LIVE FLESH

THE MALE BODY IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH CINEMA

Santiago Fouz-Hernández
Alfredo Martínez-Expósito

I.B.TAURIS

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For Christian and for Ignacio

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and
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Preface and acknowledgements

The idea for this book originated in 2000, when we initiated email correspondence about a film that we had both separately written about. The film was Almodóvar's *Live Flesh* (fatefully, its title has turned out to be an ideal one for this book too). Having identified a clear compatibility in our research interests, we organized a six-month teaching exchange in 2002 (between the Universities of Durham in the United Kingdom and Queensland in Australia). We then brought together our shared research interests (Spanish cinema and men's studies) in an extended project. This book is its main outcome.

Spanish director Bigas Luna once confessed that his fascination with the concept of 'Spanishness' had been stimulated by a visiting English friend. Those national customs and everyday objects that we take for granted in our own culture were perceived as surreal by the visitor. Our experience as Spanish nationals who have spent most of our formative years in Spain but most of our professional lives as academics in English-speaking countries has also given us a new perspective on our own culture. We feel privileged to have been exposed to the Anglophone theory and criticism on Spanish cultural studies and film studies and, at the same time, to have kept in touch with the ongoing academic discourses around this ever-growing field in Spain. The rapid changes that have taken place in our country of origin since we both left it over ten years ago have been all the more surprising and noticeable for us from abroad, particularly in what relates to issues of gender and sexuality and their representation in Spanish film and media. One of our main purposes when conceiving this book was to use such experience as the basis for the analysis of Spanish filmic texts produced during the last three decades. Scholarly work in the fields of Spanish gender and film studies has been immensely productive during that time in both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking worlds. Parallel to this, the growing attention paid to the representations of masculinity and the male body in English-language films has prepared the ground for a study dedicated to the representation of the male body in Spanish cinema.

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At I.B.Tauris we would like to thank our editor Philippa Brewster for her help, encouragement and confidence in this project, Gretchen Ladish and everyone else involved in the production of this book. At the Filmoteca Española we thank all staff that assisted us in the library, graphics department and screenings, but especially Margarita Lobo and Trinidad del Río for their advice and for facilitating the daily viewing of films during December 2004, February and March 2005. We would like to thank the following colleagues for their advice and feedback on earlier drafts of various parts of the material included here: Mark Allinson, Ian Biddle, Roy Boyne, Joe Hardwick, Barry Jordan, Peter Lehman, Morris Low and Chris Perriam. We have presented versions of different parts of the book at conferences and research seminars held at universities in Australia (Adelaide, Flinders, Monash, Queensland, Sydney, University of Technology Sydney), Ireland (Limerick), Portugal (Braga), Spain (Valencia, Sevilla), UK (Bath, Cambridge, Institute of Romance Studies and Queen Mary and Westfield London, Newcastle upon Tyne, Glasgow) and USA (Chicago, University of California Los Angeles, University of California Santa Barbara) and we would like to thank the organizers for inviting us and the audiences for their feedback.

Ian Biddle, Christian Mieves and Tony Roberts very kindly proof-read drafts of the manuscript and Christian Mieves designed the concept and artwork for the book cover. Special thanks go to Sonia Lázaro Arriola at Lola Films for providing us with a high-resolution reproduction of the exact still that we wanted for the cover and for granting us permission to reproduce various stills on behalf of Lola Films. We are also grateful to Pedro Costa, Marta Esteban (at Messidor Films), Jason Leaf (at Avatar), Beatriz Morillas (at Amiguetes Entertainment), Ventura Pons and Christina Sutherland (Tessela) for granting us copyright permissions for the reproduction of various stills. Earlier versions of the analysis of *Jamón, Jamón*, *Barrio*, *El Bola*, *Krámpack*, *Live Flesh* and *Mar adentro* were published in the following books and journals: *Revisiting Space: Space and Place in European Cinema*, ed. by Wendy Everett and Axel Goodbody (Oxford: Peter Lang); *Youth Culture in Global Cinema*, ed. by Timothy Shary and Alexandra Seibel (Austin: Texas University Press); S*ymbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics 7* and *Proceedings of the AHGBI Annual Conference 'Antes y después del Quijote: en el cincuentenario de la Asociación de Hispanistas de Gran Bretaña e Irlanda'*, ed. by Robert Archer, Valdi Astvaldsson, Stephen Boyd and Michael Thompson (València: Biblioteca Valenciana). We are grateful to the editors of those publications for their permissions. Finally, we would like to thank our students of Spanish cinema at the Universities of Durham and Queensland and our families and partners for their support and encouragement.

Film titles are given in the original Spanish and in their commercial English translation when available (we have provided our own translation in all other cases). Release dates, audience and box-office takings figures are based on data available at the electronic film database published in the Spanish Ministry of Culture website (www.mcu.es), consulted throughout 2005 and checked in August 2006. All translations from Spanish sources are ours, unless otherwise specified. English subtitles available in commercial releases of the films were followed only if they literally conveyed the meaning of the Spanish or in ways that satisfied the authors of this book.

Introduction

Traditionally regarded as the object of biology, the body has become increasingly prominent in a number of other disciplines, from anthropology to medicine and, more recently, sociology and cultural studies. Much European art from the fifteenth century onwards has focused on human anatomy, bringing together the disciplines of art and medicine. Medical literature and illustrations contributed to the emergence of a strong discourse of the body and to the emergence of the body as spectacle. This discourse remains largely intact today in the shape of successful serialized hospital dramas, as well as sensationalist television programmes that show footage of cosmetic surgery operations and dramatic 'make-overs', not to mention the more rare but extremely popular televised dissections such as those by doctor von Hagens shown on British television. The invention of photography and the moving image contributed to the dissemination of and curiosity in body images. The Hollywood epics from the 1920s onwards took the representation of the male body on the screen to another level, whilst present-day consumer-oriented societies have placed the body even more in the spotlight, with a clear shift from the nineteenth-century stress on clothing and the 'hiding' of the body to a culture that celebrates and displays the human form, prompting scholars from a wide range of disciplines to explore the social dimensions of the body, especially in relation to gender. The use and abuse of bodies (male and female) in advertising and other forms of media has also been widely discussed (Bordo 1999 is a key reference of such discussions with regards to the male body) as part of the ongoing debate arguably sparked by Mulvey's 1970s influential essay on the male gaze and the female star as spectacle in classic Hollywood cinema. Mulvey's controversial argument inspired a productive debate that initially resulted in major publications about femininity and the female body on the screen during the 1980s. In the years that followed, emphasis was diverted to cinematic representations of the male body, resulting in important publications such as those usefully summarized in the introduction to Powrie, Davies and Babington's own volume on masculinities

in European and Hollywood cinemas (2004: 1–5) (see, for example, Shaviro 1993; Tasker 1993; Jeffords 1994; Cohan and Hark 1995 or Lehman 1993 and 2000).

Writing in the mid-1990s, Cohan and Hark regret that mainstream film theory has generally tended to equate masculinity with activity, voyeurism, sadism, fetishism and story, and femininity 'with passivity, exhibitionism, masochism, narcissism, and spectacle' (1995: 2). They denounce what they consider as a system based on 'monolithic', 'homologous differences' that attributes only 'power, stability, and wholeness' to masculine subjectivity in a seemingly axiomatic, universal distribution, and then reclaim for the masculine a symmetrical position to the feminine. In short, they are arguing that issues of spectacle, masochism, passivity, masquerade and the body – traditionally explored in female contexts – must be part of the purview of masculinity studies. A more critical masculine paradigm will necessarily have to consider men as spectacle-driven, exhibitionist, masochist, passive and narcissist; it will have to consider their masquerades and their bodies. One of the primary aims of this book is to contribute to this critical turn, by engaging specifically with the Spanish cinematic context.

In Spain, despite a self-declared focus on women and femininity, the early films of Pedro Almodóvar constitute an anticipation of the noticeable centrality that masculinity and the male body would have in the Spanish cinema of the last two decades (see Allinson 2001 or Smith 2000a). In that period, the Spanish male body has been both celebrated and problematized most notably by directors such as Bigas Luna, Álex de la Iglesia or Santiago Segura. Using a wide range of genres and styles, their films have drawn on Iberian stereotypes, on the commercial appeal of graphic violence and on the long tradition of the grotesque in Hispanic culture to both criticize and glorify older and alternative prototypes of Spanish masculinity. In *Stars and Masculinities in Spanish Cinema*, Chris Perriam (2003) mapped out one of the most relevant and revealing innovations in the field of Spanish cinema studies by (re)discovering masculinity as a marked, non-neutral and controversial aspect of a wide range of films beyond Almodóvar and placing Spanish cinema in the field of stars studies – a field usually associated with Hollywood productions. The list of actors whose careers Perriam examines could be seen as a canonic gallery of men who in some important ways have come to embody the values of contemporary Spanish masculinity, most of whom are also studied in various sections of this book, although in different contexts. In the case of Antonio Banderas, who now plays mainly Latino roles in Hollywood, the

embodiment of masculinity has been associated for international audiences with the more controversial embodiment of a racial maleness often identified with alterity and otherness. Arguably, offshore readings of Spanish masculinity tend to emphasize elements of difference and otherness along racial and broadly defined cultural lines. Such readings draw on discourses often built on the acceptance of a national identity or racial determinism or a cultural specificity that allegedly dictates the authenticity of representations.

In this book we have explored a wide range of Spanish films from the last three decades with two main questions in mind: how the bodies of male characters are represented, and how those representations mediate the perceptions that different audiences obtain of Spanish masculinity. The first question is related to issues of visual rhetoric and the politics of the body, but also to more general questions of filmic discourse such as the gaze, spectacle and stardom. The second question is closely connected with issues of readership and spectatorship, and, in the context of an increasingly transnational Spanish cinema, with the question of stereotypes. We are also interested in exploring how recent developments in Spanish cultural studies, rooted in the Anglo-American and French traditions but rapidly developing within the Spanish academic discourse, can contribute to new understandings of Spanish masculinities. Thus, in the pages that follow, we will investigate the mechanisms by which hegemonic masculinities (for example, the *macho ibérico*, the young athletic ideal, the muscular hero) have made claims to public discourse and how those mechanisms have been contested in recent times. We will ask, furthermore, whether there is evidence to suggest that marginalized masculinities (such as those represented by disabled men, homosexuals, transsexuals and 'foreign' men) have made a contribution to the contestation of those conventional male hegemonic types. Our work is indebted to existing research in the field of Spanish masculinities and the Spanish male body in Spanish cinema by authors such as Paul Julian Smith, Peter Evans or, in Spanish language, Ricardo Llamas and José Miguel García Cortés but, at a more subject-specific level, to the essential volumes by Chris Perriam (2003) and Tatjana Pavlović (2003). Needless to say, key works that have focused on issues of femininity in Spanish cinema, such as those by Susan Martin-Márquez (1999), Isolina Ballesteros (2001) or the various essays on gender collected by Marsh and Nair (2004) have also been major reference points. The 'national' element that underlies this book is influenced by important readings of national and transnational identities in Spanish cinema such as those by Marsha Kinder (1993), Barry Jordan and Rikki

Morgan-Tamosunas (1998), Núria Triana-Toribio (2003) or Isabel Santaolalla (2005) amongst others.

The eight thematizations of the male body we propose in this book are related to established paradigms in film and cultural studies such as gender and sexuality (in Chapters 5, 6 and 8), stereotypes and issues of national representation (in Chapters 1 and 7), youth cultures (in Chapter 2), and the representation of particular aspects and parts of the body (in Chapters 3, 4 and 8). Rather than attempting a systematic account of the virtually limitless fields of sexuality, gender, class, age and nation, we have deliberately chosen critical intersections of these paradigms with the most revealing trends in contemporary Spanish cinema and we have thus chosen to focus on stereotypical, young, muscular, (dis)abled, homosexual, transformed and foreign male bodies in ways that will reveal as much about their opposites.

The first chapter introduces the concept of the 'Spanish' male body by revisiting some of the most memorable images of Spanish masculinity in the cinema of the democratic period. The often ridiculed 'average Spaniard' of the 1970s 'sexy comedy' exemplified by the '*landismo*' phenomenon (named after Alfredo Landa, the most popular actor starring in that type of comedies) is the starting point, leading to the ambiguously portrayed *macho ibérico* famously embodied by Javier Bardem in Bigas Luna's trilogy of 'Iberian Portraits' in the early 1990s (especially in *Jamón, Jamón* (1992), which is one of the central case studies of the chapter). We argue that, whilst such stereotypes run counter to the more Europeanized and sexually ambiguous types that abound in more recent films, the relatively recent commercial success of the politically incorrect *Torrente* saga (dir. Santiago Segura, 1998, 2001 and 2005), with their bald, overweight, grubby and reckless antihero played by the director himself, questions the relevance of the so-called 'metrosexual' or 'new' man in the Spanish context. This grotesque sub-genre (which includes another historic box-office success, *Airbag* (dir. Bajo Ulloa, 1997) and many others that followed) draws on scatological humour and on the commercial appeal of graphic and gratuitous violence which manifests growing anxieties about the demands of the body beautiful as well as a certain nostalgia provoked by the inevitable abandonment of more familiar models of Iberian masculinity.

Chapter 2 explores iconic representations of young bodies in democratic Spain, from Eloy de la Iglesia's *Colegas/Pals* (1982) to the more recent *Historias del Kronen/Stories from the Kronen* (dir. Armendáriz, 1995) or Cesc Gay's *Krámpack/Dani and Nico* (2000). In *Kronen* the emphasis is on hedonistic

pleasure: a group of *madrileños* in their early twenties seek ever more extreme stimulation by experimenting with sex, drugs and alcohol or speeding and joy-riding. In *Krámpack*, the attention paid to the incipient transformation of the boys' bodies serves not only as an explicit reference to their growing-up but also as one of the keys to the exploration of their gender and sexual identities. The marginal settings of other recent Spanish films such as *Barrio/Neighbourhood* (dir. León de Aranoa, 1998) or *El Bola/Pellet* (dir. Mañas, 2000) seem to suggest that cinematic representations of contemporary Spanish youth are more closely related not only to their European contemporaries but also to previous iconic representations of youth in Spain in films such as *Colegas* or the earlier Saura film *Los golfos/The Delinquents* (1962). Their fragile, often abused and damaged bodies work as a metaphor for their social exclusion. Yet, the hospital drama *Planta cuarta/The Fourth Floor* (dir. Mercero, 2003) uses the very real physical vulnerability of a group of young cancer patients as a way to highlight the strength and resilience of the new generations. The scenes of group masturbation and the prominence of violence and risk-taking activities in many of the films studied illustrate the relevance of the body as a site of resistance but also as a tool of gender-identity formation from an early age, a key to the masculine identities in the adult characters explored in other chapters.

Questions of muscularity are examined in Chapter 3. The chapter starts with a review of key debates of screen 'musculinity', to use Tasker's term (1993), and highlights the relative absence of muscular bodies in Spanish cinema before the 1990s. After a brief review outlining relevant exceptions that go back to the Crusade films of the 1940s, we then focus on *El corazón del guerrero/Heart of the Warrior* (dir. Daniel Monzón Jerez, 2000) as an example of the presence of superheroes which is relatively infrequent in Spanish culture and film and tends to be mediated by someone else's fantasy. The chapter explores some of the ways in which the excessively muscular body enters the pantheon of accepted body images and how its reception is undeniably mediated by forms of popular art such as the Hollywood blockbuster and the superhero comic. Indeed, the muscular hero is a long way from the 'average Spaniard' discussed in the first chapter, or the struggling teenagers of the second. Notably, the ever-elusive 'hyper bodies' are often foreign characters and are frequently played by foreign actors. The figure of Philip the Handsome (Felipe I of Castile) (Daniele Liotti) in Vicente Aranda's *Juana la Loca/Mad Love* (2001) is also analysed in this chapter as an example of 'imported muscle', but also as an exceptional case which avoids both the

superhero genre and, to an extent, the parodic intention that is often associated with 'heroic' bodies.

In Chapter 4 we use recent literature on filmic representations of disability to propose new readings of modern Spanish films. Álex de la Iglesia's disabled cyborgs (especially *Acción mutante/Mutant Action*, 1993), Amenábar's troubled men (from the sadist of *Tesis/Thesis* (1996) to the disfigured face of *Abre los ojos/Open Your Eyes* (1997) or the tetraplegic man that wants to end his own life with dignity in *Mar adentro/The Sea Inside* (2004)) or Almodóvar's battered lovers – especially *Carne trémula/Live Flesh* (1997), which we use as a case study – exemplify a common tendency to use the disabled body as a script. Most instances of broken and disabled bodies in contemporary Spanish film are marked in one of three ways: as diseased, as incapacitated, or marked by violence. Although these categories often overlap, each of them conjures up a well-defined epistemological landscape: disease as metaphor, disability as monstrosity, violence as bodily inscription. The chapter considers the enormous influence of Freudian theories of disability as castration and the Oedipus complex in the production and exegesis of contemporary films. However, it is proposed that the feminist-originated concept of 'body as text' might help explain more clearly issues of bodily technologies, scarification, bodily disorders (from obesity to bulimia), sensory deprivation, disfigurement and normalcy. This set of conceptual tools is also useful for a timely re-evaluation of the male body as an eventful locus of action, as opposed to a dynamic motor for the action plot. If the female had traditionally been the main site of bodily discourse, in the Spanish cinema of the last three decades or so, it is the man who becomes blind, lame, ill, hospitalized, physically attacked and even raped.

Recent and drastic changes in the Spanish legal system with respect to homosexuality (from incarceration during the dictatorship to equal rights including marriage and adoption since 2005) have undoubtedly contributed not only to improve visibility but also the gradual integration of the homoerotic gaze into mainstream film and media (although not always in a very favourable light, as Llamas (1997) argues). In the long path from Eloy de la Iglesia's tormented homosexuals to seamlessly integrated queers of Albacete/Bardem/Menkes or the adult types of Vera's *Segunda piel/Second Skin* (1999) or Pons's *Amic/Amat/Beloved/Friend* (1999), it is possible to identify a thorough investigation of the means by which a gay character can be visually constructed in mainstream Spanish film. The influence of Almodóvar both in terms of the stylization and character development (especially in *La ley del deseo/Law of Desire* (1987)) cannot be underestimated, as shown in our

study of *Perdona Bonita, pero Lucas me quería a mí/Excuse Me Darling, but Lucas Loved Me* (dirs Félix Sabroso and Dunia Ayaso, 1997). In this generally poorly received but, for our purposes, highly relevant film, the male body takes centre-stage and becomes the recipient of many of the physical anxieties usually associated with gay men (fatness versus fitness, promiscuity, vanity and so on). Drawing on queer theory and existing studies of gay representation in Spanish cinema (such as Smith (1992b); Llamas (1995); Martínez-Expósito (1998b); Fouz-Hernández and Perriam (2000); Alfeo Álvarez (2000) or Mira (2004a)), Chapter 5 focuses on recent developments perhaps best illustrated by the controversial *Cachorro/Bear Cub* (dir. Albaladejo, 2004), where the naked large bodies of the so-called 'bear' men (often middle-aged, overweight and hairy) are boldly displayed and celebrated. Rather than attempting a history of the problematic representation of homosexuality on the screen, this chapter explores the visual rhetoric of such representations. Hence we focus on the strategies devised to organize and structure the bodies being shown as well as the means by which they influence the audience. Inevitably, the chapter draws on queer theory and scholarship, but it does so on the understanding that this theoretical body needs to be appropriated (and sometimes even reformulated) by the culture-sensitive critic if it is going to be used for the analysis of a non-Anglo-Saxon cultural object, and must therefore inevitably take into account recent developments in queer discourses from Spain.

In Chapter 6 we propose that the way the topics of sex change, transgenderism and cross-dressing are dealt with and presented to the audience depend largely on the pragmatics of genre. Whilst we would be reluctant to argue that high-brow genres offer a deeper, better articulated critique of the body, we can deduce from the cases studied that 'high' genres tend to focus on the character and 'popular' genres tend to exploit the (comic, sometimes farcical) situation. Early classic representations of transvestites and transsexuals such as those seen in *Mi querida señorita/My Dearest Senorita* (dir. Armiñán, 1972), *Cambio de sexo/Forbidden Love* (dir. Aranda, 1977) or *Ocaña, retrat intermitent/Ocana, an Intermittent Portrait* (dir. Pons, 1978) are compared with more recent examples in Fernando Trueba's *Belle Epoque/The Age of Beauty* (1992), Albacete and Menkes's *I Love You Baby* (2001) or Salazar's recent *20 centímetros/20 Centimetres* (2005). The chapter also revisits key episodes in Almodóvar's filmography, such as the influential *La ley del deseo/Law of Desire* (1987), *Tacones lejanos/High Heels* (1991), *Todo sobre mi madre/All About My Mother* (1999) or the more recent *La mala educación/Bad Education* (2004),

which is used as an extended case study. The sexy comedy of the 1970s (exemplified by the box-office success *No desearás al vecino del quinto/Thou Shall Not Covet Thy Fifth Floor Neighbour* (dir. Ramón Fernández, 1970)), seems to be the origin of certain 'battle-of-the-sexes' comedies of the 1990s such as *Pon un hombre en tu vida/Put a Man in Your Life* (dir. Eva Lesmes, 1996) or *Corazón de bombón/Sweetheart* (dir. Álvaro Sáenz de Heredia, 2000). The high/low divide is a crucial factor in any attempt to understand the profound differences, both aesthetic and ideological, in the presentation of the male (and female) bodies in these titles. However, the more recent examples studied would seem to reflect an evolution towards a more 'positive representation' like the one experienced by the homosexual character, as suggested in the previous chapter.

Chapter 7 focuses on the representation of foreign bodies (tourists, migrants, nomads), whose presence is increasingly visible both in Spanish cinema and in its academic consideration (notably in Santaolalla's monograph on the subject – 2005). The relevance of the related topics of migration, nomadism and tourism is considerable for a country like Spain, with high levels of activity in the three areas. Not surprisingly, recent Spanish cinema is generous in the cultivation of them all. The intersection of national, class and gender identity can be used in order to queer those bodies' regimes of presence/absence, but also to invoke a cultural framework which is no longer that of modern radical subjectivity. The chapter analyses in detail two recent and representative migration films that until now have had less prominence in academic discourses on the subject: *Ilegal/Illegal* (dir. Ignacio Vilar, 2003) and the controversial *La fuente amarilla/The Yellow Fountain* (dir. Miguel Santesmases, 1999), famously denounced by the Chinese community in Madrid as racist and xenophobic. The chapter also examines mixed romances involving a foreigner and a Spaniard in films such as *La niña de tus ojos/The Girl of Your Dreams* (dir. Fernando Trueba, 1998), *La pasión turca/Turkish Passion* (dir. Aranda, 1994), *Hola, estás sola?/Hi, Are You Alone?* (dir. Icíar Bollaín, 1995) or *Torremolinos 73* (dir. Pablo Berger, 2003).

Peter Lehman (1993, 2000) and Susan Bordo (1999) amongst others have argued that the centrality of the phallus in patriarchal society is paradoxical. In Chapter 8 we explore the politics of male frontal nudity in Spanish cinema. Whilst the glimpses of the male genitals in films at the beginning of the democratic period such as Gutiérrez Santos's *Arriba Hazaña/Long Live Hazaña*, Ventura Pons's *Ocaña, retrat intermitent* or Eloy de la Iglesia's *El diputado/Confessions of a Congressman* and *El sacerdote/The Priest* (all released

only months after the abolition of censorship in 1978) or even Almodóvar's *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?/What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984) seemed unusual and even shocking; the penis has become increasingly visible in Spanish films of the last three decades. In 1997 the total nudity of heartthrobs Jordi Mollá and Liberto Rabal (in Franco's *La buena estrella/Lucky Star* and Almodóvar's *Carne trémula* respectively) attracted much attention as did the sight of an erect penis in Medem's *Lucía y el sexo/Sex and Lucía* (2001). More recently, films such as *Cachorro* (dir. Albaladejo, 2004) or *Amor idiota/Idiot Love* (dir. Ventura Pons, 2004) have included notorious close-up shots of penises that have attracted much media attention (but little or no controversy) whilst others such as *XXL* (dir. Sánchez Valdés, 2004) or *20 centímetros* (dir. Salazar, 2005) teasingly place the male organ at the centre of the narrative. The chapter questions the notion that this new visual investment in the male genitals has contributed to a 'decentring of the phallus' in the narratives of these films and ends with a detailed study of the phallic discourse in Pedro Almodóvar's filmography that supports the chapter's overall argument.

It is interesting that one of the most representative actors of contemporary Spanish cinema, Javier Bardem, features quite prominently in five very different chapters of this book, embodying very different types of men. Still regarded by some as the epitome of Iberian *macho* masculinity through his long-abandoned but still prominent roles in the first two installments of the Bigas Luna 'Iberian Portraits' trilogy, Bardem has struggled to be disassociated from the muscular heterosexuality and overt physicality that characterized much of his early work. Yet, his performances as a disabled man in Almodóvar's *Carne trémula* (1997) or Amenábar's *Mar adentro* (2004), or as an overweight and powerless unemployed man in León de Aranoa's *Los lunes al sol/Mondays in the Sun* (2002) as well as some of his gay roles (although not so much in Vera's *Segunda piel* (1999), as we argue in Chapter 5), are equally convincing. The malleability and adaptability of Bardem's body is a good illustration of the evolution of the representation of masculinity in Spanish cinema. The iconic image used on the cover of this book invites a careful reflection on the body and construction of masculinity on the screen. The posture and facial expression of Bardem's character in this still from Bigas Luna's *Jamón, Jamón* (1992) could suggest that the old *macho ibérico* type has been defeated by the new consumerist society. The muscular build and confident swagger have not prevented the commodification of his body, that, in this shot, is intensified: used by the newly financially powerful woman

first as a vehicle to get her own way with her son and then as a toy-boy, his nude upper body is now marked by one of the utmost symbols of his consumerist ambition (the unmistakable Mercedes-Benz emblem). At a narrative level, he has been brought to the ground by his excessive sexuality and competitive instinct; yet, his lower body could also suggest that the defeat is only temporary. The legs are only partially spread and ready to get up and reclaim agency in the face of the malign erosion of his authority by late modernity. The question that we will be asking in the pages that follow is whether the apparent changes in the visual representation of masculinity described above are thorough-changing or only skin-deep.

1

Stereotypical bodies

MEET 'THE AVERAGE SPANIARD'

When considering the stereotypical representation of the Spanish male in Spanish cinema, most national audiences would inevitably think of the characters played by actors such as José Luis López Vázquez, Andrés Pajares, Fernando Esteso or, especially, Alfredo Landa in the 1970s. The so-called 'average Spaniard' of the Francoist *comedia celtibérica* and the *destape* films that followed has been unflatteringly described retrospectively as 'a eunuch proud of his excessive body fat', 'with depressing soft dicks' (Satué 1996: 57); 'a mediocre Spaniard, with various sexual traumas (…) short, ugly, a bit bald, funny, repressed and shy' (Freixas quoted in Pavlović 2003: 81) or a male 'responding to a realistic typology: short, horny, shy and poor' (Ponce 2004: 24). As Jordan and Allinson note, through a long series of roles in the 'Iberian sex comedy' in the 1970s, actor Alfredo Landa (born 1933) became 'the epitome of Spanish maleness' (2005: 127): he was 'short (…), balding, a little overweight and not good-looking' (126) and when stripped down to his underwear, the sight of his bent legs always guaranteed a good laugh. As Pavlović has argued, his legs became a symbol of the 'surface of embarrassment' that revealed the contrast between 'fantasies of endless sexual activity' and 'the reality of anxious and incompetent lovers' that characterized these narratives (2003: 82).

Yet, these films were also a celebration of the perceived interest in the *producto nacional* (literally 'the national product') expressed by the invariably foreign and blonde females (usually Swedish or French) that started to populate the Spanish holiday resorts from the 1960s. In these films, the lady visitors from Northern Europe brought their liberated ways into a demure

society which, despite a shy *apertura* (economic and moral liberalization), was still under the influence of a dictatorial system that promoted the role of women as saintly wives and devoted mothers whilst their husbands made trips to France to watch erotic films banned in Spain (see Triana-Toribio 2003: 98 or Melero Salvador 2004: 93). After a carnivalesque encounter with the liberal female Other, the Spaniards of these films usually went back to their 'honest' wives, rediscovering their preference for the autochthonous female and moral values and thus conveniently restoring the status quo (see Pavlović 2003: 83–84). Beneath a thick layer of humour, as Pavlović has also noted, these films reveal some of the anxieties surrounding the regime's demands on national masculine identity which, within a strict gender division, asked that Spanish men were 'proper men, not queers'. Nowhere else are these anxieties more obvious than in what became the most representative film of the so-called *landismo* (a group of films starring Alfredo Landa in very similar roles and with the type of narrative that we have just described), *No desearás al vecino del quinto/Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Fifth Floor Neighbour* (dir. Ramón Fernández, 1970), in which Landa's character leads a double life (see Chapters 3 and 5). It turns out that his camp persona, working as a dress-maker in his town, was only a cover story to ensure that his customers' husbands did not get jealous and disguised his 'real' *macho* playboy outlook and lifestyle in the capital.[1] Yet, as Pavlović argues, in their 'eagerness to perform both masculinity and national identity', the protagonists of these films 'destroy the desired effect' (2003: 82). It is important to note that, despite a marked emphasis on sexuality, these films, constrained by censorship, were more about guessing or hearing than actually seeing (Ponce 2004: 22) and teased audiences that never got to see 'what the tourists were up to', nor did the *macho ibérico* 'ever manage to consummate the act, despite the opportunities offered by those girls from the other side of the Pyrenees' (Lloréns and Uris 1996: 36).

Whilst the *destape* films that followed the end of censorship in 1977 were unashamedly generous with the exposure of female bodies ('*destapar*' literally means 'to uncover' or to 'undress'), male actors usually kept most of their clothes on, thus accentuating the objectification of women and the self-confidence of men, who rarely had to expose their own bodies or put under scrutiny their physical adequacy as sex symbols. The poster of *Los chulos* (dir. Ozores, 1981), a late example of the genre, typically illustrates this: the male protagonists (played by Pajares and Esteso) are fully dressed in suits, shirt, tie and smart shoes but are surrounded by drawings of three females,

two of them blonde and fully naked and one brunette, topless and wearing revealing lingerie including black stockings and suspenders. Ponce has noted that, in theatre, Juan Ribó was made to wear a leotard that matched his skin colour during the censored play *Equus* and it is believed that he was the first male to be nude on a Spanish stage in the uncensored version of that play during the transition (2004: 54). It is revealing that in his book on *destape* films Ponce devotes only two illustrated pages to the section 'shirtless Spanish men' but 32 to the three-part section 'topless Spanish women'. Actors such as Patxi Andión (who, according to Ponce, was the first Spanish male to be nude in a film – in 1974 – 2004: 17), or Sancho Gracia (better known for his work on television) stand out as males who were more willing to take their clothes off on the screen and, even more remarkably, for special magazine spreads.

Things have certainly changed since then. The arrival of Pedro Almodóvar (and, before him, Eloy de la Iglesia – see Aliaga and García Cortés 1997: 152) onto the Spanish cinema scene introduced a male homosexual perspective in which the display and objectification of the male body was much more commonplace, as we will see in Chapter 5. Actors such as Antonio Banderas became famous for their attractive physique – in his case from his very first film role (for Almodóvar) in 1982 (see Perriam 2003: 45–69 for a detailed analysis of Banderas's Spanish career). Others like Imanol Arias or Jorge Sanz (both also discussed at length in Perriam 2003) took advantage of their sex appeal in roles that often involved (semi)nudity and which, especially in the case of Sanz, arguably helped to transform the public imagination of the Spanish male. In films such as *Amantes/Lovers* (dir. Aranda, 1991) or *Belle Epoque* (dir. Trueba, 1992), to mention two of the titles most familiar to non-Spanish audiences, Sanz's body is visibly inscribed – through its dressing in various uniforms – within some of the most traditional Spanish institutions (the army in *Amantes*, the Civil Guard in *Belle Epoque*) and thrown into relief against important episodes of Spanish history (Francoism and the Second Republic respectively). In both films, his characters seem to accept man's new position as an object of the gaze and yet, as Perriam notes, at times this objectification empowers Sanz's characters, enabling them to restore 'the male norm' (2003: 152) with gestures such as his gaze back at the camera (as in Figure 1).[2] Some of the characters played by Sanz during the late 1980s and 1990s are a more literal illustration of the commodified male body that, as we shall see in Chapter 8, has almost become commonplace in Spanish cinema.[3] Both in *Si te dicen que caí/If They Tell You I Fell* (dir. Aranda, 1989) and in the comedy *¿Por qué lo llaman amor cuándo quieren decir sexo?/Why Do*

They Call It Love When They Mean Sex? (dir. Gómez Pereira, 1993), his characters are paid for performing sex for an audience (thus directing the cinema audience's gaze at his body); in *Hotel y domicilio/In Calls and Out* (dir. del Río, 1995) he plays a rent-boy and, as we shall see in Chapter 6, in *I Love You Baby* (dirs Albacete and Menkes, 2001) he plays the love object of a homosexual man and a heterosexual woman.

Spanish cinema of the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s tended to blur the differences between the Spanish male and his northern European counterpart, placing the Spanish man within a modernized global (or at least pan-European) context of 'metrosexuality' in which men are aware of their appearance and look after it. Interestingly, the successful *Torremolinos 73* (dir. Pablo Berger, 2003) – discussed in Chapter 7 – recaptures the atmosphere of 1970s Spain and emphasizes the differences between the old-type 'average Spaniard' (ironically played by Javier Cámara, fresh from his role as sensitive 'new man' in Almodóvar's *Hable con ella/Talk to Her* (2002) and his Northern European counterpart (played by Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen), a contrast that some contemporary audiences have found laughable (such a reaction, if anything, illustrates our point).

It has been widely suggested in Spanish cultural studies (the edited volumes by Graham and Labanyi 1995; Kinder 1997; Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas

1. Returning the gaze: Victoria Abril and Jorge Sanz in *Amantes*.

2000 and Labanyi 2002 being perhaps the most comprehensive and representative works) that Spanish society has radically revised its identity in the last three decades, following the end of the dictatorship. One important aspect that has transformed the 'Spanish stereotype' is its double re-positioning, on the one hand within Europe since entering the Union in 1986 and, on the other domestically with the instigation of the new *autonomías* (devolved administrative territories with Spain) that came with the democracy. José Luis Sangrador García, one of the key sociologists in the study of Spanish stereotypes, corroborates this: 'Spanish identity can be questioned at two levels: from within by some of the autonomous regions and from outside by the European Community' (1996: 20). One of the most commercially successful films of the 1990s, *Airbag* (dir. Bajo Ulloa, 1997) – with over two million spectators and with a box-office take of over seven million Euros – exemplified this, mixing actors and cultural references of several parts of Spain (including the historic regions of Galicia and the Basque Country) and Portugal. The use of regional stereotypes was defended by the director during the promotion:

> Any 8-year-old [Spanish] kid knows that a guy from Oklahoma wears a hat and takes care of cows and that it is cold in Boston. But they [Americans] don't know anything at all about us, they don't know the difference between a Galician and a Portuguese, they don't know that the Basque exist, that we are trustworthy people, very stubborn and party animals. (Triviño 1997: 8)[4]

As Sangrador García notes, stereotypes are, 'not only a reflection of reality, they help to create it' (1996: 96), and the mass media are one of the most effective ways of spreading them (see Mazzara 1999: 65). Mazzara explains how, apart from socio-historical reasons that have contributed to the formation of stereotypes (some artificially created for various interests, others with a 'kernel of truth'), we have a cognitive necessity to simplify reality and recognize 'others', as well as an anxiety of belonging to a group that shares some of our characteristics, even if these are the product of generalizations (1999: 93). In her analysis of the Andalusian stereotype in the cinema of the dictatorship, Jo Labanyi usefully applies Bhabha's (1994) study on stereotype and the colonialist discourse to explain how the gypsies exploited their own stereotype – first with the Spanish bourgeoisie then with the tourists – because it was in their interest, adding that 'the colonized subject can subvert the stereotype projected over it by imitating it to the point of excess, in a parodic way, in a type of transvestism that demonstrates its falsehood' (Labanyi 2004b: 10).

The films chosen as case studies for this chapter are iconic in their portrayal of stereotypical Spanishness. Special attention will be given to *Jamón, Jamón* (1992), the most well-known film of Bigas Luna's trilogy 'Iberian portraits', and arguably a major filmic representation of Spanish masculinity abroad.[5] As the title of the trilogy suggests, it engages in a self-confessed conscious effort to scrutinize 'Spanishness' from the perspective of a foreigner and to explore it with the earnestness of an 'outsider'. Aware of the blind familiarity with one's own culture, Bigas Luna famously declared that his fascination with everything Spanish was inspired by an English friend who was visiting the country and was shocked by the sight of 'animals' legs hanging from the ceiling of most bars' (Pisano 2001: 181–182). The emphasis placed on the male star of the first two films of the trilogy (Javier Bardem) also invites a careful study of the use of the actor's body as a site where issues of national identity can be contested. The films could be regarded as a cultural effort to exaggerate the *macho ibérico* stereotype and thus demonstrate its falsehood (in line with Bhabha's argument). The anti-hero of *Huevos de oro/Golden Balls* (dir. Bigas Luna, 1993) falls prey to the fantasies and overconfidence that characterizes the *macho* stereotype, at least on the surface, and his personality and dress-sense (if not his physique) draw on the tradition of those 'average' Spaniards of earlier times. Arguably, the politically incorrect and financially hugely successful *Torrente* saga (already a three-part phenomenon) that we will analyse later in this chapter also draws on this tradition, although it takes the stereotype further with its bald, overweight, grubby and reckless anti-hero played by the media personality Santiago Segura. The *Torrente* saga banks on the type of scatological humour and the commercial appeal of graphic and gratuitous violence that made *Airbag* or *El día de la bestia/The Day of the Beast* (dir. de la Iglesia, 1995 – starring Segura) box-office successes and that has continued to be exploited in films such as *Una de zombis/Zombie Adventure* (dir. Lamata, 2003) or *Isi & Disi: Amor a lo bestia/Isi & Disi: Beastly Love* (dir. de la Peña, 2004) and *Isi & Disi: Alto voltaje/Isi & Disi: High Voltage* (dir. Lamata, 2006), all starring Segura.[6] The excessive representation of the body, and of the male body in particular, in these films manifests a growing anxiety about the body beautiful and those Europeanized, beauty-conscious and pristine types that abound in recent Spanish cinema. Arguably, these films use irony and black humour to reclaim older and alternative prototypes of Spanish masculinity in what Jordan has called 'a conservative moral backlash' and a return to the *cutre* aesthetic of the 1980s with a certain anti-feminist and misogynistic tendency

that has its roots in Buñuel.[7] The bodies analysed in this chapter provide a bridging reference to the past and an appropriate contextualization for some of the more 'modern' types studied in the chapters that follow. Icons of Spanishness including typical Spanish food such as paella, tortilla or *jamón*, the tourist industry, the Spanish flag or the national *fiesta* of bullfighting (seen by reformist thinkers such as Joaquín Costa as a key obstacle for the modernization and Europeanization of Spain – see Shubert 1999: 2–4) feature prominently in their visual narratives and are part of the exaltation of bodily pleasures such as food and sex that characterizes these films. Of all these symbols, it is the concept of the *macho ibérico* that most strongly stands out and that is common to both trilogies. An article published in the Spanish national daily *El País* in the days prior to the legalization of gay marriage in Spain offered a sarcastic but perhaps accurate explanation of the opposition that the law encountered amongst the most conservative (and nationalist) sectors of society: 'people will forgive ZP [the Spanish PM José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero] many things (…) but not to have put the *macho ibérico*'s reputation into question' (Martínez 2005: 15), adding that it was one of very few 'myths' left to Spanish identity – fittingly the article ends with a inappropriate line from the film *Torrente* which is too crude to cite here.

PORTRAIT OF AN IBERIAN *MACHO* OF THE 1990s

The iconic status achieved by the stereotypical representation of Spanish masculinity made in Bigas Luna's 'Iberian trilogy' owes as much to the director and scriptwriters as it does to the actor who played the central male roles of the first two films. As Perriam notes, Javier Bardem (born 1969) has become a key figure in recent discussions of the *macho ibérico* (2003: 93). Today one of the most representative and well-respected actors in Spain, he is also one of the most international (in 2001 he was nominated for a Golden Globe and an Academy Award for his first English-language role in Schnabel's *Before Night Falls* (2000)).[8] His first role, in Bigas Luna's *Las Edades de Lulú/Ages of Lulu* (1990), was as a male prostitute and the spectacular display of his naked muscular body in a scene of S&M was an important highlight of the film's visual narrative. Such spectacular emphasis on the male body seemed remarkable in a film that, as Ballesteros has argued, largely neglects the female voyeuristic pleasure and control of the narrative that the protagonist Lulú enjoyed in the original novel by Almudena Grandes (Ballesteros 2001: 194).

The sexualization of Bardem's body in that early appearance initiated a career that in its early stages was arguably built upon a visible corporality and *macho* attitude paraded in his next two roles with Bigas Luna but which, since then, has been proactively re-written with roles such as those discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this book. Despite acknowledging the crucial importance that the Bigas Luna films had had for his career in the early 1990s, half-way through that decade Bardem was openly trying to resist his typecasting as a 'cocky macho' (Rigalt 1997: 19). Aware of the importance of his appearance for his acting, he has admitted that his broken nose (due to the practice of boxing in his early days) was a key factor for Bigas Luna when choosing him for *Las Edades de Lulú* (Castellano and Elola 1997: 40) and that, beyond his strong performance in *Jamón*, it is his nose and rugged looks that are partly to blame for his typecasting as a 'hard male' (Rigalt 1997: 19). Yet, in the early part of his career at least, Bardem the actor actively encouraged the perceived attention to his well-developed physique. Happy to pose semi-naked for many photo sessions at the time, he has admitted that his first press conference (for *Lulú*) was a frustrating experience 'because nobody took pictures of me' (Rigalt 1997: 20). In the booklet that accompanied an early video edition of *Jamón, Jamón* Maruja Torres introduced Bardem as a 'young *macho*', adding that, in him, Bigas Luna 'saw the expressive force of his virility and the "deep Spain" that it represents' (1992: 28). Another piece in the same booklet stressed the centrality of his body to this film, saying that the actor 'filled with his physique a character written specially for him' (26).

Bardem has often spoken publicly about being famous for his screen nudes: of his role in *Jamón, Jamón* he says, 'I wonder why people keep talking about Penélope Cruz's breasts. I guess that it is at least as important that I am naked in it, isn't it?' (Mericka Etxebarría 1994: 4); of his role in *Perdita Durango*/*Dance with the Devil* (a film that originally was going to be directed by Bigas Luna but was finally directed by Álex de la Iglesia in 1997) he says, 'I was prepared to undress a lot more, but with the Americans (…) I ended up very frustrated' (Castellano and Elola 1997: 40). In an interview promoting *Perdita Durango* (another very 'physical' role) published in the Sunday magazine of the Spanish daily *El Mundo* (Rigalt 1997), the accompanying pictures of the actor wearing his half-opened bathrobe by the swimming-pool seemed to reinforce this point. The use of the bathrobe also invites a glance of his half-hidden naked body underneath and it also implies a level of domesticity whilst also suggesting post-coital relaxation (Bingham (1993: 172–173) makes this point when reading a similar picture of Warren Beatty). In the magazine, Bardem's