Introduction. One Hundred Years of Sex.

Santiago Fouz-Hernández

A. Sex and Spanish Cinema from the Screen to Academia

Sex and sexuality have permeated Spanish cinema scholarship for the last three decades or so. With few exceptions, however, eroticism has only been considered as part of studies on other issues such as gender (for example, the collection by Marsh and Nair 2004), the body (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito 2007), queer cinema (Perriam 2013a) or in the context of the work of specific directors known for the sexually explicit content of their films – Pedro Almodóvar, Vicente Aranda, Luis Buñuel or Bigas Luna for example. Understandably, discussions on eroticism have tended to revolve around the so-called *destape* (literally 'uncovering'/'undressing') films of the late 1970s and early 1980s.[1] This distinctively erotic genre of films that bourgeoned after the abolition of Francoist censorship at the end of 1977 has often been dismissed by critics and scholars alike for their weak and often sexist plotlines, their debatable aesthetic value and in some cases poor acting performances.[2] More recently, however, they are experiencing a critical re-evaluation on the basis of their socio-historical interest, but also for their significance in terms of gender and sexual politics in the context of the transition. This volume aims to extend that re-evaluative effort to cover erotic content in Spanish cinema from the silent period until today.

It is worth noting that, although not focusing explicitly on eroticism, the work of Pilar Aguilar (1998), Isolina Ballesteros (2001), Barbara Zecchi (2014) or Susan Martin-Márquez (1999) has been essential in building a feminist perspective on studies of sex and the erotic

image in the history of Spanish film. Lengthy studies by Alejandro Melero Salvador (2010), Alberto Mira (2004) or Perriam (2013a) have been equally important from GLBT and queer standpoints. Indeed, Melero Salvador has been a key voice in the critical re-evaluation of erotic films of the transition more widely – see, for example, Melero Salvador 2010, 2011, 2014 and his contribution to this book. Yet, despite the inescapable presence of the erotic in writings about Spanish cinema, work focused solely on Spanish erotic films is rare. This is all the more surprising when we consider that, as Xavier Mendik notes, 'recent years have witnessed an explosion of critical interest in the pervasive influences of the erotic image' and 'the study of the "cine-erotic" has emerged as one of the most significant and subversive aspects of film cultural studies' (2012: 1). Much of this work has been focused on pornography and inspired by Linda Williams' influential *Hard Core. Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible* (1999). Williams' edited collection *Porn Studies* followed in 2004, leading the way for countless other edited volumes including Lehman (2006) or Hines and Kerr (2012). Porn Studies is now a well-established discipline with its own journal and several international conferences and panels devoted to the field. Monographs published within the last ten years or so by Linda Ruth Williams (2005), Tanya Krywinska (2006) or Linda Williams (2008) and Mendik's edited collection (2012) have discussed eroticism and depictions of sex on the screen beyond the realm of pornography. In Spain, Gubern's (1989) pioneering study of the pornographic image has been equally influential. More recent work on pornography includes the monograph by Barba and Montes (2007) and some of the theoretical essays produced in the context of queer studies. These writings, however, rarely focus on Spanish primary material. Books by José Ponce (2004), Tomás Pérez Niño (2011) or Aguilar García (2012) provide useful overviews of national erotic productions, but with very little critical analysis. Ponce's book is mostly a collection of visual materials such as posters and press cuttings covering the transition period, Pérez Niño provides encyclopaedic entries on a selection of one

hundred Spanish erotic films that the author considers most representative of the Spanish erotic genre, while Aguilar García's book is a more journalistic discussion of the stars of the *destape* films.

If there is something that the various writings on aspects of eroticism in Spanish films reveal it is that it is impossible to understand the history of Spanish cinema without paying some close attention to the erotic. As Melero Salvador has shown, it is commonplace, especially outside of Spain, to associate post-Franco Spanish cinema with explicit sexual imagery (2014: 179). Numerous studies have demonstrated that such an association is not a cliché and that the erotic element of Spanish films is by no means exclusive to post-Franco productions. Indeed, sex and eroticism were important elements of some Spanish films since the silent period. Eva Woods Peiró has established that many films of the 1920s were the 'product of the popular erotic novel' (2012: 83) while Leigh Mercer has worked on some fascinating materials that would seem to form the basis for an early history of sex and pornography in Spanish cinema (2016 and in preparation). Even films produced during the most unlikely times, the 1950s and 60s, become all the more interesting to study due to the existence of 'double versions' for co-productions and exports: one censored for Spanish audiences and one uncensored with extra or longer scenes and different wardrobe for foreign, more liberated markets. The relatively recent availability of uncensored versions on foreign DVDs proves the significance of eroticism in the cinema of that period. The repressed erotic content that was already present in the cuts, fades to black, silences and wardrobe choices in the Spanish versions, has become visible. The production of double versions had always been denied by Franco's administration, but there was anecdotal evidence that proved otherwise: in January 1973 a film theatre in Santiago de Compostela (Cines Yago) exhibited the uncensored version of Rafael Moreno Alba's *Las melancólicas/Exorcism's Daughter* (1971) by mistake,

drawing in unprecedented numbers of delighted spectators and becoming the talk of the town until a local authority investigated the case and corrected the error (see Alonso Tejada 1977).

B. Forty Years Without Sex?

One of the most entertaining (albeit problematic) critiques of the double standards of the Franco regime in relation to sex and eroticism is Juan Bosch's sketch-based satirical film *Cuarenta años sin sexo/Forty years without sex*. The film, released in 1978 – shortly after the abolition of censorship – unambiguously points the finger at the Catholic Church and the State as instigators of a damaging sexual repression with long-lasting effects. Under a thick layer of comedy, the film ridicules absurd laws and regulations imposed by the Francoist Ministry of the Interior, such as the 1950s legal requirement to cover up at the beach.[3] The film also highlights the responsibility of the Church for its disparaging teachings on masturbation, sexist views on the 'holy' marriage or condemnation of homosexuality. Some of the comedy sketches are introduced by more reflexive and direct criticisms recited by an actor who talks directly into the camera. These direct attacks of the Church and the State underscore the didactic message of the stories: 'for centuries the Church has been the big administrator of sex for all Spaniards'; 'in these forty years more than four thousand super large families were rewarded with small change and a diploma… some of these cases were a clear example of sex put at the service of the homeland'. A number of sketches blame priests, in their role as preachers, teachers and confessors, on the widespread existence of sexless marriages, homophobia and sexism. The stories illustrate their role in brainwashing women and children, interfering with family life and sex education, sometimes leading to tragedy. In one of the sketches a fascist man commits suicide after being informed by a priest/teacher that his child has been expelled from school because they suspect he might be gay. Importantly, the film also debunks the

macho myth and draws attention to the sexism embedded in marriage laws. It culminates with a long sketch where an adulterous man sets up his wife to commit an act of adultery herself, so that he has a legal reason to separate and live with his lover. It becomes clear that the law is fully behind the man, and would even protect him if he were to kill his wife on the basis of adultery. Even while critiquing the oppression of the dictatorship years, Bosch's film is itself oppressive and exploitative in other ways. The markedly male-centred narrative is emphasised through the pervasive male voiceover that threads the stories together, as well as the male actors who introduce some of the sketches or the overtly dominant male gaze. Despite some male nudity, the gaze is very much focused on the female bodies in the screen. This was characteristic of the *destape* films – although, as Jorge Pérez and Melero Salvador show in his contribution to this collection, there are notable exceptions.

C. Another Forty Years of Sex

The years following the abolition of censorship saw the introduction of new film classifications mostly determined by the explicit depiction of sex and violence. The 'S' classification ('S' for sensitivity) was a financially successful and hugely popular product. According to Pérez Niño, the so-called 'S' films (*películas S*) accounted for twenty five percent of all films produced in Spain between 1980 and 1982, with a total of 127 produced between late 1977 and 1983 (when the stronger 'X' category and purpose-built X theatres were introduced) (2010: 56). The popularity of X theatres with audiences previously targeted for 'S' films and, as Jordan and Morgan-Tamousunas note (1998: 66), other factors including the rising production costs, introduction of the Miró film reforms and increased circulation of erotic films on videotape, resulted in the rapid decline of a group of films of considerable interest for this volume, as we shall see.

The aforementioned renewed interest in the 'S' films is perhaps best illustrated in the popularity of contemporary films that pay homage to them nostalgically, notably *Los años desnudos (clasificada S)/Rated R* (dirs. Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso, 2008) and *Torremolinos 73* (dir. Pablo Berger, 2003), films that Melero Salvador has studied together in a recent essay (2014). As he argues, these films demonstrate the importance of the transition as 'a landmark in the exploration of sexual discourses' (2014: 187). There were, of course, other types of films during the transition (and since) that placed sex at the very centre of their narratives. If Fernando Colomo's debut film *Tigres de papel/Paper Tigers* (1977) became iconic for its depiction of the freedoms (not just sexual) afforded to the newly liberated post-Franco youth, years later Chus Gutiérrez's documentary *Sexo oral/Oral Sex* (1994) was also ground-breaking in making a point not only about the need to talk about sex openly and freely (the playfully deceiving title in Spanish refers to 'talking' sex, not just 'oral sex') but also in having a woman behind (and at times in front of) the camera. By filming and interviewing people about their sexual preferences, she is also making a point about taking active control of a narrative centred in a topic traditionally reserved for men – and, importantly, also taking charge of the gaze.

Needless to say eroticism continues to be a major ingredient of many Spanish films. Many directors have found much success in formulas that put sex at the centre of the narrative. Besides the names mentioned at the start of this introduction, directors like Manuel Gómez Pereira and Julio Medem have also become famous for their sexually explicit material. In the case of Gómez Pereira titles like *¿Porqué le llaman amor cuando quieren decir sexo?/Why do They Call it Love When They Mean Sex?* (1993), *Boca a boca/Mouth to Mouth* (1995) or *Entre las piernas/Between Your Legs* (1999) speak for themselves, while some scenes in Medem's *Lucía y el sexo/Sex and Lucia* (1999) or *Habitación en Roma*/*Room in Rome* (2010) push the limits between eroticism and pornography – a distinction that I will return to below. Both

directors have also made the most of utilising a certain erotic cachet and strong screen presence of the stars that they work with, some of whom became famous precisely for their sex appeal. These include Jorge Sanz, Javier Bardem or Victoria Abril and Aitana Sánchez Gijón in Gómez Pereira's films or Paz Vega and Elena Anaya in Medem's.

As these examples show, while comedy might be the prevailing genre for erotic narratives in Spanish cinema, eroticism is also at the centre of melodramas (in many Almodóvar films, for example), period dramas (Aranda's *Juana la loca/Mad Love* (2001) or Bigas Luna's *Volaverunt* (1999) are good examples), musicals (see Perriam 2013b), or even documentaries, as we saw in the case of Chus Guitiérrez.[4] Indeed, as exemplified with the international notoriety of Jess Franco, eroticism has been an important factor for the global success of Spanish horror films, despite critics' disapproval of this combination when it started to emerge in the early 1970s, as Lázaro-Reboll has shown (2012: 167-68).

Let us return briefly to the 'S' classification, as I believe it can function as a useful way to draw the sometimes-blurry line between eroticism and pornography. This interesting category served the double purpose of promising some sexually explicit content while preventing the alienation of audiences who may not be yet ready to watch porn, at least not in a public space. Importantly, this type of film offered what Linda Ruth Williams describes as 'a promise of effect': 'If the film contains erotic scenarios', she argues, 'it ought to produce an erotic response in its viewer' (2005: 25). This appeal to the viewer is one of the premises, that, as we shall see in contributions in this volume by Fouz-Hernández, Whittaker or Zechhi, has become crucial for the study of sex on the screen: the affective and haptic quality of the erotic image, as informed by the work of Linda Williams (1991), Laura Marks (2000), Sobchack (2004) or Barker (2009) among others.

D *Kiki*: Sex through the Senses

In that sense, the recent and enormously popular *Kiki, el amor se hace/Quikie, Love is So* (dir. Paco León, 2016) becomes the latest example of a film sold very much on the basis of its sexual narrative and some nudity, but that in fact leaves much to the imagination. It also presents a set of themes, aesthetic concerns, performances and ideas that make it a fitting case study that helps to draw out some conclusions about the erotic tradition in Spanish cinema and to introduce some of the main concerns of this volume. The tagline 'Una comedia erótico festiva' – literally 'a merry erotic comedy' (see figure 1) – used in the intensive promotional campaign in Spain is a conscious effort to link the film with the *destape* tradition and the 'S' cinema, since many people would informally refer to those films as '*erótico festivos*'. The extra-diegetic soundtrack of some of the sex scenes also draws out this comparison – in particular in the culminating ménage-a-trois between Paco, Ana and Belén – by using the kind of music that became a common feature of the *destape* genre, drawing on a range of commercial musical styles, here most notably bossa nova, and French and German popular song from the late 1960s, thereby referencing an 'international' style common to much European erotic film from the period. As Julio Arce (2014) – informed by Linda Williams (2008) – has shown, this 'musical sexual interlude' was common in post-Code Hollywood cinema. Williams explains that this interlude provided an element of affective control of the explicit sexual imagery presented on the screen and made it more palatable, as opposed to hearing the diegetic sounds of the sex act (see Williams 2008: 83).[5] Yet, in sharp contrast with the backward Spanish society represented in *Cuarenta años sin sexo*, León's film (almost forty years later!), presents a much more sexually liberated, permissive society that is happy to openly discuss its increasingly sophisticated sexual preferences. Importantly, if, in *Cuarenta años sin sexo*, women seemed subjugated by their husbands and, in some cases, apparently non-orgasmic, women in *Kiki, el*

amor se hace appear to be utterly in control of their sexuality, well-informed about various practices, open-minded and confident in their pursuit of their preferences and desires.

Female orgasm becomes an important driving force in the narrative from the first scene where, shortly after sex, Natalia (Natalia de Molina) confesses to her partner that she had experienced a very intense sexual climax when she was mugged at a petrol station the previous week. Harpaxophilia (becoming sexually aroused by a burglary or robbery) is the first of many paraphilias and fetishes presented in the film as the main narrative thread between five loosely interconnected stories: María Candelaria (Candela Peña), a fairground worker, is sexually aroused by sobbing (dacryphilia); Ana (Ana Katz) is married to Paco (played by the director Paco León), but attracted to bisexual Belén (Belén Cuesta) with whom the couple eventually enter into a polyamorous relationship; cosmetic surgeon José Luis (Luis Bermejo) finds in somnophilia a way to rekindle his sex life with his differently-abled wife Paloma (Mari Paz Sayago); while Sandra (Alexandra Jiménez), is slightly deaf, has a lactose resistance and a fetish for certain textile materials.[6]

Figure 1. Natalia de Molina y Álex García in a trailer for *Kiki, el amor se hace*/*Quickie, Love is So*, directed by Paco León. Spain: ICAA, Mediaset España, Telecinco Cinema, Vértigo Films, 2016.

The casting of Candela Peña is, in my view, quite a crucial part of this film's conscious effort to firmly place itself into the long tradition of erotic Spanish cinema. This is arguably Peña's first major role in a Spanish film since she famously admitted to having serious financial problems during her Goya Award acceptance speech in 2013, openly asking for work in several television chat shows thereafter. Interestingly, two of her most recent important roles in Spain where in the aforementioned erotic-nostalgic comedies *Torremolinos 73* and *Los años desnudos, clasificada 'S'*, while one her most iconic performances (for which she received a

Goya award) was in the role of a sex worker in León de Aranoa's *Princesas/Princesses* (2005). While it would not be fair, nor particularly productive to establish comparisons between Peña and the stars of the *destape* films, it is worth pointing out that Peña's sexually explicit roles and her performances in nostalgic comedies set in the transition in particular, further underscore this film's symbolic re-inscription into that tradition.

There are at least three other issues that make this film particularly fascinating for the study of sex and eroticism on the Spanish screen. Firstly, the film establishes a clear tension between the primal, animalistic aspects of sex and the need to rationalise, perform, mediate and sometimes pay in order to make erotic fantasies come true. The opening credit sequence superimposes images of the first sex scene between Natalia and Álex with footage of wild animals on heat or breeding, sometimes combining the two so that the faces or body parts of the characters are replaced with the heads or equivalent body parts of the animals. From the outset, then, the film makes a point of blurring the distinction between animal and human sexuality. One of the main tenets of Bataille's theory of eroticism is that it is '[an] aspect of the inner life of man', that human sexual activity is only erotic 'whenever it is not rudimentary and purely animal' (2012: 29). Thus, for him, the creation of taboos is a crucial aspect of human evolution and part of what differentiates us from animals. The sense of animal abandonment that characterised the opening moments of *Kiki* rapidly gives way to the characters' 'inner life'. Natalia can't stop thinking about what caused her unexpected orgasm when she was robbed at the petrol station. This inexplicable, almost primal reaction is hastily rationalised. Álex, wishing to give his girlfriend a sexual thrill, will attempt to recreate the robbery in an underground parking lot. In contrast with the spontaneity of the unexpected first incident, however, a lot of planning, props and, importantly, financial investment will go into this re-enactment. Not only will Álex pay actors to perform the robbery attempt, he will also dress up as a robber to become part of the enactment after the foreplay provided by the actors. The plan

goes horribly wrong, but the scene introduces two more points of interest here: the performativity and the commodification of sex.

This performance of sex within a film *about* sex draws attention to the fact that what we are seeing, throughout the film, is a performance – a fact that the film seems interested in foregrounding in other ways, for example by naming most of the characters with the real names (or similar) of the actors who play them. The fake robbery scene also demonstrates that, as Krywinska has argued, we should 'be sceptical about any putative dividing line between the constructed, the natural and the real, particularly as sex and sexuality in life are themselves performative, grounded in the imagination, often staged and involving role-play and fantasy' (2006: 6). In other words, the performativity of the robbery and of sex in film more generally is but a reflection of the performative nature of sex also in the lives of those who are watching. The commodification of sex underlies the whole film and becomes particularly obvious in the references to the sex industry implicit in the nature of Belén and José Luis's jobs. The fetish parties in Belén's club involve both performativity and also a series of financial transactions: costumers have to pay an entrance fee and, once inside, consume drinks. For special parties they will also need to rent or buy pricey outfits to adhere to specific sexual dress codes. José Luis buys her maid's silence (she knows that he secretly sedates his wife in order to have sex with her) with ever-increasing discounts for the breast implants that she wants. Meanwhile José Luis's assistant at the clinic is worried about her daughter, who has started selling her used underwear online. The business of sex is, of course, best symbolised in the film product itself. Outselling Almodóvar's long–awaited *Julieta* by three to one in the Spanish box office in the first four months of theatrical exhibition (both films were released within a week of each other) and arguably resurrecting Peña's career, *Kiki* proves Krywinska's point about 'the allure of erotic sensationalism' at times of crisis in the industry (2006: 13-14), something that also applies more widely to the erotic films of the transition.[7]

The role of technology as mediator of sexual desire is also evident in Sandra's job as a sign language interpreter. She falls in love with one of her clients who calls requesting that she interprets a call to a telephone sex line. In a complex incitement to the spectator's senses, Sandra becomes the visual and language mediator between her client Rubén (David Mora) and the erotic female voice that he can't hear. In a further turn of the screw that is reminiscent of the humorous dubbing scene at the start of Almodóvar's *La ley del deseo/Law of Desire* (1987), we see the real person at the other end of the phone. The lady pretending to be a hot 'heterosexual blonde' is in fact a rather unglamorous and business-oriented person busy multitasking at home. She is holding the phone with one hand and waxing her facial hair with the other, while also keeping an eye on the stove. Her very unsexy appearance resulting from the *real* circumstances once again draws attention to the performativity of sex – already implicit in the context of the paid act – while at the same time highlighting the role of technology, capital and the senses in this multiply mediated exchange. The scene cleverly plays out its affective appeal by emphasising specific senses in different characters. Rubén, as a 'super consumer' (he pays the sex line worker and the interpreter), relies on his gaze to filter sensations conveyed by Sandra. Sandra, who also relies on a sometimes malfunctioning hearing aid, depends on her hearing in order to interpret the conversation with the telephone sex worker – while at the same time becoming aroused herself with the vision of handsome Rubén on her screen. The telephone sex worker draws attention to the senses of touch and smell: not only is she painfully waxing her facial hair, at one point she has to put out a fire in the kitchen. The inescapable hapticality of this scene is further enhanced by Sandra's fetish for fabrics. In an earlier scene she had an intensive orgasm in a metro station after frenziedly touching the shirt of an anonymous fellow passenger as she alighted the train.

The senses of touch, smell and taste are, of course, essential in most paraphilias, and this highly sensual film emphasises them unambiguously through the fetishes of the main

characters and some secondary ones, as seen in a golden shower scene or in the references to the used-underwear traffic. Talking about what she calls the 'body genres' (melodrama, horror, pornography), Linda Williams argues that 'the success of these genres seems a self-evident matter of measuring body response' (1991: 5). Although this erotic comedy would not quite fit any of the genres identified by Williams, the emphasis placed on bodily fluids (tears, blood, sperm, urine), smells (used clothing, food), sounds (and their interruption by a malfunctioning hearing aid), textures (fabrics, skin), flavours (food, bodies), and, of course, provocative imagery, is remarkable.

By reinserting the human sensorium into the critical frame and emphasising such degraded categories as 'feeling' and 'intensity', this study of Spanish erotic cinema seeks to contribute to the current tendency in Film Studies of doing theory through the senses. One of the main premises of this book's approach to erotic cinema is informed by Williams's work on embodied ways of experiencing sex in films and, in particular, Benjamin's concept of *innervation*. As Williams argues, in watching bodies engaged in sexual acts, the spectator 'is solicited sexuality too' (2008: 19). The studies that follow combine the more established approaches to socio-historical contextualisation and interpretation of the films with analysis informed by cutting-edge film and cultural theories, with a view to making room within its analytical trajectory for the auteurs, the texts, their contexts, the stars, the industry and, importantly, the audiences.

E. This Book

The main aim of this book is to use the erotic as a prism through which to study and better understand important aspects of Spanish cinema and Spanish society as wide-ranging as age, class, gender, modernity, national identities, race religion or sexualities. To that end, and while

not claiming comprehensive historical coverage, the chapters are presented chronologically (on the basis of the main case studies discussed) in an attempt to reveal the evolution of what we may understand as 'erotic' in the Spanish cinema production of the last one hundred years or so. The thirteen chapters included in this collection offer a detailed overview of a wide range of aesthetics, genres, directors and styles. Genres discussed include the crusade film (Epps), comedy, horror (Lázaro-Reboll), melodrama, and religious film (Pérez), as well as some specifically Spanish genres including *cine con niño* (Wright), *cine quinqui* (Whittaker) and, or course, *destape* (especially Pérez and Melero Salvador). The stars discussed include household names such as Alfredo Mayo (Epps), Maria José Cantudo (Pérez), José Sacristán (Faulkner), Silvia Munt (Stone), Ana Torrent (Wright), Amparo Soler Leal (Zecchi), Bardem or Banderas (Fouz-Hernández), but also some lesser-known figures including Pisano (Sanabria), Jorge Rivero and Tony Fuentes (Melero Salvador), or José Luis Manzano (Whittaker). The list of directors is too long to enumerate here, but it ranges from Benito Perojo in the silent period to Almodóvar, Paula Ortíz or Paco León today. Eloy de la Iglesia deserves a special mention, as this book, suitably, celebrates his erotic film production in almost half of the contributions (Lázaro-Reboll, Pérez, Melero Salvador, Fouz-Hernández – and whole chapters by Faulkner and Whittaker).

Starting in the silent period, Eva Woods Peiró explores the erotic allure of the kiss in 1920s Spanish films, paying special attention to discussions about the cinematic kiss in the Spanish specialised press at the time. Her research reveals an obsessive fascination with the technological mediation of the Hollywood kiss on the one hand, and, on the other, a highly racialised discourse about Japan's prohibition on kissing, used by the Spanish printed media to present a comparatively modern image of 1920s Spain – despite the shortage of Japanese films shown in domestic theatres at the time. If Woods Peiró ends her chapter by referring to the renewed emphasis on racialised erotic discourses in 1990s Spanish cinema, where foreign

bodies are often exoticised, Brad Epps starts his essay by connecting those 1990s postcolonial film narratives to the 'jumbled conflux of the exotic and the erotic' in the three 1940s Spanish films set in Africa that he examines: *¡Harka!* (dir. Carlos Arévalo, 1941), *¡A mí la legión!*/*Follow the Legion* (dir. Juan de Orduña, 1942) and *Misión blanca*/*White Mission* (dir. Juan de Orduña, 1946). In his chapter, Epps argues that the films use desiring subjects as a propagandistic vehicle of Spain's imperial ventures that are put at the service of the Nationalist cause. While the decidedly homosocial colonial military setting has inspired a number of homoerotic readings focused on the strong male friendships celebrated by the films, Epps critiques the misogynistic and racialised nature of those relationships. The very sublimation of desire implied in the 'masculine mystique' promoted in the narratives inspires in this case a different and innovative kind of queer reading.

Concerned with a different kind of exoticism, that which was motivated by the new influx of mass tourism in the *desarrollismo* years, Annabel Martín explores the transformative power of the then newly introduced neoliberal economic policies. In her study of 1960s films (especially Jaime Camino's *Los felices sesenta/The Happy Sixties* and Jorge Grau's *Noche de verano/Summer Night*) Martín teases out the tensions that the films establish between the allure of capitalism, consumerism or the potential for social upward mobility on the one hand, and erotic frustration on the other. Moreover, while the films suggest a certain sexual liberalisation both of the characters and 1960s Spanish cinema and Spanish society more widely, they also commodify bodies. In the new neoliberal regime, bodies become consumers as well as consumer objects. This preoccupation with the objectification of the body also underlies Lázaro-Reboll's chapter on 1970s erotic horror films. His essay reveals how the Spanish film press became highly critical of what it perceived as an exploitative commercialisation of eroticism and sexuality in what it appropriately called '*erotismo de consumo*'. Rather than focusing on the well-trodden territory of the objectification of female bodies in horror cinema,

Lázaro-Reboll turns his attention to the male body and the camp aesthetics of Miguel Madrid's (aka Michael Skaife) *El asesino de muñecas*/*Killing of the Dolls* (1975) and, in particular, to the body of David Rocha as spectacle.

Jorge Pérez's essay on filmic depictions of the Opus Dei opens a section of five chapters that explore different aspects of eroticism in the films of the transition. To an extent, all five chapters explore the political potential of the erotic content of these films. Focused on the *destape* films, Pérez and Melero Salvador make important contributions to the aforementioned re-evaluation of this often scorned genre from two different perspectives, while Sanabria, Faulker and Whittaker propose new readings on the work of two crucial directors of the period, Bigas Luna and Eloy de la Iglesia.

Pérez's revealing analysis of the Opus Dei in Grau's *La trastienda/The Backroom* (1976), Yagüe's *Cara al sol que más calienta/Facing the Warmest Sun* (1977), and Berlanga's *La escopeta nacional/The National Shutgun* (1978), demonstrates the political value of these films in their different approaches to the depiction of the secretive religious organisation. In *La trastienda*, for example, the casting of Czech-born actor Frederick Stafford helps associate the Opus Dei elites with modern European democracies. The other two films offer more direct criticisms of the organisation, exposing the perverse effects of the sexual repression that it fosters. The potential of the erotic as political critique is also at the centre of Sally Faulkner's essay. Adapting her original concept of 'middlebrow cinema' (Faulkner 2013) to Spanish erotic cinema – what she calls 'the middlebrow erotic' – her chapter examines how, after the abolition of censorship in 1977, eroticism 'extended beyond subject matter and became the very grammar by which a new film language was constructed'. In turn, that new language was used to express the new freedoms afforded by democracy. She illustrates this theory with a fresh reading of an important film of this period, Eloy de la Iglesia's *El diputado/Confessions of a Congressman* (1978), demonstrating how the erotic is used to didactically explain previously

forbidden political and sexual tendencies and, indeed, how these go hand in hand with each other. Carolina Sanabria's chapter focuses on another iconic film of the transition, Bigas Luna's *Bilbao*, released in the same year as *El diputado* and causing a similar uproar – but for very different reasons. After reclaiming the importance of this controversial film as 'a foundational text of Spanish sex-cinema' and an essential testament of the transition, Sanabria reveals that despite the film's reputation as sexually provocative and overtly erotic, *Bilbao* is in fact an abstract tale about the disenchantment with the body, which is quite literally turned into a lifeless, undesirable and *anti*-erotic object.

Returning to the *destape* comedies, Melero Salvador proposes a different focus to what we are used to in work on this genre by turning attention to the male star system. In this sense, his chapter joins forces with Pérez, but also with Epps, Lázaro-Reboll, Faulkner, Whittaker and Fouz-Hernández's discussions of masculinities and male bodies in this and other genres and periods elsewhere in this book. Melero Salvador studies the performances of Tony Fuentes in two popular *destape* films: *Deseo carnal/Desire of the Flesh* aka *Carnal Desire* (dir. Manuel Iglesias, 1978) and *Jóvenes viciosas/Dirty Young Ladies* (dir. Manuel Iglesias, 1980), as well as the evolution of Fuentes' star persona. The analysis reveals both how the films projected onto the actor's body stage some of the social anxieties of the time, and how, in turn, these and other historical traces are carried forward into his roles in other films. The male body and another male star are also the focus of Tom Whittaker's discussion of Eloy de la Iglesia's *quinqui* films. Informed by senses-receptor-based film theories, as previously discussed, his chapter reflects on the importance of the visual erotics of touch and skin, using the body of de la Iglesia's *actor fetiche* José Luis Manzano as a productive and very fitting case study. The chapter proposes that the aesthetic roughness, the post-synch sound, and the delinquent narratives characteristic of this type of film, make it ideal to illustrate the kind of visual immediacy that sensually engages the viewer with the image on the screen. Manzano's skin is

often shown in close-up, pierced and tattooed. Through his work in de la Iglesia's *quinqui* films, the actor became iconic of a genre fascinated with 'the fragile glamour of male youth' as a memorable example of what the press at the time referred to as the '*estética de calzoncillo*', as Whittaker notes.

As the book reaches beyond the transition, into the democratic period, the last four chapters show how eroticism in contemporary Spanish cinema continues to be used as a tool to draw attention to social anxieties of the times: national and nationalist identities, gender equality, ageing, and sexuality. In his chapter, Rob Stone sets out to investigate the curious absence of erotic content in Basque cinema (Julio Medem's feature films are the obvious exception), an absence that, as he says, extends well into the democratic period and therefore cannot be blamed on censorship or catholic repression. His research shows that the explicit content of Basque films often revolves around contexts of torture, revealing a certain fascination with masochist narratives that could be suggestive of nationalist martyrdom. This is explored in his Deleuzian analysis of his two main case studies, *Estado de excepción*/*State of Emergency* (dir. Iñaki Núñez, 1977) and *Akelarre*/*Witches' Sabbath* (dir. Pedro Olea, 1984), and of a segment of Medem's documentary *La pelota vasca: la piel contra la piedra*/*The Basque Ball: Skin Against Stone* (2003) among many other examples throughout the history of Basque cinema. This noticeable absence of erotic narratives could be part of a revolutionary intent to distance Basque cinema both from the erotic narratives of the Barcelona School and from the *destape* films associated with Madrid, but also a nationalist commitment to sacrifice individualistic desires and pleasures at the service of more collective aims.

Sarah Wright studies the child figure as 'the conduit for the exploration of the trauma and loss of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath of dictatorship in Spain' in well-known films including *El espíritu de la colmena/The Spirit of the Beehive* (dir. Víctor Erice, 1973), *Cría cuervos/Raise Ravens* (dir. Carlos Saura, 1976), *Secretos del corazón/Secrets of the Heart*

(dir. Montxo Armendáriz, 1997) and *Pa negre/Black Bread* (dir. Agustí Villalonga, 2010). In an analysis informed by queer theory, and in particular by Lee Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism and Elizabeth Freeman's erotohistoriography, Wright focuses on sequences of intense intimacy (between mother and child, for example), transgressive kids' games, and some traumatic events witnessed by children to explore the potential of the child figure as the key to queer the films' version of history. If Wright focuses on the child, Barbara Zecchi puts the spotlight at the other end of the age spectrum to discuss the figure of the ageing female character as a sexual being in a wide selection of films directed by women filmmakers including Cecilia Bartolomé, Isabel Coixet, Pilar Miró, Josefina Molina or Paula Ortíz among others. Zecchi usefully identifies a number of sometimes opposing strategies that serve to organise the films into three distinctive categories. Some films actively spectacularise the body of the mature and sexually active woman, others do the opposite and use the portrayal of the unglamorous older female body as a means to draw attention to and denounce the expectations set by the youth-obsessed mainstream film and media that displace mature women making them invisible. Finally, she identifies a third group of films with 'affirmative ageing' discourses. In ways that closely link this chapter to Whittaker's, Zecchi explains how this latter group of films actively encourage the spectator's sensual engagement with the erotic experiences of the older women on the screen.

In the chapter that closes the collection I investigate why so many erotic scenes involving sex between men are often interrupted. While these interruptions are perhaps to be expected in erotic – as opposed to pornographic – films, the frequency and sometimes violence with which they occur is intriguing and troubling. The chapter identifies different strategies of interruption that go from the classic ellipsis with fades to black to literal concealment achieved with distance, poor lighting or visual obstructions such as doors, window blinds or props. In some other cases, other characters enter the scene. These include family members (often female

– wives, girlfriends, mothers) but also (often male) strangers that halt the sex act quite suddenly and aggressively mid-way. Importantly, these *violent* interruptions prevent the kinds of pleasurable identification that are often encouraged in heterosexual erotic scenes, even when the sex act is left to the spectators' imagination. The study revisits some classic and well-known films by directors including Pedro Almodóvar, Cesc Gay, Eloy de la Iglesia or Gerardo Vera, as well as more recent and lesser-known work including Juanma Carrillo's short film *Fuckbuddies* (2011). The analysis of the final case study, Almodóvar's *Los amantes pasajeros/I'm so Excited* (2013), suggests that, as demonstrated in other contributions in this collection, the erotic content of films can sometimes be hidden (and found) in surprisingly conspicuous places.

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[1] The erotic content of Spanish films is also often discussed with reference to later productions that may have experienced classification or distribution problems in foreign markets due to its sexually explicit content. Almodóvar's *¡Átame!/Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down* (1991) is often cited as an example (see, for example, Jordan and Morgan-Tamousnas 1998: 112).

[2] Kowalski's succinct account of the poor critical reception of the *destape* films in Spain is as accurate as it is revealing (2004: 203).

[3] Shaha Pack's study of European tourism in Franco's Spain provides an excellent context for this important trope often revisited in Spanish films of the 1960s and 70s (2006).

[4] In her book *Sex Radical Cinema* Carol Siegel refers to some scenes in another Chus Gutiérrez film, *El Calentito* (2005) as 'sex radical cinema at its most powerful' (2015: 125).

[5] Virgina Sánchez Rodríguez (2013) has written an excellent analysis of the soundtrack in 1960s Spanish cinema from a Gender Studies perspective.

[6] Belén's job in a nightclub that organises fetish parties provides the perfect excuse to introduce a whole set of other paraphilias, fandoms including furries and swingers.

[7] As of 11 August 2016, *Kiki* made 6,192,817 Euros in the Spanish box office, becoming the second most successful Spanish release of the year since opening on 1 April. In comparison, Almodóvar's most recent film, *Julieta* (2016) – third in the year ranking – released only a week later on 8 April, made 2,120,527 Euro in Spain. Source: Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport <http://www.mecd.gob.es/cultura-mecd/dms/mecd/cultura-mecd/areas-cultura/cine/datos-industria-cine/taquilla/agosto2016/cine-espanol-acumulado-11-agosto16.pdf> (last accessed 11 August 2016).