

(DIS)AGREEMENTS

**GERMANY, ITALY, AND SPAIN:
EROTICISM AND DESIRE UN-
DER EUROPEAN FASCISM**

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introduction

CINEMA AS DESIRING-MACHINE

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The jury of the 66th edition of the Cannes Film Festival surprised both insiders and outsiders with their decision to award the Palme d'Or to both the director and the two leading actresses of the film *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (*La Vie d'Adèle – Chapitres 1 & 2*, Abdellatif Kechiche, 2013). By placing Adèle Exarchopoulos and Léa Seydoux on the same level with Kechiche, the jury seemed to be sending the message that film authorship did not belong exclusively to the one behind the camera, but that the bodies and gestures portrayed were also responsible for the creation and discourse of the image. Moreover, this decision of the jury, headed that year by Steven Spielberg, came at the exact moment of an uproar in France with hundreds of demonstrators protesting in the streets of Paris against the legalisation of homosexual marriage. This context gave both the prize and the picture a political dimension, despite the fact that the jury insisted that its appraisal of the film was based exclusively on cinematic rather than moral considerations.

Months later, controversy would surround the film's public release when Exarchopoulos and Seydoux both claimed that the director had taken an authoritarian and violent approach during shooting, demanding an extreme commitment from them, especially in the most erotically charged scenes. The naturalness of the film's images was not really natural, and with the declarations of the two stars the deceit was revealed: it was im-

possible to deny that the lesbian romance depicted on screen and all the women's movements were, in reality, meticulously orchestrated by a man. At the same time, *Blue is the Warmest Colour* would face distribution problems: both in Tunisia (the director's place of birth) and in the United States the film was subject to censorship, especially of the long sex scene between the two actresses. Even in France, two years after its première, the Catholic group Promouvoir would succeed in having the film's distribution licence legally revoked based on the argument that the realistic sex scenes could offend the sensibilities of a young audience.

According to Christian Metz, censorship proper mutilates distribution; economic censorship mutilates production and ideological censorship mutilates invention (METZ, 1970: 18). In this sense, it is worth highlighting that film history "is the history of censorship, written also in its banned images, and we should not forget, as Gérard Lenne rightly notes, that 'censorship (its history) becomes an integral part of creation'" (BASSA AND FREIXAS, 2000: 52). The case of *Blue is the Warmest Colour* is perhaps the clearest example of a recent film that presents an intersection of simultaneous debates over the censorship of eroticism, political resistance linked to desire, the limits of the *mise-en-scène*, and film authorship. Both the award at Cannes and the controversies surrounding the film effectively contributed to its success, but did this new type of condemnation—of both the work

and its message or methodology—actually enhance the desire for what had been condemned? In a way, factors external to the film contributed to the repression of a work whose greatest merit was, ironically, an apparent freedom of movement.

In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Wilhelm Reich discusses how sexual repression begins with the patriarchy and extends to women with the idea that the sexual act is something dishonourable for them: “This patriarchal sexual order [...] became the basis of authoritarian ideology by depriving women, children and adolescents of sexual freedom, by making a commodity out of sexuality, and by putting sexuality in the service of economic suppression” (REICH, 1946: 30). The banning of *Blue is the Warmest Colour* operated more as an *a posteriori* symbol than an *a priori* obstacle: the days of fascism and its methods are far behind us, yet the sexual act between two women has similarly been read as one of those “dishonourable” acts. In the words of Félix Guattari, “the cinema is a desiring-machine that has won its place over the course of a long historical evolution. The history of desire is inseparable from the history of repression. Might a historian one day take up the task of writing a history of the cinema of desire?” (GUATTARI, 1983: 81). Jacques Aumont posited a similar idea when he suggested that a face today is the history of all the others that preceded it: “the history of the face in the modern era may be all at once the history of its expressiveness, of the free inscription of passions on its surface, and of its civility, of the retention, refinement and codification of that inscription [...]. The face [...] follows two paths: the externalisation of the depths of intimacy and the manifestation of belonging to a civilised community” (AUMONT, 1998: 25).

One of the objectives of fascism was to dehumanise and desexualise those faces through the body. On this basis, topics or motifs like adultery or sexual desire were elided, internalised or ex-

pressed metaphorically in the same way as other expressions related to eroticism. The face and physical presence of actresses under fascism is in part a question mark, and the different methods of turning the camera’s gaze on desire (linked more to the imaginary) and on eroticism (linked more to the body) would thus have a substantially different but normally muzzled iconographic approach. It would seem essential to turn back now to the Germany, Italy and Spain of fascism and censorship, an historical turning point for both social and cinematic conventions, to understand Europe and European cinema today; to know how to read the history of the body and face of the female figure in the modern era through the taboos, through the actresses and the femininities constructed by means of the masks of dictatorship. It is also necessary in order to make sense of the history of cinema as a desiring-machine. ■

NOTES

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discussion

I. Were there similar elements in the cinematic depiction of women in the different European fascist regimes or, conversely, were different motifs established based on their respective cultures?

Alejandro Montiel

Although they were under governments that were diametrically opposed politically, Spanish cinema from 1939 to 1945 still drew aesthetic inspiration from the “poetic realism” of the French films of the previous decade, and had no qualms in drawing from other controversial influences (including Soviet cinema). In analysing this we need to tread carefully and examine each film case by case. For example, I suspect that the Victorian spirit was still present in the British films of this period, regardless of the fact that they were withstanding the blitzes of the Luftwaffe. It is also obvious that in the former colonies (the United States) there was a certain conservative resurgence as well, with the promotion of a model (the soon-to-be hegemonic Hollywood model) of the loyal, self-sacrificing wife of the heroic soldier who was the antithesis of the flirtatiousness and levity of the gay divorcees dancing to jazz music in the subversive years of the 1920s and early 1930s. The Spanish case (after the victory of the rebel faction) is notable for the disturbed, disturbing and unabashedly antiquated alliance it made between sex and religion; an utterly Catholic morbid fascination that the Germans, for example, took no part in, whether pro-Nazi or anti-Nazi. Paragons of female characters trapped in sordid situations when they are driven by desire abound in Spanish cinema, where there was also a powerful resurgence of the traditional code of Calderonian honour and the defence of modesty.

Vinzenz Hediger

My theory is that all of the fascist iconographies were built on pre-existing cultural foundations. In this process, the foundations were modified and,

sometimes, permanently altered. Successful political regimes don't appear out of nowhere; their political legitimacy always depends on, or is inter-related with, their cultural legitimacy, and in this sense I would say that culturally specific foundations exist and need to be taken into account in the three countries.

Marta Muñoz Aunión

In the cases of German and Spanish cinema I think that similar female archetypes can be found, because they are icons of Western culture established over centuries in literary and theatre tradition. I refer here to the two traditional poles in the patriarchal structure of bourgeois society: the good woman and the bad woman. Nevertheless, in the specific depictions of these stereotypes we can find differences associated with the social complexities that separated the two countries in the 1930s. Thus, under the banner of the *good woman*, the Germany of the Third Reich included and exploited new models that Spain in that period never contemplated: the hard-working independent city woman, the patriotic fighting woman, the war widow at the head of the family, and others. These are figures that reflect the models that were imposed in the country thanks to modernisation, urbanisation, and the consequences of the First World War (1914-1918), among other factors. Under the heading of the *bad woman*, which in both countries included the same kind of female conduct associated with promiscuity and deceit or betrayal, the Germans created and developed their own female archetype, the *red woman*, the leftist political activist, which was expanded during the Second World War to include the woman who tarnishes the Aryan bloodline by

having relations with men considered to belong to “lower races.” These archetypes don’t appear in Spanish cinema, because neither the levels of political emancipation achieved by Spanish women under the Second Republic nor their depiction in the cultural production of the period are comparable to those of the Weimar Republic. While it is true that National Socialism strove to control the emancipation of women, it cannot be ignored that a significant proportion of the working population before and during the war was female and demanded a symbolic recognition of their work. This accounts for the differences in the cinematic models of femininity between the two countries.

Raffaele Pinto

Cinema represents women based on the literary and national cultures of each country (I think that the cinematic depiction of men, on the other hand, depends much less on national cultures and therefore crosses a lot more conventional boundaries). There is a very obvious, radical difference, for example, between the misogynist (Shakespearean) view of the woman in Hollywood (Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich) and the philogynous (Dantean) view of the woman promulgated by the Cinecittà studio (Anna Magnani).

Gino Frezza

I would argue that there is very little similarity between the cinematic images of women produced under the three fascist regimes: perhaps a few could be found between Spain and Italy when the female characters belong to traditional or reactionary contexts in terms of economic development (peasants or women far removed from modern urban centres, for example). Nevertheless, if we take the Italian case overall, I think it offers a gallery of female figures who seem to me to preclude comparisons with other film traditions except for the American tradition, with which Italian cinema set itself in fierce competition based precisely on its ability to offer more diverse and sophisticated products (including female archetypes and images). This is the result of both internal work on the imaginary of the period and the need to meet audience demand for realistic product. The female spectator at whom Italian cinema is aimed is less inclined to carry out her role according to the norms and customs enshrined by Italian law or traditions than to pursue opportunities (for gratification, success, etc.) that instead seem to be a reflection of the—still emerging—consumer society.

2. Nudity in cinema, for example, was not handled in the same way in Italy or Germany as it was in Spain. Did the different countries share the same taboos under the three dictatorships?

Alejandro Montiel

My answer is a categorical no. This has probably been the case, at least, since the sixteenth century and the Wars of Religion, and, on the other hand, I wouldn’t go as far as to describe the tradition of false modesty (for example) as a taboo, but merely as a social custom, which has waxed and waned, risen and declined at different times in history. We also shouldn’t forget that the German and Italian dictatorships both collapsed in 1945, while the Spanish went on interminably, with Spanish

National Catholicism taking on greater force after the defeat of the Axis powers, even at the expense of other no less repulsive albeit more modern sectors of the National Movement, like Falangism. *Rome, Open City* (Roma città aperta, Roberto Rossellini, 1945) offers a fascinating character besieged by burning desire and moral uncertainty, Pina (Anna Magnani), in a film that is pro-Catholic but which takes a first step on the path towards a new, democratic and liberal Europe. A heroine who is desperately in love with a good-hearted

communist partisan would be unthinkable in the repressive and autocratic Spain of Franco, but not in Italy after Mussolini or in the liberated Berlin. I cannot imagine an erotic myth like Silvana (Silvana Mangano) in *Bitter Rice* (Riso amaro, Giuseppe de Santis, 1949) being offered to the world by Spanish cinema in the 1940s, or even in the 1950s or 1960s.

Vinzenz Hediger

I would say that other types of cultural influences are more decisive. In Italy and Spain, for example, the Catholic Church was a much more predominant political factor than it was in Germany. In this sense, as Pierre Sorlin suggests, the Church was one of the unifying features that made the Italian nation-state possible. The scope of Mussolini's political power was only fully realised after he reached an agreement with the Catholic Church with respect to the division of power in the Lateran Pacts of 1929. In Germany, on the other hand, the country was unified against the Catholic Church: Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* or *culture struggle*, in the 1870s, was explicitly designed to restrain the political influence of the Catholic clergy and to inculcate in German citizens of the Catholic faith a loyalty to the Reich that prevailed over their loyalty to the transnational institution of the Catholic Church. If we agree that the fascist cultural regime was built on pre-existing foundations, we can see differences in each country in terms of the degree to which the moral teachings of the Church affected sexuality (and, by extension, the representation of nudity in cinema). At the same time, there was an inherent conflict between fascism, the fascist political and cultural regime, and the traditional morality of monogamous heterosexual sexuality (and its constraints). Totalitarian regimes tend to establish patterns of social connection and emotional and ideological loyalty that transcend (and sometimes directly interfere with) the family unit on which—at least from the perspective of political theory since Jean

Bodin—the modern European nation-states have been built. Both because Catholic traditions were not as strong in Germany and because Germany was the most totalitarian of the three fascist states, we find a kind of depiction of sexuality that works against the bourgeois family model and the traditional understanding of female sexuality. But even in the case of Germany, these tendencies are, in the best of cases, quite moderate.

Marta Muñoz Aunión

The taboos were different. Nudity might be one of them, but there were also profound differences in relation to pregnancy outside marriage, separation and divorce, widows remarrying, the activity of women in the workplace and the public sphere, religious sentiment, and others. For example, the woman in German National Socialist cinema is more active and enterprising, holding positions from which she had until then been forbidden, and more visible in the public sphere. This is due to three main factors which I can only mention briefly here: her real presence in the German economy of the period, which was too obvious and necessary to be denied, the need to confirm this modernising dimension to which National Socialism had appealed from the beginning, and the fact that German women were a huge support to the social and political projects established by Nazism to reinforce the ideology of a “people united behind an upright leader.” The film production of the Third Reich addressed the need to control female desire for emancipation, which at the same time was being given a limited degree of freedom. This contradiction was accentuated with the outbreak of the Second World War and the obligation to secure the full support of what came to be called “the internal front” made up of the mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters of the soldiers sent to the front. They were the ones who kept the country running, filling traditionally male occupations, and becoming the heads of their families and, as a result, the task of State

cultural production (including cinema) was to control female *desire*, to channel it in directions in keeping with National Socialist interests, redirecting the energy unleashed by the *laxity* resulting from the absence of men and delimiting it within a discourse based on the needs of war and the promise of a final victory. The case of abortion is interesting: although it was highly stigmatised in cases of normal pregnancies, it was accepted and even imposed in the interests of *public health* and the maintenance of the race.

Raffaele Pinto

As far as I'm able to judge (my experience as a spectator is very uneven in the filmographies of the three regimes), I would say that the female question is almost absent in German cinema, where Nazi propaganda imposed a military idea of society (with the consequent cult of violence), which also encompassed the woman, negating her female aspect (Riefenstahl's semi-naked female bodies are *healthy* and *athletic* bodies). In Spain I think the regime opted for a more conservative vision, where the woman was relegated to the expressiveness of the folk tradition (the female body is revealed, up to a certain point, *singing*). Italian cinema, which was quite independent from the propaganda of the regime, turned to an analysis of the feminine in order to create models of *Italianness* (it was a first-class cinema without which the emergence of Neorealism could not be explained); the hints of nudity normally have a *tragic* quality.

Gino Frezza

Analysing the relationship between nudity (particularly and almost universally female) and the film image is very important to explore the expressions of freedom existing in the dialogue between cinema, censorship, politics and society. In Italian cinema, there are examples of how female nudity has appeared on the screen, albeit for very brief moments, thus denoting a level of awareness of this innovation—which would provoke an explicit outrage in cases like Alessandro Blasetti's *La cena delle beffe* [The Jester's Supper] in 1942, where Clara Calamai's breasts were shown in a very brief but very shocking scene. However, nudity in Italian cinema was generally relegated to the shadows, out of the frame, as tended to occur in other countries. Censorship oversaw this aspect of representation, perhaps to a greater degree than it oversaw the political adherence of films to the ideals of the regime, but, at the same time, these conditioning factors related to nudity invited filmmakers to value the imagination of the spectator and to keep it vividly projected on the desired images. Nevertheless, what was explicitly prohibited, more than nudity, was full sexual intercourse, as well as erotic kisses. With these aspects, religious censorship was more restrictive than political censorship. In Italy, the Catholic Centre, expressly established for this mission, was very active (not only during the fascist regime but also after the war and into the 1950s and early 1960s). I would say that any analysis of nudity needs to take a temporal rather than a geographical perspective. The real differences in filmic expression of nudity and sexual relations actually appear with modern cinema.

3. Do actresses contribute any idea to the discourse of the film through the subjectivity of their own bodies and erotic gestures? To what extent does the star system overstep the camera's gaze or conform to historical codes?

Alejandro Montiel

George Cukor, who directed all the great actresses of Hollywood's classical era, once claimed that he had never directed Greta Garbo. Greta Garbo, he said, could not be directed. She worked the little miracle of her performance, charged with suggestive meanings, as she saw fit. To a certain extent, every actress does this. Subjected to castrating codes, after the cruel amputation of the clitoris, at some time in the eyes of every inspired actress, desire shines in a way that cannot be repeated. Actresses embody (a most appropriate way of putting it) the fictional desire with their own desire, the flirtatious woman with their own flirtatiousness, the lewd woman with her own lewdness, the truth of the character with her own inimitable smiles and tears. It is impossible to erase the splendour of the bodies (*splendor veritas*), of the gestures, of the gazes of Consolación (Rosita Díaz Gimeno) in *El genio alegre* [The Happy Genius] (Fernando Delgado, 1939), of Florentina (María Mercader) in *Marianela* (Benito Perojo, 1940), of Eloísa or "Malvaloca" (both played by Amparito Rivelles) in *Alma de Dios* [God's Soul] (Ignacio F. Iquino, 1941) and *Malvaloca* (Luis Marquina, 1942); of Luisa (Conchita Montenegro) in *Rojo y negro* [Red and Black] (Carlos Arévalo, 1942), of Inés (Isabel de Pomés) in *La torre de los siete jorobados* [The Tower of the Seven Hunchbacks] (Edgar Neville, 1944), or of Nieves (Conchita Montes) in *Domingo de Carnaval* [Carnival Sunday] (Edgar Neville, 1945).

Vinzenz Hediger

The actresses were quite aware of the cultural codes and knew how to play with them. An exhaustive analysis would also have to study *conventionalisation*, that is, the patterns of lighting, framing, wardrobe, etc., in that transition occurring from the rise to the fall of political fascism. I sus-

pect that we would find a number of strategies and patterns with a certain technical continuity with non-fascist films, before coming to the elements of representation of the female body and the organisation of male and female gazes that could actually be characterised as examples of a fascist aesthetic of the kind that Susan Sontag identified, for example, in the films of Leni Riefenstahl. The question would be how these tropes are related to the specific representation of the film actresses in Germany, Italy and Spain in the 1930s and 1940s.

Marta Muñoz Auni6n

The German star system was the result of a plan orchestrated by the Ministry of Propaganda that produced a range of roles, filled by different actresses, aimed at satisfying the fantasies of different groups and social classes (rural, urban, low, middle, religious, nationalist, etc.). However, although the star system was designed according to the social needs identified by the Nazi regime's intelligence services to satisfy and at the same time control the desire(s) of the masses, it is important to take into account that often the controllers were unable to foresee the effect and consequences that some of these representations would have on the population. Some constructed roles, such as the case of Zarah Leander, ended up being re-interpreted by oppressed sectors of society, and the lyrics to her songs even operated in a limited way as subversive.

Raffaele Pinto

I think that the star system was a system, and that the actresses contributed little of their own voluntarily. They were chosen by the system based on the values that the cultural industry wanted to convey. Magnani was chosen because she perfectly embodied the sexually active woman in keeping with, and not contrary to, the role of motherhood.

Gino Frezza

The star system in Italy in the 1930s and early 1940s was not a closed and imposed system as it was in America. Auteur-filmmakers like Camerini, Blasetti, Poggioli, Soldati, Palermi, Gallone, Alessandrini, Matarazzo, Mastrocinque, Braggaglia, Mattoli, Gentilomo, etc., offered images of women who, on one hand, perpetuated certain stereotypes (the shy girl, the extroverted secretary, the young rebel, the lovestruck ingénue, the vengeful woman scorned, the likeable mischief-maker, etc.), while, on the other, could be *themselves*, contradicting and challenging audience expectations. They might even glimpse the shadowy realms of female subjectivity. For exam-

ple, a film like *Apparizione*, directed by Jean de Limur in 1944, presents the radical ambiguity of a seduction between a film star (Amedeo Nazzari, who plays himself) and one of his most ardent fans (Alida Valli): the film's story traces the development of the unpleasant consequences that could result from an excessively close encounter between star and fan, ultimately leading to the brink of infidelity... But the illusion is broken, and reality takes over from the image on the screen. In this way of presenting the female outside the usual patterns, Italian cinema in the 1930s, even within the classical parameters of film narrative, was already clearly modern, capturing the new mood of the era and projecting it onto the screen.

4. On the other hand, does any actress fully embody the ideals of her nation's dictatorship? Is there any case of femininity constructed (so to speak) by the regime?

Alejandro Montiel

It is true that the meaning of "femininity" is constructed in each time and place with powerful and insidious ideological intentions (of domination), but I don't think Spain's originality in this respect went beyond the sophistication revealed in the celebrated assertion of our former prime minister José María Aznar, a worthy heir to Franco's crown: "Man is man, and woman is woman." Of course, one thing I am sure of is that neither an actress as bold as Conchita Montes nor the characters she portrayed on the screen were role models in any sense; I'm thinking of Isabel, the drunk, in *The Last Horse* (El último caballo, Edgar Neville, 1950), but also, earlier, the troubled Andrea in *Nada* (Edgar Neville, 1947) and even earlier, the misfit Mercedes in *Life on a Thread* (La vida en un hilo, Edgar Neville, 1945). *Constructing* a fascist femininity was beyond the capacity of Spanish cinema, but *destroying* any feminist flame the moment it was fanned by anarchist

organisations like *Mujeres Libres* was not. Although some thirty years later there was no longer any way to hold it down.

Vinzenz Hediger

Kristina Söderbaum would be the clearest case among German actresses. Goebbels was involved in the casting of most of her films, and her husband Veit Harlan was practically the official director of the regime. Söderbaum always played the slightly chubby angelical blonde, profoundly moral and always prepared to sacrifice herself, usually drowning towards the end of the film, a habit that earned her the nickname of "reichswasserleiche," the "Reich's water corpse." The mere fact that such a term existed and film lovers made fun of her suggests that the ideological purity in the construction of female roles was not entirely effective and that the successful modes of representation were inserted in patterns that operated under the level of ideological messaging.

Marta Muñoz Aunión

Without doubt, the physical appearance of Söderbaum (blonde, blue-eyed, tall with an athletic figure) and her character on screen (sweet smile and motherly quality, innocent and full of feeling) made her the ideal image of the Aryan woman. Curiously, in three of the great dramas she filmed together with her husband, her character always died from drowning, which led the German people to refer to her as the “imperial drowned corpse.” In the last years of the war, Söderbaum became an indispensable figure in Nazi drama films, playing in two of the most significant films of the era: first, as the disgraced German woman whose honour demands the death of the Jewish banker in the dreadful film *Jud Süß* [Jew Süss] (Veit Harlan, 1940); second, in the apocalyptic epic *Kolberg* (Veit Harlan and Wolfgang Liebeneiner, 1945), as the daughter of the mayor of a Prussian town besieged by Napoleon’s army, whose boyfriend is among the Prussian troops defending the town. Once again, her image of sacrifice and surrender for the nation represents a hymn, apologetic in this case, to the visual racial fantasy imposed by Nazi cinema from 1933 to 1945.

Raffaele Pinto

I think that every cinematic femininity is constructed by the cultural system within which it operates (whether under a regime or not). As evidence of this, consider the casting of the girls in *Bellissima* (Luchino Visconti, 1951).

Gino Frezza

The Italian film system didn’t produce an individual case of an actress who completely and unambiguously reflected the ideals and cultural vision of national fascism. This doesn’t mean that the Mussolini regime would not have gladly accepted a figure fully in keeping with its own ideals, but Italian cinema didn’t look to politics for inspiration; instead, it looked in the opposite direction, to what was happening in society on the level of customs and consumerism, which by this stage were being transformed by an international process of modernisation. Ultimately, the regime chose mostly to develop a *laissez-faire* relationship without explicit coercion in the form of censorship and repression.

5. Pasolini argued that an aesthetic choice is always a social choice and that in this sense the bourgeoisie of the 1960s and 1970s operated in a similar way to the fascists of the 1940s, as they also attempted to derealise the body through the mask (PASOLINI, 1983: 96, 99). In which specific aspects can we glimpse the change that occurred in the treatment of eroticism in film after the end of the dictatorial period? Could it be said that the progressive establishment of a certain ideology of hedonism contributed to the disappearance of desire or to an inability to satisfy it? Did the subsequent appearance of coitus or full-body nudity on screen represent the conversion of eroticism into more a source and object of consumption than of desire? If we assume that eroticism relates to a function of the brain linked to the “imaginative” while pornography refers to a more “demonstrative” function of the body,¹ where is the boundary between these two concepts today?

Alejandro Montiel

If I’ve understood Pasolini correctly, what he suggested towards the end of his life, in Bologna in December 1973 and in his famous essay “Tetis”, is that the people were still opposing mass lam-

ination of bodies in favour of rather deplorable masquerades characterised by a certain spirit of consumerist affectation. He warned that truth “embodied” (again, a most appropriate term for it) in the common people was in danger of extinc-

tion. Pasolini wrote that by the end of the 1970s Italy had entered the era of consumerism and subculture, thereby losing any sense of reality, which had survived almost exclusively in the bodies of the working classes. Perhaps this was how it was. Today, these words exude a certain old musky quality, remote and nostalgic, which is rather more sensual and sybaritic, however, than what internet eroticism manages to produce. But while it is reasonable to identify eroticism in the image (what is no longer there), it is still impossible to find truth outside the body (where we are and cannot cease to be, what we are and cannot cease to be). Bodies—whether or not they have been pillaged by a process of *deculturation*—don't know the difference between eroticism and pornography. Only the fascists of today would be interested in such hair-splitting. The fascists of the 1940s—and their Ideological State Apparatuses, including Cinema—were less persuasive and efficient.

Vinzenz Hediger

Foucault suggests that sexual liberation was not the opposite of repression, but its continuation in other terms. As he argues in his *History of Sexuality*, confession, for example, is not a means of repressing sexuality, but of cultivating and controlling it through a system of continuous transgression, guilt and repentance. If confession were successful in repressing sexuality, it would render itself obsolete. Instead, it is incorporated into sexual desire as an authority that fosters transgression through its regulation. Along these same lines, Judith Butler argues that censorship should be viewed not as a privative form but as a productive form of power. In this sense, the transition to any kind of hard-core pornography should again be seen as a gradual development, as a reconfiguration of a system of sexuality and its representation, and as a modification of a continuous circulation of sexuality and sexual representations in the culture. The boundary between imaginative

and demonstrative sexuality certainly changed, especially in the 1960s, when in the United States the MPAA (the Motion Picture Association of America, the association of Hollywood producers that generally oversaw the control of content and is now responsible for film ratings) introduced an X-rating for pornographic content.

But even before then, there was already a clear change to the code which, drawing on Pasolini, we could call the consumerist conception of sexuality. Sophia Loren is an excellent example of this consumerist abundance of the post-war period. In her films and glamorous photographs, Loren is repeatedly associated with Italian cooking, either eating spaghetti or making pizza and pasta in provocative dresses that accentuate her voluptuous figure. The type of *italianità* embodied by Loren reflects naturalness and traditional values, but in reality it is a commodified notion of the culture that creates an association of the oral pleasures of eating with the oral and genital pleasures of sexuality. In his brilliant study of Marilyn Monroe, Richard Dyer demonstrated that the key element of Monroe's star image was the notion of an innocent and natural sexuality; i.e., clean and free of guilt, very much in line with the representation of the female body and the conception of sexuality promoted by *Playboy* magazine in the post-war years. Loren certainly could be seen and studied together with Monroe in this respect.

Marta Muñoz Aunión

After the war ended and it recovered its national cinema, Germany film production in the 1950s was characterised by a clear shift towards a conservatism anchored in Christian religious morality, whether Protestant or Catholic. The female role models were reduced, the divas disappeared, and the licentiousness of the previous years was suppressed. An example of this puritanism of the calm after the National Socialist storm is the outrage generated by the film *Die Sünderin* [The Sinner] (Willi Forst, 1951), whose plot, very much

against the general trend in the films of the period (although fitting within an earlier trend begun in the days of the Weimar Republic), presents the figure of a marginalised woman who faces her fate independently and makes her own decisions about her life and death. Such female autonomy was not tolerated in the early 1950s. However, this film and its moral weight would be easily placed within the dramatic genre and seem inoffensive compared to a Third Reich film like *Ich klage an* [I Accuse] (Wolfgang Liebeneiner, 1941), in which a woman with multiple sclerosis asks her husband to help her die, and the husband makes a plea in court in defence of euthanasia. Considering that the Nazis at that time were exterminating thousands of people suffering from chronic mental and physical illnesses and that Wolfgang Liebeneiner's film was described as "especially valuable from an artistic point of view" and "educational for the nation," it seems at least worthy of mention that just ten years later the suicide pact of a pair of lovers confronted with the incurable illness of one of them should be demonised. In post-Nazi Germany, hedonism was clearly identified with the consumption of material goods. Desire was once again re-directed, constrained, this time without the need of an ideological political discourse, but thanks to the country's abundance of material goods, economic growth and needs for reconstruction. However, all of this would begin to crumble, attacked by the filmmakers of the New German Cinema, who sought to recover the body, a desire that was not channelled, but free and libertarian, and an eroticism that had nothing to do with bourgeois conventions. Finally, eroticism is being relegated to a place outside the image due to the definitive presence of the body, the high profile of sexual ambiguity and the right to choose one's gender in the public sphere. It is found today more in the word, which due to its nature as a written sign offers greater possibilities for the individual imagination and fantasy.

Raffaele Pinto

The display of the body and sexuality (in both pornography and commercial cinema) has progressed in parallel with the reduction of its symbolic meaning, and as a result has absolutely no emancipating value. The sex sold in cinema is a *silent sex*, i.e., useless or counterproductive in terms of reducing the renunciation of drives. A sex that is not verbalised and problematised, and is reduced to mere display, has masturbation as its aesthetic horizon; in other words, the infantile regression of society as a whole. The most destructive consequence of this regression is the weakening of the mechanisms of subjective control of violence.

Gino Frezza

Pasolini led his own battle against the bourgeois hypocrisy which, in the 1960s and 1970s, still refused to accept the open expression of sex and eroticism in film and on television. He saw in this obstinacy the entrenchment of a fascist attitude. His was a battle in defence of modern cinema, which sought to explore freely the profound relationship between the image and desire, between love, sex, innocence, and individual and collective maturation. But the situation of the 1960s was quite different from that of the 1940s. The fascist regime had a binding and even more direct power than that which, in the era of democracy and under the predominantly Christian Democrat governments (imbued with Catholic culture), was presented as political power. Pasolini denounced this paradox: in the 1960s, the force of censorship was more penetrating and more dangerous than before, because it was less visible and more indirect. It is also true that thanks to the social and cultural battles of the 1970s, notwithstanding its diverse victims (some of which were excellent; consider, for example, Bertolucci and the court decision against *The Last Tango in Paris* [Ultimo tango a Parigi, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972]), the relationship between culture and censorship, and therefore be-

tween cinema and censorship, was considerably liberalised. Today, at least in appearance and in legal terms, censorship does not exist; and yet it could always return. The evolution of the media (from the film age to the television age, from the new television age to the digital communication age, and now in the age of digital cultures online) has radically changed the situation between the right to free expression and the forms of control and repression by those in power. The opportunities for free expression are much greater today, but, on the other hand, the danger of political control is intangible, often invisible... I think that it's important to take into account these major mutations before condemning the huge quantity of images and the propagation of the so-called "ideology of hedonism"; such definitions usually simplify the cultural context, set up arbitrary conflicts and obstacles and, above all, feed on underlying moral prejudices. For example, I don't support the idea that desire is obscured when the forms of representation of eroticism are many, or even that pornography and consumption are objects of disdain and condemnation. Moreover, there has always been a very close and fruitful relationship between eroticism and pornography, at least since the end of the 18th century, and I don't think that these two forms of manifestation of images of the body (naked, shown in all its parts and in every action possible) have to be treated as opposite poles (whereby eroticism would be valid because it is "imaginative", while pornography is reprehensible because it is "demonstrative"). I think that eroticism and pornography have a lot to do with the relationships that exist between the imaginary and the real, and in turn in relation to desire. This is exactly what digital networks are rewriting and redirecting in highly innovative ways. And this is where we should look to resume a study of the relationship between censorships (in plural) and imaginations of the sexualised body (female and male). ■

NOTES

- 1 "Eroticism is that which is developed 'in the head'; it is a function of the brain. Pornography is what bodies do and the spectacle they produce: it is a function of the body. Eroticism is imaginative; pornography is demonstrative" (LENNE, 1978: 19-20).

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conclusion

THE SHADOW OF THE BODY

ENDIKA REY

For Pasolini, the body was the last place inhabited by reality, but as they were granted (rather than winning) their sexual freedom after the fascist regimes collapsed, the people lost their own body precisely because eroticism was already in an area of permissiveness: “The conformist anxiety of being sexually free transforms the young into miserably neurotic erotomaniacs, eternally dissatisfied [...]. Thus, the last place inhabited by reality, that is, the body, or the body of the people, has also disappeared” (PASOLINI, 1983: 101).

In cinema, the appearance of pornography in a certain way represented the reappearance of a primitive cinema, of raw presence: “The porno possesses mechanisms of identification, but it only requires a minimal identification. Like the film-events of the Lumière Society, or like the chase films of early cinema, the porno film offers the spectator the imaginary experience of being somewhere else rather than of being someone else, of seeing an action rather than of doing it. It is always the formula of being transported: exotic journeys to the countries of the bodies” (AMENGUAL, 1976: 47). What is curious is that beyond representing a fresh start in relation to previous constructions of eroticism and desire, pornography, in principle distanced from all fascism and sup-

posedly liberating, ended up perpetuating some of those same repressive and distorting elements.

The taboos disappeared, but not every trace of them. “A whole social order is perpetuated: the virile man appropriates the submissive woman. Thus, pornography is commercial not only in its aim: it is commercial ontologically, as it reduces love to relations of domination, and therefore of ownership, once again evacuating any sentimental dimension” (HENNEBELLE, 1976: 69). The patriarchy continued to define this new type of film and, even today, generally and with few exceptions, the genre (both in its professional and its amateur configurations) approaches the female in an authoritarian manner and without any emphasis on her role as a subject: she is merely an object of satisfaction. Fascism, as Hediger asserted, drawing on the theories of Pasolini, not only refers to a political movement based on violence, but to a whole ideology founded on our cultural regimes that emerges and continues far beyond the period of the dictatorships themselves.

If the representation of eroticism has undergone a significant change in the last few years, this is undoubtedly related to the rise of social networks. This phenomenon distances us from cinema, but not from the image itself: the mo-

bile phone permits the construction of identity of the one behind the camera. The selfie is the definitive mechanism of self-control, underscoring how portrayer and portrayed are the same person. Originally conceived for the purposes of flirtation (in other words, to feed desire), the selfie allows individuals to control the construction of their own identity or, at least, the dreamed reflection of that identity. The pressure is no longer in the hands of a totalitarian system that directs the gaze; instead it is controlled by a global society where censorship goes hand in hand with democracy. The block (Twitter), the ban (Facebook) or the report (Instagram) are the new anonymous mechanisms of repression to which all users have access. Nudity, for example, continues to be censored and the social networks have established themselves as the new high priests of morality, or at least as their pupils.

Thus, audiovisual strategies of seduction must once again include omission, internalisation or metaphorical expression because, although invention and production are permitted, public distribution continues to be censored. As Pasolini foresaw, now it is the freedom of the consumer society that has established a hedonistic, secular ideology, and the theory of eroticism is thus reflected in an anthropology founded on a certain type of deranged natural corporeality. The idea of sin has disappeared, and “without the threat of stoning, love is weakened, relaxed, transformed into something easy and risk-free that is no longer capable of re-directing a life, of giving meaning to anything. [...] With the splendid vindication of desire, eroticism and love are separated as they are brought together, the effect miraculously made independent of its cause. Might sex be the revenge of love?” (RINS, 2001: 114).

In his posthumous work *Cuerpo a cuerpo*, Domènec Font suggests that “while the discourse on the body is established as a revelation of the mentalities, artistic practices and bioculture of an era, its application as a study in cinema is complex

and seems only to disguise a return to idolatry and fetishism. The grammar of the body in cinema is problematic and functions in relation to a metaphysics that establishes it not as a biological object but as a ghost, a mere apparition without volume or substance, a trace of light and chemical essence. What is it that defines this imaginary construction, material and sign, simulacrum and reproduction? The image as medium” (FONT, 2012: 15). Félix Guattari, on the other hand, suggests that eroticism “is always an inversion of the boundary between authorized pleasure and coded prohibition. It proliferates outside the law; it is the accomplice of the prohibition; it channels the libido over the forbidden object, which it only brushes against and barely uncovers. [...] On one side we have the ghost, desire made ghost, an impotent act; on the other, the reality of desexualised production” (GUATTARI, 1983: 91). The cinematic image contains desire and eroticism, the body, as a ghost. The history of the cinema of desire is yet to be written, but, today, perhaps the last place inhabited by the reality of the images is in that shadow. ■

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GERMANY, ITALY, AND SPAIN: EROTICISM AND DESIRE UNDER EUROPEAN FASCISM

Abstract

This text offers some reflections on the treatment of eroticism and desire in cinema under German, Italian and Spanish fascism. Censorship and repression under the dictatorships were integrated into a pre-existing cultural and moral framework where female sexuality was ultimately conditioned by a derealisation of the face through the mask. This body turned ghost is both privative and productive because the star system controlled but also satisfied the desires of the masses. Different types of femininity were constructed based on the particularities of each country and regime, but several similar codes were also used to create an ideal image of the woman. With the end of fascism, this constrained eroticism would be redirected to include forms such as pornography, although the boundary between the two concepts has been blurred and identity structures are still under the influence of patriarchy and commercialism. The history of the cinema of desire can help us to read the body and face of female figures in the modern era.

Key words

Eroticism; Desire; Fascism; Actress; Body; Gesture; Censorship; Star-system.

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ALEMANIA, ITALIA, ESPAÑA: EL EROS Y EL DESEO BAJO LOS FASCISMOS EUROPEOS

Resumen

El presente texto reflexiona sobre el tratamiento en cine del eros y el deseo bajo el fascismo alemán, italiano y español. La censura y represión de las dictaduras se integran en un marco cultural y moral preexistente donde la sexualidad femenina acaba siendo condicionada por una desrealización del rostro a través de la máscara. Ese cuerpo hecho fantasma no solo es privativo sino también productivo ya que el *star-system* controla pero también satisface los deseos colectivos. Se construyen distintos tipos de feminidad según las particularidades de cada país y régimen, pero también hay una serie de códigos parejos a la hora de crear un ideal de la mujer. Ese erotismo constreñido se reconducirá con el fin de los fascismos adquiriendo formas como la pornografía, si bien la frontera entre ambos conceptos es difusa y las estructuras identitarias siguen estando bajo el influjo del patriarcado y el mercantilismo. La historia del cine del deseo nos ayuda a leer el cuerpo y rostro de las figuras femeninas en la era moderna.

Palabras clave

Eros; deseo; fascismo; actriz; cuerpo; gestualidad; censura; *star-system*.

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