selection of films usually discussed by Spanish film academics. The period that my thesis covers includes films released in the last five years, so I have been able to examine recent films like *Mentiras y gordas*, *Pa negre*, *Chuecatown*, *El cónsul de Sodoma*, or *Fuera de carta*, films that have had very little coverage in academic texts. I believe this selection is complemented by my interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of these films, which bridges different areas of knowledge such as geographical and sociological studies. By broadening the discussion in this way, I have been able to identify socio-cultural trends that shape the study of mainstream films in Spanish cinema, as well as the Spanish social, cultural, legal, and political contexts in which these films are produced. This methodology has also enabled me to offer new readings of films that had previously been studied, such as *Segunda piel*, *Sobreviviré*, or *Cachorro*. My interdisciplinary approach has allowed me to focus not only on the representation of gay male characters, but also to expand the analysis to include the representation of queer spaces or same-sex relationships, for example, thereby contributing to an extension of those areas studied in academia to date. While other previous studies have certainly discussed the representation of gay male characters in Spanish cinema, my specific choice of case studies, combined with my interdisciplinary approach, has helped augment these studies by examining also the interplay between gay men and space in the *Queer Spaces* section, the medicalisation of gay men and the representation of the gay male body in the second section, and how gay men queer the institution of marriage and the family concept in the *Same-Sex Families* section.

With regard to the gay community at large, the films I have examined point towards an increasing cultural, social, and legal recognition of same-sex couples, critiquing and questioning established conventions and ideologies, while at the same time helping to naturalise configurations of stability for gay masculinities. Films like *Reinas, Fuera de carta* or *Tú eliges* generally position sexualities and individuals outside the marriage institution (and those whose beliefs challenge it) as problematic, while at the same time proposing the family unit as the strongest social bond. Progressively, this family unit is neither patriarchal nor exclusively heterosexual, promoting the validity of same-sex family. The representation of families and same-sex marriage in films like *Reinas* or *Fuera de carta*, however, does promote a new 'homonormativity' – it presents marriage as the ultimate goal for same-sex couples. On the other hand, *Cachorro* unapologetically presents an alternative view of family formations in which promiscuity, non-married couples, and public sexual gratification, for

example, are valid options within both the ideology of the family and the representation of the queer space of Chueca.

As a queer space, Chueca itself is, overall, portrayed in a favourable manner. The films discussed present it as a positive neighbourhood with its own idiosyncrasies, in which the gay community enjoys great openness and visibility. It is a place that supports and affirms gay identities. Gone are the notions of a queer 'ghetto,' of a liminal space characterised by furtive, criminal activity. Instead, Chueca is depicted as an intrinsic part of a modern and vibrant metropolis. This in itself does at points present a problematic commercialisation of the territory, with *Chuecatown* in particular highlighting the current gentrification and homogenisation that exists in modern queer spaces. The film does, however, critique the commodification and consumerism that would appear to characterise the latter-stage development of queer spaces, and offers an alternative (via the representation of Leo and Rey as non-homonormative) to the dominant western representation of this space as white, affluent, and middle-class. Chueca is not always presented as an ideal space in which to form or raise a family. Several films do point towards stable, monogamous same-sex couples needing to exit the 'gay village' in order to form a family: Horacio and Max leave Chueca to do so in *Fuera de carta*, while in *Los novios búlgaros* Daniel seems unable to find a long-lasting relationship while living in Chueca. *Cachorro* and *Chuecatown* do offer the possibility of forming a family within the area, however, offering a progressive view of Chueca as both a gay and familial space. Difference from within the gay community is encouraged in both films, representing gay men who do not conform to the norms and values of the commercialised and commodified majority.

My analysis of the representation of the gay body highlights the often 'sexualised' nature of the gay community – something which I also highlighted in Chapter 2's discussion of the representation of private and public spaces in the gay community – with such representations sometimes presenting homosexuality as the only defining aspect of a character's identity, and blurring the line between a character's identity and sexuality. Both the medicalised discourse and Dyer's theory of the 'sad young man' demonstrate a widespread, stereotyped image of the gay man, who is often 'doomed' to rejection, loneliness and / or death. Films like *Segunda piel* or *Historias del Kronen* prove that homosexuality is still used as a dramatic element in western narratives, as one that 'induce[s] catharsis and [generates] the tragic climax' (Melero Salvador, 2010: 144). Even in the more recent examples of gay Spanish cinema, coming-out narratives emphasise the difficulties that gay men still face in this respect: *Mentiras y gordas*, *El mar* and *Segunda piel* all depict coming

to terms with one's sexuality as a source of much distress and cause of social and / or personal rejection. The narratives that discuss coming to terms with one's homosexuality seem to position gay characters as fulfilling the discourse of homosexuality as a disease; it is interesting and perhaps encouraging, however, that characters whose sexualities are already established – those who do not question who they are, such as Jaime in *El cónsul de Sodoma*, Pedro in *Cachorro*, or the couples in *Reinas* – are, by contrast, presented more progressively by de-problematising their sexuality. Moreover, HIV is also de-problematised in both *El cónsul de Sodoma* and *Cachorro*, both films highlighting the reality of many men within the gay community who are HIV-positive but who are not socially chastised because of it (as the 'homosexuality as a disease' discourse does). Any dissenting voices within the films' narratives are disavowed – like Doña Teresa in *Cachorro* – reinforcing the naturality with which gay men can nowadays live with HIV. When the narrative centres on homosexuality as the defining identifier for the character, however, as we see in *Mentiras y gordas*, *Segunda piel* and *Perdona bonita…* the films tend to problematise sexuality, positioning the character as an outsider. Conversely, films like *El cónsul de Sodoma*, *Cachorro*, and *Fuera de carta* – where homosexuality is decentred and presented as but one element of that character, rather than what defines them – we see a more progressive, open and less problematic view of that character.

More widely, the representation of gay male characters in recent Spanish films seems to reinforce the notion that nuclear family formations, monogamous couples, and marriage – even when presented somewhat cynically, as we see in *Reinas* – are social structures that are innately desirable for gay men (a narrative trend which also applies to heterosexual characters). Those that are characterised as outsiders of the family institution or that do not agree with same-sex marriage (or marriage in general), like Flavio in *Tú eliges*, are portrayed as problematic. *Chuecatown*, *Reinas*, or *Fuera de carta*, on the other hand, heighten the 'emotional development' of gay men nurturing the values of commitment, monogamy, and the family institution, reinforcing a number of our cultural and social beliefs, not only about love, but also about hegemonic understandings of marriage and gender and sexual relations. On the other hand, Leo and Rey in *Chuecatown*, the couples in *Reinas*, and Horacio and Maxi in *Fuera de carta* represent the 'normalisation' of homosexuality on screen, ignoring those dissenting voices that (as discussed in the Same-Sex Families section) view same-sex marriage and monogamy as a 'heteronormatisation' of gay relationships. Nevertheless, they can also be read as a reaffirmation of same-sex relationships as not being so different from those of heterosexual couples – therefore, arguably naturalising homosexuality on screen.

These mainstream films are, on the whole, assimilatory in their representations, representing the inclusion of gay male characters within hegemonic culture.

The narrative in *Cachorro* does offer an understanding of parenting ideology from a non-normative, non-traditional perspective, inscribing same-sex parenting within the concept of family, rather than rejecting it; and at the same time, doing so while avoiding criticism of alternative lifestyle choices within the gay community, such as the more sexualised, promiscuous elements. The criticism of the older (heterosexual) generations in several films – which we see in *Cachorro's* Doña Teresa, Maxi's parents in *Fuera de carta* and the old ladies in *Chuecatown* – also posits the view that newer generations are more open-minded, and that more traditional ideologies are losing ground to those held by more progressive and tolerant generations.

My research has also identified a new stage in Kerman Calvo's (2006) five-stage evolution of social visibility and gay and lesbian rights in democratic Spain: what I called the 'fase de re-reflujo' (re-ebbing phase). Since same-sex marriage has been legally recognised, political parties and social movements alike generally seem uninterested once again in further debate on these rights, as if this legality is an end point to the fight for equality. Raquel Platero (2007a) rightly highlights that although discrimination against the LGBT community does not end with legal recognition (2007a: 103), the LGBT-rights movement does seem to be winding down, with a focus more on ensuring that the same-sex marriage law is not revised nor retracted (as revealed by my analysis of recent newspaper headlines). As I have discussed, in *Reinas* there exists an almost total acceptance of same-sex marriage: it portrays a society where gay men and lesbians are completely assimilated into Spanish society and where marriage is the only legal right that is missing. The film, however, does not discuss issues of social inequality, and it glosses over any political topic that might arise over same-sex marriage. *Tú eliges*, on the other hand, sees same-sex marriage as the only area of discussion regarding same-sex rights within the gay community, and the film ends with an image of the gay community celebrating at Madrid's Pride event – as if, once same-sex marriage has been legalised, all other injustices and concerns are things of the past.

The political apathy present in the 'fase de re-reflujo' also comes at a time when queer spaces, as I stated in my analysis of Chueca, are viewed less as spaces of / for collective resistance, and more as spaces that allow for an enjoyment of gay and lesbian identity and sexuality without – at least at face value – any constraints. Although I acknowledge and support (as I discussed in Chapter 5) same-sex marriage, the passing of the law has depoliticised the territory of Chueca as a space of resistance, and instead evolved the

neighbourhood into a calling card for Madrid – as a promotional tool used in presenting the city as a cosmopolitan, go-to destination, which reflects / suggests a commodification and homogenisation of the territory (issues criticised in my analysis of *Chuecatown*).

Overall, Spain has come a long way since the end of Franco's dictatorship and the reinstatement of democracy. I believe my work highlights some of the negative stereotypes, limitations, and trends within which the gay male has been presented on screen over the past twenty years, as well as those more positive, open and progressive representations, which I hope reflects and informs the evolution of wider social attitudes. In this spirit, I can also hope that this thesis helps, in however small a way, to further remove the stigma and mystery surrounding homosexuality in Spain, which resulted from years of enforced silence and oppression. To borrow Keller's words, my work aims to be 'productive, provocative and well-intended' (2002: 201), and by throwing some light on contemporary representations of the gay character in Spanish cinema, I can also hope that my work contributes in some way to the 'normalisation' (whether in the assimilationist or activist sense) of gay representations on the Spanish screen; and to an understanding of the need for a normalisation through the acceptance, appreciation, and understanding of difference.

The Road Ahead

Looking towards the future of the analysis of gay characters in Spanish cinema, I want to revisit my introductory discussion on the heterosexual / homosexual binary, specifically how, historically and socially, one form of sexuality has always been deemed more valid than another, and how this has created opposition and division. Peter Tatchell (1996) states that the 'gay/straight schism' sustains queer oppression (1996: 44) and that until sexual orientation is not used as a basis for the denial of rights, the hetero / homosexual divide will not be bridged. He asserts that until society ends its 'favouritism towards straightness and its chastisement of gayness,' gay identity will have a historical value as a defence against compulsory heterosexuality (1996: 52).

Crucially, and as Tatchell also claims, what is important to the argument concerning the future social evolution of attitudes towards sexuality is not the 'prevalence of homosexual and bisexual behaviour, but the intrinsic human capability and potential for greater sexual diversity' (1996: 40). Maintaining the binary of what he calls a 'them-and-us' antagonism is counterproductive for gay and straight alike, since this is an artificial and constricting division that 'centuries of homophobia and puritanism have imposed upon us all' (1996: 48). But the possibility of one day transcending the gap between sexual orientations offers the

potential for society to understand sexuality as fluid and malleable, not founded through and reiterated by rigid and well defined borders.

That the representation of sexuality in cinema – and homosexuality in my particular analysis – is both expanding and evolving is clear. Furthermore, and as I have discussed throughout the thesis, the quantity of Spanish films representing gay sexualities has increased in recent decades (see also Perriam and Fouz-Hernández, 2007: 61-62). Looking beyond my own research, I would encourage future studies of films that represent not just gay sexuality but sexuality which, as Tatchell describes, is even more fluid and malleable, and that deal with the interplay of sexuality and gender. These are themes which are only now becoming prominent in Spanish cinema. Films such as *Castillos de cartón / Cardboard Castles* (dir. Salvador García Ruiz, 2009), *Todo lo que tú quieras / Whatever You Want* (dir. Achero Mañas, 2010), *Lo contrario al amor / The Opposite of Love* (dir. Vicente Villanueva, 2011), and *El sexo de los ángeles / The Sex of Angels* (dir. Xavier Villaverde, 2012) offer a broader understanding of sexuality and gender relations, which perhaps also points toward a broader understanding of sexuality in contemporary Spain.

Although cinema may be a construct, it does, as Paul Begin (2011) contends, have the capacity to speak of the here and now and reflect contemporary Spanish reality (2011: 128). The four films mentioned above attempt to represent sexuality outside of defined categories and if, as I have already argued, cinema both shapes and is shaped by the social, political, and legal context in which it is forged, then it may be that both the social understanding of sexuality and gender issues – and their representation in Spanish cinema – are evolving further away from the heterosexual / homosexual binary. In *Todo lo que tú quieras*, for example, homophobic lawyer Leo (Juan Diego Botto) must reassess his ideals when his wife dies in an accident and he is left to raise their daughter Dafne (Lucía Fernández) on his own. Unable to engage with Dafne and realising that she only responds to female guidance, Leo decides, with the help of gay performing artist Alex (Jose Luís Gómez), to invent a female persona for himself in order to reconnect with his daughter. As implied by the premise, the film consciously explores the boundaries and fluidity of gender and identity, how gender roles are performed, and what the reactions to these identities say about wider social understanding of gender and sexuality.

If we are to use the example of *Lo contrario al amor*, however, it would seem that Spanish cinema is not yet ready to fully grasp the concept of sexuality as variable. The film contains a subplot in which two 'straight' firemen, Toño (Álex Barahona) and Salva (Rubén Sanz), begin to find themselves attracted to each other after mistakenly downloading gay

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pornography instead of *Terminator Salvation* (dir. McG, 2009). While this sounds like the premise for a crass comedy, the film, interestingly, does not present their burgeoning attraction in comedic terms, nor rely on conventional labels of sexuality. Instead, we see them converse about the meaning, and masculinity, of their attraction and indeed actions, as Toño and Salva film each other posing naked, compliment each other's physiques and even masturbate together. The progressive storyline is cut short, however, when Toño (who is more eager to explore the relationship, suggesting that Toño is somewhat 'more gay' than Salva) is killed in an explosion, leaving their feelings largely unexplored and unresolved – the film thus falling into the stereotypical narrative where the 'gay' character dies in order to restore the status-quo. The next time we see Salva he is back with girlfriend Sandra (Elena Ballesteros), the film re-heteronormatising the character, while his relationship with Toño is never again spoken of. The film's conventional ending is indeed a disappointment, but at least it momentarily attempts to blur the gay / straight line.

On the rationale behind my thesis, I would like to echo James R. Keller's (2002) discussion on what our work – as academics interested in the relationships between queer and film studies – attempts to achieve. Our efforts, he maintains, can only help reach a compromise, a compromise which we hope:

> …can be negotiated in the future to forge a more egalitarian settlement, one that allows such portraits without the antithetical bias associated with the semiotics of representation that compares gay and straight men, frequently to the disadvantage of the former; one that no longer sympathizes with heterosexual men's fear and loathing of gay men before it declares the same unfounded; one that no longer needs to portray gay men as sufficiently safe and middle class before it urges their appropriation into the mainstream; and, finally, one that does not necessitate the erasure of alternative masculine gender performances.
> (James R. Keller, 2002: 201)

There are questions and issues about the reality of many gay men in contemporary Spain that are to be explored in future works, but this thesis has demonstrated an increasing progressive and inclusive understanding of gay male sexualities and identities within Spanish cinema of the last twenty years. This thesis has analysed three key themes that are notable in many of the contemporary Spanish films that have represented gay men on screen in the last two decades: space, the body, and the family. The case studies analysed are mainstream films that were produced from the mid-1990s onwards, a period which saw a considerable increase

in gay and lesbian visibility in Spanish cinema. As I have demonstrated this increase in the visibility of gay male experiences in contemporary Spanish cinema does not come, or does not attempt to be, generally, at the expense of gay male sexuality and identity, but from an appreciation, an understanding, a celebration, and an acceptance of both sexual difference and difference within the gay male community at large.

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