Living and Dying for the Plural: Transformations of Queer Iberian Cinema

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Dedication

To my family
&
To Alison
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Introduction

*Living and Dying for the Plural: Transformations of Queer Iberian Cinema,* focuses on queer Spanish and Portuguese films produced in the post-dictatorial era of the 20th century. The primary films analyzed, *Ocaña: Retrat Intermitent* (1978), *Kika* (1992), *Todo Sobre Mi Madre* (1999), *Morrer Como Um Homen* (2009), and *Los Amantes Pasajeros* (2013) span a wide variety of genres, budgets, and intended audiences creating a seemingly diverse queer filmic genealogy in an Iberian context. By creating such a dialogue across seemingly divisive intellectual and historical spaces, I argue for a more robust understanding of the specificity of the Iberian context to discourses of sexual and geographic peripheries. In order to achieve this end, this dissertation encompasses two disciplinary camps: Iberian Studies and Gender/Sexuality Studies. At the core of this study, however, is a discussion about the ways in which identity, particularly gender and sexual identity is espoused in the body politic through cultural production, film, in this case.

The chapters that comprise this text are based on close reading and interpretation through an optic that takes into account these two disciplines. In order to better understand the arguments put forth about the connections, disjunctures, and convergences found in these films, a brief overview of the important contribution of Iberian Studies to the field of Hispanism is merited. This discussion will be followed by an overview of the contributions of Gender and Sexuality Studies to cultural criticism.
Iberian Studies

Iberian Studies is a methodological shift by the part of “peninsularist” researchers—those primarily concerned with the languages and cultures of the Iberian Peninsula—to confront stalwart tenets of Hispanism that have been left unchallenged by the academic establishment. Hispanism, for its part, has been the ideological anchoring of many Departments of Spanish in United States higher education, which has sought to explore its function as “a dominating political force, as an interpretive and representational cultural model, and as an epistemological paradigm, throughout the entire development of Spanish America’s and Spain’s cultural histories” (Moraña ix). Central to these debates are ethical concerns about the hierarchy of a system that privileges languages, in this case Spanish, over other minority languages that exist in a “Spanish-American” and a peninsular “Spanish” context. More troubling for Hispanism is the frequent incidence of the word "Lusophone" being placed in the names of some foreign language departments—not as a means of integrating Lusophone Studies into the work of the department but rather as a seemingly expedient way of signaling a multidisciplinary and transnational perspective. This need for the union of presumably separate languages and cultures into more compact and economized disciplinary units fits within a 21st century United States university model; a model which has undergone a transformation from Language/Cultural Studies being paramount to a liberal arts education and to humanism more generally, to the moniker of “service department” to prepare students with only
“proficiency” in spoken and written language (Resina 30). Given the interest in monetary profitability in an era that privileges STEM professions as the future of our strength in the globalized economy, absent from this model are robust discussions of cultural nuance.

This market driven tendency has brought with it a divide within those that find themselves in Foreign Language Departments. The plurality of Iberia, to take but one example, is not reflected in the ideology of this type of departmental naming as Hispanism forecloses on diverse linguistic opportunities to study texts from the peninsula in their native languages of Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Portuguese. Center stage is the politics of translation as a remedy to a diverse linguistic landscape seen similarly in other identitarian departments. For example, should American Indian Studies (Native American Studies) be inside the disciplinary unit of American Studies given its engagement in minority languages and cultures that necessitate specific attention or, to cite another, is Chicanx Studies in this same predicament? What is evident in these discussions are overtones of cultural and ethnonationalism, an arena that Iberian Studies has deliberately made part of its mission to counteract.

This dissertation’s theoretical approach is informed by these long overdue discussions in the profession as the films studied in Living and Dying for the Plural: Transformations of Queer Iberian Cinema encompass Portuguese, “Spanish”, and Catalan identities and traditions. Innovative is my inclusion of a
non-hierarchical approach that includes Portuguese as an integral part of my theorization.¹

**Gender and Sexuality Studies**

Sexual identity and entanglements with naming practices that follow tight moral, juridical, and social strictures of a nation has been largely examined by Foucault, whose writing laid the groundwork for intellectual fields such as Queer Studies. Foucault argues most impassionedly in *The History of Sexuality* that upon closer examination of this history, it is possible to see that the product of certain genealogies is contingent in nature, instead of their perception of being enduring and natural. For Foucault, an individual cannot be accounted for in its entirety under a Cartesian framework, which posits an essentialist subject as independent from language. In fact, the division of knowledge and discourses surrounding the self are socially constructed, which actually produce the fantasy of an “autonomous” self, one based on individuality. His objective is to demonstrate that power does not only seek to repress sexuality as is commonly thought about centuries past, but instead, power produces sexuality through an incitement to discourse (Spargo 50).

Foucault points out despite this perceived repression of sexuality, it was

¹ Peninsularist Sebastian Faber in his article, “Economies of Prestige: The Place of Iberian Studies in the American University,” commits in a footnote part of the very problem that Iberian Studies seeks to remedy. Regarding Portuguese Studies inside the framework of Iberian Studies he remarks, “I will use the term ‘Iberian’ studies throughout this essay to refer to the ‘Peninsular’ half of Hispanism, although my analysis does not include Portuguese Studies” (8).
spread through institutions like medicine and religion predominantly through psychoanalytic and religious confession. The process of transforming sex into discourse is a dual part development, in which there was not only a shift away from studying or thinking through heterosexual monogamy, but also an interest toward “unnatural” sex as a focus of scientific inquiry (Scientia Sexualis). This natural/unnatural dichotomy takes shape into arenas that become mutually constitutive so much so that, “This concatenation, particularly since the eighteenth century, has been ensured and relayed by the countless economic interests which, with the help of medicine, psychiatry, prostitution, and pornography, have tapped into both this analytical multiplication of pleasure and this optimization of the power that controls it” (Foucault 48). Foucault suggests that through the use of religious and psychoanalytic confession, using “truth-sharing” practices to move sexuality into discourse is also closely attached to “truth”. Thus, now located in ontological claims about the Self, homosexuality becomes a “species” in which he remarks, “Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodisim of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (43).

This nomenclature of “species” leads Foucault to argue homosexuality must be policed and regulated through biopower—a term used to describe the ways that a body is useful under capitalism (e.g. in the workplace, education, military, etc.), and the reproductive capacity of the body through studies of demography,
wealth distribution, and so on. In light of biopower being deployed to regulate non-normative and unproductive sexualities, homosexuals were abused, castigated, demonized, and admonished for their behavior which at the same time allowed them a voice, a locus of enunciation, and the ontological claims necessary to catalyze themselves as worthy and legitimate forms of being. This theoretical paradigm shift later aided Judith Butler in her text Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity to approach gender as a social construction and advance her theorization of “performativity”.

Butler advances a Foucauldian understanding of sexuality by applying some of the same ideas to the (in)stability of gender in our everyday lives. Since Foucault's discussion was predominantly one which centered on men, Butler problematizes how (un)productive it would be to have at the bedrock of feminist politics the category “woman,” given its buttressing of binary assumptions. As Foucault reminds us that the body is not naturally sexed, curious to Butler is how the materiality of that body precedes signification; thus, her project to focus not on what produces gender but instead what gender produces. Butler explores the body as a space of signifying practice by “troubling” the way superficial outward attributes on the body, as well as more inward epistemological/ontological questions create something that is legible and cohesive. Through psychoanalytic theory, Butler demonstrates the fictional interior essence created by the differentiation of subject and Other. The culmination and most critical intervention for Queer Theory is Butler’s concept of performativity. Although
often misread and misunderstood as performance, performativity is a set of repeated stylized acts, gestures, movements defined as, “at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation” (Butler 526). The example that Butler uses to illustrate this performativity is through the use of drag, which parodically calls attention to its imitative nature that normalizes gender. In a similar vein is her neologism of heteronormativity, which is defined as a normalizing discursive practice of situating heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of relations between two “complementary” genders of male and female.

**Heteronymativity**

To analyze Queer Iberian Cinema and the body politic, I have coined the term, heteronymativity. This term provides a more complex understanding than that afforded by the term queer; of how those that are marginalized sexually and geographically implode unitary and centrist notions of identity and place espoused by dominant modes of political and social discourse. Although Queer Theory has provided many people the language through which to articulate identity formations and forge unexpected alliances, I use Queer Theory as the base needed to ground my study in creating a more epistemologically nuanced prism for understanding Iberia.

The term, heteronymativity, derives from various strands of intellectual terrain: literature, gender, and the State. This term that I am using could be thought of
as an amalgamation of various forms of linguistic word play: part spoonerism, part neologism, and part portmanteau. Three basic components comprise this new term that I put forth: heteronym, heteronormativity, and heteronomy. These components speak to questions of naming practices as well as political and social dimensions implicit to Iberia.

The first of these concepts that undergirds heteronormativity is the heteronym, made famous in the contemporary era by modernist Portuguese writer, Fernando Pessoa. Pessoa’s use of over one hundred heteronyms—a literary technique in which imaginary characters have their own particular personal history, writing style, and interact with each other (inter)textually—shows the ways in which literature becomes the production of an act of becoming-other while simultaneously demonstrating becoming-oneself. The dialectic between creator and creation is manifested through the heteronymic nature of various “names”, whether they are stage names, pen names, heteronyms, alter egos, etc. These manifestations of multiplicity speak to the desire not just for the actor/writer/author to live in the plural, but through this linguistic, sexual, and spiritual vehicle of naming, to achieve an otherwise unobtainable consciousness.

The second concept, rooted in gender studies/queer theory, heteronormativity, delineates (hetero)sexuality as being a discursive norm, which systematically forecloses on other possibilities of queer-er love (e.g. homosexuality, pan sexuality, etc.) I will argue that Queer Iberian Cinema

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2 Since Pessoa’s own anxiety about his sexuality provokes and sustains that same anxiety textually (Arenas 109–110).
examined in this dissertation demonstrates a resistance to heteronormative structures through a privileging of alternative spaces, places, and temporalities. To restrict *queer* to an agreed upon definition is an exercise in futility. United States scholars informed by French intellectualism—thorists such as Guy Hocquenghem and Michel Foucault—have tussled with the term, providing diverse and sometimes contradictory "definitions" of how *queer* and queer theory operate. Among the field is American David Halperin whose now canonical text; *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (1995), outlines the most succinct and closest un-definition of the term as I deploy it throughout this dissertation. He writes,

> Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers.* It is an identity without an essence. 'Queer' then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality *vis-à-vis* the normative. ( . . . ) Queer describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance. (qtd. in Sullivan 43)

In the humanist sense, *queer* is a positionality that should not be limited to the LGBT community exclusively but anyone who finds themselves with a marginalized sexuality. However, *queer* is also susceptible to being a back door for accommodating patriarchal and heteronormative power relations by allowing
for, say, a married heterosexual couple without children, to be on proportionate grounds of oppression as say, a trans man of color. Moreover, although the term is sometimes used as an updated label to encompass the LGBT community, many scholars have pointed out that this process of homogenization tends to flatten very real differences between trans, lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities. In part queer is a radical potentiality that can be provisional, political, and may or may not be realized. Queer theory, for its part, is less a matter of explaining the repression or expression of a homosexual minority, than an analysis of the Hetero/Homosexual figure as a power/knowledge regime that shapes the ordering of desires, behaviors, social institutions, and social relationship in a word, the constitution of the self and society (Sullivan 44–45).

Spain has been slow to engage with the discourse of Queer and Queer Theory. During much of the 1990s there was only a handful of scholars whose work was dedicated to the subject. The first manuscript length publication about situating Spanish queer theory and subjectivity came in the form of Ricardo Llamas’s text, Teoría Torcida: perjuicios y discursos en torno a la “homosexualidad” (1998). The text addresses the (dis)torsions needed to fully engage with “homosexuality” in an academic sphere. He defiantly articulates against any sort of rectitud (straightness), playing with the English term, “straight”, to derive a term better suited for a Spanish context, torcida based on the latin etimology, torquere which means to twist. In essence, Llamas challenges that, in a temporal sense, a straight (and hetero) line is the one that
should be privileged discursively. Largely informed by Foucauldian theorization regarding the location of power, he shows how the distinct ways in which things are presented as orderly through organizations like the Church, medicine, family, etc., become normalizing practices that look at the concept of "homosexuality" in sometimes incoherent and restrictive ways which, notwithstanding, still regulate and normalize discourse. Llamas's text is the baseline for understanding the Spanish queer canon that would later give rise to further theorization, particularly, Francisco Vidarte's *Teoría Marica* (Faggot Theory) (2007).

Llamas's "Twisted Theory" incited a willingness on the part of Spanish intellectuals living and working in Spain to invest in the factors needed to change and challenge the asymmetrical relationship between the discursive entity found in the regime of sexuality and the discursive purpose of said regime. That is to say, the Twisted Theory pushed against social practices that had been deployed without the need for self-justification in a social reality that was giving rise to a collective conglomerate of prejudices, one that would culminate with the emergence of HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Spanish context (Vélez-Pelligrini 26–27).

There are, of course, many Spanish born scholars turned United States academics present in higher education that have also theorized this subject, allowing them a larger audience due to their perceived prestige and pedigree.

Gema Pérez-Sánchez, in her text *Queer Transitions in Contemporary Spanish Culture: From Franco to the Movida*, argues that her use of the term *queer*—prominently displayed in the title of her manuscript—although
recognizing it as being problematic and uneven, is more interested in an engagement with a wider anglo audience:

Although my book is written in English and actively engages with and benefits from the tradition of queer scholarship that has largely emerged from the U.S. academy, it does so, in part, because it recognizes the importance of being read by mainstream Anglophone queer studies academics in the hope that non-Anglophone academics (like myself) can make a strategic intervention in that discourse and force Anglophone queer theory to engage with other world theories about alternative sexualities and desires. (7)

Although self identified as non-anglo, Pérez-Sánchez was largely educated in the U.S. and, throughout her text, is mostly negligent in mentioning the ways in which Queer Theory was thought of and conceived on the peninsula she left behind. Nonetheless, my dissertation, in part, hopes to achieve some goals similar to those presented by Pérez-Sánchez, in that it seeks to articulate the ways in which queer identity and queer theory can be thought of across multiple places and temporalities to highlight the specificity of the filmic cultural production made and produced in Iberia.

If heteronym is associated with the act of naming and heteronormativity confronts the social dimension, the last concept, heteronomy, addresses the political dimension of place. Heteronomy is an action affected by a force outside
the individual, most commonly thought of as a state of being ruled or governed. Rather than exercising autonomy, each of the films’ protagonists engages in a heteronomous struggle to establish themselves in new places of being, knowing, and belonging due to the power of normative discursive forces pushing against their desire to be autonomous and free.

Heteronymativity is not just an invention to signal the union of three different fields of well-charted and developed intellectual histories/legacies but more thoughtfully, defines itself by the very nature of its construction based on word play. It signals a self-reflectivity by calling attention to its constructedness and attempts to further expand upon institutionalized academic parlance of radical critical theory offered by many in the profession. As I argue in each one of my chapters, heteronymativity brings together indivisibly that which is subversive, with that which it is trying to subvert; resulting in an antagonism that pushes and pulls on the very theoretical scaffolding the term is built on.

**Historical Background of Post Dictatorial Spain and Portugal**

Portugal and Spain during the mid 1970s saw a slow but progressive move away from the autocratic dictatorships, which had ruled their respective countries throughout much of the mid 20th century, toward a democratic government, a unifying trend in Europe during post 1989 era. In order to appreciate the complexity of the post-dictatorial periods that ran parallel to each other in many respects, a brief overview of each history is necessary.
António de Oliveira Salazar came to power in 1932 as Prime Minister of Portugal with a regime that was based on fascist tendencies. It was, however, constructed more generally on the platform of the *Estado Novo* (New State), an authoritarian ultranationalist government whose corporatist model was based on conservative, Catholic social doctrine. Similar to the Spanish case, Salazar created a one-party political system, a women and youth mobilization effort, as well as a secret police to quell political and social dissent called the *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* (PIDE) (International and State Defense Police). During the 1940s while Portugal was in the throes of economic disparity and slow growth, Salazar collaborated with the Allied forces by maintaining a “neutrality” which, in turn, granted him assistance in the form of Marshall Aid as well as founding membership in NATO. The West’s Cold War strategy of keeping the Portuguese and Spanish dictatorships in place was based largely on an effort to prevent leftist social and political movements akin to Soviet-style communism from taking hold in both countries. Salazar’s use of Portugal’s African colonies (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé e Príncipe, and Cape Verde) as an economic bulwark amidst the global uncertainty of World War II was critical for his perpetuation as a dictator. Throughout this period, the largely landowning and elite class of Lisbon continued to support him. The demobilized rural agrarian Portuguese population, however, was forced to leave the country in search of better opportunities or face further economic hardship. It
would be decades before those that left would be able to return following Salazar’s death in 1970 and the end of his Estado Novo project in 1974.

Salazar maintained power until 1968, when he was incapacitated following an accident in which he suffered a brain hemorrhage. An advisory board quickly replaced him with Marcello Caetano (1968–1974), whose career was marked by his defiant resistance to decolonization of Portugal’s African territories. The continued maintenance of Portugal’s empire in Africa came at a high cost. The regime spent nearly half of Portugal’s GNP at the end of the 1960s on Portuguese troops in Africa (Graham and Quiroga 512). This economic nosedive was further exacerbated by the global oil shock of 1973. Caetano’s overzealous reliance on the unwavering support of the military backfired when he was overthrown by that same army. On April 25, 1974, the Movimento das Forças Armadas–MFA (Armed Forces Movement), headed by General António de Spínola, led a coup d’état in Lisbon that later became known as the Revolução dos Cravos (The Carnation Revolution). The name derives from the carnations that were placed in the muzzles of soldiers’ rifles as well as pinned on their uniforms by the population that took to the streets that day. The flower holds greater meaning as there were minimal shots fired and the coup effort was mostly peaceful. That day effectively ended Salazar’s Estado Novo project.

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3 One of the major consequences of the Revolution particular to post-dictatorial Portugal was the process of decolonization and the subsequent handling of the retornados (the returned) ethnic Portuguese that were considered refugees. It is estimated that nearly one million Portuguese returned home from the former African colonies in addition to others who had fled the dictatorship in search of a better life elsewhere (mainly Brazil, the United States, Venezuela, and France).
Today the event is commemorated in Portugal as *Dia de Libertade* (Freedom Day). Replacing Caetano was the MFA backed General Spínola, who established a provisional government of senior officers of the military and began what is known as the *Processo Revolucionário em Curso*–PREC (Continuing Revolutionary Process).\(^4\) After multiple provisional governments and failed coups from both the radical left and the more conservative wing of Portuguese society, a 1976 constitution was adopted, and Portugal held its first new constitutional government with socialist Mário Soares as Prime Minister.\(^5\) In March of 1977, Soares filed for ascension into the European Economic Community, and nearly ten years later, in 1986, Portugal became a full member state.

In 2005, thirty years after the dictatorship of Salazar (and its continuation by Caetano), the first official organization to resist a revisionist history of the Salazar dictatorship was established. Specific to its mission was to combat conservative Salazar sympathizers’ attempts to frame his legacy as one of staunch antifascism and patriotic devotion to Portuguese ideals. This civil organization, *Não apaguem a memória* (Don’t erase memory), protested efforts to destroy sites of historic memory of the resistance of the *Estado Novo* epoch. The first direct action taken by the organization was an unsuccessful attempt to prevent turning the PIDE headquarters in Lisbon into luxury apartments (Sarmento 70).

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\(^4\) For a more thorough discussion of the Portuguese transition to democracy see Maxwell’s *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*.

\(^5\) Not to be confused with the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Spain following its dictatorship, *Adolfo Suarez*. 
Confronted with the growing neoliberal landscape of the 21st century, organizations like these sought to “highlight the existence of competing stories and ‘dissonant heritages’” as historical distance leaves this dark moment in Portuguese history behind (Sarmento 70). If the Portuguese history of the post dictatorship was focused on the decolonization of imperial Ultramar territories, Spain’s transition was based on the internal divisions of competing autonomous identities criminalized by Francisco Franco. Franco ascended to power in 1939 in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War that dismantled the Second Spanish Republic. Declaring himself the Caudillo of Spain, he quickly established a one-party system based on a unified Catholic Spain in which autonomous identity languages and practices, including speaking Basque, Galician, and Catalan in public, were prohibited. 6 Dissent in any form was quickly punished by forced labor camps, torture, execution, or indefinite detention. Although declared officially neutral during World War II, he was a conspirator to many of the Axis nations’ ideals (more so than Salazar) while at the same time, given his deep hatred of communism, he was also tolerated and supported by Western Allies, which permitted Spain UN membership in the mid 1950s. Spain’s inclusion in NATO came much later than that of Portugal, well after the Franco dictatorship ended in 1982.

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6 The motto prompted by the dictatorship was “Una, Grande, y Libre” (One, Great, and Free) in a nationalist discourse used to promote a unified country (resisting autonomous and autochthonous identities like Basque and Catalan), an imperial country (maintaining its territories in Africa despite losing all of its overseas empire in the Americas), and a country free from external ideologies like those of Marxism and freemasonry.
Franco’s health declined during the early 1970s: a signal of an uncertain future for Spain as his death felt impending. In 1973, long time confidant and member of Franco’s advisors, Luis Carrero Blanco, became Prime Minister of Spain, and public perception at the time was that he would continue Franco’s legacy as his replacement. Not six months into Carrero Blanco’s new role, members of the Basque terrorist organization *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*—ETA in Madrid—assassinated him. As Franco fell ill in 1974 and his faculties faltered, he tapped Juan Carlos de Borbón as his successor due in part to Franco’s long-standing monarchist sympathies. Although outwardly supporting Franco until his death, Juan Carlos quickly instituted reforms, halted the ultraconservative trajectory of the regime, and dismissed then–Prime Minister Carlos Arias Navarro, who had been attempting to continue Francoist policy, undermining Juan Carlos’s effort to democratize the country. Shortly thereafter, Adolfo Suárez became the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Spain of the post-Franco era in 1977.

What transpired following the first democratic elections since the Second Republic was a cultural awakening that has been known and theorized in many ways and through various frameworks: socioeconomically as *El Desencanto*⁷; in

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⁷ The *desecanto* is thought of as a postmodern disenchantment of the failings of the fledgling liberal democratic system put in place on top of the socioeconomic policies of Francoism. See Vilarós, *El Mono del Desencanto*, which heavily critiques the artificially seamless break with the past following the death of Franco as a start to a new epoch for Spain.
visual studies as *El Destape*\(^8\); socioculturally as *La Movida*\(^9\); and historically as *La Transición*. Another critical arena for contemporary Spanish politics has been recent debates about historical memory of the Spanish Civil War and subsequent dictatorship, particularly during the tenure of Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004–2011). Enacted in 2007, his signature legislation, *Ley de la Memoria Histórica* (Historical Memory Law) calls, amongst other things, for the removal of Francoist imagery in public spaces and government buildings, prohibition of political events at Franco’s burial ground, *El Valle de los Caídos* (The Valley of the Fallen), and state aid in exhuming and identify remains of the victims of Francoist repression who are disappeared or buried in mass graves.\(^{10}\)

Particular to the Iberian peninsula and perhaps Mediterranean countries more broadly during the 20\(^{th}\) century was a move from liberal republics to fascist dictatorships that crushed dissenting voices in the name of their unified, nationalist, Catholic mission. Essential for their continuance was the support of western allies, mainly the United States, which turned a blind eye to human rights abuses committed in each country in the interest of its own geopolitical Cold War strategy. In the aftermath of the ousting of both dictatorships has been a popular attempt in both countries at addressing the longstanding damage (e.g. emotional,

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\(^8\) The *destape* is characterized as a cinematographic pervasiveness of full frontal nudity (predominantly female) that stood in stark contrast to years of Franco state censorship. See Ponce’s *El Destape Nacional*.

\(^9\) The *Movida Madrileña* (The Madrid Scene) is known historically as a cultural renaissance predominantly felt in the capital. See Nicholas and Rosi Song’s *Back to the Future: Toward a Cultural Archive of La Movida*.

\(^{10}\) For a more general analysis of the politics of memory during the transition, see Resina’s *Disremembering the Dictatorship*. 
physical, material) committed by the regimes. It is within this context—popular post dictatorship movements toward redressing damage—that Queer Iberian Cinema is made.

**Contribution to the Field**

My dissertation has resonance in the field of Hispanic and Lusophone Studies, particularly due to its effort to forge new alliances and connections across two disciplines that have sometimes been (in)conspicuous bedfellows. Although Queer European cinema has been examined in recent years, many times Spanish and Portuguese productions in this arena have been largely—if not completely—left out, particularly in recent texts such as *What’s Queer About Europe?* and *Queer Cinema in Europe*. However, when there is consideration given to queer cultural production in Iberia, it is largely focused on a “Spanish” national context, excluding Portugal, as well as centrally figured on titans such as Pedro Almodóvar. Though Almodóvar has done much to redefine LGBT/Queer cinema at an international level, as well as put contemporary Spanish film in a place of prominence amongst other great national cinemas; his saturation of the market has left little space for theorizing connections across different places and spaces in Iberia. What, if any, are the unifying tendencies found in Iberian film that deals with queer identity? To what extent are the directors of the films studied in this dissertation in dialogue with each other in terms of content, context, and cinematic technique?
Description of Chapters

In the first chapter of my dissertation, I analyze the Portuguese film, *Morrer Como Um Homen* (2009), focusing on the film's soundtrack as a means through which the director, João Pedro Rodrigues interrupts, in a heteronymative sense, the “official,” “facile,” and “singular” narratives of a completely reconciled Self. By stopping us in these moments of interruption—whether temporal, generic, or epistemological—the soundtrack’s “narrative” works in ways that loosen up the uniformity of the plot, the structure and linkage between scenes through spatial and temporal disjunctions, as well as the understanding of the articulation of the sequence of scenes in the film. These interruptions complicate the idea that the diegesis is unidirectional, uniplanar, and exclusively complemented by an extradiegetic soundtrack that plays in conjunction with the visual narrative.

The second chapter, a documentary film by Catalan director Ventura Pons titled *Ocaña: Retrat Intermitent* (1978), invites the spectator into the world of burgeoning artist José Perez Ocaña. Ocaña finds himself moving around Spain due to his queer identity, longing to escape persecution and ridicule while at the same time never giving up the conservative Catholic rituals, traditions, and cultural production of his home of southern Spain. Much more than just a “hybrid” subject, the documentary works through the contradictory nature of Ocaña’s own subjectivity and incomplete self which is mirrored through Pons’s cinematographic technique of interrupting Ocaña’s narration. At the same time, the narration provides snapshots of the multiplicity of selves, and the
(heteronymativic) nature of his Being through interludes. I argue that the multiplicity of voices, faces, and spaces which Ocaña inhabits, along with the documentary genre, provide a means of truth telling. They gesture that Ocaña’s life, body, and spirit are not a work of fiction, but instead reveal kernels of a true self that is left to be discovered by future encounters with Ocaña (the artist).

My third chapter further develops how heteronymativity is at work in the Iberian context through an analysis of the filmography of Pedro Almodóvar, putting him in conversation with the directors of the first two chapters. I examine the subversive nature of Almodóvar’s most infamous work—the film Kika (1993)—as well as his Oscar-winning Todo Sobre Mi Madre (1999), in comparison with Los Amantes Pasajeros (2013). This later film, I argue, reveals that mainstreaming and international recognition have rendered certain heteronymativic strategies (il)legible.
Chapter 1—Unexceptional Splendor: On the Particularity of Portugal in *Morrer Como Um Homem* (2009)

"Autopsicografia"
O poeta é um fingidor.
Finge tão completamente
Que chega a fingir que é dor
A dor que deveras sente.
E os que lêem o que escreve,
Na dor lida sentem bem,
Não as duas que ele teve,
Mas só que éles não têm.
E assim nas calhas de roda
Gira, a entreter a razão
Ésse comboio de corda
Que se chama o coração.
—Fernando Pessoa

"Autopsychography"
The poet is a faker
Who’s so good at his act
He even fakes the pain
Of pain he feels in fact.
And those who read his words
Will feel in his writing
Neither of the pains he has
But just the one they're missing.
And so around its track
This thing called the heart winds,
A little clockwork train
To entertain our minds.
—Translation by Richard Zenith (314)

João Pedro Rodrigues is a relatively *mystérieux Portugay* director whose work has reached critical acclaim primarily through a “trilogy” of queer films: *O Fantasma* (2000), *Odete* (2005), and *Morrer Como Um Homem* (2009).¹¹ These films transcend sexual, gender, geographic, spatial, and temporal boundaries. Although he is known on the international film festival circuit (Cannes, Toronto, Venice, etc.) he has not been met with the same recognition inside his native Portugal. This is due to a particularly small market for cinema in Portugal, and an even smaller one for queer Portuguese cinema. João Pedro Rodrigues remarks about his personal position in the Portuguese cinematic landscape, stating:

¹¹ The playful label of *mystérieux Portugay* was created by Jean-Baptiste Morain in an interview he conducted with João Pedro Rodrigues in 2010.

(I don’t know . . . I know Pedro Costa, Miguel Gomes, [Manoel de] Oliveira a little bit who is from Porto . . . We make very different films. I, I have a place, a little one but I don’t have a fan club! [laughter] Very few films are popular in Portugal. The country produces less and less, about ten films each year. We have fewer funds than during the early 2000s. It’s a shame. We, Portuguese filmmakers, are mobilizing so that it changes).

Rodrigues’s use of a “fan club” underscores the precariousness of his situation. He maintains a tenuous relationship as a queer director on the margins of a country regarded as already semiperipheral (Boaventura de Sousa Santo 11).12 His noting a lack of fan club reflects, on the surface, his humility despite being a respected filmmaker; however, even more telling, it also signals a history of Portuguese cinema where financial support has always been scarce and largely

12 The use of semiperipheral remarks on the marginalized space of Iberia (on the periphery of Europe but still very much pertaining to a dominant discourse of Europe).
based on a dependency of international collaboration or looking outside the
borders of the nation.

This scarcity of film production in Portugal does not easily lend itself to
investigating the reasons behind the lack of popularity of Portuguese film inside
Portugal. With this in mind, in order to better investigate “what Portuguese
filmmaking is,” a larger ontological issue emerges: “Who or what is Portuguese to
the Portuguese?” Although I am not suggesting the introduction to the history of
Portuguese cinema and João Pedro Rodrigues’s location inside it in these first
pages is in any way exhaustive, it provides a necessary background to
substantiate what I argue. The medium of film becomes a vechile to modernize
Portugal despite the content of its narrative being rooted in the past. In many
ways Portuguese cinema has historically participated in this dialectic of
representing the present past of Portugal as a “nation.” This ontological question
of Being has shape shifted into different forms during Portugal’s history, but in
terms of the “national,” “who we are” has unresolved questions. In fact, for much
of its recent history, the country attempted to capture the imaginary of “Portugal”
through film (Baptista 3).\textsuperscript{13}

The origins of Portuguese cinema began similarly to other cinema schools
and nationalized cinemas. During the 1890s to the 1920s, which falls in line with

\textsuperscript{13} To be clear, the question of the national wasn’t exceptional or singular to Portugal; for
as long as the Hollywood studio system has/had a death grip on the market, there will
always be a group of actors (literally and figuratively) to challenge it and Portuguese
cinema has been largely positioned as a response to the United States based studio
system. In other words, film has attempted to answer this question of the national but
hasn’t managed to achieve any kind of resolution to this thorny “national” term.
the silent era, there was an attempt by Portuguese filmmakers to exoticize Portuguese rurality, emphasize the country’s arts, and focus on folklore as a means to attract international audiences as well as the audiences of its colonies. The reinvention of old histories through the “modern” medium of the screen became the *modus operandi* of Portuguese filmmakers. Consequently, there was a rewriting of what Portugal used to be, with little attention to what Portugal was in that historical present moment or imagining what Portugal could be.

Subsequent to the silent film era, the 1930s–1940s were characterized by the prominence of popular urban comedies. These comedies, almost always in the capital city, became known as Lisbon Comedies, which were primarily based on Lisbon Vaudeville Theater productions in their use of a star system. The unique aspect of these formulaic films was the construction of the city/countryside and urban/rural dichotomy which represented Lisbon not as a freeing city of anonymity and unknowing but instead a space of enclaved barrios or mini-villages; in essence, imagining Lisbon as having the same intimate qualities as those found in sparsely populated agrarian communities outside the capital (Bautista 7). Later on in the 1940s, National Portuguese cinema aligned more closely with the Salazar dictatorship’s interest in creating historical super productions that integrated narratives and discourses around a notion of a shared patrimony through literary adaptations to film.

The year 1948 was critical in changing the course of Portuguese cinema as the government created the *Fundo Nacional do Cinema*–FNC (National Cinema
Fund) which, contingent on market fluctuations, gave small grants to cineastes to travel and study at prestigious film schools abroad. This emigration of Portuguese film makers from Portugal, which has been regarded as the margins of Europe, toward the enlightened centers of France or Germany is a historical moment in which *heteronymativity* emerges from their films in the way they begin to represent Portugal differently (Bautista 7). Briefly, I implement the term *heteronymativity* as a way to signal the plurality of experiences in determining Portugal as “nation,” given that the term’s very construction is based off of heteronomy—a Being that is subject to a standard external from itself. This movement of overseas education would later inform much of the Portuguese cineastes’ work, which, only decades later, would feel the force of Italian Neo-realism, as a field from which to launch and/or subvert critiques of Fascism. This influence was felt in the subsequent decades as Portuguese filmmakers looked elsewhere in search of their own voice.

In the decade prior to the *Cinema Novo* movement of the early 1960s, nearly all films followed a prescriptive narrative of either incorporated ahistorical popular cultural themes, like fado, bullfighting, soccer, or religion, and/or those of a revisionist/romanticized historical narrative of Portugal. In either case, this form of filmmaking fell out of favor due in part to hackneyed plots or the films’ overall artistically and/or technically poor nature (Bautista 8). This failure, however, yielded a critical moment in Portuguese cinema, *Cinema Novo*.
Comprised of a small informal group of young filmmakers, championed by Manoel de Oliveira, this group resisted the governmental FNC by creating new representations of Portugal that ran outside the confines of acceptability for the dictatorial government’s official narrative. Present in their work was a spotlight on the figure of the social outcast attempting to negotiate the difficulties of Lisbon as a prison of social control and despair of the dictatorship. In many ways this concept of cinema ran antithetical to that of the Lisbon Comedy just a decade earlier. As the movement began to pick up steam, filmmakers petitioned the Gulbenkian Foundation\textsuperscript{14} for the inauguration of the Centro Português de Cinema (Center for Portuguese Cinema) in 1969 in order to allow for greater artistic freedom of imagining the future of Portuguese cinema. The State was quick to respond and only two years later dissolved the FNC, replacing it with the Instituto Português de Cinema–IPC (Portuguese Institute for Cinema). Along with the IPC’s construction, a law was ushered in to accompany it, stating that films no longer needed to be intrinsically “Portuguese” in order to receive financial support; all that was required to receive funds was that they be \textit{produced} in Portugal.

Instead of searching for the “national” Portuguese essence that had been folklorized in previous decades, the prime focus of film following the Carnation

\textsuperscript{14} The Gulbenkian Foundation is a wealthy charitable organization used to advance Portuguese public interests in fields like education, science, and the arts. A comparable organization in the United States context could be the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
Revolution of April 25, 1974 was people living in the quotidian, as a way of documenting or archiving present day history in the making; the lived experience and witnessing of the end of the dictatorship and a route to democracy. It was clear the Portuguese wanted to record this historic moment in order to have future generations not forget the death grip the Salazar dictatorship had on the people. Moreover, many films at the time were ethnographic in nature and in some instances filmmakers rediscovered the rural once again.

After the immediate turmoil of the revolutionary 1970s, Portuguese films of the 1980s began gaining traction on the international film circuits and were widely well received. This relationship, however, was fraught with as many pitfalls as possibilities. This is a historic moment in which one can see a collision of paradigms that encounter each other disruptively in a singularly Iberian context. During this time period, the foreign press bestowed these filmmakers’ work with the label of “Portuguese School” in recognition of their attention to realism. However, the label for some felt patronizing and reductionist because it lumped together all Portuguese filmmakers, despite their touching on a variety of genres of film in addition to diverse subject matter. The term “Portuguese School” was nothing more than a faddish construction by Northern Europeans who felt an invitation to rediscover the periphery of Europe through Portugal at a moment of its “modernization” (running concurrently with Spain)—that is to say, with their integration into the European Economic Community. Overall, “‘Portuguese School’ films mourned a country that wanted to be something else, but found
itself restricted to what it was" (Bautista 13). This "something else" and the
mourning it produced is a desire to be unrestricted, uninhibited, and unapologetic
for their approach to film and their perceptions of the world. Manoel de Oliveira’s
intentional and calculated departure from general conventions of narrative
film as a leader of the Cinema Novo movement permitted a necessary
alternative to just shooting “‘... the artifice of reality, but [instead] the reality of
the artifice” (qtd. in Bautista 9). (Un)fortunately as director João Pedro Rodrigues
remarked about lacking a fan club, and as revealed by the precarious position of
Portuguese cinema both in and outside of Portugal, Rodrigues’s film, Morrer
Como Um Homem is similar to Oliveira’s conception of cinema, one which has
left a legacy of incomprehension for film audiences.

The 1990s focus was placed on marginal, peripheral figures, like João Pedro
Rodrigues’s emphasis on queer subjects. Directors during this time were
unconcerned with what was, had been, or would be regarded as the national
Portuguese imaginary, but instead were concerned about representing the
happenings of marginalized characters on their own terms, not as characters in
relationship to a directly national(ist) discourse. Hence, there was an uptick in the
value bestowed upon the documentary format to capture or reflect that reality.
The use of the documentary format to convey a certain unique lease on
identitarian politics will be discussed in detail elsewhere in this dissertation,
primarily, in chapter two which addresses the complexity of this film genre.
To highlight one example historically contemporaneous with Rodrigues's trilogy of three films, one can turn to the work of director Pedro Costa. In his own trilogy of films (Ossos 1997, No Quarto da Vanda 1999, Juventude em Marcha 2006) Costa focused his attention on the Lisbon slum of Fontainhas where he shed light on “at risk” populations: vagrants, the working poor, and immigrants. What is significant about his work is that the main characters of his films are not the actors (the real life people who live there) but rather the construction of the collective character of the slum itself. Thus, it could be said, as Bautista has suggested, the more that Portuguese directors of previous generations attempted to hunt for the unique singularities of Portugal, the further they distanced themselves from the “real” Portugal that sat right in front of them in all of its unexceptional splendor (9).

In this chapter, I argue that João Pedro Rodrigues’s masterful film addresses the Oliveiran mission of shooting the reality of artifice through the queer characters which inhabit all of the stereotyped trappings of drag, spectacle, and camp, while, at the same time, demonstrating that the reality of artifice is an incomplete and myopic vision of the plurality of Portuguese experience. To this end, Rodrigues uses many real people or untrained “actors” to be the protagonists of the fiction of reconciled identity.

Essential to the discussion of the many aspects of the film I analyze is the aforementioned concept of heteronymativity. At its most basic, heteronymativity is a means of demonstrating, managing, and coping with the sometimes-
contradictory multidimensionality of our Being. Unlike other strategies like a narrative of coming out of the closet which is contingent on a neatly stitched chronicle of finding authenticity as a direct reflection of self worth and identification through a binary (pre-coming out and post-closet), heteronymativity takes an artistic stance to envision itself not as a mere reflection but more vigorously, an image that is subject to perpetual critical interpretation of authenticity.

**Morrer Como Um Homem**

The first scene of the film is an extreme close up of a soldier's face that engages the audience in, by all accounts, a typical scene from a war film as the soldier prepares himself for battle. In drawing conclusions from only the title itself, *Morrer Como Um Homem*, the spectator is invited to draw a reasonable connection to his presumably heroic fate of “dying like a man” as he has a fellow soldier smear war paint over his face. Under a shroud of darkness, he and his army platoon walk through a densely wooded area and the team is later divided into small groups. It is in one of these groups that Cardoso, the war painted soldier from the first shot, shies away from the rest and has a clandestine sexual rendez-vous with a comrade.

The filmic composition of this meeting is developed and enhanced by the attached shadow of the two soldiers who sensually kiss and touch each other’s bodies and ultimately engage in penetrative sex. Within the span of less than
four minutes the spectator is shaken by the destabilizing and transgressive rupture from the “war” genre, which orients the spectator toward the genre’s homosociality/homoerotic component. No longer can the spectator’s impression be one of traditional constructed notions of manhood; a brave heterosexual macho soldier iconized by this variety of film. Rodrigues instead loosens up the audience from their previous filmic and societal conditioning, creating a stage from which to engage in the complexity of the themes developed in his film, which, by these marked interruptions of genre, make the film difficult to classify.

Also within this first scene we are introduced to an overarching theme in the film, which is the notion of “performance”. Since we know these men engage in homosexual activity together, can we re-appropriate Cardoso’s camouflage as “makeup” instead of “war paint”? Does his alleged feminization by breaking with the hegemonic masculinity found in the war genre make the movie immediately queer? Can this gay soldier die like a man despite his performativity of straightness inside a culture deeply rooted in traditional notions of bravery? Rodrigues invites us to entertain these questions. What is clear is the characters that populate the rest of this film are ones defined by their remarkably performative aspects: drag queens, transvestites, transgender individuals, not to mention “queer” characters (as is the case for Rosario) all of which will be explored later in this chapter.

The film’s main character is Tonia. She is a career drag queen who is at a cross roads as she realizes that, much like her female contemporaries in
formalized film, television, and theater, her older age is marked with a waning public interest which consequently means less work. For the spectator, her performance on stage fits within ascribed sexist conditioning: older actress yields the need for a younger replacement while older male actors receive the title of “seasoned professional” or “veteran”. This is precisely what happens to her as Jenny, a young black transgender woman, captivates her audience with unrivaled beauty and eroticized exoticism. To make matters worse, Tonia’s problems at work follow her home where she is met with even more of the same as she mothers a drug addict boyfriend who is half her age. Then there is the most revelatory issue that she is faced with, a transgender identity.

Unlike some men who dress in drag as a cathartic pastime and are not “gay”, Tonia lives her life as woman on and off the stage. Within a hegemonic white, heterosexual, male discourse, a shift from male to female through drag can be understood as synonymous with moving from a place of privilege and power to a place of greater marginalized powerlessness. This paradigm of binaries leaves no room for agency for women much less members of the trans community. It is in this disquieting uncomfortable space that Tonia ruptures a number of binary opposites, not a “full” woman by society’s standards, as she does not have “complete” female genitalia, but also not a man due to her female gender presentation. It is in this space of ambiguity that Tonia receives her agency but also her powerlessness. Tonia’s internalized struggle is multilayered: on one level her Catholic faith and strict morality will not let her change her sex by
removing her penis and the other being the pressure she feels from Rosario—her boyfriend—(a curious name given Tonia’s conflicts surrounding religiosity); a society which legally conditions the limits of gender; and a medical community which dehumanizes the life altering physical changes done to the body by only focusing primarily on the biology rather than the interior psychic space of such changes.

Unlike other queer directors, namely Almodóvar, which will be explored thoroughly in chapter three, João Pedro Rodrigues takes the spectacle out of Tonia’s drag performance as the movie-going audience never sees her perform onstage. “Je voulais faire un peu le contrarie de films tels que Priscilla, folle du désert. Un film très austère avec des travesties, un film antispectaculaire à propos de spectacle” (qtd. in Loret 1). (I wanted to do the opposite of films such as Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. [My film is] a very austere film with transvestites, an anti-spectacular film about spectacle). To this end, he purposefully shot the film with a 1.33 ratio that is essentially incompatible with widescreen projections, a now standard format in use in most theaters (Messias). Ironically, the antispectacularization has very real consequences for the diffusion of his film, as it is incompatible in most theaters since Super 8mm is almost obsolete in North America and Europe (Messias). Notwithstanding, it is in this non-essentialized story of a conventionalized identity—following the daily life of everyday Portuguese—represented through spectacle that Rodrigues crafts an innovative shift from current representations of LGBT characters. However,
Tonia is not the only character in which we see this new representation take place; it is also visible through the sexuality of Tonia’s boyfriend, Rosario.

The battleground of sexuality is fought through the words, actions, and physical body of Rosario throughout the film. He is first introduced in a static shot under low light where he lays on a Lisbon street one night. He is discovered by Tonia who was frantically looking for him after Rosario did not show up to celebrate his birthday at the gay bar where Tonia worked. When she arrives and kneels down to come to his aide, Tonia’s head is out of frame and only her curvy feminine figure is seen and accentuated by a red sequined dress. Rosario, upon recognizing her, comments on how attractive he finds Tonia in the dress she wears, a dress that he made for her. Rosario is a partner and accomplice in Tonia’s professional life as well as her personal one. In this scene, Rosario engages the audience in its understanding of sexuality. Is he straight since he is attracted to Tonia as woman, or is he gay as he ultimately knows that under the exterior of a performative accoutrement hides the evidence of her biology, male genitalia? This early scene primes the general audience to think through hetero and cis notions of gender and sexuality.

As Rosario and Tonia begin walking to find a taxi cab to head to their home, the camera cuts to a shot of a path in a cemetery lit by faintly glowing red and white candles along a row of tombs lining each side. The mise-en-scène is backlit so as to faintly outline Rosario and Tonia’s silhouettes, as they seem to spectrally float with certain tranquility while Rosario begins to sing. In keeping
with Rodrigues’s artistic and cinematic vision in the film, his use of song is quite representational of his creation of an aesthetic based on interruption. There is hardly any extra-diegetic music in the film, but rather, it is the characters themselves that sing *a capella* (as Rosario does) or with only the piano. Rosario’s melodramatic rendition is of a song originally written by an artist named Antonio Variações. Variações was a singer/songwriter and a celebrated icon of the Portuguese LGBT community in the years following the Carnation Revolution during the late 1970s and early 1980s.\(^{15}\) Due to the overall campiness of Variações’s on-stage performance and life in the public eye, his following was small but loyal as he produced visceral reactions that were not always positive by the general Portuguese public, a society during those years that was just opening up from the firm grip of a decades-long dictatorship (Gonzaga).

Rosario’s song elicits an interruption in the narrative, as the song demands an abstraction that leads to uncovering its rich queer history. By citing Variações, that interruption becomes a part of reality, which, paraphrasing Walter Benjamin is critical since we operate under the suspicion that life itself is a form of theater. Despite being known for his camp aesthetic, Variações wrote songs with lyrics strikingly much more profound and personal than what is generally considered the superficiality of the camp spectacle. His song writing artistry was a deep and self-referential understanding of queer through the inspiration of such artistic

\(^{15}\) It is debatable that, in a Portuguese context, individuals would identify under this overarching and predominantly United States based understanding of identity.
greats as the writer Fernando Pessoa and Fado singer Amália Rodrigues (Gonzaga 185–190).

To enter an even deeper level of complexity to Rodrigues’s meta-diegetic soundtrack and Variações’s deep lyrics, Pessoa’s sexuality has never been ascertained despite writing texts with a homosocial/homoerotic charge, a factor that converges with the overall thematic element of Rodrigues’s (de)construction of boundaries and representations of ambiguity (Zenith 37–40). In the case of Amália Rodrigues, her status is also paradoxical as she pushed and redefined the limits of traditional Portuguese Fado music all of which resulted in her status as an iconic legend in Portugal. Fado tradition itself is based on the proletariat: the working poor, prostitutes, and the uneducated (“Amália Rodrigues”). To further highlight the meta-operation of the song’s lyrics and their interpretation by Rosario, the following is a fragment of the song titled, “Erva daninha a alastrar” (Weed spreading):

Só eu sei que sou barro,
Difícil de se moldar,
Argila com cimento e cérebro,
Nem qualquer um sabe trabalhar.

(I only know that I am clay,
Difficult to shape,
Clay with cement and brain
Neither of which anyone knows how to work).

Em moldes feitos não me sei criar,
Em formas feitas podem-se quebrar,
Também não sei se me quero formar

(In ready-made molds I don’t know how to grow,
In ready-made forms that can be broken, 
What's more I do not know if I want to form)

Porque eu não se me quero polir,  
Também não sei se me quero limar,  
Também não se quero fugir deste animal  
Que ando a procurar.

(Because I do not want them to polish me  
I also do not know if I want to be filed down,  
And I do not want to escape this animal  
That I've been looking for).

In these lyrics we see resistance by Rosario to understanding his “being” as something that is prescriptive in nature, however, he still affirms that he is made from the earth through clay, indicating a connection to specific locality or region. As the song lyrics make evident, Rosario expresses an anxiety about coming from or being molded into preconceived notions of sexuality. He even sings that he might not even want to be formed. This echoes the Butlerian understanding of redoubling—“being” and “playing” a certain non-heterosexual sexuality (Butler, “Imitation and Gender” 307). Additionally the evocation of these concepts of “being” and “playing” are not mutually exclusive as they both are essential for the way “being” gets established: through the repetition of how and when you “play” with your sexuality. This idea, according to Butler, is that the “I” that is constructed through certain repeated performances (in an attempt to create a form of cohesion) are, in effect, neutralized because “there is always the question of what differentiates from each other the moments of identity that are repeated” (Butler, “Imitation and Gender” 309). Thus, there is no “I” that precedes the
gender it performs as the repeated actions of the self cannot possibly be exactly the same, which consequentially puts into question the coherence of “I”. In simpler terms, following Butler, Rosario wants to be free from the confines of the conditioning both he and society receive daily by treating divergent sexualities, gender representations, and other markers of identity as perverse, unnatural, and something one could present as a “bait-and-switch” (Butler, “Imitation and Gender” 307–309).

As Rosario and Tonia travel from Lisbon to Northern Portugal to visit Rosario’s brother, Tonia appears to be in desperate need of escape from the harsh realities of her life. The medium close static shot of Tonia’s face against the car window produces a reflection of the scenery outside rushing past her as she articulates an inner space that cannot be expressed in any other way than through song. She continues the parallel musical narrative with another Variações song “Ausente” (Absent), which comes on the car radio and is quickly changed by Rosario. She sings of an absent space in which others project their understanding of what her “self” and aspirations may look like:

*que viagem é essa*
*que te diriges em todos os sentidos*
*andas em busca dos sonhos perdidos*

*lá vai o maluco*
*lá vai o demente*
*lá vai ele a passar*
*assim te chama toda essa gente*

*mas tu estás sempre ausente e não te conseguem alcançá*
(what a trip this is
that runs though you in every way
you’re in search of lost dreams)

there goes a nutjob
there goes a madman
there he goes passing
that’s what all these people are calling you

but you are always absent and they are not able to reach you)

When singing these lyrics in the car she is traveling not only in the car but also traveling from a space of economic hardship by her low wage job as a house drag queen to a space of alternatives and of infinite possibilities, an enchanted forest. Despite João Pedro Rodrigues’s claim that his films are not intended for a specific audience, the selection of his diegetic music throughout the film is uniquely part of Portuguese music history (Morain 1). As demonstrated through his use of Variações (not to mention this artist’s inspiration channeled through Pessoa and Amália Rodrigues), without a background in Portuguese culture, a general global audience would miss the depth of the self-reflexive message he produces through interruption in the film.

It is this dreamlike space mentioned and embodied by the song itself that foreshadows the mythical forest that Tonia and Rosario enter. These woods are the same location where the first scene of the film took place, a space where anything is possible. It is in this thicket where they meet Maria Bakker, a pretentious sassy drag queen who lives a life of solitude and whose repartee is
only enjoyed by the company of her live-in “fellow inmate” as she puts it, Paulinha.

A salient scene that encapsulates many themes that are articulated in the film takes place in Maria Bakker’s home when she invites Tonia and Rosario for tea. The mise-en-scène is representational of “otherness” in all of its aspects. From the eclectic hodgepodge of items collected and placed in the living room such as the indigenous masks on the mantle to the Asian inspired artwork on the walls, it entertains difference and invites dialogue. The conversation that ensues is one of small talk, which later develops around Tonia’s trepidations of retiring from her post as the house drag queen at the gay bar where she works:

M: Depois? Será apenas uma mulher.
T: Serei mesmo?
M: Ter vinte anos para convencer os outros. É igual na altura convencer a si.
T: Como?
M: Não se deixando iludir. Aparece muito importante. Em quanto às aparências, sempre iludir aos outros. É nos?, devemos de iludir-nos também?
T: Há sempre alguém que nos critica.
M: Não, quando estamos sozinhas. Ou, bem acompanhadas.
T: E depois, como é de sustentar-me? Tenho alguém que depende de mim.
M: Ha isso é o verdadeiro problema.

T: I've been doing drag for twenty years. I've reached the end. I can’t afford to and I don’t want to, but it has to be. I don’t know what it will be like after.
M: You'll just be a woman.
T: Will I really?
M: You have had twenty years to convince other people. Time to convince yourself.
T: How?
M: Not letting yourself be fooled. Appearances are very important. As for appearances, they’re useful to fool other people. Should we fool ourselves as well?
T: There’s always someone criticizing us.
M: Not when we’re on our own. Or in good company.
T: And afterwards, how will I support myself? I have someone who depends on me.
M: That is the real problem.

Bakker sheds light on the grim reality of acceptance of one’s own self. Drag for Tonia has been more about gaining financial capital than it has been about getting to know herself as a person. In the same way that she has envisioned herself as fooling her spectators into believing she is the same ageless Tonia, she has also fooled herself into believing that she is happy with the life she is leading. Tonia seems to understand herself in a sort of gendered androgyny. She considers her drag performance and her “female” stage appearance as something not fully corresponding to her private life. Although she has all the campy trappings of female spectacle on stage (e.g. boa, crown, gaudy dresses, high heels, heavy colorful makeup) this performance does not define her personhood as Butler underscores in the differentiation between “being” versus “playing.” This conversation with Maria Bakker demonstrates the problematic nature of drag performance. Men control markers of femininity in a way that is not necessarily anti-phallocentric or anti-patriarchal, as they are sometimes appropriated for spectacle in a way that mocks forms of femininity by way of theatrical exaggeration. This conversation sheds light on why João Pedro Rodrigues “despectualizes” drag in a way that disrupts an otherwise
compounding repetition of performance, which is disingenuous to women (Hooks 148). Rodrigues does not stop at just addressing the category of female, but also, another layer of subjectivity, the African female.

**Jenny: Essentialized representation or Portuguesely authentic?**

The audience is introduced to Jenny, a black transgender woman that brings to light the deeply unresolved and, in many ways, haunting specter of postcolonial Portuguese modernity. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Portugal has long been entrenched in binaries of hegemonic colonialism such as subject/object, civilized/uncivilized, culture/nature, human/animal that have lead to a continued crisis concerning the question: "Who are we?" a question posited earlier in this chapter (11). Jenny seems to stand in for Portugal itself, and she is positioned precariously within another binary construction: her instability of belonging and not belonging to a European discourse indicative “of a struggle not against a past present but rather against a present past” (de Sousa Santos 13).

In the pages that follow, there are various moments highlighted in Rodrigues’s film that underscore the untranslatability of the subaltern experience to an imperialist one. Following theorizations by Rey Chow, I will argue that Rodrigues represents the present past of Portugal through his cinematic interruption of the native’s (in)congruency with the colonists’ own personal identity. In addition, I

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16 This is also why Tonia at the end of the film sings in a cemetery in full drag a fado song demanding the need to live in the plural.
argue, following Bruno Latour, that the question of the “modern” is precisely the theoretical structure that legitimizes the perpetuation of the colonial gaze through the imagetic fascination of the black native. Studying these imagetic encounters between native and colonizer allows for a radical queer color critique regarding hegemonic structures of looking and (de)humanizing representations of black subjects.

To highlight one example of many in which this “present past” operates, early in the film it becomes apparent to the audience that Tonia is envious of Jenny’s beauty and youthfulness, as she is the visual reminder of ephemeral characteristics of her own identity. A sequence of shots, particularly one of her shoes, creates a cinematic blasón in an effort to index Jenny’s attributes in order to praise them and reiterate the notion that time is fleeting given Tonia’s resentment and anxiety around Jenny. As both women prepare backstage, Tonia helps Jenny zip up her white beaded gown, but in the process forces the zipper too hard and cuts her. She then presses her lips over the wound and faces the camera where Jenny’s blood is smeared over and around her lips. The blood symbolically represents the youth running through Jenny as she is the “young blood” in the line-up of drag queens at the bar. This blood also acts as a representation of the blood on the hands of Tonia for her racist attitudes towards Jenny, but more importantly, the bloodshed during the slave trade in the colonial
Deeply seeded in Portuguese history is the Portuguese character in literature that drinks the blood of the native and is in effect, a cannibal. This character is unique in that it is a matriarchal figure doing violence to the colonized/enslaved, which comes in sharp contrast to the paternalism of lusotropical ideals.  

As the domineering white matriarch’s envy festers, another encounter between Jenny and Tonia surges in the only moment of the film where one of the characters is actually on stage—despite being a film emphasizing the lives of drag queens and performers—during a dress rehearsal. Rodrigues disrupts and

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17 The practices of Portuguese occupation and control of the overseas territories of their empire in Africa were founded on an attempt to Europeanize the native constituent African populations. Despite being propagandized as an interchange of cultural production, intellectual curiosity, as well as commercial trade, the flow of these aspects of culture was unidirectional in a way that was contrary to the largely celebrated lusotropicalism found in Brazil. This process called *cafrealization* was one through which the Portuguese became “Africanized” despite being largely discouraged and stigmatized. This term addresses the ways in which Eastern Africans perceived the way in which the Portuguese conducted themselves as civilized and cultured while at the same time attempting to adopt local ways of thinking, knowing, living (224 Bender) (23 Sousa Santos). By in large the perspective or disavowal of this process of the Portuguese and the African peoples they “colonized” is reflected by the following disaffirmation from General Galvão do Melo an original member of the Portuguese Junta of National Salvation: “Pouco aproveitamos da África, e a África pouco aporveitou de nós. O Povo Português e o Povo Africano permaneceram desconhecidos um do outro: estrangeiros” (qtd. in Bender 224). (We benefited little from Africa and Africa benefited little from us. The Portuguese people and the African people remained unknown to each other: foreigners.)

18 Lusotropicalism could be understood as a white lie that the Portuguese propped up as “truth”. The story goes that the Portuguese had a unique and inherent way of tolerantly working through race relations in their overseas territories located in the tropics and non-europeanized/industrial areas. They used the *mestizagem* of Brazil as an example of their handiwork with the help of Gilberto Freyre in order to perpetuate this myth, which, in some circles, continues to have currency despite the end of the Salazar dictatorship in 1974 in Portugal and the independence of the ex colonies in Africa.
resists the spectacularization of performance by “staging” reality through a practice run-through instead of an actual live performance.

**Eclipsing Blackness**

This second scene in which Tonia encounters Jenny is one that works on multiple levels: to expose spatiotemporal logics of coloniality (through a modernist lens) and the failure to authenticate the imagetic native (mise-en-abyme). In this practice run, there is a close up shot of Jenny singing the classic drag song, *Total Eclipse of the Heart* by Bonnie Tyler. Fitting within the larger scope of (in)visible diegetic queer structures (e.g. heteronymativity) and (inter)textuality in the film, the song’s title and thematic are indicative of the queer post colonial encounter/network. According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, *eclipse* is defined as “3A) A fall into obscurity or disuse; a decline. 3B) “a disgraceful or humiliating end; a downfall” and finally, “1) to obscure; darken 2) to surpass; outshine.” In many ways the song title also functions more literally in the way it anticipates the eclipsing of Jenny’s image to one of defilement. While she performs her lip-sync, Tonia immediately interrupts her. Due to Tonia’s own insecurities as a commodified and commercialized figure of the Lisbon gay scene (her own eclipsing in the making—as her popularity is in decline), she demands that Jenny take off her blonde wig and explains why she is the only blonde performer at the bar. Jenny very confidently takes off her wig exposing her long black hair which she shakes out casually and
lets her “Europeanized” coded performance be exposed in a public way to reveal her features that are also paradoxically in plain sight. Jenny’s black naked body becomes the visual index of colonial time. To this end, as Fanon has argued in *Black Skin White Mask*, the black becomes an imago, attempting to call forth a past disaster but fails to do so (the originary witnessing of colonial violence). In essence, the Black is a temporal “passing”, an attempt to bring forward to the present a general past that keeps appearing. In essence, the Black is a direct image of time and simultaneously indexes this “past-present” and “present-past” dialectic (Keeling 69–70).

In a role reversal, instead of being humiliated by Tonia’s demands that she strip down, with the help of Rosario, who sensually takes off her sleeves and dress exposing her idealized feminine figure, she is instead powerfully silent. Jenny’s silence in the wake of the untranslatability of her experience, demonstrates an attempt to reach the authentic “native” acts ephemerally, in a mise-en-abyme of sorts. What is revealed by her naked body is no secret, she stands as a trans black woman. If Tonia was hoping to reveal a secret under her clothes, the secret speaks to Tonia’s own phantasm that haunts her: making meaning/sense of her identity as Portuguese, trans, colonizer, and parent all of which are crucially traced to a subsequent scene. It is in this phantasm that one can see the embodiment of Boaventura de Sousa Santo’s statement earlier in

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19 Regarding silence, Chow aptly writes, “. . . silence is at once the evidence of imperialist oppression (the naked body, the defiled image) and what, in the absence of the original witness to that oppression, must act in its place by performing or feigning as the pre-imperialist gaze (333).”
this chapter regarding Portugal’s struggle not against a past present but a present past. The present past takes the form of an Otherly being, a ghost whose uncanny similarities interrupt Tonia’s own understanding of self, and provoke a confrontment through her interiorized look at her present past.

Despite Jenny’s naked female body, Tonia exclaims to Rosario’s gawking, “What’s the matter Rosario? You’ve never seen a naked guy?” Present in this scene is not only an attempt at defiling the image on stage but also the defilement of the trans black body as well. What purpose does it serve to resurrect that native? How does (or not) Rodrigues reinscribe a violence he attempts to undo cinematically?

Rey Chow argues, in thinking through the problematic nature of nativisim and its repercussion on the discourses of race:

The problem of modernity, then, is not simply an ‘amalgamating’ of ‘disparate experience’ but rather the confrontation between what are now called the ‘first’ and ‘third’ worlds in the form of the *différend* [Lytard], that is, the untranslatability of the ‘third world’ experience into the ‘first world’. This is because, in order for her experience to become translatable, the ‘native’ cannot simply ‘speak’ but must also provide the justice/justification for her speech, a justice/justification that has been destroyed in the encounter with the imperialist. (333)
If, as Chow astutely articulates, modernity—as it relates to the notion of temporality and politics of progress—is the roadblock to the translatability of experience from the third to the first world, Rodrigues reconfigures a similar colonial encounter by playing with spectators’ viewing practices. In the next scene this temporal aspect of modernity is interrupted and dismantled by Rodrigues in a scene located in a queer enchanted forest.

In a later scene, Jenny is also “stripped” to a place of spatiotemporal limbo, as she is a part of the décor of Maria Bakker’s living room in the same scene where Tonia laments her complicated situation of facing an eminent retirement. Upon entering Maria Bakker’s house, the camera focuses on her high heels as she saunters across the tiled floor where the camera cross cuts to a life size photograph of Jenny. In this photograph Jenny is “primitively” naked, only adorned by tribal/native/indigenous jewelry, and the quick shift between the juxtaposed shots highlights even further the clear difference between Maria and Jenny. Tonia upon recognizing this image could be her colleague, Maria interjects, “Um magnífico espécimen do Nuba . . . Uma feiticeira . . . Um efeito de um amigo aventureiro, um caçador de tesouros. Este é raridade.” (It is a magnificent specimen of Nuba . . . A witch . . . A gift from an adventurer friend of mine, a treasure hunter. This is unique.) Maria Bakker engages in a nativist discourse by signaling native art as timeless to be preserved and institutionalized as museum art on display for public consumption although in this case, it is fetishized in her living room. At the same time, Bakker also suggests that this
native art can be categorized as historically and ethnographically specific in nature, pertaining to a historiogeographic space that is in sharp contrast to the one found in contemporary, civilized European Portugal (Chow 331–332). In this sequence of shots, a queer black gaze taken from the point of view of Jenny on the wall, looking down on the women in the room who are returning the gaze, interrupts the audience’s expectations. This point-of-view gaze through the eyes of Jenny in the photograph (through the camera) makes Maria, Tonia, and Rosario aware of themselves. This interrupts the discourse of the colonizer as a powerful subject because the colonized, the camera as Jenny’s eyes, now has the power of the gaze and, instead, it prompts a reflection of the colonizer’s view of the native as his/her mere image. This reinvisioning is made possible by situating the scene in an enchanted forest, whose constitution is not held to the spatiotemporal logics of the “modern.” In fact, the forest is a timeless space of reflection, critiquing the bedrock of modernity’s desire for a narrative of progress. The space of the forest with its unknown and alternative powers dismantles the dualism of the “modern constitution”, a concept articulated by theoretician Bruno de Latour whose scholarship will demonstrate the power behind the space/place of Maria Bakker’s home in an area of unimagined possibilities.

**Latour de force**

Bruno Latour’s text, *We Have Never Been Modern* sets out to interrogate the Descartian dualism of the subject/object, a theory contingent on the idea that the
subject is the only entity that has agency and intentionality (I think therefore I am), which affords him/her the power for epistemological discovery not the objects themselves. In essence, Latour (de)constructs the “modern constitution”, the dichotomy of Nature/Culture by dismantling some of its presumed theoretical guarantees: 1) nature is transcendent (non-created/already present in the world) and 2) culture is immanent (created/contingent). Through a lengthy discussion of scientific empiricism he concludes that knowledge is always constructed and scholars operate under the assumption of an objective truth (something that is universal in time and space) by constructed, mediated facts. He argues that scientists are not mediators of knowledge but instead delegators that merely convey what nature shows them: its own objective transcendence. Even our understanding of the epistemology of nature is always mediated by something else. With society’s failure to maintain a very clear distinction between nature/culture, he suggests we have never been modern but instead live in a world saturated with hybrid objects and quasi subjects. Latour puts into question the rigidity of the field of ontology which, according to Latour, is always mediated and in contact with various material bodies (e.g. object/animal, animal/subject, object/object, etc). In essence, object oriented ontology at its core means giving objects agency but devoid of intentionality.

By placing Maria Bakker’s house in an enchanted forest, Rodrigues facilitates an escape from the confines of the Latourian modern constitution which, consequently produces an “undoing” of the issue of translating third world into
first world experience while at the same time, providing a certain level of Benjaminian “aura” to the medium of the photograph of Jenny. Thus, this employs a queer strategy albeit only for a moment. Walter Benjamin in his fifth and sixth theses in his text *Theses on the Philosophy of History* famously states, “The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again (V Thesis).” In the VI thesis he states, “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.” When Jenny returns the photo/cinematic gaze to the audience that objectifies her, a heightened aura of her own subjectivity “flicks up”. I believe Benjamin understands articulating the past historically is not to recognize the way it “really” was, but rather, not to interpret the photograph as a mimetic facsimile of what the other past images should have looked like. Instead, it is the type of memory that flashes up with the specificity of a unique shot in a moment of vulnerability when it is at risk of being destroyed.

This scene also highlights the importance of Jenny as the object of a Western understanding of Otherness as Marianna Torgovnick argues in *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives*:

> What is clear now is that the West’s fascination with the primitive has to do with its own crises in identity, with its own need to clearly demarcate
subject and object even while flirting with other ways of experiencing the
universe (qtd. in hooks 22).

I would add to Torgovnick’s assertion, that this creation of Other is the means by
which the oppressor also ontologically creates himself/herself. It is clear from
this scene an effort is made to gesture again at the “present past” of the
continuation of Portugal to objectify Otherness, in particular, its former African
colonies in a way that exploits, reinscribes, and maintains the status quo.
Returning to Latour, this photograph of Jenny becomes a type of hybrid object
and the colonizer a quasi-subject, thus, permitting a density to this cinematic
exchange of glances between those invited into Maria Bakker’s house and a
“primitive” Jenny who greets them.

On Being Portuguesely Specific?

At the end of the film as Tonia is dying from a terminal illness, Jenny visits her
in the hospital. Before entering, there is a shot of Jenny’s back as she looks in
through the glass door of Tonia’s room. She is dressed in casual clothes, with
her natural hair exposed. In this brief shot the audience views Tonia in the
background taking off her curly blonde wig to expose her hidden appearance, a
“masculine coded” short haircut, which highlights the performative aspect of her
life in an ambiguous space of “being”, (ontological/positionality [ser vs. estar])
between two gendered identities. The subject and object of “being” in the
Portuguese context is a concept that is deep seeded and contentious. Although famously rehearsed in the English language during the Shakespearian era (to be or not to be), the final encounter between Jenny and Tonia forces the spectator to reflect on how disruptive the specificity of the Portuguese case can be: an identity in Portuguese grounded in (between) two forms of being, but singularly Portuguese in its discussion/treatment of post-coloniality.

T: Agora e tua vez. Podes fazer tudo diferente.
J: Olhe para mim, Tonia. O que que estás a ver?
T: Uma linda mulher.

T: Now, it’s your turn. You can do everything differently.
J: Look at me, Tonia. What do you see?
T: A beautiful woman.
J: I never had friends just envy . . . and envy. Don’t worry. I don’t want your place. We are all here passing. None of this is the end.

From a point-of-view shot from Tonia’s bed when the words, “A beautiful woman,” are uttered, the spectator sees that Jenny is dressed with a blue medical gown as well as a white facemask. Tonia’s language is as sanitized as the boxy gown that covers up Jenny’s black body. In this space of medicalization, a hospital smock hardly remarks on Jenny’s presumed “womanly” figure. There is no use of either ser/estar to address Jenny’s state of being, in essence, reducing her through absence to a space of objectification. She has no ontological or locatable being for Tonia; she is just “a woman.” The compounding nature of those words is magnified by another curious absence by
Tonia who “looks past/through/or leaves absent” Jenny’s blackness in her statement that only remarks on her presumed gender. Despite Tonia escaping reading Jenny’s racialized body in the medical space of the hospital, there is an additional failure on Tonia’s part, perhaps due to the medicalization/pathologization of transgender identity, that she refuses to read the ambiguity of Jenny, who slides between binary gender codes. Tonia’s anxiety about seeing Jenny as a black subject speaks to Tonia’s own phantasm that haunts her through the inability to self situate inside a racialized Portuguese discourse founded on miscegenation.

In regards to the specificity of racialization in the context of the Portuguese, or even more broadly the Iberian context, Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s seminal bilingual article, “Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity”20 seeks to study identity in time/space in the Portuguese language. He argues that time/space is a multidimensional contact zone between the Portuguese and the people of America, Africa, and Asia. Since the fifteenth century, the British as well as other Western non-global south countries have had a negative perspective of the Portuguese and Spanish, considering

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20 “Entre Próspero e Caliban: Colonialismo, Pós-colonialismo e Inter-identidades” and “Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity” were published in different venues and worked their way through several revisions in the terms of conference lectures. A curious omission in the English version of his text is around the figure of the intellectual in discussing postcoloniality. Additionally curious is Sousa Santos’ use of pós-colonialismo with a hyphen in Portuguese while the English version is one word, postcolonialism. This use and omission of the hyphen as a strategy for communicating the discursive field of postcolonial studies raises questions over the perceived smoothness or interrupted nature of the transition from colonial to postcolonial in a given language and a given historical context.
them as equal to peoples of Africa and America largely based on skin color. Sousa Santos states that due to the hybridity of the Iberian peoples, their identities have racialized throughout history by attaching labels of Moorish, Jewish, peasant, primitive, dirty, and slave all in an effort to conglomerate them into the “other” group. (50–52, 22–23).

In this discussion of the functionality of the Prospero and Caliban metaphor are scholars Phillip Rothwell and Ana Paula Fererira, who take up the structuring of Sousa Santos’s metaphorical argument as well as his comparison of Portuguese colonialism to that of the British. Rothwell and Fererira contend that such problematic dualisms engender new challenges regarding the specificity of the Portuguese case. Rothwell’s rebuttal piece titled, “Perverse Prosperos and Cruel Calibans” underscores some noteworthy characteristics of Portuguese colonialism un(der)addressed by Sousa Santos. He argues Portugal could be thought of as a pervert whose colonial history is arranged on complicity from another actor in the pervert’s quest to achieve his/her own pleasure. Rothwell affirms, “Underpinning everything he does, the pervert gets off on transgression that involves some kind of often unlocatable discomfort, but also the acquiescence of the Other he undermines” (315). To apply this metaphor to the case of Jenny in the film would demonstrate her resistance from the Portuguese pervert’s game of domination by again remaining silent, not commenting on Tonia’s inability to see her in the same way that she self-presents and self-identifies. Rothwell adds:
The pleasure in the perverse structure is really about showing the Other where they truly are—their position over an essence, the “estar” that trumps the “ser”. The idea of a purely formal structure to Portuguese imperial culture, one that disavows substance—or rather, whose substance is its form—is really tantamount to saying it can adapt and more importantly, manipulate to meet the varying exigencies of the time. (315)

Following Keeling the Black figure is a temporal “passing”, an attempt to bring forward to the present a general past that keeps appearing. If the Black figure is a direct image of time, then Jenny’s statement suggesting that “We are all here in passing,” takes on new meaning by implicating all coded queer “Others” in constructing ephemeral performative identities. Jenny becomes the pervert and turns the table on Tonia by signaling that Tonia herself is complicit in this transient “passing”; the “estar” as Rothwell argues, which, for Jenny will never have an end point.

The first scene articulated in this subsection of the chapter creates a trajectory for seeing Tonia’s interpellation of Jenny. In the first scene, Tonia resents Jenny for her youthful features and unquestionable beauty and symbolically commits the cannibalesque act of drinking her blood. The second scene is a stripping of Jenny on stage through her performance as an actress, drag queen, and live performer. Then there is an interrogation of the dialectic of
subject/object and colonizer/colonized in a nativist discourse in Maria Bakker’s home. Finally, an encounter in a medicalized setting that reinforces gender not as performative but biological sex determines who you are as Tonia prepares to “die like a man.” It could be said then, that medical discourse figures the context in which you die but it also leaves the story incomplete. Why are we gendering both these actors in the ways that we are? At the heart of this is the queerness felt in each of these exchanges. There is a substantial amount of ambivalence in each scene, as Rothwell underscores in the “estar” aspect of Being, an “estar” vital to any film scene in which temporal placement and contingent performances become coded in specific ways. When Tonia takes off her wig in the final scene she assumes a masculine persona as she prepares to die. Does that signify that we should see Jenny as a proper object of desire under a reaffirmed hetero-patriarchy? Would that mean that the looking relations between these two characters constitute Jenny as an improper object of desire if both Tonia and Jenny are thought of as women in earlier scenes? What I have sought to demonstrate is that the binary system of colonizer/colonized, subject/object, male/female, gay/straight, proper/improper object of desire are all a complicated web of subjectivity, looking relations, and desire. This desire to live simply in the plural is the heart of the Portuguese cinematic queerness demonstrated in film.
Codetta\textsuperscript{21}: Heteronymativity, \textit{Viver No Plural}

The musical term “coda” finds its way into the conclusion of this dissertation chapter to serve as a lynchpin for understanding the (inter)textuality felt throughout the film, but encapsulated in its ending, as Tonia stands high atop a mausoleum singing a (neo)fado song into the credits. As I have argued in this chapter, the development of the queer “actors” as both agents of change and theatrical actors has permitted a complex but never totalizing view of the failure and promise of thinking about Portugal in the context of Iberia, the transgressions of desire, and the autonomy of the individual. Jenny’s affirmation rings true here, as this is not the end, but only the beginning of the discussion.

To conclude, I would like to focus on this song Tonia sings as a means of explicating heteronymativity—which serves to signal the particularity of the locality of Portugal. Additionally this term enables a consideration of how queerness permeates Iberia in a time when the crisis of modernity is manifested through the anxiety of the uncertain destiny of a Western post-colonial (hetero-male) subject.

The film concludes after the drug overdose suicide of Rosario on a beach where he sits nude on a towel. In the moment when he dies, his cell phone rings, the only sound heard over the crashing waves on the beach. The jump cut that follows is to that of a close up of another cell phone, when, a final pan

\footnote{This codetta as I am using it here calls back a bygone era of music of the 19th century in which Beethoven or Brahms expanded the classical practice of the use of the Coda as a way to conclude a musical argument but also allow the listener a way of traveling back to “take it all in” again, arguably a rediscovery.}
reveals Tonia closing the phone and hanging up on Rosario and then pulling back to show her in drag atop a mausoleum in a cemetery in Lisbon. She sings the following lyrics to a song titled *Imenso*:

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Ai como eu quero viver no plural
Este singular é pior que mal
Cavaleiro ignoto na Eternidade
Exílio nos mares da minha saudade
Ignore em mim qualquer solidão
Mesmo na rua, sem tecto nem chão
Enganar o espelho com retrato de mim
Não tenham certezas, eu não sou assim

(Oh how I want to live in plural
The singular is worse than awful
Unknown Knight of Eternity
Exile in the seas of my longing
Ignore in me any loneliness
Even on the street without a roof or floor
Deceive the mirror showing the portrait of me
I have no certainties, I am not that way)
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Despite the song being metaphysical in nature, it gestures at the localities of “being” as well as place. The lyrics evoke life as transcendent of the purported binaries of life/death. Heteronomy is present in these lyrics because Tonia becomes a microcosm of the desire for autonomy. She wants to become the individual she wants to be against the heteronomous forces of patriarchy and capitalism hindering her wants, duties, and desires. Additionally, the act of heteronomy is present in the form of Rosario’s terrible drug addiction as well as his reconciliation of Tonia’s body as being in a space of incompleteness as she floats between normative sexual and gender binaries. What for Rosario would
be “incomplete” is part of the reason why Tonia feels anxious and unsure about
her own desires. She never once desires to be whole but instead to be plural.
This plurality of the self is critical for understanding the ways in which various
manifestations of “self” and “Portugal” appear in the film.

The origin of the song and its own history is a plural one. According to
scholar Ana Paula Ferrerira, the lyrics of this song can be accredited to Paulo
Bragança in his 1996 album titled Mistério do Fado (Mystery of Fado). However, the website IMDb lists Imenso in the film’s soundtrack as composed by
renowned singer and composer Jose Cid. Be that as it may, tracing either of the
trajectories of the song leads back to the heteronymativic nature of this chapter
and film. In fact, this very split in authority over the song is heteronymativic in
nature. To begin, the artist Jose Cid deploys simultaneously a nom de guerre,
nom de scène (d’artiste), and nom d’usage. He implements a nom d’usage as
he abbreviates his name from José Albano Cid de Ferreira Taveres as well as a
nom de scène that is characteristically used by many musicians throughout
history. With regard to José Cid’s nom de guerre, his “last name” can be traced
back to another figure that employed the same nom de guerre, El Cid
 Campeador.

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El Cid was the *nom de guerre* of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, the national hero of Spain who is known for his military leadership during the 11th century that lead most famously to the conquest of Valencia after several sieges of the territory. In the end, these clashes afforded the formation of his own fiefdom along the Mediterranean coast. Thus, El Cid is an epic figure of Iberian history due to the disparate and constant shape shifting of Moorish or Christian territory in an era when the modern constitution of what we now perceive as Spain and Portugal was not yet constructed.

The Iberian history behind Jose Cid’s *nom de guerre* and his *nom de scène* forces the two to collide as they encounter each other again in his early work as founder of the pop-rock group *Quarteto 1111*. The group was known for its innovative style. Their sound was characterized by the inclusion of the harpsichord in contemporary Portuguese music as well as additions such as the Mellotron. As a pop/symphonic rock band of eclectic melodies, one of Cid’s early hits dealt precisely with an uncertain and mythologized era of Portuguese history. The title is almost too-good-to-be-true, *El Rei D. Sebastião*. As the title of the song suggests, the lyrics unpack one of the principal stories of early Portuguese modernity: the hoped return of the King Don Sebastião, who had allegedly perished in the Battle of Alcazaquivir in present day Morocco, while attempting to forge a grand crusade to reclaim a lost route to India through North Africa. His death in battle is often associated with Portugal’s subsequent loss of independence to Spain and the Portuguese empire’s decline. Despite being
marked as a deeply dark era of Portuguese history beginning in 1580, it was also a time in modern history when an Iberian union was formed again, irrespective of the many problems faced by such a remapping of territories. The presence of the heteronomy is felt deeply in this area as both countries tenuously negotiated the desire for autonomy and sovereignty. Many variations of this myth received both lyrical and instrumental treatment in the song, which became popular even outside of Portugal. The consequence of King Don Sebastião’s death is the concept of Sebastianism, that is, that the king, who had no heirs to the throne, survived the battle and would come back to Portugal to reclaim his rightful place as king. In this web of heteronymativity, we find Fernando Pessoa again, who invoked Sebastianism in his epic titled Mensagem (The Message). The text is structured in three parts and the poetry is divided in sections associated with: birth, fulfillment/attainment/actualization, death, and finally, a rebirth.

An alternative way to arrive at the heteronymativity found in the film is through Paulo Bragança. Although he is characterized by Ferreira as androgynous, I feel that a more precise word to articulate his gender presentation would be gender queer or non-binary (15). What is curious about Paulo Bragança is the queerness he both embodies and represents for a post-colonial Portugal. His representation of post-coloniality is revealed in his birthplace, Luanda, Angola not Portugal. Yet, Bragança is not a cherry picked example of this discourse of post-coloniality. Currently, one of the most popular fadistas of the present moment is Mariza, a nom de scène used by Marisa dos Reis Nunes, who was born in
Lourenço Marques (present day Maputo), Mozambique who embodies this traditionally “Portuguese" style. Not surprisingly we see this heteronymativity manifest again. In the same way Tonia attempts to rejuvenate herself through the blood of an African youth in a Portuguese context, the Portuguese have used that same African body to breathe life into an intrinsically “Portuguese“ 19th century tradition of the country’s national music genre, so much so that it is deemed by UNESCO as part of Portugal’s “Intangible Cultural Heritage.”

In excavating the past of the song, *Imenso*, as a way to usher in the credits of the film *Morrer Como Um Homem*, we are left with a dense, intricate, and heteronymatvic snapshot of queerness found in Iberia. Irrespective of which route of terrain you follow you arrive at this same conclusion. One way would be through the metanarrative of Tonia’s yearning to live in this plural, echoed by queer fado singer Paulo Bragança, whose experience is most directly felt through their shared history of living in a queer post-colonial moment of Portuguese history. The other would be experienced through the web of heteronyms of Jose Cid, used to celebrate and complicate an already recondite history of Iberia that is manifested in all means of cultural production, whether they be music, film, folklore, or the very act of narrating history.

**Final Curtain?**

In this chapter I have sought both to analyze the intricacies of a place known as Portugal in the most contemporary of understandings and at the same time disaggregate the particularities of the territory by placing them in a broader
context of understanding cultural phenomena: drag, queerness, post-coloniality in an Iberian context. Through the narrative of queer people of Portugal and more broadly Iberia, we are afforded the possibility to think in the plural, the heteronymic, and as I have put forth, the heteronymative of the place/space/territory called Iberia. Instead of thinking of “naming” as a practice that forecloses the possibilities for self-exploration, Tonia and her relationship to her diegetic and extra-diegetic comrades, Rosario, Jenny, José Cid, Paulo Bragança, and Antonio Variações, demonstrates the openness/fluidity that is characteristic of heteronymativity. Heteronymativity also includes an epistemological orientation. In other words, it is, in part, a way of knowing the world that makes space for disruption and interruption of “official”, “facile”, and “singular” narratives of a completely reconciled Self.23 Heteronymativity that is manifested in the film is not a technique or a concept bound to film but is also applicable to the collision of paradigms that find themselves in Iberia. Each of these heteronymic interruptions—inside or outside of film, collective or individual—makes space to apprehend a truth, an authenticity. Regardless of their perception as successful or failed, interruptions speak to the queerness of the text, the characters, the genre, and/or the geopolitical and social climate of Iberia. Tonia, as I will argue in chapter two, also has allies of other times and spaces in Iberia; one of these allies, José Ángel Perez Ocaña, will be explored

23 This Self could be personal, plural, regional, national, autonomous, etc.
through Ventura Pons’s “intermittent portrait” of the Andalusian drag queen’s emigration/immigration to Catalonia (Barcelona).

Throughout this past chapter, I have highlighted several examples of interruption as a means of seeing or making heteronymativity stand out. This is not any surprise due to the plurality of ways in which interruption is seen: cinematically, temporally, or generically. By stopping ourselves in these moments of interruption, what I have sought to show is how film narrative works in ways that loosen up the uniformity of the plot, the structure and linkage between scenes through spatial and temporal disjunctions, as well as understanding the articulation of the sequence of scenes in the narrative. These interruptions complicate the idea that the diegesis is unidirectional, uniplanar, and exclusively complimented by an extradiegetic soundtrack that plays in conjunction with the visual narrative (Gopalan 19).

In the next chapter, I will, drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin and Laura Mulvey, explicate the desire to flatten, iconify, spectacularize, and nostalgize the queer body of José Perez Ocaña, and, at the same time, signal the limitations of the documentary film genre of achieving legible ideals of realism. As I will further develop in Chapter Two, the role of interruption in heteronymativity is an organic one. This subsequent chapter will elucidate the filmic interruption feature of heteronymativity in order to demonstrate that although José Ángel Perez Ocaña lacked the spoken language through which to communicate his desire to live a
life of plurality, he was able to do so through Pons’s use of interruption and suturing of multiple fields of narration.
Chapter 2—Interrupting Intermittence in *Ocaña: Retrat Intermitent* (1978)

“Salí del armario cuando salí del coño de mi madre” (Olmeda 19). (I came out of the closet when I came out of my mother’s snatch).

In the Portuguese context, *Morrer Como Um Homem* articulated a discontinuity between the main characters’ desires to space and time—particularly Portugal’s historical legacy as a colonial power. The film addressed in this chapter, *Ocaña: Retrat Intermitent*, provides a historical and geopolitical overlap that puts into question the Spanish transition to democracy as a cohesive whole, versus fragmented moments of discontinuity and incongruence. The life of José Ángel Perez Ocaña, a displaced queer Andalusian artist living in Barcelona, is one that has been celebrated historically for its value as a symbol in the popular imagery of Spain’s perceived smooth transition from the Franco dictatorship to democracy. The documentary film that bears his name, *Ocaña: Retrat Intermitent* (1978) by Catalan director Ventura Pons, has been revered as symbolic currency, a declaration of democratic freedom and emergently “postmodern” by/on José Ángel Perez Ocaña’s body. Although there is a political component to his life valuable and worthy of scholars’ attention, an equally significant discussion delves into how a documentary about Ocaña is fertile ground for discussing the anything but seamless questions of identity, gender performance, and queer subcultural lives during the transition.
The film itself it is divided into two basic arenas. On the one hand, the spectator views an autobiographic narration of Ocaña, sitting calmly on his bed in his small apartment in Barcelona, recounting details of his life in a predominantly static, close-up shot. He describes his childhood growing up in rural Andalucía where he was born. During his formative years, he was a social outcast due to his flamboyant personality and attraction to men. Consequently, he was castigated by both his peers and many adults in the village where he lived, leaving him despondent and desperate to leave. He articulates his taste for the Catholic rural traditions, customs, and rituals through talking about his artistry: whether painting virgins and saints for a gallery exhibition, singing a folkloric *copla* song from southern Spain, or theatrically acting out in costume the role of a Spanish *Andaluza*. The second area of the documentary is the interruption of this autobiographical narrative with snapshots of the many “roles” of Ocaña’s artistry. In fact, Ocaña visually performs his love for the popular by dramatizing many of his artistic endeavors in and for the public. It is this dual narrative, created through collaboration with director Ventura Pons’s own artistic vision of fragmenting Ocaña’s story in a cinematic discontinuity, that demonstrates the importance of the “incompleteness” of Ocaña’s life and legacy.

Although the film’s subject has been studied in a larger context of his life in Barcelona (see Preciado), this chapter focuses on the cinematic techniques used by the director to present the complicated and sometimes contradictory nature of Ocaña, who lacked the critical contemporary language to present his Self in a
way that was more reflective of the density of his experience. Although Ocaña believed that his Self was largely fulfilled and complete in the environment of liberal Barcelona, the documentary reveals that his lived experience was not without obstacles. His own vision of Self as unified was symptomatic of historical traumas rooted in the Franco dictatorship, which impeded his own self-portrait as a fragmented, plural, and queer body. The director, Ventura Pons, demonstrates the complexity of Ocaña through cinematic interludes, which demonstrate the plurality of artistic expression Ocaña always sought to convey. Furthermore, his documentary invites attention to the narrative voice that accounted for researchers’ and laypeople’s fascination with his body, in the most voyeuristic of ways. This interruption of both cinematic narrative and Ocaña’s oral narrative brings another dimension of heteronymativity to the foreground: a cinematographic technique/manifestation. This technique is particularly salient in the documentary genre, in which, due to the film’s narrative arc, Ocaña’s own insights about embodiment and subjugated ways of knowing are privileged.

A Brief History of Ocaña’s Place of/in Transition

Pedro G. Romero remarks regarding Jose Perez Ocaña’s location in the historic moment of the Spanish transition to democracy, “His mixture of the Andalusian, progressive politics and unselfconscious taste for the popular, all framed by the context of the political modernization that took place in Spain during the transition years, make it difficult to place Ocaña within the narrative of
our recent history” (396). Assuredly, Romero’s statement acknowledges that Ocaña’s placement within recent Spanish history is a difficult task. Nevertheless, it is essential to examine and contextualize this time period with the goal of better apprehending the arguments I put forward about Pons’s film. Historically speaking, Spain’s transition to democracy was tenuous and was based directly on a promising future built on forgetting. The Pactos de la Moncloa (Moncloa Pacts) of 1977 have been characterized as a negotiated rupture with the past and were accompanied by a so-called pacto de olvido (Pact of Forgetting). In these agreements, the democratically elected president (at that moment president-elect) Adolfo Suárez effectively negotiated with the socialists (the Spanish Socialist Workers Party [PSOE]) and communists (Spanish Communist Party [PCE]) to create a layer of democratic reforms over the old Francoist structure in order to resolve immediate economic problems (Linz 92).

Remarkably, Spain’s transition to democracy is an anomaly of sorts; there was no “transitional justice”, no interrogation of human rights abuses, and no trial of military top brass (Encarnación 2–3 and Linz 93–94). These actions of disremembering are what give birth to the Movida Madrileña, and it was the puncturing of the self-congratulatory balloon of Spain’s swift and un-interrogated move to democracy, what has been called a cultural desencanto (disillusionment). It is not my intention to glaze over the huge advances toward a modern democratic Spain. However, the underlying hierarchy of power was still
present in a reform from above, a top-down adjustment of power, much to the ire and critique of everyday Spaniards at the time.

The *Movida Madrileña* (roughly 1977–1986) began as a countercultural movement in direct response to the dictatorial regime of Francisco Franco, which lasted nearly forty years from 1939–1975. During the late *Movida* of the mid 1980s, the cultural production that was created (avant-garde theater, film, plastic arts, and music) was transformed into social and political marketing tools to advance Spain’s economic status, as Sklar writes:

A generation ago, Spain was emerging from a nearly forty-year dictatorship. Tourism notwithstanding, the view of Spain from outside—in Europe and North America—was of reactionary, repressive, backward society, out of step with the rapidly growing prosperity, sophistication and internationalism of neighbouring [sic] Western European countries. Then, seemingly overnight, to those observing from afar, Spain transformed itself, with much less strife and recrimination than might have been expected, in the template of its European counterparts. In no time, Spain, too, became prosperous, sophisticated, and international. An underlying concern . . . is whether, in so successfully becoming an equal partner, indeed in some ways a leader, in modern European culture, Spain may have lost something of its ‘Spanishness’ (xvi).
The story of Ocaña fits squarely within this moment Sklar remarks on, a transition that was fraught with a vertiginous pace toward modernization and perhaps, at the same time, a loss of at least some of the country’s charming backwardness. Indeed, on the horizon was Spain’s full integration into EEC (European Economic Community) in 1986 as well as a successful bid in 1992 to be the site of both the World Expo in Seville and the Olympic Games in Barcelona. This political and economic advancement—from the autarkic Franco years of the forties and fifties, to the slow opening of the country during the 1960s and 1970s—is what primed a “liberated” Spain in need of shedding its calloused, dictatorial skin. The 1980s was a time in which emotions ran high for all, and each constituent group of the fledgling Spanish democracy had their own particular thoughts on the past, present, and future. The most curious of this transitional moment’s features is how the people of Iberia related to their recent past of the late 1970s and early 1980s. If it were left to scholars like Sklar to create an official narrative about this moment, one could easily lose sight of the complexities of the heightened climate of understanding identitarian politics. A noteworthy example of one of the many issues of that time was, economically speaking, the wealthy and bourgeois, who felt either personal guilt or public shame for their complicity with the Franco regime. Nevertheless, this discourse would change as Spain crept into the 1990s, which saw most Spaniards not necessarily feeling bad about having too much wealth, but instead, feeling ashamed of not having enough of it.
Sklar’s articulation of the almost mythical metamorphosis of the Spanish state underscores the absence of the details of how political time and space were criss-crossing as Spain attempted to reconcile, to varying degrees of success, temporal notions of modern, backward, primitive, and advanced. In order to delineate how the disenchantment/disillusionment narrative of the *Movida* is manifested by this crisis of confidence in systems of representation, a bedrock issue of modernity, I look to Bakhtin to begin working through time and space as it relates to this contentious period. Bakhtin’s creation of the chronotope is vital for understanding the ways in which Ocaña’s life, as well as cinematic representation, permit a greater complication or simplification of how the historicity of narrative of nation and Self are (de)naturalized.

Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin’s conceptualization of the chronotope (time-space or timescape) takes up previous theorizations on the structure of narrative, especially the intrinsic temporality needed for its organization. Bakhtin argues that a chronotope is a place where narrative is—in and of itself—knotted but also a place for tying and untying (250). Informed primarily by fictional narratives, Bakhtin suggests that a chronotope could be thought of as:

... intrinsic connectedness of spatial and temporal relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. It expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). In the literary artistic
chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance ( . . . ) It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions ( . . . ) The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic. (84–85)

Thus the chronotope is the central point through which the limitations of the internal dialogues are constructed to give meaning to the narrative. Here, Bakhtin posits the chronotope’s role in creating a narrative by rooting the “body” as a text through his reference to bodily flesh. Specifically, and most importantly for queer time and place that is present in the Movida, the chronotope demarcates what is real/imaginary, human/technological, rational/irrational. This is elicited through the analogy of the image of man and the chronotope as a definition of genre and generic distinctions. Ventura Pons uses the camera as a method to represent in a chronotopic way, an artist thereby allowing a multiplicity of visual forms to interrupt, critique, and aestheticize the image of Ocaña. Additionally, Pons’s camera limits the boundaries between events in the narration
as well as sets the distance between the reader and text itself. This concept of the chronotope can also be applied to my interrogation of the politics of “progress” in the Spanish transition: the movement and moment, when, first there was Franco, then there was a Spain sporting a new democratic “skin” over a very internally wounded body. The chronotope as a boundary setting concept is crucial because, as I have discussed in this concise history of the transition of Spain to democracy, the border, in this sense a temporal border, delimits the way space is organized into different times of shared belonging. Thus the chronotope, a knot, produces a dominant aesthetic form through which the spectator can approach the documentary. As a genre apt for “transitions,” Pons invites us to untie or knot even further the historicity of Ocaña’s life in the context of contemporary Spanish cultural studies.

Ocaña finds himself moving around Spain due to his (queer) identity to escape persecution and ridicule while at the same time never giving up the rituals, traditions, and cultural production of his home of southern Spain. Much more than just a “hybrid” subject, Ocaña’s documentary works through the contradictory nature of his own subjectivity and incomplete Self. Pons’s cinematographic technique of interrupting his narration mirrors this subjective conflict, while simultaneously providing snapshots of Ocaña’s multiplicity of selves (heteronymic). What I will show is that “aura” is not lost through the cinematic reproduction as Benjamin would have it. In fact, it is regained through the multiplicity of voices, faces, and spaces which Ocaña inhabits through the
documentary. The use of the documentary genre as a means of truth telling is a calculated one on the part of Pons: by interrupting the conventions of the very genre he is using, Ocaña/Pons calls into question documentary's immediate access to the Truth/Realness.

Although relatively young compared to its counterparts in the visual arts, film can illustrate for its spectators a level of precision and complexity through the assistance of technology that in some ways—that I will articulate in greater detail later—are better equipped to deal with the multifaceted layers of human subjectivity. Pulling at the seams of both the autobiographic narrative of Ocaña, as well as examining the cinematographic operations used to “stitch” various takes into a complete film, allows for a critical analysis of how queer time and space are at play in the film’s construction.

The title of the film, *Retrat Intermitent* seems at first glance almost paradoxical. According to the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, the first definition of the word *retrato* reads, “pintura o efigie principalemnte de una persona” (painting or effigy generally of a person.)\(^{24}\) It is this purported fixity and level of consistency that render the second word in the title, *Intermitent*, so meaningful. *Intermitent* most commonly means, “Que se interrumpe o cesa y prosigue o se repite” (That which is interrupted, ceases then continues, or recurs.) So what does it mean, then, to have a sporadic and repetitive portrait of

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\(^{24}\) I have chosen to use the Spanish translation of the Catalan words in the title because, curiously, no Catalan is spoken in the film. The only language spoken is Spanish by its main protagonist as well as the Pons himself from behind the camera who can be heard at one point in the film briefly speaking to Ocaña.
someone? In what ways does the purported facticity of a portrait—as revealing a level of facsimile—detract from the ways in which portraiture is also ideological and subjective in nature? That is to say, many portraits are declared timeless, as an object that transcends time, while also being grounded in a painterly style of a very precise historical moment.

Returning to the Catalan title of the film, *Retrat Intermitent*, it calls for an attention to three different attributes Pons crafts in shaping the documentarian image of José Perez Ocaña: *retrat* as a static imprint of a photograph/image, *intermitent* an interrupted spatio-temporal (chronotopic) narrative, and finally, language in relationship to cinema and geopolitics of Iberia and Catalanidad. The content of heteronymativity is found most prominently in *intermitent*, the spatio-temporal construction of Pon’s documentary, wherein there is a calculated constructing and dismantling of the documentary style itself, that permits a humanizing, albeit incomplete “real” Ocaña. This “realness” delves into Ocana’s his past, present and (un)known future for this artist, performer, Spaniard, and Self.25

**Moving (One An)Other: Locating Heteronymativity in Ocaña**26

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25 I would like to challenge the fallacy of total relativism protected by postmodernist claims that there is no truth and in so doing, argue, that in various moments, we see the Real Ocaña emerge in the documentary.

26 This heteronymativic gesture is the self-reflexive play on words that pays attention to the theorizations of prominent film theorist, Christian Metz, whose assertion that the film image is the “moving other” of photography. In this case, not only is his comment important for my analysis of the film in this chapter, but also to signal moving “(one an)other” occurs by creating unexpected community of non-normative people as José Perez Ocaña demonstrates in the film.
According to Jean-Marie Schaeffer, there is a reduced temporal impact of cinema due to the “present tense” of film, as opposed to the “pastness” of photography. The filmic flow of sound-images permits an experiential element of continuous change that denotes involvement and identification. Thus it primes “the moving image to be image with time whereas, the immobile image . . . is image of time” (qtd. in Wahlberg 7). The documentary is predominantly shot in Ocaña’s apartment bedroom interspersed by over a dozen interludes/intermedios. Intermedio is an apt term for describing these breaks as they function as a performative, intermittent portrait of “Ocaña.” These intermedios capture the persona of the performing artist. We see Ocaña in various locales throughout Barcelona, almost always in drag. As the biographical narrative is interrupted, Schaeffer’s notion of the immobile image (portrait) and the moving image (plurality of Selfs in Ocaña’s performative commentary) comes into full view. These otherwise contradictory notions of time collide. The presentation of the shots of the film achieves an emotional or conceptual aesthetic, instead of stitching a clearly defined narrative. This alternative approach allows for the juxtaposition of elements that, at times, are not obedient to a legibly linear timeline. This complicated disruption, dislocation, and discontinuity found in the film editing permits Pons to collaborate from behind the camera in his own performativity. The film provides a performative and playful manipulation of time that either takes the form of speeding up or a slowing down that cannot be as easily achieved in other artistic media. Additionally, it
facilitates a complicated understanding of self by the coalescence of drag, otherness, memory, and performance. This “intermittent portrait” is crafted through Pons’s cinematic editing that creates both a legible continuity system while at the same time, allowing for the exposure of implicit meanings in momentary crosscutting of spatial and temporal boundaries.

One example of this spatio-temporal dislocation occurs in an interlude during the middle of the film of a queer Easter procession. I will explore the intricacies of this interlude later on in this chapter but what is salient to note at this juncture is how the scene ends. The final shot of the interlude concludes with Ocaña on an unspecified balcony with his friend, Camilo, who fans himself after seeing the Virgin pass along the narrow callejuela below. The medium range shot of the balcony quickly shifts to a medium close up of Ocaña in which he is back in his bedroom opening up his fan that reads Ocaña on one side, as he lightly fans himself. In this suturing of the two-scene sequence, the spectator views a somewhat smooth match on action (fanning oneself) along with the individual’s graphically matched position in the frame, implying that Ocaña is moving continuously, yet the change of setting contradicts this impression.27

27 Cinematic suturing, as argued most prominently by Kaja Silverman, proves important in order to understand not only how two still images are spliced together on a film strip but also to demonstrate that the space between the images can be a place of signification as well. Spectators do not consciously observe the process of suturing. This is due to the fact that the speed of the cinematic film being projected is too fast for the eye to discern each separate image. There are different types of positions that an observer can adopt relative to the cinematic suture but the most critical is the spectators’ identification with “the film apparatus” that is, the (un)conscious fact that we are limited to looking through and with the camera. It is in various moments of the story-world of the film where the appearance of wholeness and completeness is denaturalized as the
As Deleuze argues in his seminal two-part tome, *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*, what makes cinema such an experiential medium is the way in which the internal dynamism of the image presupposes involvement from the spectator in order to complete the cinematic slight of hand. The contemplative framing of the fan for Pons creates a still life (immobile image) that goes beyond the logic of narrative time, through the direct clash between the cinematographic image and the photograph (*retrat*) (Wahlberg 26). The duration of the fan through static framing creates a transgression of sorts between the time of the image and the time of the film. This cinematic technique that Pons uses is a heteronymativic change in filmic rhythm. It calls to attention the constructedness of the documentary narrative in a way that parodies, or even altogether rejects, the genre’s strong ties to realism. But, crucially, this does not cast aside the notion of the Real.

**Gayzing Pleasure**

Ocaña discusses within the first two minutes of the film his propensity toward public nudity, particularly a moment in which he causes a disquieting reaction by some onlookers,

> Aunque mi cuerpo es blanco como una pescadilla, unos señores decían, “Oh, pero si es una mujer!,” porque el pene me lo había metido entre las piernas.

audience is forced to reflect on the constructed nature of not just Ocaña’s autobiographical narration but also address the “seams” or gaps found in the film’s composition through its mise-en-scene, editing techniques, and well as other codes.
(Even though my skin is pasty white, a few men said, “Oh, what a woman!” because I have put my penis in between my legs. Later on a younger man came and said, “Oh, you’ve got quite a beautiful penis! I thought that you were a woman.” I told him, “By chance did you not see my hairy chest, or what?!”)
Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, subsequently published two years later. In general terms, Mulvey at the time was concerned with the ways in which structuralist theoretical and methodological techniques (primarily psychoanalysis and semiotics) could be deployed not to simply understand cinema as a reflection of reality, but instead, as a partial ideological view of reality.

Her work looked at the ways in which mise-en-scène, script writing, stage direction, etc. all were handiwork masked “in the background” by the narrative force of classical film. In this sense, Mulvey championed the feminist pursuit of both production/construction of meaning and subjectivity in cinematic production. Mulvey’s text is a psychoanalytic approach, arguing that cinema integrates voyeurism (gaze) and narcissism (identification) into story and image through camera, character, and spectator. The author highlights in the piece two contradictory aspects of the pleasurable structures of looking. On the one hand, there is a looking-at-other-as-object (voyeuristic-scopophilic gaze) in which the spectator uses the character for sexual/erotic stimulation through sight. This active scopophilic gaze produces a critical distance between the subject’s identity as different from that which appears as object on screen. The second is self-identification with image/figure (narcissistic identification) ego libido. In other words, Mulvey posits that the controlling gaze of cinema is male and spectators are made to identify with the male hero and make the female in the film passive and objectified as erotic spectacle. Thus, one of the main tenets in her theorization is of primary concern for my discussion of the film Ocaña: the
objectified representation of a (minority) character as spectacle (defined by to-be-looked-at-ness).

The author later links this gaze to argue that Hollywood cinema is an apt medium for propping up male (hetero) desire because the threat of the female character (which evokes castration anxiety) is managed by the story either through her death/punishment, or, by fetishism. This fetishism is produced because women are transformed into reassuring objects of beauty, most commonly demonstrated in the *femme fatale* archetype (Chaudhuri 31–41). Mulvey concludes her article by suggesting that cinema should “free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics and passionate detachment” (26). I find this short passage appropriate as a critical point of entry into my discussion of Ocaña. Just as Mulvey understood a radical feminist film project alongside modernist film practices, I too see through the concept of heteronymativity, a way to (un)knot the film narrative through processes of defamiliarization, disruption/disjuncture, and self-reflexivity.

Although Mulvey at the time was chiefly thinking through a lens clouded by biological determinism and binary construction of Male/Female, the fetishization that she addresses in her text highlights the process through which a woman’s body (parts) become cinematic moments of “spectacle” that far surpass what is needed for narrative cohesion. In fact following Chaudhuri, Mulvey zeros in on the need for scholars to look at other moments of ideologically charged disruptions and interruptions found in film. The intermittent portrait of Ocaña
then, disrupts this otherwise facile, one-dimensionality to his Being through the abstraction that occurs by cinematic techniques like the close-up, the dominant cinematic mode in the film.

William Viestenz has addressed the close-up as the keystone for understanding the personal identity politics of Ocaña as well as a mimetic cinematic strategy for communicating plurality. He contents—through a variety of philosophical schools of thought—the mimetic implementations found in the jumps between autobiographic narration and interlude performances in the film reveal a convergence between montage and identitarian desire. Viestenz traces Barthes’s evolution in thought from his presentation of the face of Greta Garbo as one of iconified and archetypal platonic beauty that is complete, totalizing, and whole, to the face of Audrey Hepburn who, conversely, is an infinite display of morphological functions. Later, Viestenz postulates that Ocaña’s intermittent portrait is the effect of Deluzean micromovements—the product a dialectic created by the objective qualities inscribed on the portrait, and subjectively affective movement present at the same time (139–140). To illustrate his articulation of Ocaña’s desire to be who he wants while at the same time reject identitarian labels, Viestenz uses an interlude of Ocaña at the Cafè de l’Òpera, where Ocaña interprets the role of Juanita Reina singing the zambra, Yo soy esa. Salient for Viestenz is the declaration in the song lyrics that Soy la que no tiene nombre (I am the one that doesn’t have a name). From this interlude he posits a strand of Sartrean existentialism in which the subject starts from a pure
négativité, permitting a complete freedom, and thus an infinite level of ontological possibilities. As I have argued elsewhere in earlier articulations about this documentary (Ehrenburg), I would suggest that this not-wanting-to-be-named is indicative of a queer strategy. Queer theory, at its most general, works not in absence of categorical beings but instead obfuscates the intelligibility of such categories that do not fully represent the subject’s identity. The relationship between the Real and mimesis in cinema bears greater complication through Pons’s implementation of documentary strategies to capture the facticity and Realness of Ocaña’s experience. In using these strategies, I will argue, he also participates from behind the camera in a level of resistance to legible categories of genre and cinematic experience by admittedly, “staging” reality in every way (Campo Vidal, 41). This “staging” takes the form of careful placement of items in the mise-en-scène, specifically, a mirror in Ocaña’s bedroom, which will be analyzed in greater detail later, as well as traveling shots, close ups, and directorial intervention from behind the camera.

**On the documentary: A surgeon’s precision or a magician’s enchantment?**

Regarding the specificity of documentary genre, securing a clear working definition of the term *documentary* proves to be as unresolved as earlier sections that examined pluralistic iterations, beings, and feelings toward gender, sexuality, and queerness. Should documentary be considered a genre or a style? Or, better still, is it just a particular stance toward a specific social context (Roscoe 7)? If thought of in relation to other ideologies and historical moments,
documentary would, at its broadest, fit in with the rhetoric of naturalism; the camera is an object that captures reality as it happens, but in so doing, lacks *authorial/directorial* intentionality. It is, however, the spectator’s reliance on Ventura Pons, who presents his work as a documentary, to frame our viewerly expectations to fit generic standards. Another powerful discourse behind the notion that *the camera does not lie* is power given to the medium of the photograph. Be that as it may, the documentary and the discourses behind it, shape-shift along a sliding scale of fact/fiction, providing at the same time forms that would otherwise be considered antithetical to each other. What makes the documentary such a powerful form is not found in its relationship to fictional representations of reality, but instead, in its particular stance and (in)ability to access the Real (Roscoe 7-8). The magic of realism is its power to set the scene through which representations are placed on an ideologically “neutral” stage. This privileging of realism has dire consequences for documentary, as it fosters an unquestioning or renders the images projected unproblematic, as opposed to visual works of fiction which rest on a premise that things are often metaphorical and beg for interpretation. In any case, the documentary image is referential to the extra-filmic world, either directly, physically, or indexically, and thus, metonymic in nature (Roscoe 11).

As mentioned earlier, one of the primary ways to illustrate the documentary and its relationship to realism/facticity is through an intentionally placed mirror in Ocaña’s bedroom. After cutting from one of the interludes in his narration, the
camera focuses again on a close up of Ocaña’s face but upon zooming out our attention is drawn to the trickery of an “objective” capturing of reality. We expect that close up to be the image of Ocaña, however, it is only the reflection of the image of Ocaña that we see. This displacement through the work of cinematography is, I will argue, the essence of Benjamin’s understanding of the tension between the various competing roles of surgeon, magician, philosopher, and artist. This interruption of expectations plays into the intentionality of the director, which, from a Benjaminian perspective, highlights an elaborate construction of various fields of expertise.

In the introduction to the *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin discusses his methodological approach to his analysis of the *trauerspiel*. The original text was presented as a piece of scholarship to demonstrate his ability to become a university professor and was famously rejected by the University of Frankfurt. Despite the rejection, it is one of the most prominent pieces of his scholarship, primarily because it is his only book of criticism. Benjamin defines his method as taking shape through a digressive approach based on interruption as opposed to a more linear uninterrupted progression. This *modus operandi* permits thought to “[t]irelessly . . . begin from new things, returning in a roundabout way to the same object. This continual pausing for breath is the mode most proper to the process of contemplation (Benjamin, *Origin* 28)”.

Interpreting cinema through this frame validates the pauses and abstractions most critical for contemplation but also the structure needed for reading
cinematic heteronymativity. To delineate my advancement of the relationship between concepts, phenomena, and ideas, I turn to examples in both the *Origin of German Tragic Drama* and later *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* in which Benjamin positions the philosopher’s relationship to the scientist and artist. Benjamin writes:

> If it is the task of the philosopher to practice the kind of description of the world of ideas which automatically includes and absorbs the empirical world, then he occupies an elevated position between that of the scientist and the artist. The latter sketches a restricted image of the world of ideas, which, because it is conceived as a metaphor, is at all times definitive. The scientist arranges the world with a view to its dispersal in the realm of ideas, by dividing it from within into concepts. He shares the philosopher’s interest in the elimination of the merely empirical; while the artist shares with the philosopher the task of representation. (*Origin* 32–33)

Benjamin understands the philosopher’s role as crucial to bridging the gap between the artist’s desire for representation and the scientist’s concern with conceptualization of ideas. This is not unlike theories of cinema, suggesting an analysis attuned for both scientific empiricism and humanitarian understanding.

In his later work, Benjamin returns to a similar collation opposing natural science
and distanced observation in “The Work of Art in Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, this time contrasting the role of the surgeon to the magician:

The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient’s body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient’s body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. In short, in contrast to the magician—who is still hidden in the medical practitioner—the surgeon at the decisive moment abstains from facing the patient man to man; rather, it is through the operation that he penetrates into him (Benjamin, Work of Art 13).

Informed by these two fragments by Benjamin, cinema participates in objective scientific activity by virtue of the mechanical function of the camera. At the same time, just like a surgeon can rearrange the body, the cinematographer can rearrange what is filmed of reality and through staged sets, arrange the perception of filmed reality even before editing, making it precisely a (re-)presentation. Recall, Pons acknowledged that each scene of his film was
carefully staged before shooting it. This in turn restores the illusion of the magician’s detached, unintrusive model of authority. In that sense there is an artistic component and scientific component. So like the philosopher, the filmmaker too finds himself/herself situated in the dialectic between the representation of ideas and the workings of empirical reality. If the scientific side of the cinematographer is privileged, the technique of montage is used to divide a film’s “portrait” from within. This exposes a film’s constituent parts, and like the Benjaminian “surgeon,” diminishes the distance between the spectator and the “cinematic” organs otherwise unnoticed and perhaps, unappreciated. Be that as it may, if viewed from the side of the artist/magician, this (re-)presentation is offered as a definitive, mimetic whole, created at an unobtrusive distance—if evoking the mirror in Ocaña’s bedroom, for example.

Following Benjaminian thought, I would suggest that film itself is a conceptual practice that mediates between the world of empirical truth and the representation of ideas. If the film can create a concept through the way it pieces together phenomena of reality, it would also in turn have validity as a philosophical system. Its basic outline is inspired by the constitution of the world of ideas (Benjamin, Origin 33). Benjamin points out that, “philosophical terminology—logic, ethics, and aesthetics, to mention the most general—do not acquire their significance as the names of special disciplines, but as monuments in the discontinuous structure of the world of ideas” (Origin 33). These monuments of discontinuous structure are created, just like Benjamin’s
explanation of the careful work of the surgeon, through the filmmaker's use of montage, as phenomena divested of their false unity thus creating the documentary itself as a monument in the discontinuous world of ideas. In other words, the filmmaker takes phenomena—the objective capturing of phenomena through the medium of the camera—but then divests the phenomena of its totality (its false unity) by cutting it up and altering it. The splicing, editing, or cutting up of these phenomena isn’t arbitrary, but is what allows the components of the structure to participate in something greater. In fact, this follows a logical schema. Particularly in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin seems to embrace the implementation of the camera in the human environment in part because through the “optical unconsciousness” of the camera, certain phenomena became observable for the first time through cinematic technique like freeze frames, exaggerated angles, slow motion, etc. So, Benjamin seems well aware that film is not a realistic medium of representation *per se*, it offers the possibility of rupture with the fixity of both objects and a certain linearity of time.

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28 By montage, I understand the term as illustrated by Deleuze who describes montage’s function as placing, “the cinematographic image into relationship with the whole; that is, with time conceived as the Open” (Cinema 1, 55). So, new and different forms of reality are created through transformation of forms. Thus, in contrast to analytic cinematic theory, whose analysis hinges on a shot by shot linkage more apt for photographic interpretation, Deleuze stresses that such an approach ruins the “living image” present in cinema.
Interrupting Time

After an opening shot of the Plaza Real where Ocaña lived, the film begins with a close up of Ocaña in which he narrates his experiences with marginalization, heteronormativity, and dominant social codes both past and present. Although not in drag during numerous sequences of interrupted biographical narration in the film, it is important to address his contradictory self-identification found in his narrative, as well as the space in which he is located. Ocaña states, “A mi me gusta travestirme . . .” (I like to dress in drag . . .) and then claims “yo no soy ningún travestí, por supuesto . . . Yo soy teatrero, pero puro” (I’m not a transvestite though . . . I’m a pure thespian). Ocaña is more concerned throughout the documentary about his life as an artist than he is about his sexuality and his gender presentation in and of itself. Although an anachronistic term, thinking of Ocaña as a queer subject allows for a deeper understanding of what he seems to be arguing for, (affirming his use of the verb “trasvestirse” but rejecting the noun “travesti”) despite not having the language to articulate his views. I offer this term queer cautiously as well as any trans related identity due in part because both terms are polyvocal and multivalent, signifying different things in different contexts. The possible slippage of these terms should be embraced because identity is consonant with the discursive strategies that those words represent historically (Case 5). Presently, transgender identity has been defined as a term used for people who do not want to reside outside of categories altogether, but for people who want to place themselves in the way of
particular forms of recognition (Halberstam). In effect, transgender may indeed be considered a term of relationality; it describes not simply an identity but a relation between people, within a community, or within intimate bonds (Halberstam). This is a relationality that Ocaña affirms through his affinity toward other subjugated individuals who find themselves on the periphery.

The famous song “A quoi ca sert l’amour” (Love, what's the point?), by iconic French singer Edith Piaf posits the age-old question of the value of love and our relationship to it. The simple upbeat song was performed as a duet with her third husband, Teho Sarrapho, in 1962, only a year before her death to a battle with liver cancer. In many ways the song can be considered “timeless” precisely due to its content—love—an ephemeral desire that pushes and pulls on so much of the human spirit (Burke 209–210). This song provides the background music to one of the many “interludes.” as the lyrics to A quoi ca sert l’amour ring out extradiegtically to a woman wobbling back and forth, erratically shaking her hands and torso as if dancing in the middle of a record shop in Barcelona. Her appearance is one of someone eccentric, high on drugs, or intoxicated with an air of non-lucidity, as if in her own world, a world apart from the other patrons who stare at her uneasily. Her dress is too small and ripping at the seams, her hair unkempt, her white wedge heels are dirty. On the one hand, Pons’s layering of Piaf over this strung out women demonstrates in a

29 As I argued in chapter one, elements found in the mise-en-scene and extradiegetic soundtrack—like this song by Piaf—further call for the ways in which film has a relationship to social context and outside world in which it is filmed. It gives trace accounts to other histories and unforeseen solidarities and homages of people, places, and things otherwise forgotten or unconsidered.
heteronymativic way, the plurality of Selfs feeling wronged, othered, and damaged—as Piaf herself was an alcoholic and heavy drug user, abusive behavior that led to her own “untimely” death. Ocaña affirms upon returning to his bedroom monologue that he identifies with this woman in the record shop as well as other types of marginalized people,

“A mí donde me gusta exponer [el arte] es en medio de la gente, con la gente…porque yo soy un marginado. Como las putas, como los chulos, como los maricones y como los ladronzuelos que roban motos, aunque yo soy pintor . . . me siento identificado entre toda esa gente.” (Preciados 102)

(I like to exhibit my art among the people, surrounded by people because I’m a marginalized person just like the whores, pimps, fags, and petty thieves, although I am a painter . . . I feel indentified in the company of these people).

The narrative he articulates throughout the film provides many insights about his morphing epistemology about topics of embodiment, time, and space. A line from the Piaf song notes, “All that now seems to be tearing you apart, tomorrow will be a memory of pure joy”. This somewhat paradoxical line is fitting for the documentary itself as well as for the protagonist, as Ocaña stands on a shifting ontology due to a transforming epistemology. How can a memory, an idea grounded in the past, be part of a certain (near) future that produces
contradictory feelings of both a tearing apart, a painful feeling, and one of pure joy? This interlude, along with many others that interrupt his narration, function as temporal borders that delimit the way space—both cinematic and geographic—is organized into different times of shared belonging: a belonging that Ocaña holds dear by embracing the lives of those who are also castigated from society.

Ocaña’s positionality on the margins is contrasted with his declaration of what it means to be manly/macho in another segment of the film,

Pero el macho . . . por que se ve de ser macho es un . . . es como si . . . no sé . . . ser macho es . . . no sé como decirlo es, no, bueno no me acuerdo la palabra pero ser macho es mejor o es lo natural es lo normal que decir la sociedad. El macho, lo natural. El hombre que va con el hombre esta cargando un poco del rollo de la homosexualidad y tampoco creo en los homosexuales. Yo lo único que creo es en las personas. Y yo creo que el que tu vayas con un hombre o con una mujer no debería poner un letrero este es así, esta es aca.

(But the macho . . . because by being macho . . . its like . . . well . . . being macho is . . . I really don’t know how to say it, well, I don’t really remember the word but being macho is the most ideal, its what society deems natural and normal. Being macho means being normal. The guy that is seeing another
man has an air of homosexuality to it, and I don’t really believe in homosexuals. The only thing that I believe in is people. I think that if you go out with a man or a woman there shouldn’t be a banner affirming this is this and that is that).

Ocaña signals his own pain, anxiety, and frustration with gender and sexuality as he affirms the air of “macho”-ness that is constituted as natural and normative by a predominantly heterosexual society. He is at such a loss discussing the topic, his own speech becomes intermittent, full of interrutions; it starts and stops as he struggles to find the worlds to articulate a definition of “macho.” Effectively, he laments that queerness is deemed something unnatural and thus undesirable. In multiple interludes the spectator is invited to interrogate his claims as Ocaña’s artistic personas take on queerness and the desire that stems from it as a haunting or liminal space.

Sue Ellen Case has rightly argued for the haunting or even vampiric nature of queer desire insofar as it ontologically pushes the boundaries of Platonic life and death. Case writes:

Queer sexual practice then impels one out of the generational production of what has been called ‘life’ and history, and ultimately out of the category of the living. The equation of hetero=sex=life and homo=sex=unlife generated as queer discourse that reveled in proscribed desiring by imagining sexual objects and sexual practices within the realm of the other-than-natural, and
the consequent other-than-living. In this discourse new forms of being, or beings, are imagined through desire. And desire is that which wounds—a desire that breaks through the sheath of being as it has been imagined within a heterosexist society. Striking at its very core, queer desire punctuates the life/death and generative/destructive bipolarities that enclose the heterosexist notion of being. (Case 4–5)

If one were to shift ontologies through nonconformist gendered acts like Ocaña does in his many interlude performances: through a mourning mother grieving her child’s death, the spectator perched on a balcony over a Semana Santa procession, or dancing flamenco naked at a rock concert, he manifests his feelings to create a new epistemology—a reorganization of the senses.

Ocaña in many ways exemplifies a Foucauldian hermeneutics of desire as his confessions on his bed deconstruct his social milieu. It also serves to alleviate the pain of exclusion mentioned in no uncertain terms with anecdotes such as one regarding people in his small village throwing rocks at him while he was growing up. This bedroom also holds an air of intimacy where Ocaña sitting comfortably on his bed recounts his sexual exploits of the past. He makes no mention of sex acts in the private realm like his bedroom where he narrates, but instead in public places like after mass, down by the river, or even on a pig farm. In effect, he recounts a queer rural tradition that is in sharp contrast to the urban landscape of Barcelona. Queer desire was not just contemplated during his
youth and amongst his friends, but was acted on. As a consequence, these desires left imprints and gestures, movements and actions, modified particular places, and contributed to the ongoing evolution of the built environment (social construction). His narration of these sexual transgressions points to the co-constituency of the worlds of gender and sexuality: conformity in one facilitates a certain amount of deviancy in the other. However, gender presentation wasn’t as primary as his sexuality. Ocaña demonstrates that the retrospective gaze is not only temporal, a nostalgia for a golden age of “playing around” with his lovers after church, but spatial. It manifested in the public or private, and in the urban and rural differently, but not unproblematically. So, in a queering of postmodern geography, Ocaña demonstrates how notions of body-centered identity politics shift toward a subjectivity that is “within and between embodiment, place, and practice (Halberstam 5).

Linked to this subjectivity is Ocaña’s articulation of “real” and “realness”. Early on in the film he discusses his upbringing in Andalucía:

“ya empezaba a sentirme aparte de los demás y a hacer un teatro falso. Pero por la noche cuando me acostaba me encontraba conmigo mismo. Y me daba como mucha rabia tener que interpretar un papel falso delante de la gente. Me gustaba muchísimo hacer teatro, hablar delante de los espejos cuando estaba solo.”
(I started to feel apart from others and do acts of “kabuki theater”. But at night when I went to sleep I found my-self. And it really angered me to have to interpret a "kabuki" role in front of people).

This open account of his angst about realness versus real is what contemporary queer theorists have highlighted as part of a transgender identity. Arguably, realness is the appropriation of the attributes of the real. Judith Halberstam writes, “the real, on the other hand, is that which always exists elsewhere, and as a fantasy of belonging and being. [. . . ] Transexuals become real literally through authorship, by writing themselves into transition” (50–51). In this sense, Ocaña employs the strategy of inhabiting a space of gender realness of his own creation. Also, his account of his artistic endeavors underscores his life as a queer performer, a non-lucrative aspiration that destabilizes the organizations of time and space. He was without a financial safety net, was not fixed on living or working in just one area throughout his life in Barcelona, and by all accounts, didn’t find steady work. In effect, his break with normative values, qualities that make the world at large safe and secure, is where queer time is represented in the film: by stepping outside temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance: he breaks with (hetero)normative time.

Ocaña also discusses his fascination with cultural objects of Catholic (Andalusian specific) religious traditions of his youth, like the festivities of the
Assumption in Cantillana. The interlude that follows is his own performative representation of a *Semana Santa* procession, in which a pastiche of elements from Andalusian popular cultural (*cabezudos* as well as the *mantilla*, *peineta*, and *monaguillo* whips a prisoner on the street) along with other specifically Catalanian features, inaugurate a queer form of relationality to various discourses. Here queer temporalities are multiple in nature. To begin, we have the time frame of what would be an Easter procession occurring in August. Ocaña’s *saeta* on the balcony observing the procession, is disruptive particularly because it comes in sharp contrast to his affirmation, not a few minutes earlier, from the same balcony which he reiterates *hoy es quince de agosto, y está Nuestra Señora por las calles! Viva la Asunción gloriosa!* (today is August 15th and Our Lady is here on the streets!). The balcony demarcates not just a boundary of a boxed space, located between the public and private, but also forces the viewer to consider the relationship of this space to masculinity and femininity. It begs to consider what spaces are open to men and women and what relationship a man or woman has to that space and its occupants. As Josep Anton-Fernandez rightfully points out, the *saeta* is out of place, since the Assumption is a celebration more jubilant in nature. To make matters more complicated the paper miche *cabezudos* are out of “time” because of their association more with carnival or *Las Fallas de Valencia*. Additionally, there is a convergence of misrecognition, a fracturing of historical time/space.
procession occurs not in Seville, but in Barcelona, and in addition, its enactment unfolds in the Carrer de la Seca, in the medieval quarter of Barcelona.

**Documenting death in (moving) images**

In one interlude, the spectator views a long row of graves in a columbarium as Ocaña enters on the right of the screen. He walks slowly toward the camera adorned in a *peineta*, fanning his *abanico*, and with marigolds in his hair. Wearing a typical Andalusian style colorful dress, he murmurs to some of the graves in a solemn tone, and begins to recite a fragment of the poem *Zorongo* by Federico García Lorca. He looks toward the sky as he pays homage to the fallen queer Andalucian artist, who in popular myth was said to have been killed in part due to his homosexuality during the Spanish Civil War. Ocaña goes as far as to say in another part of the documentary that “he was shot twice in the ass for being a homosexual” although that has never been substantiated. While singing, he exclaims, “Dónde está tu cuerpo santo? Que no tuvo o (ni) sepultura?” (Where is your holy body? That didn't even have a burial?).

This interlude characterizes cinematic heteronymativity in various ways. Pivotal to the human experience and to the philosophy of time is the awareness of inevitable death. The limitations of biographical time are not just connected to one’s relationship with death but also to the theories of (moving) images (Wahlberg 45). The ritual use of photographs as a way to call up the features, gestures, and presence of the departed demonstrates the affective meaning of
photography, and a temporality rooted in the past. Pons in this interlude demonstrates a heteronymativic approach to cinematic temporality by setting the shot in a cemetery, contrasting (a living) Ocaña amongst the dead. The camera movement (and lack thereof) in this scene demonstrates on multiple levels the existential drama of the end of life, as there is both movement and stasis that flows in a way to signal the possibility of endless repetition of past events, the event specific here is, of course, death. This heteronymativic change in tempo and rhythm also has a citational component through Ocaña’s crying, in which he yearns for the dislocated body of another queer artist, García Lorca. Not only is Ocaña’s lament a gesture at rediscovering a queer genealogy of artists, but ones specifically in Andalucía, far removed from the cultural specificity of Catalonia (Wahlberg 45–47). The juxtaposition of Ocaña’s vivid gestures and static nature of an immobile being like that of a dead body, communicates the complexity of cinematic representations of death.

Conclusion

If Ocaña’s queer desire, like Sue Ellen Case elucidates, finds itself on the border between life and death, a spectral haunting of sorts, what does that reveal about the potentiality of queer bodies? I believe that queer theory can return to the body and identity as an important space for thinking about the discursive. To this end, Freeman states,
Bodies, then, are not only mediated by signs; they come to 'matter' through kinetic and sensory forms of normativity, modes of belonging that make themselves felt as a barely acknowledged relief to those who fit in, while the experience of not fitting in often feels both like having the wrong body and like living in a different time zone. (172)

Evidently, through the examples I have provided in this chapter (as well as the preceding chapter about Portugal), this activation of the past in the present is sometimes not visible, and instead spectral or haunting, as in the case of Ocaña’s performance in his interludes. This relationship between the image, death, and the philosophy of time bears striking similarities to those presented in the first chapter despite a completely different historic context and geographic locality. Perhaps, by interrogating the specificity of the narrative of the Spanish move to democracy, I am more concerned with the dash that demarcates the “post” from “dictatorship” or the “post” from Spain's conceivable “late” arrival to “modernity”. Thus, this chapter has attempted to posit time and space as interwoven in the texture of narratives related to post-dictatorship. Focusing on how queer bodies and queer cultural texts resist these narratives of progress, by forcing the spectator to look back and also think forward through interrogating the present, denaturalizes normative notions of historical time as well as cinematic time.

In this way, as a means of final consideration, narratives are constructed
by rooting the body as a text in temporalities. This holds particular weight for the queer body that—for better or for worse—came into view most prominently in this movement of historical transition. José Perez Ocaña, regrettably, was left no choice, if we recall Romero’s statement regarding Ocaña’s location in contemporary Spanish discourse, but to somehow disruptively, drag his way within the narrative of Spanish post-dictatorship. Judith Halberstam reminds us that this is one of the only ways that trans and arguably queer folks can write themselves into recognition by others. For me, José Perez Ocaña’s insertion could be argued as a chronotopic knotting up of recent Spanish history but such an affirmation would be incomplete and fail to recognize the density of Ocaña’s narrative. Pons’s documentary provides a robust cinematic vantage point to express through heteronymativity, the incomplete, incongruent, and self-reflexive need to understand Ocaña’s (in)complete personal story. In addition, I have shown the mechanisms behind how that story is represented through Pons’s interrogation of the limits of documentary style’s relationship to the Real, as well as the precariousness of queer bodies’ encounters with time and space. So as the curtain closes to this chapter, I showed how the ways in which the interruption and disruption detailed in this chapter become extended moments of authenticity, taking the shape not by the performance on stage, but by the dissonance festering from behind the curtain.
Chapter 3—On Almodóvar: Sighting the Citational Self in Three Films

Pedro Almodóvar has reached international recognition and admiration with a career that has spanned over thirty years. Despite the seemingly infinite number of tomes dedicated to his work, almost no scholarship has been presented in a comparative way with other queer directors of Iberia, thus, rendering an Almodóvarian filmography to be appreciated only through the self-containing context of Almodóvarian terms. However, this chapter helps to facilitate a larger discussion of his work through a broader lens of Queer Iberian Cinema and heteronymativity. This lens permits Almodóvar to live in the plural, too, through the intertextuality and thematic similarities seen with João Pedro Rodrigues’s and Ventura Pons’s work.

Pedro Almodóvar was born in the village of Calzada de Calatrava in the province of Ciudad Real, on September 25th 1949. As he grew up, his parents, both from humble backgrounds, moved to Cáceres, Extremadura in order to send young Pedro to a secondary school run by Salesian priests. His personal experiences with Catholicism, and particularly his Catholic school education, would be reflected through various films in his career. Upon completing high school, Almodóvar moved to Madrid in the late 1960s to pursue a life fraught with greater possibilities, and in so doing, abandon forever his life of Spanish rurality for the cosmopolitanism of Madrid. Between 1969–1979 Almodóvar worked as an employee of Telefónica (the national telephone service of Spain). During this time period, Almodóvar experimented with various artistic projects and
endeavors, meeting actors, artists, musicians, and activists alike in the social movement called *La Movida*. During his employment at Telefónica, Almodóvar took several leaves, which allowed him the possibility to tap into his own artistic creativity in Madrid’s underground culture scene (Edwards 9). Almodóvar’s early period of work touched various mediums, including writing both non-fiction and fictional works, creating short films, and acting in experimental theater.

Through his connection with fellow artist Félix Rotaeta, Almodóvar began working and collaborating in the theater company *Los Goliardos*, a university based organization that was devoted to artistic production guided by experimentation, seeking to reform both the internal mechanisms of Spanish theater and the culture that surrounded it (Allison 8) (Peinado Alba 13). In fact *Los Goliardos* wanted to flip theater on its head in an attempt to construct a theater because, “"la existencia de una identidad parcial entre el sujeto y el objeto, entre el pensamiento crítico y la realidad social cambiante, exige la complicidad con las fuerzas sociales existentes, capaces de trasformar cualitativamente el orden establecido"” (Peinado Alba15) (*the existence of a partial identity between subject and object, between critical thinking and the changing social reality requires complicity with existing social forces capable of qualitatively transforming the established order*). In other words, Almodóvar’s early work in experimental theater in Spain served as an instrument/vehicle of opposition in society: similarly, Almodóvar later presented oppositional
representations of the traditional family, womanhood, maternity, and sexuality in his films *Kika*, *Todo Sobre Mi Madre*, and *Los Amantes Pasajeros.*

**The make-up of *Kika*: mediatized privacy, piracy, and patriarchy**

As indicated in the previous chapter, the year 1992 was critical in Spanish history; it was a time to reflect on five hundred years of historical legacy since its “discovery” of the Americas. That year was also a tipping point for Spain’s relationship to European and global discourses as it found itself once again a *tour de force*, at the global center stage for the 1992 summer Olympic Games in Barcelona, as well as the 1992 World Expo in Seville and the declaration of Madrid as a European capital of culture. In many ways Spain needed to reinvent itself with a new branding of “modern,” with the 21st century looming on the horizon. What made Spain “different” this time around? This desire for reinvention, rebranding, and renaming also found prominence in Pedro Almodóvar’s filmography, which, since the early eighties, saw a remarkable amount of success, crossing over multiple genres to become recognizably identified/iconified. His tenth film released that following year, *Kika* (1993), has been received both in academic and popular circles for its infamy as the worst

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30 Almodóvar met Carmen Maura in the group, while he was touring during the production of Federico Garcia Lorca’s most famous play, *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. She would later star in nearly half of Almodóvar’s feature length films. His affinity toward the theater and its interplay with film was not limited to just Maura but to a whole litany of theater-trained actors starring in his work including: Verónica Forqué, Julieta Serrano, Marisa Paredes, and Antonio Banderas (Edwards 15).
Almodóvar film in terms of its cinematic quality and box office sales (Cerdán and Labayen 142).\textsuperscript{31}

*Kika* is not unlike *I'm So Excited* (2013)—another film studied in this chapter—as Almodóvar took a retrospective gaze toward a nostalgic reverence for his “earlier films” (142). Almodóvar wasn’t interested in creating a new take on a “comedy” but instead on the Almodóvarian “style/form” of cinema seen throughout his decades-long career. Critical commentary stemming from *Kika* presumed that “originality” was synonymous with “authenticity.” I argue that his reliance on plurality, excess, and self-referentiality builds a new iteration of his work without considering critical desire for a reinvention of “Almodóvarian” cinema.\textsuperscript{32}

I study this film to demonstrate how the lens of heteronymativity highlights the importance of Almodóvar’s perceived artistic failures and own self-criticism. In order to demonstrate this Almodóvarian “failure” I will rely on two scenes in the

\textsuperscript{31} Almodóvar saw the film *Kika* as one in a moment of transition reflective of a larger Spanish society that began putting itself on the map as a forerunner in “modern” contemporary Europe. Almodóvar said in this regard, “I see [*Kika*] as a film in which I finish a cycle and where I go toward another, though I don’t know yet what that will be. It is a film which serves as a period, an ending to a chapter in my filmography which situates me in another one” (Almodóvar 106).

\textsuperscript{32} Regarding style and generic confines Almodóvar declares, “I am not a person capable of respecting the rules of any particular style. But *Kika* is more radical than any other. *High Heels* is a drama if it needs to be categorized. In all of them there is humor. I think *Kika* is the most unclassifiable. I don’t mean to say that I have invented any new genre, as much as that it is truly hard not only to classify, but to even tell the story. Depending on which character you follow, the story keeps changing. It is the most non-linear. And that always creates a certain challenge for the spectator. That’s why I was more worried with this one than with any of the others. The audience likes to feel familiar with what is being told, that it corresponds with their expectations” (Almodóvar 106).
film that also “fail”: the prolonged rape scene of Kika, the film’s main character, as well as a conversation (about the aesthetics of physical beauty) with her maid, Juana, in the bathroom of Kika’s apartment.

Self-referentiality and self-citationality have become the hallmark of Alomodóvarian cinema. However, in an interview given in 2009 he states, “Durante mucho tiempo he tenido la tentación de cambiar de nombre y dejar de ser Almodóvar” (qtd. in Cerdán and Labayen 129). (For many years I’ve had the temptation to change my name and stop being Almodóvar). What would not being Almodóvar look like? This statement draws precisely on the theoretical strings that have been outlined in much of this dissertation. What would it mean to live in the plural, a heteronymic space permitting not only many iterations of Self but a plurality of Iberian selves? Through this quote about not being Almodóvar, the director resists the notion of what being Almodóvar actually entails and that his naming is inextricably linked with his recognition as a director in the public eye. In addition, while gender interpellation has always been a flash point in his work, Almodóvar’s proposal that not being named would amount to the removal of all ideological implications, ironically renders impossible his work of subverting, refashioning, and delegitimating truth claims about naming practices. This trouble with naming proved complicated for him in 1993 as much as it did for him in 2013 with I’m So Excited, as he struggled to frame the film Kika, much less name it. In the press release section presenting the director’s biography it states, “Odía que Eva al desnudo, Sunset Boulevard, y Opening
Night, por ejemplo, ya estén hechas, porque eso le impide intentar inventárselas" (139). (He hates the fact that All about Eve [Joseph L. Mankiewicz], Sunset Boulevard [Billy Wilder, 1950] and Opening Night [John Cassavetes, 1977] have already been made because that prevents him from trying to invent them himself). In fact, not only does Almodóvar lament the films already made by different directors that he isn’t able to make himself but that Kika could have also taken shape through the title or plot of his other famous films, stating, “La verdad es que la película podría llamarse ‘Laberinto de pasiones,’ ‘Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto’ or [sic] ‘Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios.’ Los tres le van como anillo al dedo, pero esos títulos ya existen, yo mismo los he usado.” (The truth is the film could be called “Labyrinth of Passion,” “What Have I Done to Deserve This,” or “Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown.” The three fit it to a tee but those titles already exist, I’ve used them myself” (139–140). In an effort to convey a well suited title for the film, it took on many tentative titles early on in the process including, Las uñas del asesino (The Fingernails of the Assassin) as well as Una violación inoportuna (A Poorly Timed Rape), a title he later rejected because “existen en el mundo gente muy susceptible, que no necesita ver una película para hacer campaña contra ella” (there are oversensitive people in the world who don’t need to see a film to mount a campaign against it) (138).33 In effect naming the film A Poorly Timed Rape would cause the film to be misinterpreted as only that, its very title giving away

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33 This point, however, made little difference in the film’s reception in the United States, where it was shown on limited release due to the rape scene even with the title Kika.
the main crux of the film, framed around the comedic rape scene which would stand in sharp contrast to the film’s press materials alleging that it would be an improbable task to recount the film in the three pages allocated (139).

Despite the perceived difficulty of encapsulating the film, the plot can be summarized as a web of relationships that Kika, a cosmetologist, has with the extended network of one of her clients. The film begins when Kika is summoned to the house of an American writer living in Spain, Nicholas Pierce, where she is instructed to “make-up” the dead body of Nicholas’s step-son, Ramón, before the authorities arrive. While performing her duties Kika is startled to find out that Ramón is in fact alive only having been in a catatonic state. Upon regaining consciousness, he talks about his life as a lingerie photographer conjuring up Michelangelo Antonioni’s classic, *Blow-up* (1966). Kika and Ramón eventually move in together where Kika cheats on Ramón with Nicholas due in part to Ramón’s oft sullen mood. To complicate matters, Nicholas is being stalked by a former lover, Andrea Caracortada (Andrea Scarface), a TV show host desperate to get the inside scoop on macabre tabloid topics. Kika and Ramón’s maid, Juana, introduces her brother, Paul Bazzo—a daft porn star who flees prison in search of refuge wherever he can—which ultimately leads to Paul raping Kika.\(^{34}\)

After two incompetent police officers arrive on scene while the rape is in progress, it is revealed that the act is being secretly recorded by an unknown source, and is passed along to Andrea Caracortada. Kika leaves town when

\(^{34}\) Paul Bazzo’s name is a play-on-words in Spanish whose equivalent in English would be “Great Fuck.”
faced with having to re-live the rape through Andrea’s intention to show the recording to the public on her show. As the story unfolds the spectator witnesses several other grisly details involving murder and deceit that ultimately leave Kika, at the end of the film, deciding to ditch Ramón enroute to the hospital, after meeting a hitchhiker on his way to a wedding. Kika chooses to go with him citing her need for a “distraction”.

The jarring end of the film did no favors in leaving critics largely certain about the value of this very polemical film, as Almodóvar described it (138). Despite countless unfavorable reviews, Kika was heralded by a Spanish newspaper, El País, as a “Triunfo del Mestizaje” (Triumph of Crossbreeding) while Eduardo Mendicutti, writing for El Mundo, lauded the film for its postmodernism via the film’s highly critiqued “excess,” a stylistic paradigm that should have been legible to various audiences including a general Spanish public and esteemed film critics (138–139). Finally, critic José Enrique Monterde states about Almodóvar’s work,

Prefiere ser famoso a ser importante . . . Su cine no es más que un vacío más o menos bien adornado . . . por momentos patéticamente dedicados a preservar una imagen personal que acabará ejerciendo de ancla y puede contribuir a hundirle en el lodazal de banalidad y aburrimiento (qtd. in Cerdán 142).
(Prefers being famous to being important . . . His cinema is nothing more than a better or worse decorated empty void . . . at moments pathetically devoted to persevering an image that is destined to function as an anchor and that may contribute to burying him [or his cinema] in a quagmire of banality and boredom).

Monterde’s critique precisely misses the point of Almodóvar’s exercise which was one not based off originality but unearthing “authenticity” through self-referentialty. The image used to anchor the film’s most important scene, Kika’s rape, is crafted through a preceding scene where Juana’s make-up primes the “make-up” of an (in)authentic rape.

_Ambas cosas a la vez_

The scene that precedes Kika’s rape is critical in order to understand the deconstruction strategy Almodóvar uses to put into question notions of the (in)authentic and the “real”. The primary attention in this scene is, again, the importance of the mirror and the photographic image in its multidimensionality. The first shot is of Kika walking towards what could be construed as a circular mirror or the corporeal eye of the camera, citing and sighting shots akin to Peeping Tom (1960) by Michael Powell or _Blow-up_ (1966) by Antonioni.³⁵ Kika

³⁵ On the issue of the voyeuristic gaze in _Kika_, Almodóvar has remarked, “Everyone watches themselves, everyone is spying on everyone else, and everyone is lying to everyone else. And yet, all of this furtive information about everyone else’s life doesn’t really help you to understand anyone. It doesn’t lead you to help anyone. On the
enters through a door with a porthole telling Juana,

Kika: ¡Huy, vengo muerta, Juana! ¿Ha llegado Ramón?
Whew, I’m pooped, Juana! Has Ramón arrived?
Juana: Todavía no.
Not yet.
Kika: Entonces me voy arriba; porque es que estoy agotada; y no me mires con esa cara.
Well, I’m heading up because I am wiped, and don’t look at me with that face.

During this exchange Kika’s entrance into the kitchen where Juana is working is first shot through Juana’s reflection in the counter top before the camera pulls up to a medium shot of both in the aforementioned exchange. The importance of Juana’s face is anticipated with the reflection shot in the counter top as Kika already signals her fascination with Juana’s face. Juana continues,

Juana: Lo siento, pero no tengo otra.
I’m sorry but it’s the only one I have.
Kika: Juana, no puedes pretender que todas las mujeres seamos bolleras...
Juana, you can’t expect that all women are dykes.
Juana: Ser bollera no es ninguna vergüenza, ¿eh?
Being a dyke isn’t at all shameful, ya know?
Kika: No, pero tampoco lo es que una chica se vuelva loca por los hombres. Juana, a propósito, no es por meterme dónde no me llaman, pero, ¿no has pensado nunca en afeitarte el bigote?
No, but it also isn’t shameful for a girl to go crazy for men. Juana, by the way, I’m not trying to poke around where I shouldn’t be but have you ever thought of shaving your mustache?
Juana: ¿Por qué?
Why?
Kika: Mujer . . .
Honey . . .

contrary, these images which are seen passively do not move you toward any kind of solidarity with others” (Almodóvar 104).
Juana: El bigote no es sólo patrimonio de los hombres, ¿eh?
The mustache isn't only men's patrimony, ya know?
Kika: ¿Ah, no?
Oh, really?
Juana: No. De hecho los hombres con bigote o son maricones o fachas, o ambas cosas a la vez.
No. In fact men with mustaches are either faggots or fascists or both at the same time.
Kika: Yo te lo digo como profesional. Sin bigote estarías mucho más mona. Ligarias más, bonita, ay, un día de estos te maquillo, vas a ver qué cambio. Me voy arriba, Juana, porque estoy agotada.
I'm telling you as a professional, without your mustache you'd be so much cuter. You would flirt more, honey, one of these days I'll do your makeup and you'll see the change. I'm heading up, Juana, because I'm exhausted.
Juana: Qué equivocada está, pero que gracia tiene, la jodia.
She's so wrong, but what a laugh. That fucker.

Kika suggests that Juana is “gayzing” at her with eyes meant to sexually objectify and she plainly says that Juana can’t assume everyone is a “dyke”, something, which Juana says, is nothing shameful. What is curious about this exchange is the way in which Kika objectifies Juana by subsequently zeroing-in on her “moustache” suggesting that her masculinity is what is holding her back from finding someone. Juana’s retort about the appropriation of the facial hair, specifically the moustache as specific to masculinity, is heightened by her suggestion that it is the most feminized of men, gay men, which are stereotyped as sporting the look. Juana manages not only to insert the politics of policing gender and sexuality but also historical memory by indirectly pointing to the notorious Spanish fascist, Francisco Franco, who had a moustache throughout
his dictatorship akin to Adolf Hitler.\textsuperscript{36} This transitivity based on false equivalency is not only humorous but also telling for the ways in which Juana suggests people are placed in certain categories of recognition not based on self-identification but external powers. Curiously, for Kika, it is wearing make-up that would get Juana closer to her authentic self as demonstrated in the bathroom scene that follows.

In a subsequent scene that takes place in front of Kika’s bathroom vanity, Kika provides Juana the much-needed make over with heavy makeup on her face in the form of eye shadow and lipstick.

Kika: Ya está. Mírate Juana, ¿a qué estás maravillosa? ¿Le gusta más así?
There you have it. Look at yourself, Juana? Aren’t you marvelous? Do you like yourself more like this?
Juana: Sin comparación.
There’s no comparison.

Kika: Mira, si fueras menos cardo, ahora que se llevan las caras raras, ¡podrías ser modelo!
Hey, if you were a little less ugly, now that strange faces are in, you could even be a model!

Juana: No me veo yo en una pasarela, me gustaría ser jefa de prisiones, rodeada de tías todo el santo día.
I don’t see myself on the catwalk; I’d like to be a prison warden, surrounded by chicks all day long.

Kika: ¡Qué heavy eres, Juana!
You’re hardcore, Juana!

Juana: ¡Soy auténtica!
I’m authentic!

Kika reminds us that Juana could achieve great things, including universally accepted beauty if she were just a little less ugly. Through the

\textsuperscript{36} Although never judged as a member of the LGBT community, Francisco Franco’s devout Catholicism, which virulently opposed homosexuality, makes the assertion even more salacious that he could have been a repressed gay man.
transformative process of makeup in a world of commercialism and popular consumption, Kika states that although there are some conflicting judgments regarding if “strange” people could be beautiful, Juana can become legible despite her location in the “strange” category. However, the glammed-up Juana dismantles the idea that cosmetics make you appear as your most authentic self (because you look your “best”) by acknowledging that such a representation of self is only for the scopophilic gaze of the other. She rejects the notion of being a model on the catwalk and instead opts for tapping into her own sexual desires as a prison warden where she can surround herself with women made vulnerable through their subjugation to the prison staff. In part, Juana’s depiction as a domineering lesbian who aspires to be a prison warden is a parody of homophobic clichés used through the power of a camp discourse to deconstruct “authenticity” (Lev 215). A discussion on camp will be explained in greater depth in my analysis of *I’m So Excited* (2013).

The framing of Juana’s face, doubly-bound by two mirror images, fractures our referent and leads us to analyze it from multiple vantage points, bringing the subject into a greater context, analogous to a work of cubist art. Juana’s unique features (interpreted by actress Rossy de Palma) resemble a Picasso cubist portrait of the early 20th century, while at the same time, her pose with her hands on her face is like a new iteration of Munich’s *The Scream*. Furthermore, her actions in front of the mirrors dismantle her femininity as a fetishized site of

37 Ironically, Juana (Rossy de Palma), precisely because of her unique features and popularity in the late 1980s, became a model for designer Jean-Paul Gaultier.
Spanish and national identity. Her exaggerated pose of fear and unvoiced shriek, shows the (in)authenticity of her corporeality, the camera’s capturing of it, and the strangeness of confronting one’s own personal intimate desires in one’s own reflection. Almodóvar’s placement of the camera and the mirrors moves this scene from passive to active: by creating a portrait that looks directly at the spectator, he frames a competition of gazes and a(n) (interrupted) confrontation with the audience. We are not just flies on the wall in Kika’s bathroom as she puts on Juana’s makeup in order for her “natural” beauty to stand out. We are confronted with the paradoxical nature of being authentic. What is produced is an image of Juana as a portrait that highlights the curious and pronounced features of her face, while at the same time producing an iteration of Juana as an (in)authentic representation of herself. Having both Kika, Juana, and the reflection of Juana in the vanity mirror all aligned at the same height, viewerly expectations are interrupted precisely because the gaze of the portrait of Juana is the one which directly confronts the camera and the audience. In a sense, the incomplete self of Juana, in the framing of portraiture, confronts the audience’s voyeuristic gazing of an intimate scene in the bathroom between Juana and Kika.

The subsequent dialogue centers back on Juana’s sexual attraction to her employer Kika, a sexual appetite already known to be for women, and also revealed is Juana’s “authenticity” as a (lesbian) woman willing to commit incest with her brother to prevent sexual violence done to other (hetero) women. Kika is puzzled as to why Juana is looking at her so intensely when she asks,
Kika: ¡Desde luego! ¿Qué te pasa, Juana?
That’s for sure! What’s wrong with you, Juana?
Juana: La señora... que me ha excitado.
Ma’am...you’ve turned me on.
Kika: ¡Ay, Juana, por favor!
Oh, Juana, please!
Juana: Necesito un poco de agua, que me baje la erección.
I need a little bit of water, so my erection calms down.
Kika: Juana, ¿tú nunca has estado con un hombre?
Juana, you’ve never been with a guy?
No. Well, just my brother.
Kika: ¿Has hecho incesto?
You’ve had incestual relations?
Juana: No sé si era incesto; el caso es que mi hermano es subnormal...
I'm not sure it was incest; the reason being my brother is a retard.
Kika: Pobrecillo.
Poor thing.
Juana: Bueno, es. Y como a todos los subnormales, le gusta mucho follar.
Well, yes, he is. And like all retards, he loves to fuck.
Kika: Bueno, no sólo a los subnormales, Juanita...
Well, that’s not just for retards, Juanita
Juana: Ya . . . Pero el caso es que empezó con las vacas, con las cabras y con todos los corderos del pueblo...
Yeah . . . but the thing of it is that he started with cows, then goats, and the with all the lambs in the town...
Kika: ¡Pues vaya cuadro!
Wow, what an image!
Juana: Y luego empezó con el vecindario y antes de que violara a todas las vecinas, pues claro me dejaba que me pagara allí unos polvos y se desahogara.
And then later he started with the neighborhood, and before he raped all of the (female) neighbors, well, I let him fuck me a few times so he could have a release.
Kika: Bueno, siendo así, a lo mejor no ha sido incesto, pues claro, Juana, por esos estás tú tan traumatizada...
Well, as it were, maybe you didn’t have incestual relations, of course, Juana, that is why you are so traumatized
Juana: ¡Qué traumatizada! Donde se ponga un buen chocho que se quite todo lo demás. La señora porque no lo ha probado.
What do you mean traumatized?! Wherever there’s a good pussy, everything else fades away. Ma’am you’d know but you
Juana’s remarks on needing some water puts directly into question not just femininity but the biological imperative behind aesthetic judgments that construct gender with her comment that she needs some cool water on her neck so “... que me baje la erección” ([her] erection calms down). Within a scene that lasts a total of about two minutes, the spectator is bombarded with not only images of Juana at her most authentic but her authenticity as it relates to femininity, womanhood, and lesbianism through her discussion of unspeakable topics including incest.

Almodóvar matches cinematographically Juana’s words about authenticity by the multiple images of Juana on the screen. Which iteration of self should the spectator be focused on or privilege? The portrait in the shaving mirror? The larger frame of the bathroom mirror? Kika’s opening line in the scene affirms, “Do you like yourself more like this” but what is this this? Returning to Benjamínian theorizations on photography, what is the relationship between the absence of the photographed subject (within the image) and the new presence of the subject that is now part of an image? What is clear is that absence of the “authentic” image, the “true” capturing of Juana in-the-flesh, which we only see as a reflection within a reflection, creates a heteronymativic mise-en-abyme of sorts. This scene is a way in which heteronymativity, through the images of an
image, highlight the danger of appropriation of physical, social, and aesthetic judgments as being hierarchical in nature, since the spectator is left unsure what to privilege in the speech acts of the character and Almodovar's signature cinematic visuality.

The conversation in this scene serves a twofold purpose: on the one hand, the characters' discussion is a reorientation about the ways in which one looks at oneself, ontologically speaking. On the other, the scene fails at pinning down the veracity in authenticity whether it is gender, consumerism, or sexuality. This sequence of scenes leads up to the most controversial section of the film, Kika's rape, which has left Almodóvar in some circles, particularly those of feminists, as being anti-woman or trivializing rape or rape culture.

**Rape and Recovery**

The subtitle of this section is a fragment of one of the first articles written on the subject of rape in Almodovarian filmography titled, *Can a Good Feminist Sit Through Kika? Rape, Recovery, and Submission Fantasies in the Films of Almodóvar* by Patricia Hart. Hart contends that, effectively, a good feminist *can* sit through *Kika* as well as other portrayals of rape and submission fantasies in his work because of Almodóvar's cinematic presentation of the act as a universal problem, affecting both men and women, while at the same time advancing a discussion on the right of an individual to his/her own sexual desires regardless if they are acts of submission or egalitarian in nature (74). Although the
universalizing component of rape does not negate that it is an area for feminist inquiry, Almodóvar’s intervention isn’t anti-woman as Hart points out. This is in part due to the highly stylized aspect of the (un)reality found in the scene. In essence, it is Almodóvarian framing that disrupts what should be the violent, realistic, and pornographic depiction into one that demonstrates a critique of mediatized fantasy.

Almodóvar has been reluctant over the years to speak specifically about the rape scene in his most controversial film but, in an interview with Peter Bowen, Almodóvar suggested that jokes and comedy are better appreciated when no explanation is needed to convey their punch line,

“I assure you that you can make a comedy out of the most horrible subject matter. You can make a comedy about Hitler as Chaplin did in The Great Dictator. I don’t think that Chaplin felt any sympathy for Hitler. It is just that in making a film a director tries out all kinds of strategies. And to allow a director that flexibility seems so basic to me that it is important not only in cinema, but also in life. People and films are not simple things; they have many facets. You have to see them in their complexity, and not just in one of their facets—if you want, I can explain to you what my intention was behind that rape scene, but it would be like explaining a joke. The strength of the joke disappears when you have to explain it” (Bowen).
In a resistance to perceived political correctness and establishing precedent for filmic representations of taboo subject matter, Almodóvar maintains an unflinching defense of his work which includes a disavowal of sexualized violence through normalizing discourses of spectacle as witnessed not just in Kika but her assailant, Paul Bazzo.

Paul Bazzo (a nom de scène for his given name, Paul Mendéz) is able to escape from prison by participating in a religious procession, much like the one that occurred in Ocaña, where an order of self-flagellants publicly demonstrates their devotion through sadomasochistic fetishism. This fetishism is one meant for public consumption and normalized under the auspice of heteropatriarchal “tradition” of the Roman Catholic Church. The viewer learns that Paul is also full of queer contradictions as someone who admittedly had sex with men while he was in prison, had incestual relations with his lesbian(?) sister, and also boasts a hyperheteromasculinity by his work as a porn star, hence his cheeky stage name. Paul’s first motivation was not to rape Kika upon entering her home, but to steal video equipment used by Ramón. In order to make the scenario believable, that it was in fact stolen by an attacker while Juana was home, Paul conspires with Juana who suggests that Paul tie her up and knock her unconscious with a sucker punch to make the scenario more “authentic.” Things don’t go according to plan when Paul, upon entering Kika’s room to retrieve the equipment, gets distracted by Kika sleeping in bed and rapes her.
Paul Bazzo further demonstrates his overdetermined sexual desires and sexuality by blurring the lines between cinematic inauthenticity/performance and the reality of sexual violation. He blurts out, “I’m good! They all said so on the set! I can achieve five climaxes without withdrawing.” As suggested by various scholars (D'Lugo, Martín-Márquez, and Lev), his confusion of when and where “real” sexual encounters start and where simulated ones end, as well as his affirmation about his sexual virility, runs counter to the narrative of pornography, a genre which is supposed to seamlessly create a level of verisimilitude between the mediatized sexual performance and that of the sexual desires of the spectator (Lev 214). Mark Allison argues that this scene fails despite the fact that it was the intention of Almodóvar the whole time, not to make light of a serious subject, but to problematize the very way in which the subject matter is represented. Allison writes, “The scene does not work [. . . .] This episode is far too long (eight and a half minutes), and Kika’s resilience does not triumph over her attacker. In fact, it’s the two stupid policemen who finally remove the rapist from his victim” (Allison 77). This simplistic assertion that the scene doesn’t “work” lies on the over determined narrative of Kika needing to be strong enough to ward off her attacker or courageous enough to not need the police to feel empowered. Though the inept policemen indicate to Allison the presence of a certain levity, his focus on the scene’s length for its perceived failure, and not the constructed comedic stance of the rape itself. This is highlighted by Kika, who humorously states, “Okay, one climax is a rape but three climaxes is just
ridiculous.” Despite the perceived levity of the scene, the rape traumatizes Kika in subsequent moments in the film, particularly at the revelation that it would be broadcast again on Andrea Caracortada’s reality television show.

Make-up can be used to camouflage (recall the first scene of the film *Morrer Como Um Homen*); through its relationship to aesthetic judgments on beauty, femininity, youthfulness—a recurring trend in all of the films studied—or as a way to reveal another layer of consumerism. Almodóvar demonstrates the power of this discourse prominently through the cosmetologist protagonist Kika in the film that comes to embody her being, much like that of Ocaña in his own self-titled film. The failures in this film, whether deliberate or unintentional, have landed it a spot as one of the most infamous of Almodóvar’s career. The next film analyzed, *All About My Mother*, shifts to another phase of Almodóvar’s career while simultaneously moving from the infamous to the most famous. Winning “Best Foreign Language Film” in 1999 at the Oscars as well as other countless awards, *Todo sobre mi madre* (All About My Mother) has been regarded as one of his best-known films and certainly most financially lucrative yielding almost seventy million dollars at the box office. Similarly to Kika, Agrado, a central character in *Todo sobre mi madre*, imagines herself in terms of media images, drawing her inspiration from popular culture and defending on stage her decision to spend large amounts of money on cosmetic surgery because as she states, “*una es más auténtica cuando más se parece a lo que*
sueña de si misma” (you are more authentic the more you resemble what you’ve dreamed you are).

**Beginning at the End and Ending at the Beginning: All About My Mother**

The final scene ends and the traditional red velvety curtain is drawn. Superimposed over the curtain is a dedication with which Almodóvar ends his thirteenth feature length film:

“A Bette Davis, Gena Rowlands, Romy Schneider . . . A todas las actrices que han hecho de actrices, a todas la mujeres que actuan, a los hombres que actuan y se convierten en mujeres, a todas las personas que quieren ser madres. A mi madre.”

(To Bette Davis, Gena Rowlands, Romy Schneider . . . To all actresses who have played actresses, to all women who act, to men who act and become women, to all people who want to become mothers. To my mother).

This dedication by Almodóvar leaves no doubt in the spectator’s mind that the slipperiness of gender, sexuality, motherhood, and mortality have all been accomplices to each other in the film’s construction. The story begins in Madrid, with a mother named Manuela, who mourns the loss of her son, Esteban, who tragically dies after being struck by a passing vehicle in his attempt to secure an
autograph from his favorite theater actress. Manuela, in a quest for healing, travels to Barcelona to make contact with her estranged husband, also named Esteban but who now goes by Lola. Manuela attempts to locate Lola to inform her about her son’s death. After running across old friends including a cheeky transgender woman named Agrado, and making new ones—like befriending the theater actress that Esteban was chasing after, named Huma—Manuela comes face to face with Lola, revealed as a street level prostitute dying of AIDS, who has also fathered another child named Esteban. In the end, Esteban is born anew, as Manuela adopts the “new” Esteban after his mother died in childbirth. What is clear is a heteronymativic structure based on multiple manifestations of the same person (like Esteban) which through a spectral transformation and embodiment renders incongruent hetero-patriarchal power structures. Notwithstanding, the most famous scene in the film is one in which Agrado informs the audience in a brief autobiography of sorts about her authenticity through the transformation of her physical body to achieve inner peace, which is not unlike Juana and Kika’s discussion in the bathroom on the use of cosmetic adjustments purchased as a vehicle to self-fulfillment and living a truly “authentic” life.

**Capturing the Quotable: Agrado’s Monologue**

The tumultuous relationship between the theater actress Huma and her amorous relationship with her co-star/manager/girlfriend Nina comes to a halt when
Agrado receives a phone call backstage minutes before the show. Unfortunately, Nina’s drug addiction has landed her in the hospital with Huma at her side. Upon receiving the phone call Agrado is tasked with addressing the audience, already in their seats for the show, to break the news that it will be canceled for reasons outside the actresses’ control. Through a close reading of Agrado’s monologue about body politics, I will highlight the theatricality of her “performance” which permits a vantage point to see heteronymativity more clearly. Agrado’s performance is both remarkable and ordinary as she embodies the Brechtian untragic hero, one that inhabits and, in this case, embodies, the contradictions of society, as she looks back on the gaze of both the scene’s theater audience and the cinema spectator as well. I offer that Agrado’s act of stepping on stage is marked by a stepping in and out of “character” as it relates to her personal gender identity, as well as her professional aspirations as an actress. Agrado upon taking the stage states:

Por causas ajenas a su voluntad, dos de las actrices que diariamente triunfan sobre este escenario hoy no pueden estar aquí, pobrecillas. Así que se suspende la función. A los que quieran se les devolverá el dinero de la entrada pero a los que no tengan nada mejor que hacer y pa una vez que venís al teatro, es una pena que os vayáis. Si os quedáís, yo prometo entreteneros contando la historia de mi vida.
(Through no fault of their own, two of the actresses who triumph daily on this stage cannot be here today, poor things. So the performance is canceled. Those who want their money back will be refunded but those who have nothing better to do and since you made it here to the theater, it's a shame you'd leave. If you stay, I promise to entertain by telling the story of my life).

Adiós, lo siento, eh (a los que se marchan).

(See ya, sorry, heh) [to those few that leave]

Si les aburro hagan como que roncan - así: Grrrr - yo me cosco enseguida y para nada herís mi sensibilidad (eh, de verdad!) Me llaman la Agrado, porque toda mi vida sólo he pretendido hacerle la vida agradable a los demás. Además de agradable, soy muy auténtica. Miren qué cuerpo, todo hecho a medida: rasgado de ojos 80.000; nariz 200, tiradas a la basura porque un año después me la pusieron así de otro palizón. Ya sé que me da mucha personalidad, pero si llego a saberlo no me la toco. Tetas, 2, porque no soy ningún monstruo, 70 cada una pero estas las tengo ya superamortizás. Silicona en labios, frente, pómulos, caderas y culo. El litro cuesta unas 100.000, así que echar las cuentas porque yo, ya las he perdido... Limadura de mandíbula 75.000; depilación definitiva en láser, porque la mujer también viene del mono, bueno, tanto o más que el hombre! 60.000 por sesión. Depende de lo barbuda que una sea, lo normal es de 2 a 4 sesiones, pero si
eres folclórica, necesitas más claro... bueno, lo que les estaba diciendo, que cuesta mucho ser auténtica, señora, y en estás cosas no hay que ser rácana, porque una es más auténtica cuanto más se parece a lo que ha soñado de sí misma."

(If you do get bored start pretend-snoring like this: Zzzzzz– I'll get the idea immediately and you won't hurt my feelings at all (hey, I'm serious! ) They call me “Agrado” [Charity], because all my life I have only intended to make the lives of others more pleasant. Aside from being so kind, I am very authentic. Look at this body, all tailor-made: almond shaped eyes, 80,000 pesetas, nose 200,0000 pesetas, thrown away because a year later I got my current nose after another ass kicking... I know it gives me a lot of personality, but if I would have known the outcome, I wouldn't have touched it. Tits, 2, because I'm not a monster, 70 each but I more than earned that money back. Silicone lips, forehead, cheeks, hips and ass. A liter costs 100,000, so...you do the math because I can't keep it straight... 75.000 for a jaw reduction; permanent laser hair removal, because a woman is also a descendent of the ape, well, even more so than man sometimes! 60,000 per session. It depends on how hairy you are, normally it takes 2-4 sessions, but if you are a flamenco diva, you’ll need a bit more of course... well, what I was saying before is it costs a lot to be an authentic woman, yes ma'am, and you can’t be stingy with these things because you are more authentic the more you resemble what you've
Agrado reveals the mechanisms that at once produce and perform gender, eliciting applause from the audience about her (continual and always incomplete) transformation from man to woman. She also destroys the fourth wall by stepping out of character as a “natural” woman to reveal the alleged “inauthenticity” she celebrates as being “authentic”. Her revelations are demonstrated through a separation of elements on various levels: 1) the actress separates from the woman behind the role of an actress 2) drawing attention by abstracting and fetishizing each body part that corresponds to womanhood. This scene reinforces a heteronymativic theatricality as she deploys theater strategy noted by Benjamin using Brecht:

The actor must show his subject, and he must show himself. Of course, he shows his subject by showing himself, and he shows himself by showing his subject. Although the two coincide, they must not coincide in such a way that the difference between the two tasks disappears. In other words, an actor should reserve for himself the possibility of stepping out of character artistically. At the proper moment he should insist on portraying a man who reflects about his part. [. . .] Basically, it demonstrates only the philosophic sophistication of the author who, in writing his plays, always remembers that in the end the world may turn out to be a theater (Benjamin 153).
Thus Agrado engages with the filmic audience as well as the diegetic theater audience through this interruption with viewerly expectations (of the expected theater performance), as well as the shock of her personal narrative. The queer aspect of her narration helps to drive home the Brechtian emphasis that instead of allowing the spectator to focus on action, forces the spectator to focus on the conditions of action. Agrado embodies a more “authentic” woman by revealing the mechanisms needed for the construction of “womanhood.” In essence, she speaks to representation as a condition of life itself. Agrado situates her discussion in a Spanish context through her specific reference to the *folklórica*, a term used to describe many queer performers/artists that took the stage before her—particularly José Pérez Ocaña. Her narration serves as a queer historical “footnote” akin to Brecht discussion on the matter:

The corresponding attitude for the spectator is that he should not think about a subject, but within the confines of the subject. But this way of subordinating everything to a single idea, this passion for propelling the spectator along a single track where he can look neither right nor left, up nor down, is something that the new school of play-writing must reject. Footnotes, and the habit of turning back in order to check a point, needs to be introduced into play-writing too. (Brecht 44)

Agrado also nods/footnotes Juana and Kika’s discussion specifically about facial
hair for women. She humorously remarks, much like Juana, that facial hair should be a naturalized feature of women despite their divergence in their method of appropriation. For Juana, it should be left alone and for Agrado, it should be removed per normative conventional wisdom.

So, as a means of final considerations the audience is left to decipher what Almodóvar achieves in presenting Agrado on stage. Perhaps Almodóvar’s achievement is to produce an intellectualization and self-reflection/positioning by the filmic audience. Should the film audience be clapping too, along with the theater audience at Agrado’s declared authenticity? Should we question why the theater audience is clapping? What is important is that we are cognizant that our lives are implicated in her testimony and that we should all operate under the suspicion that life itself is a form of theater.

Evident from these two Almódvoar films presented so far, both (in)famous in their own way, is the question of bodily authenticity. For Kika, it is reading Juana’s body through a marketplace of cosmetic touch-ups that will permit a more “acceptable” image for public consumption despite the spectator’s identification with Juana for her resistance to Kika’s efforts to make her more “authentic”. Conversely, for Agrado, this cosmetization of her body through a legible transformation from “male” to “female” is what the audience celebrates. Despite understanding their bodies in different ways, both claim to be authentic. So, what then, is authenticity in a world of Almodóvarian identity politics? In the film I’m So Excited (2013), he takes a radical departure from his attention to
bodily authenticity as a site for contestation and instead focuses on the question of queer authenticity more broadly. Vital to this approach is the vehicle he uses, a camp discourse, as a way to signal queerness for an international consumer accustomed to a marketplace of gestures, ways of being, and expressions that are coded to be worn or adorned as “authentically” camp.

Los Amantes Pasajeros (2013)

Pedro Almodóvar’s 2013 film, Los Amantes Pasajeros, titled in English after the Pointer Sisters’ classic song, I’m So Excited, presents a nostalgic reverence for his comedies of the 1980s, like Pepi, Luci, Bom y las otras chicas del montón or Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios. The film’s title in Spanish, for its part, is a play-on-words that can be construed as The Passenger Lovers or as The Fleeting Lovers. The plot of Los amantes pasajeros is simple; mechanical difficulties with the landing gear sends the cabin crew—made up of three saucy queens—and queer pilots into a panic-stricken adventure to keep the passengers on the plane distracted. In the first scene Antonio Banderas, playing the cameo role of a ground crew technician, forgets to pull one of the chocks from the wheels of the jetliner, causing the landing gear to be damaged before take off. Almodóvar’s intention for this film was to recall comedies he produced earlier in

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his career, but perhaps with the downward spiral of the Spanish economy—
clearly not as miraculous as once thought—his work has taken on a darker hue:

Cuando pensaba en producir una comedia, decía: ¡Pero si ya he hecho una
que me gusta mucho, no puedo exponerme a hacer algo peor! Y he tenido que
esforzarme para sacudirme esa presión de encima. Pero ha habido algo más:
cada vez que empiezo un borrador de guión, lo primero que me sale son
situaciones y diálogos cómicos. Pero, en cuanto investigo y caracterizo a los
personajes, se me ensombrecen. Mi cine se ha ensombrecido mucho en esta
década y puede que mi vida también. Y el resultado de esta introspección se
ve en mis películas. Y no me salen comedias. (qtd. in Pando et al.)

(When I thought of producing a comedy, I said: But I've already made one that I
really like, I cannot expose myself to doing one that’s worse! And I have had to
force myself to shake off that pressure. But there was something else: every
time I start to draft a script, the first thing that comes out is comedic situations
and dialogues. But as I investigate and sketch the characters, they get darker
on me. My cinema has darkened a lot in this decade and maybe my life too.
And the result of this introspection is in my films. Comedies just don’t come
out.)
This darkness found in his later work as well as his fleeting connection/association/relation with the comedy genre is a point I will return to later on toward the end of this chapter. But given Almodóvar’s interviews on the film, it is clear that he as a script writer and director has tasked himself, on account of external pressures, with a re-presentation of his most famous oeuvres, one of which, Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, was given the nod for an Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 1988. His feeling of overexposure signals an anxiety as he as author/director is subjected to the competing forces of the market, fame, and audience expectations. Despite looking back toward his earlier work while creating this 21st century comedy, it seems to have not proven to be a lucrative strategy as it lacked box office sales as well as failing to garner critical acclaim, corroborating his initial fears. However, it seems for some that the problem doesn’t consist in the production of a (light) comedy or that it is darker than others per se, but instead the gayness found in it has been given a significant amount of scrutiny. Some have described the film as being overly heavy in gay themes as Andrew Urban writes:

Almodóvar seems to have made it specifically for a gay audience, with ripe references, lots of talk about homosexual sex, and the very camp performances of the male flight attendants. These things by themselves wouldn’t necessarily distance a mixed audience, but the material is too flimsy to hold up, even though there are a few (too few) Almodóvar flourishes in character revelation.
Urban’s critique reads as slightly disingenuous due to Almodóvar’s international popularity of which, there has always predominantly been a “mixed audience.” But, if one were to take Urban at his word, if the film is considered a work of LGBT cinema, having heavy handed gay references wouldn’t be such a bad thing—afterall, the genre anticipates its content— but, I would argue, it is precisely the delivery of these gay themes that signals it isn’t intended for a gay audience as some of the critics like Urban may think. In fact, *Los Amantes Pasajeros* is intended for a *hetero-ish* international audience that has become more accustomed to light comedic gay dialogue. Very little in the film had the subversive edge that Almodóvar is known for in his earlier films. His trademark critique of family, religion, media, gender and sexuality norms are largely absent and instead replaced by gay joke one-liners. Although I agree with Urban that the film lacked the cohesion needed to create a more substantive project, due to its underdeveloped subplots and loose ends. My critique of the film is based, more interestingly, on the framework of heteronymativity. Due in part to his ever growing popularity and the Almodóvar brand being synonymous with Queer Iberian Cinema, I argue that this recent film is just as subversive as his earlier work. Although on the surface the film reads as a deterritorialized, mainstream, and “feel good” normative representation of the LGBT community, under the emphasis of the *heteronomy* component of heteronymativity, I argue that the streamlining of identity, particularly gay identity represented by stereotypical
campy queeny flight attendants, reveals a critique of the tension between autonomous desires and sanctionable heteronymous acts.

The mise-en-scène of this film is essential to understanding the comedic experiment that Almodóvar puts forth as an “underground film” that ends up taking on a life of its own (Pando et al. 56). I refer to this film as a comedic experiment to underscore its position in the director’s filmography, which in recent years, as Almodóvar points out, has been largely categorized as melodramas or dramas. Almodóvar’s reentry into comedy is experimental and challenging on two levels. For one, Almodóvar is cinematically shooting a comedy inside the tight quarters of the interior space of a jetliner of the fictitious airline “Peninsula” (a stand-in for Spain’s largest national airline Iberia.)³⁹ His tall order is made even more challenging by trying to join the ranks of a small number of notable films executed in interior spaces such as Night of the Living Dead (Romero) and Death and the Maiden (Polanski), a task that would prove daunting for even the best of directors (CITE). In Los amantes pasajeros, there are only four distinct and cordoned off interior spaces shown in nearly the entire film: the cockpit, first class cabin, economy seating and the kitchen galley/prep area near the restrooms. Of these areas, most of the action occurs in the first class cabin where a predominantly Spanish cohort—made up of a business tycoon (Mr. Más/Mr. Mo(o)re); a Madame of a top tier escort service and

³⁹ Although the films introductory credits reveals that “this film and those characters in it are a work of fiction” as I have argued in his earlier films, we know that this “fiction” is ensconced in the reality of the time period.
celebutante (Norma); a pair of newlyweds; an amateur psychic named Bruna; an unapologetic Don Juan, Ricardo; and Señor Infante\textsuperscript{40}, a Mexican hitman sent to kill Norma—all enjoy the attention of the three male flight attendants who have drugged most of the economy cabin to sleep to prevent hysteria for the inevitable emergency landing. The most transparent interpretation of this division of the space is in its representation and relationality to the Spanish economic crisis in 2009: specifically, the everyday middle class traveler would hardly be faced with the same criticism as the Spanish elite in First Class, who ultimately were responsible for the metaphorical nosedive of the Spanish economy. The interesting addition to this allegory is the three flight attendants, who embody in their own way the musical number “Send in the Clowns” written by Stephen Sondheim for the play \textit{A Little Night Music}—adding another layer of theatricality that distracts but does not detract, from the narrative at hand. Thus, due to the confining interior space of the film’s mise-en-scène, Almodóvar’s attention is focused instead on the personal and professional crisis of the protagonist flight crew to carry the film forward.

The predominant attention is focused on the three flight attendants: senior crew member, Joserra, along with his sidekicks, Fajas and Ulloa, whose campy style gestures precisely at the theatricality of the space of the plane. Recalling Susan Sontag’s seminal piece \textit{Notes on Camp} she reminds us in entry number

\textsuperscript{40} Given Almodóvar’s citation ality of himself, his fellow cinematographers, and playwrights, it is not unreasonable to conjure the image of a very special Infante, Pedro Infante, one of the most revered actors of Mexican cinema’s Golden Age, who infamously died enjoying his life long hobby of piloting aircraft when he crashed his plane soon after takeoff in the Yucatán peninsula in 1957.
ten that, “Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It’s not a lamp, but a ‘lamp’; not a woman, but a ‘woman.’ To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater” (Sontag 56). The “plane” as it were restricts/limits access to expressions of self for these men (as well as the pilots) in a way that forecloses on the plurality of experiences demonstrated in other films discussed earlier in chapter one and two. It is the lack of contrast between interior and exterior and the restriction of movement these flight attendants face by being stuck in the plane that causes this tension to occur—unlike the protagonists of the other films of this dissertation—who escaped or sought refuge in an enchanted forest or a progressive city like Barcelona. Instead, they are left with the only minimal comfort of a pressurized cabin and booze in an environment that prevents a frame of reference for what is going on “outside” the space of the plane in the world below.

This pressurized interior space is done precisely through artificial means in order to make the experience of flying bearable. This same artificiality and staleness of the gay joke one liners dished out by flamboyant men prevents many of the characters’ dialogue with each other to communicate anything but perceived “gay” superficiality, since the flight crew represents the most easily conjurable stereotype of gayness for an international audience. In essence the audience is left with a Petri dish sized sample of ontologies and epistemologies, causing the potential to misdirect the viewer into assuming the false dichotomy
between a small sample and the whole—in all of its complexity and
contradictions. Referring back to Urban’s criticism of the film, what made the film
not “take off” wasn’t the gay baggage of five queer male characters but the fact
that all they did and said were “gay things”; recall, he states: “there are a few (too
few) Almodóvar flourishes in character revelation.” Instead of understanding the
film contextualized in a Spanish setting, the international audience is left only to
latch on to the smutty references of the cabin crew performing an internationally
recognized version of gayness. This gayness takes the form of the cabin crew
drinking heavily, having mile-high-club sex, and overall “scandalous” behavior.

It is not just the crewmembers’ behavior but also the “plane” as a plane that
promotes the prominence of movement to drive the film. This setting literally and
figuratively gives the spectator a line of flight to see the trajectory of the film’s
protagonists, which, on the one hand, circles around gay catharsis, while on the
other hand lead us circularly right back to nearly the same airport the plane
originally departed from. The film is, at its essence, very “Spanish” despite its
international appeal. This is due to its attention to the particular geopolitical
issues of the Spain regarding, for example, autonomous self inflicted government
waste versus heteronymous pressures of European economies to take on
austerity measures for the sake of the EU territory as a whole. Additionally, it
puts into question through camp spectacle the very understanding of which
‘movement’ versus “movement” should garner the spectator’s attention.
Director or Captain?

In many ways, Almodóvar’s own directorial and personal autonomy are in constant flux, mirroring that of the pilot of the plane in his film. The pilot, Alex Acero, is a father; married to a woman while at the same time he has a relationship with Joserra, the chief steward of the plane. In many ways, Alex’s anxiety about his queer identity is due to his resistance to the camp aesthetic of “Being-as-playing-a-Role” accepted by others on board. Instead, he presents himself as the Spanish macho Capitan of an international jumbo jet. His name gives us clues as to his hardened exterior with the last name that translates to “steel”. At many points during the film Alex reprimands Joserra for his direct and indirect acknowledgement of their gay relationship. These heteronymous forces-imposed by society’s sanctioning and condemnation of queer relationships prevent Alex from truly enjoying his consensual romantic relationship. Alex is not unlike Almodóvar insofar as the heteronymous forces of the economic market, film critique/culture, and legacy compete for an autonomous Almodóvar whose identity has been shaped in the public eye. Almodóvar’s earlier quote about the possibility of making a “worse” quality film than some of his others provokes a tension between the competing constituencies demanding his allegiance. Should he make a queer film for a queer audience? Should he make a light comedy that is internationalized through its use of stereotypical representations of gay identity? Should the film be for a Spanish audience because, in the end, the film only sold very well in Spain and had a weak performance internationally? I argue
that these rhetorical questions merit addressing the heteronymativity found in the film through the screenplay’s incorporation of the pilots needing to make a crash landing.

The emergency landing is known from the very outset of the film but the subtly imbedded autonomous story of Spanish society is not in plain view for a general public to see. Mr. Más has brief scenes throughout the film to gesture at the implications of the failings of the Spanish state for causing a potential tragedy for all citizens on board the plane. Through a close up shot of a newspaper headline, the audience realizes that Mr. Más is implicated in the crash landing of the flight in La Mancha airport, near Barajas airport in Madrid where the flight took off. Because of shady dealings Mr. Más had in constructing the La Mancha airport, an authentically inauthentic representative example of a boondoggle before the economic bubble burst. This “fiction” becomes a blessing and a curse. Due to an international summit of world leaders in Madrid, all neighboring airports and those runways in Barajas are full and it is only this project of government waste—a project that represents the real life financial meltdown of the Spanish economy—that permits the plane to land safely. Despite Almodóvar’s tongue-in-cheek warning at the beginning of the film that “todo lo que ocurre en esta película es ficción y fantasía y no guarda ninguna relación con la realidad” (everything in this film is fiction and fantasy and bares no relation to reality). What the film demonstrates is that fiction and reality, theater and film, and acting and being are in constant tension and flux with each other. What
grounds this film as Queer Iberian Cinema is that it both textually and critically
doesn’t reach its final destination of praiseworthy comments of an international
audience due to its subtle references to the particularities of knowledge found in
Spanish context (related to geopolitical concerns), similar to those found in the
soundtrack of João Pedro Rodrigues’s film and the out of touch/time sequence of
a Semana Santa precession in the medieval quarter of Barcelona in *Ocaña: Retrat Intermitent*.

*(Mo(o)re) HETERONYMATIVITY*

Mr. Moore’s character is heteronymatic in nature given that it indicates
corporate or elite greed as well as translating into English the idea of “beyond”.
Almodóvar’s use of Mr. Más as an archetype creates a creative duplicity of
comedy and irony at the same time. In many ways Almodóvar’s film goes
beyond the nation, the space of the plane, beyond comedy because it turns into
the irony found in the “darkness” of Almodóvarian film production. For example,
the textual and cinematographic complexity of this film is what allows it to (not)
“fit” in any particular genre. It makes perfect sense why the film ends with a
‘crash’ landing; in a sense Almodóvar as author/director demonstrates that the film
went nowhere and everywhere at the same time. For the protagonist pilot, Alex
Acero, the only way he can confront his queer identity is to crash land it by finally
authentically opening up to his desire for Joserra at the end of the film. Re-
territorializing the film through the plane’s less-than-perfect landing, shows that
living and dying for the plural is due to a feeling of “incompleteness” as addressed in each of the films analyzed in this dissertation. Almodóvar’s personal and professional struggle with this issue is clear in script writing, as he pens multiple drafts for fear—in part—that his narrative will be incomplete for an international audience piqued with curiosity for another blockbuster film. This incompleteness, however, need not be interpreted as a failure but instead as a window through which to see the contradictions of tensions of identity politics.

As I have argued in this section, *I’m So Excited* demonstrates that the *Queer* in Queer Iberian Cinema is a malleable piece of this larger category. In Almodóvar’s latest films, this component has been manifested prominently but only as a go-between to address a larger question of Spanish identity in an Iberian context. With an Almodóvar who has become notorious for the explicit, controversial, and sensational, comes an anxiety to move away from those qualifiers of his cinema and resist the notion of needing to outdo himself with each new film. The Almodóvar of today expresses himself as gay and as Spanish by overstating the superficiality of camp aesthetics as a way to resist the normalization of queer identity and a deterritorialization of a Spanish identity, into a singularly “international” one.
Conclusion

The films that comprise this project have been analyzed through varying degrees of scale: from close textual reading of specific scenes and characters to broader implications about the formation of nation in the post-dictatorial era in Iberia. This project is informed by postcolonial studies, a discipline that has sought to critique nationalism by addressing how many of our own epistemologies continue to replicate the very colonial paradigms through which we are constituted. The premise of this dissertation is similar in that it argues that a critique of nation is imperative in order to problematize categories of State, capital, fascism, and dictatorship. Furthermore, it argues, reading these categories through gender and sexuality permits the possibility of alternative formations, whether social or political, which resist reifying the nation and instead open up space for new cultural imaginings.

The dissertation’s central term, heteronymativity, can serve as a starting point for scholars to “queer” Iberian state formations. Thinking “regionally”, a notion that has tensions bound up in specific localized configurations—many having national(ist) projects and diverse understandings of sovereignty—coupled with attending to how gender and sexuality are mobilized in the name of Nation, creates a mode of critique via vernaculars of queerness. Vernacularization is a way of negotiating formations that operate on different scales relative to socio-

41 A reference point for more in depth discussion of these important issues is Partha Chatterjee’s text Whose Imagined Community? that critiques Benedict Anderson’s canonical text Imagined Communities.
political factors and geographic particularity. Further research should advance the ways in which scholars vernacularize based on a specific ethnicity/language of a region, dominant notions of the State or Iberia, and even more broadly, about the culture of southern Europe or “the Mediterranean.”

An additional lens through which to examine queer Iberian lives is using biopower: a term that Foucault defined as “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations” (140). The subjugated bodies in each of the films studied use heteronymativity as a strategy to combat the disposability of certain lives/communities under capitalism. Each one of the central protagonists analyzed deploys specific strategies and problematizations that speak to vitality, morbidity, and mortality. For example in the film Morrer Como Um Homem, discussed in chapter one, Tonia, the aging drag queen protagonist, chronicles her negotiation over medicalized intervention practices that seek to regulate and legitimate her body. Numerous scenes throughout the film indicate that her breast implants are leaking silicone and causing a life-threatening infection. Tonia constantly refers to the pain in her breast throughout the film; in a close up shot of her breast in one scene, the pus that is released resembles at the same time both the morbidity of her condition and the vitality she is perceived to have in the form of “naturally” occurring breast milk, essential life-giving nutrition from mother to child. The implications of biopower are present across all of the films studied in this dissertation, albeit more subtly than the example just illustrated.
José Perez Ocaña’s (auto)biography demonstrates the ways in which precarity is at the center of queer people’s existence—particularly his limited if not absent safety net during much of his life.

This dissertation at its broadest invites inquiry into modes of subjectification that are needed in order for each film character to fit into certain categories of belonging. This subjectification happens in a relationship dependent on truth discourses and forms of authority seeking to transform the individual under a process of governmentality. Indispensable for a more robust understanding of these processes is the inclusion of queer women—whether directors or protagonists—into the scope of Queer Iberian Cinema. Catalan director and actress Marta Balletbò-Coll’s award winning work for Costa Brava (1995) and Sévigné (2004) would be essential to this corpus. Additionally, the film El Calentito (2005) by director and actress Chus Gutiérrez provides a window into Spanish lesbian subjectivity in the post Franco era, as many facets of this film are based off of her own lived experience growing up in that period.

Recently Pedro Almodóvar was named President of the 70th Cannes Film Festival Jury, further enhancing his profile and corpus of work as being amongst the masters of the art form. This institutional affirmation of Almodóvar invites the question, how will Queer Iberian Cinema continue to evolve and stand oppositionally to normative practices while continuing to captivate an ever-growing mainstream audience? Will this generate further investment in queer film, or will queer films continue to rely on collaboration for funding and
dissemination into new markets? Will films that celebrate living in the plural see transformations via new collectives of emergent queer Iberian directors? Queer Iberian Cinema, in whatever iteration it takes, will continue to delve into both epistemological and ontological questions that reverberate through queer lives and queer inhabitants in Iberian places and spaces.
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