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Re-membering Lesbian Desire in *Belle Epoque*, *Soldados de Salamina*, and *Las trece rosas*

Debra J. Ochoa
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The presidency of José Luis Zapatero Rodríguez has seen significant legislation in Spain that includes the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2005 and *La ley de la memoria histórica* in 2007.¹ Upon consideration of the changes in Spain during the first decade of the twenty-first century, we as critics must pause to consider how literature and film respond to the topics of homosexuality and history. Since the death of Franco in 1975, writers and directors have created a significant body of films and literature that uncovers previously prohibited topics in order to make, “the once hidden visible” (Creekmur and Doty 4). The laws of historical memory and same-sex marriage aim at overcoming the inequality experienced by homosexuals and the victims of Francoist repression. Inspired by these changes in Spain, I propose to examine the portrayal of lesbian desire in *Belle Epoque* (Fernando Trueba, 1992), *Soldados de Salamina* (David Trueba, 2003), and *Las trece rosas* (Jesús Ferrero, 2003).²

A selection of works by heterosexual men should not pose a problem because it would be wrong to assume that they are unable to offer sympathetic representations of lesbian desire. There is an understandable concern that male directors or writers would only depict female homosexuality to attract a wider readership or larger audience. However, problems with lesbian representation exist in literature and film regardless of the creators' gender as Jill Robbins

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and Gemma Pérez Sánchez observe in recent studies. Robbins points out the gratuitous portrayal of lesbian sex in Lucía Etxebarria's *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* (1998) and Pérez Sánchez criticizes the lesbian relationship in Daniela Féjerman and Inés París's *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres* (2002).³ Whether the writers or directors are men or women there continue to be challenges. Teresa de Lauretis addresses this dilemma:

The difficulty in defining an autonomous form of female sexuality and desire in the wake of a cultural tradition still Platonic, still grounded in sexual (in)difference, still caught in the tropism of hommo-sexuality, is not to be overlooked or willfully bypassed. It is perhaps even greater than the difficulty in devising strategies of representation which will, in turn, alter the standard of vision, the frame of reference of visibility, of *what can be seen*. (66)

In her discussion of lesbian representation, de Lauretis coins the term *sexual indifference* to describe society's attitude towards the possibility of female homosexuality. Since women are traditionally viewed as inherently attached to the male subject, there is a lack of recognition of a woman's desire for, "the self-same, another female self" (49). De Lauretis states that the possibility of lesbian representation depends on the separation of homosexuality from what Luce Irigaray calls *hommo-sexuality*, a term that plays on the word *hommo* or man (49-50). *Belle Époque*, *Soldados de Salamina*, and *Las trece rosas* reveal a depiction of lesbian desire that both succeeds and fails to think of homosexuality and *hommo-sexuality*, "at once separately *and* together" (71). De Lauretis calls for a new representation of the lesbian subject that involves, "re-membering, reconstituting the body in a new erotic economy, relearning to know it ("it has no name as yet") by another semiotics, reinscribing it with invert/inward desire, rewriting it otherwise, other-wise: a *lesbian* body" (62). I use de Lauretis's term "re-membering" because to inscribe lesbian desire in a historical context is to legitimize subjects previously ignored by the heterosexual monolith. Fernando Trueba and Jesús Ferrero incorporate an anachronistic portrayal of female homosexual desire to alter the visibility of lesbians and to reinscribe them into Spain's historical past. David Trueba depicts lesbian desire within a contemporary setting in *Soldados de Salamina* and examines the past through the protagonist Lola's historical research on the Spanish Civil War. Trueba portrays a woman affected by Spain's patriarchal roots that must decide whether to conform to masculine discourse or opt for an alternative outside of heteronormativity.

Before undertaking my analysis, I want to review pre-democratic Spain's attitudes towards women and homosexuality to contextualize the history

referenced by the Trueba brothers and Ferrero.⁴ Spanish society historically defined women's roles in direct relation to the family and their responsibility to produce future national citizens. In the nineteenth century, as well as during the Franco era, society determined Spanish female identity according to the model of the *ángel del hogar* that emphasized women's martyrdom for the sake of the comfort and honor of the family (Enders and Radcliff 10). Society confined women to their biological functions as wives and mothers and thus their only identity emanated from the objectification of their bodies (Morcillo Gómez, "Shaping" 57). The implementation of obligatory social service by the *Sección Femenina* evokes Judith Butler's idea that society creates laws to produce and restrain women (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 2). The Franco regime molded women into ideal citizens through indoctrination that encouraged women to believe that the country depended on them for its reconstruction. The reality was that the dictatorship enforced traditional gender roles to "turn the clocks back" as an attempt to mitigate its fear of rapid socio-economic change (Graham 184). The Falangist codes of female comportment defined women's subaltern role and stressed their symbolic duties as secondary citizens with dictums that included: "1. A la aurora eleva tu corazón a Dios y piensa en un nuevo día para la Patria; 2. Ten disciplina, disciplina y disciplina; 3. Que el hombre que esté en tu vida sea el mejor patriota; 4. No olvides que tu misión es educar a tus hijos para bien de la patria" (Morcillo Gómez, "El feminismo" 82). Women were prevented from direct participation in the nation and as a result were confined to a role where they were "subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit" (McClintock 354).⁵

The Second Republic (1931-1936) did bring progress that gave women a respite from familial duties with the legalization of divorce, the right to work outside the home, and the expansion of property rights. However, despite the debates on sexual reform and birth control, hindsight reveals that such changes served to benefit men's management of female sexuality rather than to liberate women from their maternal responsibilities (Nash 36). Beatriz Gimeno reminds us that although the left was in favor of reproductive rights for women, female sexuality remained synonymous with heterosexuality (188).⁶ In a society blinded by religious and political heterosexual ideology citizens were incapable of a consideration of female sexuality beyond the realm of procreation. Teresa de Lauretis, through her references to Luce Irigaray, explains that when the male subject defines "the feminine" there is only one singular practice and representation of sexuality (49). Such indifference created an invisibility that extended to the dictatorship's penal code that focused exclusively on male homosexuality (Gimeno 188).⁷

While the regime imprisoned gay men or sent them to rehabilitation centers, Spain's homosocial society did not judge women who lived together as companions (Gimeno 188-89). Within the private, domestic space of the home women could have sex but, because of the lack of awareness concerning female sexuality, even women who were homosexuals, Gimeno argues, remained in denial (189). Furthermore, studies such as Antonio Sabater's *Gamberros, homosexuales, vagos y maleantes: estudio jurídico-sociológico* (1962), mocked lesbianism and offered essentialist definitions of homosexual women (Pérez Sánchez 24). Sabater states that lesbians are easily identifiable because of their manly clothes and behavior or for the impolite way they treat their male colleagues (24). Sabater associated women's financial independence with lesbianism that, according to Pérez Sánchez, was an attempt to discourage women from the pursuit of high-paying jobs. In addition, the use of derogatory labels such as *solterona* or *chica rara* were a means by which Spanish patriarchal society sought to "invisibilize" those women who were incapable of attracting men or had unsuitable personalities for marriage (Robbins 109). After the death of Franco in 1975, society began to consider such women less "strange" and thus they were able to defy neat sexual categorization.

Violeta in *Belle Epoque* is an example of a woman who challenges heteronormativity and Fernando Trueba uses this character to achieve what de Lauretis describes as a figure that goes, "beyond pre-coded, conventional representations" (62). If we recall the definition of the ideal woman, as determined by the *Sección Femenina*, we can see how the portrayal of a woman who rejects Marianist codes of female subjectivity transgresses and threatens the status quo. Trueba's *Belle Epoque*, set during the winter of 1930, narrates the story of the military deserter Fernando who, on his path of escape, finds himself at the home of the liberal artist Manolo. As Fernando sets out to continue his journey, he meets Manolo's four beautiful daughters (Clara, Violeta, Rocío, and Luz) and decides to remain with them.⁸ The four sisters immediately begin to pursue Fernando, creating an inversion of gender roles where a man, rather than a woman, is the object of sexual desire. Violeta, like her sister Rocío, succeeds in her seduction of Fernando but remains emotionally unattached to him after their evening together. Clara, a widow who desires to find a new husband, is unsuccessful in her attempt to win over Fernando. Luz, the youngest and most innocent of the four daughters, will later marry Fernando at the end of the movie.

It is important that we look beyond the patriarchal *final feliz* represented in Fernando and Luz's marriage and focus on Violeta's problematization of heteronormativity.⁹ The now classic carnival scene runs nearly ten minutes long and falls midway through the film to emphasize its significance (Gasta 179).¹⁰ Violeta instigates her sisters to force Fernando to don a maid costume while

she chooses to wear a military uniform and take him as her date. The contrast between Violeta and Fernando's attire puts the female in a position of authority and places the man in a subservient role. Violeta's costume emphasizes her assertive personality and she contrasts strongly with Juanito, Violeta's future brother-in-law, who dons a bright-colored nineteenth-century uniform that only underscores his clown-like character. Juanito's fiancée Rocío, dressed in traditional flamenco attire, is the polar opposite of her sister Violeta. The juxtaposition of the hyper-feminine Rocío versus the mannish Violeta highlights the artificial construction of both identities.

Fernando is visibly uncomfortable in his female role while Violeta enjoys her performance as *galán* and even leads Fernando in a tango dance. Barry Jordan says the following about Violeta in this scene: "She genuinely wants to be male, not a mere parody of a male figure; nor does she simply want to don a mask for an evening and then cast it aside" ("Promiscuity" 297). I disagree with Jordan's statement because there is not a single point in the film where Violeta expresses a desire to be male. Violeta's independent character contrasts greatly with the men of the film who are all lovesick, spoiled, or suicidal. Therefore, I contend that what she desires are the privileges associated with the male gender. Violeta utilizes the carnival to liberate herself from societal roles and her actions disrupt what Judith Butler calls "the rightful property of sex": the assumption that masculinity belongs to men and femininity belongs to women ("Imitation" 21). While it is unlikely that a Spanish woman in 1930 would have acted like Violeta, Trueba's character functions to expose the instability of gender roles.

The culmination of Violeta's role-reversal is her sexual encounter with Fernando where she parodies male orgasm by blowing Fernando's bugle at the moment of climax. Collins and Perriam state:

As Violeta has sex with Fernando, a queer disruption to lesbian sexuality occurs that challenges the simplistic theory that a lesbian who engages in heterosexual sex becomes heterosexual. As post-lesbian theory has suggested, such an act in fact allows lesbians to challenge male supremacy by engaging with the phallic power base. In some ways, then, this otherwise extremely conformist film contains some of the most advanced representations of lesbianism in Spanish cinema. (218)

The fluidity of Violeta's sexuality disrupts the traditional binaries of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Judith Butler explains that to define the lesbian signifier is to limit its meaning. She states, "if I claim to be a lesbian, I 'come out' only to produce a new and different 'closet'" ("Imitation" 15). Violeta refuses societal definitions and remains indifferent to Fernando after sex while he

expects that they will marry. She has no desire to follow a future of domesticity like her sisters and she jokes that her only motive for a relationship with a man would be to manipulate him.

When Fernando confesses to Manolo that he and Violeta had sex, Manolo rejoices because he interprets his daughter's behavior as her acceptance of patriarchal norms and he immediately asks about his first grandson. Violeta reacts angrily and yells at Fernando, "¡lo de anoche no significa nada!" Violeta's words are a clarification to Manolo and Fernando, as well as to the spectators, that sex with a man neither commits her to heterosexuality nor "cures" her of a previous lack of interest in men. The father's opinion of his daughter alters from seeing her as a woman, who will give him a grandchild, to viewing her as a man when she rejects Fernando. Manolo says to Fernando in a disappointed tone, "pero infeliz, ¿cómo te vas a casar con un hombre?" Fernando then speaks to Clara who explains why Violeta is "different" as she makes a *tortilla*, alluding to the euphemism *tortillera* to signify lesbian. Clara tells Fernando that during her first confession, a priest mistook Violeta for a boy and spoke to her about obscene behaviors. Clara sees her sister's homosexuality as a consequence of transvestism rather than a natural disposition.

Manolo, Clara, and Fernando remain confused by Violeta's sexuality but Amalia, an independent woman herself, encourages her daughter's individuality. When Amalia returns from South America, she sits with her four daughters to discuss their intimate relationships. Amalia recognizes that Violeta is a lesbian and tells her that marriage would be horrible for her because all men are egotistical, "tú lo que tienes que hacer es buscar una chica que te comprenda, que te quiera." The lack of a conclusion for Violeta, unlike her sister Luz, who marries Fernando, is an inscription outside of conformity, a re-appropriation of the female body that is neither domesticated nor maternal (de Lauretis 62).¹¹ We as an audience should not be concerned with the plausibility of the existence of a woman like Violeta in pre-Republic Spain, but rather applaud Trueba for choosing to give Violeta an open ending, what de Lauretis calls an "extratextual future ... beyond the ending" (64).

Ariadna Gil, who plays the role of Violeta in *Belle Époque*, is the protagonist in David Trueba's adaptation of Javier Cercas's novel *Soldados de Salamina* (2001). Trueba's *Soldados de Salamina* tells the story of Lola who, after the publication of a newspaper article on the Spanish Civil War, begins a research project to uncover the identity of the Republican soldier who chose not to kill the Nationalist writer Rafael Sánchez Mazas. Lola suffers both a professional and personal crisis because the death of her father coincides with her severe writer's block and accompanying self-doubt. Lola's choice to wear her father's watch, as a reminder of him after his death, is symbolic of how patriarchy continues

to affect women despite their independence. Trueba states that his decision to change Cercas's protagonist into a woman in his adaptation complicates the plot: "convertir un personaje masculino en femenino otorga a la trama, en casos concretos, más tensión, más interés, nuevos perfiles" (qtd. in Faulkner 168). Trueba's examination of the effects of Spain's past on the contemporary subject is only possible with a female protagonist because the regime did not control men in the same way. Lola, despite her intelligence, is sexually invisible to herself because of patriarchal culture.

Conchi, who read tarot cards for Lola's father, shares with her friend that he inquired about his daughter's happiness and whether or not she would have a child. Lola, who we can presume was born during the final years of the dictatorship, is nonetheless disturbed by the assumption that she will marry and have a family of her own. There are scenes in the movie that depict Lola's contemplation of motherhood while on research trips. One example is when she borrows a colleague's car to visit the *Sanctuario de Collell* to see the location where Rafael Sánchez Mazas escaped a firing squad. As Lola drives she looks to the passenger seat and notices a baby rattle. She picks up the rattle which conveys that she, like her father, wonders if she will have a family of her own. Another revealing scene is when Lola travels to Madrid to research the writing of Sánchez Mazas. There is a brief moment when she sees her ex-boyfriend Carlos carrying a bag from the store *Prenatal*, one of the most popular baby stores in Spain (Faulkner 169). Whereas Carlos represents Lola's past and a lost opportunity for a child, Conchi provokes Lola to confront her present reality and inner conflicts.

Conchi hones in on Lola's unhappiness when she asks, "¿Hace mucho que sustituyeste los hombres por la tele?" Lola responds that more than a year has passed and she complains that real people are not that much more interesting than those on television. Conchi, seeing Lola's lack of fulfillment in a heterosexual relationship, encourages Lola to open herself up and uses the word *desnudarse* in a figurative and literal sense. The characters are about to kiss but Lola interrupts the encounter to answer the phone when she realizes it is a research-related call. Lola, given the choice of intimacy, chooses to immediately focus on work and thus postpones the possibility of a sexual encounter with Conchi. Unlike Violeta, in *Belle Époque*, Lola remains uncomfortable with her sexuality and dismisses her attraction to her friend because she chooses to see herself within male discourse.

Trueba probes further into the differences between Lola and Conchi in a scene at the university. As both women stand face to face, Conchi articulates her frustration with Lola's research topic and her interest in men. Conchi proposes that Lola study García Lorca, suggesting a focus on a Republican homosexual writer, instead of the Fascist writer Sánchez Mazas. Conchi becomes distracted

by two men that stare at her and Lola, “mira a esos dos, llevan media hora mirándonos el culo . . . no sé cómo te pueden gustar los tíos, su polla les dirige como si fueran robots.” Conchi mocks male genitalia by pretending to shoot a machine gun but Lola remains quiet and does not respond to her friend’s inquiry. Faulkner interprets Lola as a metaphor of Spain caught between a still unknown past and an uncertain future (168). I would add that Lola’s hesitation to have a sexual relationship with Conchi is a metaphor of the negative effects that the Franco era continues to have on women. Conchi encourages her friend to look beyond patriarchal ideology but Lola remains closeted, trapped in the “tropism of hommo-sexuality” where the male subject is the reference point of behavior (de Lauretis 67). Both Violeta and Lola receive encouragement from a woman in their lives to accept their homosexuality but Lola chooses to ignore her desires.

The final text in question, Jesús Ferrero’s *Las trece rosas*, is a novel of historical fiction based on the execution of thirteen women in August 1939 for their association with the organization *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*.¹² Such victimization exemplifies Butler’s observation that, “we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right” (*Gender Trouble* 140). Women’s defiance during the Spanish Civil War contradicted centuries of patriarchal ideology that fixed women’s identity to the service and care of their families inside the controlled space of the home. The freedom women experienced during the Second Republic was the first time that women functioned as subjects, rather than objects, in the nation. The consequences of the Spanish Civil War forced women to return to the interior space, which in the case of the thirteen roses was prison.

Ferrero’s novel is the first book-length fictional account that explores the thirteen roses legend to ensure that, in the words of Julia Conesa, “que mi nombre no se borre de la historia” (qtd. in Linhard 199). Since little information exists about the women, Ferrero takes an artistic approach and uses his imagination to depict their personal experiences.¹³ The author explains that for him literature is political, “No me interesa hacer política con literatura porque la literatura es en sí misma una política, o más exactamente una manera de ser en la polis y que desde ese punto de vista la misión de un escritor es emplear bien las palabras, y ya con eso tiene bastante” (“El olvido”). *Las trece rosas* is indeed political for many reasons including the author’s focus on women’s role in war that results in an examination of the discourses of sexuality and power. Patriarchal authority during the Franco era implanted heterosexuality onto women but Ferrero’s depiction of lesbian desire within the confines of the Nationalist prison undermines authority and destabilizes the omnipresence of the panopticon.

Ferrero begins his novel with references to national decay and corruption that communicate the weaknesses of the patriarchy despite the Nationalists' victory in 1939. Avelina, who we will later learn is one of the *trece rosas*, and her boyfriend Benjamín discover a carcass, "Allí se subieron a un montículo y vieron que los buitres estaban devorando un toro muerto. No era un toro bravo, era un semental negro y grande, y parecía que había muerto a balazos" (23). The bull, a traditional symbol of male sexual prowess and virility, is now nothing more than a source of nourishment for scavengers. The fact that the animal is a breeding bull, *semental*, conveys the demise of masculine discourse and infers the possibility of a future outside patriarchal hegemony that Ferrero will later emphasize through the Republican prisoners' defiance.

The atmosphere of death continues when Avelina's father Tomás, for fear of loss of his own reputation, insists that his daughter Avelina make a confession of her political activities to the police, "Cuando llegó ante la cara lívida de su progenitor, pensó que parecía Abraham antes de levantar el cuchillo" (32). Ferrero rewrites the biblical story and replaces the sacrificial son with a daughter, thus inverting biblical narrative to acknowledge the suffering of women. Avelina's bravery offers no relief to her family because Tomás's co-officers, Roux and Gilberto Cardinal, come to chide him and tell him that, not only will Avelina suffer torture in prison, he will be part of the firing squad assigned to kill her. Throughout the novel most of the female characters become victims of Roux and Cardinal's belligerent behavior and suffer physical and emotional abuse. Ferrero counteracts the oppression imposed by the Nationalists with his portrayal of the imprisoned women's platonic and erotic encounters. The author's exposure of the Nationalist prison guard's lesbian desire contradicts the ideology of her political camp.

Lesbian desire first enters the narrative through the character Zulema who, as a guard of the young women, observes the inmates and naively assumes they are all heterosexual:

Zulema pensaba que muchas de ellas llevaban cinturones de castidad más inexpugnables que los de las mujeres de la Edad Media, que se quedaban en los castillos esperando indefinidamente a su caballero. En muchos aspectos, todas aquellas reclusas que se le negaban o que rechazaban acercarse carnalmente a sus compañeras hacían lo mismo con sus míticos novios: algunos presos, otros muertos, otros en el extranjero. Se guardaban para ellos, se preservaban para hombres fantasmales que probablemente no volverían a ver, aun sabiendo que podían ser condenadas a muerte, rechazaban entregarse a placeres que hubiesen aliviado mucho su sufrimiento. (121)

Zulema's ideas pose a threat to patriarchy because she articulates an alternative sexuality that undermines the heterosexual monolith.

The majority of the narrative of *Las trece rosas* takes place within Ventas prison that calls to mind Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, which examines how authority evolved from a spectacle, embodied by a king, to a disciplinary society represented by Bentham's panopticon (203). The purpose of discipline is to immobilize subjects: "one of the primary objects of discipline is to fix; it is an anti-nomadic technique" (218). If we think back to the Francoist behavior codes such as "disciplina, disciplina, disciplina" we can see that the goal of the regime was to enforce stasis upon women. Zulema's ideas destabilize the authority of the panopticon because what she desires threatens the Nationalist prison system and its efforts to immobilize prisoners from any activity that would not confirm patriarchal authority. Ferrero emphasizes the weakness of the new regime with the bull carcass, Tomás's encounter with Roux and Cardinal, and the portrayal of Zulema. The problematization of Francoist authority, which Ferrero first introduces with Zulema, culminates in the erotic lesbian encounter between two prisoners.

Ferrero creates a narrative space wherein two inmates, whose identities are never revealed, achieve invisibility in the panopticon, "para las dos fue como meterse en el horno del amor y se hizo más grande la región del deseo, de forma que se ofrecieron lugares que antes se negaban, para volver finalmente a la ronda de besos en el cuello, en los labios, en los ojos" (115). This sexual encounter is a means by which the two women transcend the walls that enclose them:

Por un instante, desaparecieron las sábanas, las paredes y las calles. Se hallaban en el centro de una oscuridad larga como la del desierto. Y estaban solas en una noche en la que todas las especies se habían ido lejos, inmensamente lejos, para hacinarse en las selvas que rodeaban el arrenal, rojo de ausencia y rojo de deseo, bajo una noche en la que ya no cabían más estrellas. (116)

The two women make a temporary escape but are aware of the possible threat of discovery by Zulema or other inmates, "eran besos que había que robar a la luz, a la luz de la linterna de Zulema, que hubiese considerado un triunfo clamoroso sorprenderlas tan confabuladas, y a la luz de la mirada de casi todas sus compañeras, a las que aquella ceremonia del sofoco compartido les hubiese parecido reprochable" (116). Ferrero never clarifies the identity of the lovers, despite the fact that he dedicates a chapter to each of the thirteen women. I interpret the author's decision to hide the identity of the two characters as a play on the historical invisibility of lesbians in Spain. Ferrero inscribes lesbian desire into a historical context where the characters can take advantage

of society's blindspot. Despite Zulema's belief that the inmates are naive and committed to *homo-sexuality*, their behavior demonstrates that they do not accept a sexuality that binds them to men. *Las trece rosas* is a reminder that women who question authority, regardless of the time period, remain a threat to patriarchal society because they challenge, "the moral, sexual, and psychic authority of men" (Castle 5).

The representation of lesbian desire in historically-based literature or film is a re-creation of the past to acknowledge those women repressed by the Franco regime. Fernando Trueba and Jesús Ferrero adapt the past to excavate the dismissed subjects that did not fit into Spain's dictatorial agenda. In *Belle Époque* Violeta receives her mother's support while Manolo and Fernando remain frustrated by her resistance to conformity. The fluidity of Violeta's sexuality undermines absolutist binaries that society created to mold citizens. Ferrero's depiction of lesbian desire in *Las trece rosas* exposes the hypocrisy of the Nationalists and their inability to fully dominate the Republican inmates. The unidentified lovers in *Las trece rosas* defy the *ángel del hogar* paradigm through their political activity before incarceration and their sexuality afterwards. Fernando Trueba and Jesús Ferrero's work should not be dismissed because they choose to stray from historic truth. If they accurately represented the past, the result would be a perpetuation of the marginalization of lesbians. Historical accuracy is an illusion and therefore lesbian representation in *Belle Époque* and *Las trece rosas* is not a process of remembering but a "re-membering", a form of reparation for marginalized subjects. While Fernando Trueba and Jesús Ferrero present anachronistic representations of the past, David Trueba shows in *Soldados de Salamina* how in contemporary society the patriarchal roots of Spain still complicate female sexuality. Lola receives an opportunity to move forward in her life with Conchi but she chooses to remain in the past with her research and denial of her homosexuality. The success of lesbian representation relies on the ability to see female sexuality beyond the male subject, which is a particular challenge in Spain because of the vestiges of the Franco era. Nonetheless the combined depiction of lesbian desire and history evinces writers and film directors' ongoing attempts to synthesize Spain's past and present.

NOTES

¹ For detailed studies on gay marriage and the law of historical memory in Spain see Platero and Gálvez Biesca.

² I made my selection of one novel and two films based on theme rather than genre. Fernando Trueba's *Soldados de Salamina* is an adaptation of Javier Cercas's novel and the director changes the protagonist to a woman. I focus exclusively on Trueba's adaptation because Cercas's novel does not depict lesbian desire. I choose to focus on Ferrero's novel *Las trece rosas* instead of Emilio Martínez Lázaro's film *Las trece rosas* for the same reason.

³ Jill Robbins criticizes the voyeuristic position of the narrator in *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* because such a perspective satisfies readers' curiosity and confirms that lesbians are "strange." At times, Robbins observes, the narration of lesbian sex only serves to titillate the male reader (126-27). Pérez Sánchez reads the lesbian relationship between Sofia and Eliska, in *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres*, as nothing more than a "comic, safely contained exploration" of a new configuration of the Spanish family because the movie is narrated by Sofia's heterosexual daughter whose marriage conforms to the classic Hollywood ending (5).

⁴ It is a coincidence that the directors of the two films I study in this paper are brothers.

⁵ In her book *Imperial Leather* McClintock includes advertisements that use the female image to represent the homeland. Anglo-Saxon women dressed in white stand proudly as men pay homage to them (354-56). McClintock does not speak specifically about Spain, but an example of how the Franco regime symbolically used the female image would be the sculpture on top of the entrance to the *Valle de los Caídos* that resembles the *Piedad*. The representation of a suffering mother emphasizes women's duties of self-sacrifice for her family and nation.

⁶ Beatriz Gimeno states, "En cuanto a la sexualidad de las mujeres, la izquierda se muestra a favor de los derechos reproductivos de las mujeres, así como de un 'hipotético' derecho al placer femenino, pero éste tiene que pasar necesariamente por la práctica del coito heterosexual" (188).

⁷ Up until the end of the Franco era in 1975, society refused to acknowledge the existence of lesbians and therefore the country directed its homophobia entirely towards male homosexuals. During the Second Republic (1931-1936), as well as the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975), the dominant ideology considered homosexuality a disease and viewed homosexuals as ailing patients in need of a cure (Gimeno 188). Surprisingly, legislation on the prohibition of homosexuality did not come at the beginning of the Franco era, but rather during the final five years of the dictatorship. *La ley de peligrosidad y rehabilitación social* of 1970 represented one of the dictatorship's last attempts to impede its inevitable collapse. The prohibition of homosexuality was a means by which Francoism sought to ease its anxieties of its own self-perception, "on the one hand, male homosexuality literalized the underlying sexual potential at the heart of fascism's glorification of male camaraderie. On the other hand, Francoism's particular fixation with containing male homosexuality suggests that the regime perceived its own

position within the Western international community as one of marginality and deviance” (Pérez-Sánchez 13). Thus, by creating scapegoats, the dictatorship could deceive itself with the belief that it maintained control when in reality Spain looked with great anticipation to a new era.

⁸ On the topic of sexuality in *Belle Epoque*, I concur with Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas that the sexual promiscuity of the film is more reminiscent of the social milieu of the 1990s than the historical setting of pre-Second Republic Spain (58-59).

⁹ The name Violeta references the color that symbolized homosexuality in the 1920s and 1930s in Spain (Mira, “Belle Epoque,” 205).

¹⁰ It is worth noting that during the Franco era, the regime prohibited carnival celebrations because such events invited role-play and rebellion (Pereira-Muro 314). Trueba reinforces the scene’s transgressive atmosphere by depicting such a celebration.

¹¹ Trueba concludes *Belle Epoque* without a clear indication of Clara or Rocío’s future.

¹² The thirteen roses were Victoria Muñoz García, Martina Barroso García, Avelina García Casillas, Julia Conesa Conesa, Dionisia Manzanero Salas, Virtudes González García, Ana López Gallego, Joaquina López Laffite, Carmen Barrero Aguado, Blanquita Brissac Vázquez, and Pilar Bueno Ibáñez (Linhard 187).

¹³ Ferrero speaks about his literary approach, “Cuando te acercas a estas historias te das cuenta de la dimension del olvido en España, que ha sido aterrador. Se ha perdonado todo, pero ha quedado enterrado como en una olla podrida. En ese sentido es mejor desenterrarlo de una maldita vez y así comprender mejor este momento. Pero yo no soy un desenterrador. Mi interés era hacer una buena novela” (“El olvido”).

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