



ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL DEPICTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN SPANISH CINEMATIC NARRATIVES BETWEEN 1970 & 1979

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*Spanish cinema
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ABSTRACT

This research examines the portrayal of both male and female homosexuality in Spanish cinema between the years 1970 and 1979. In order to achieve this objective, a sample of 575 feature films produced and released over the course of the decade was selected, and a total of 74 films were chosen from this sample. The recurrence of films containing representations of both male and female homosexuality during the five years preceding and following the conclusion of the dictatorship is examined. From the perspective of narrative theory, a quantitative character analysis is conducted to ascertain traits pertaining to age, educational level, openness, family integration, socio-economic status, and personal care of the identified profiles. This analysis reveals the emergence of distinct typologies in late-Francoist cinema that diverge from those observed in the narratives produced during the early years of the Transition, particularly regarding the portrayal of both male and female homosexuality.

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1. Introduction

The fall of Franco's regime and the advent of the democratic transition signalled the advent of a new cultural era in Spain. The film industry became a reflection of the tensions and social transformations regarding sexual identity that were occurring at the time. During the late Francoist period, references to homosexuality in Spanish cinema were typically implicit, employing their own distinct codes that have hindered the discursive analysis of cinema with queer nuances. Nevertheless, this did occur during the period in question and has been the subject of recent study (Lomas, 2022). Consequently, the portrayal of homosexuality as a narrative device was typically unambiguous, though it was also, to a varying extent, deliberately obscured.

Despite recent contributions to the field, the Spanish case remains an area in need of further study. In particular, this study will examine the representation of homosexuality in cinema during the Transition period. Below is a comment on the concept of representation:

It is fundamental to a number of disciplines, including aesthetic and literary theory, semiotics, epistemology and certain forms of political theory. However, it is also seen as an obstacle, a crude and regressive concept. Such invocations evoke atavistic notions, such as those of truth based on 'imitation', 'copying' or 'correspondence', and mechanistic notions of political power (Mitchell, 2009, p. 361).

The film medium "has been instrumental in facilitating a restoration of the comprehensive representational order that was initially postponed by other artistic forms, including literature, painting, and theatre. It has reinstated conventional plots and characters, expressive codes and the traditional sources of pathos, as well as the rigid separation between genres" (Rancière, 2005, pp. 11-12). In this sense, "visuality becomes the object of special attention, as it corresponds to the practices of seeing the world in which the ways in which we see what we see are processed and imprinted in that experience, under the agency of socio-cultural issues" (Rocha, 2018, p. 107). The principal objective (OP) of this study is to analyse the representation of male and female homosexuality in Spanish cinema between 1970 and 1979, with a view to identifying the attributes in question. The objective is to examine the potential stereotypes that may have been formed as a result of the explicit visibility of non-normative sexualities during the Francoist era and the transition to democracy.

Prejudice and discrimination have a significant social and personal impact. At the societal level, prejudice and discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people are reflected in the pervasive stereotypes that shape everyday perceptions of these groups. These stereotypes persist despite a lack of empirical evidence to support them and are frequently invoked to justify unequal treatment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. For example, limitations in employment opportunities, parenting and relationship recognition are frequently justified by stereotypical assumptions about lesbian, gay and bisexual people (American Psychological Association, 2008).

It is pertinent to question whether the observations made by the American Psychological Association over a decade and a half ago have now become obsolete. The film medium has been regarded as a valuable source for the study of history, in its function as 'historiophotography', a record that complements traditional historiography (Rosenstone, 2013, p. 10). The fall of the Francoist regime, from a sociological perspective, gave way to a new way of being and acting, which fully manifested itself in the 1980s. The aim of this study is to analyse the portrayal of homosexual characters, both male and female, in the cinematographic discourse of the period preceding and following the end of the dictatorship. In order to achieve this, we will examine approaches that may be implicit in nature, but which are clearly defined through visual references, thereby delving into the filmic subtext.

In order to conduct this analysis, films from the specified period were recorded and a selection was made for subsequent screening. It was established that dialogical and visual elements indicated a representation of homosexual characters that was both veiled and unmistakable. Furthermore, aspects such as the age of the characters, their educational level and their social visibility within the plot were also taken into consideration. As part of the narrative aesthetics of their configuration, the resolution of the character with homosexual features in the story was also investigated, determining whether homosexuality is presented as a possible reason for punishment in the denouement, either euhelic (the

protagonist ends successfully), distelic (the protagonist loses with respect to his/her initial objectives) or atelic (open ending).

2. State of play

Fassler elucidated how Plato, lauded as the orator of Greek homosexual love, may have served as the inaugural introduction to homosexuality for many, as evidenced by the teenage Virginia Woolf, who, he notes, "acquired knowledge about it from Plato," as did the 16-year-old Lytton Strachey, who, after reading *Symposium*, was reassured to learn that similar instincts had existed years ago in the ancient Greek era (1979, p. 238). In Foucault's own words, "the psychological, psychiatric and medical category of homosexuality was constituted on the very day it was characterised in Westphal's famous article on contrary sexual sensations (1870)" (1977, p. 56). In the present era, and even within the scientific community, homosexuality has been characterised as a deviance resulting from mental illness. This perspective was first articulated by Krafft-Ebing in his 1896 publication, *Psychopathia Sexualis (Sexual Psychopathy)*. It is therefore unsurprising that psychoanalysis has devoted considerable attention to the study of homosexuality. In her book *Female Sexuality*, Helene Deutsch describes how in the majority of cases she has analysed, the subject in question – a lesbian woman – was characterised by a deep and frank surrender to her masculine instincts, which had their origin in her pre-genital development. Whether consciously or unconsciously, perversion was shaped by the mother-daughter relationship that developed at pre-genital levels, within the deep grooves of fixation belonging to the pre-phallic phases. In his regression, the subject transported with him from the phallic phase the desire for activity and fulfilled this desire in the homosexual relationship as his most cherished form of gratification (1933, p. 23). Foucault's reflections on this topic are illustrative, as he notes the increase in social controls on homosexuality, inversion, pederasty and "psychic hermaphroditism" in the nineteenth century, as evidenced by discourses in psychiatry, jurisprudence and literature on these subjects. However, a discourse of resistance was also emerging, in which homosexuality began to express its own voice, claiming its legitimacy and naturalness, and often employing the very medical categories that had previously discredited it (1977, p. 124). Indeed, these positions were also contested by synchronic communities or movements, such as the International Sexual Reform League.

Since 1975, the American Psychological Association (APA) has encouraged psychologists to spearhead the elimination of the stigma associated with mental illness that has historically been linked to lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientations. Moreover, although research on homosexuality has examined a range of potential influences on sexual orientation, including genetic, hormonal, developmental, social and cultural factors, no definitive conclusions have been reached regarding the specific factors that contribute to the formation of sexual orientation. It is widely accepted that both nature and nurture play a complex role in the development of sexual orientation. However, the majority of individuals report a lack of choice in this regard (American Psychological Association, 2008). It is worth noting that Spain currently has the second highest percentage of people who identify as queer (Europa Press Society, 2023) after Brazil.

2.1. *Visuality and Representation of Homosexuality in Cinema*

The Hays Code regarded homosexuality as one of the sexual perversions that contravened the protection of family audiences, the same audiences that were intended to continue attracting large numbers of people to theatres in the era of classic Hollywood cinema. Consequently, any explicit representation was veiled. The underlying theme of lesbianism was often linked to notions of mental illness and delirium, as evidenced by the character of the housekeeper in Alfred Hitchcock's 1940 film *Rebecca*, played by the actress Margot Maud Lewis, who portrayed the character of Mrs. Danvers with a persuasively lethal charm. Despite the negative connotations, the presence of marginalised sectors is fundamental for the recognition of these groups. Recording implies an intention to correspond as closely as possible to reality, which is essential for the accurate representation of marginalised groups. Consequently, the visual representation of homosexuality will result in a gradual modification of its nuances, should its presence become a constant feature. "The right to look asserts its autonomy from this authority; it refuses to be segregated and spontaneously generates new forms. It aims to distinguish regulatory legislation from that of the law" (Mirzoeff, 2016, p. 35). In the context of semiotics and photography, the

act of registering an image entail ensuring that it bears the hallmarks of an objective reality (Martinez, 2019, p. 223). In Durand's view, the act of imagining an evil, representing a danger or symbolising anguish is, in effect, a form of domination through the control of thought. The visual representation of danger is inherently reductive. Moreover, any symbolic representation serves to exorcise the dark aspects of reality through the power of images imbued with light (2005, p. 115).

The conclusion of the 1959 film *Some Like it Hot*, directed by Willy Wilder, featured a widely acclaimed joke in which the character played by Jack Lemon, who has cross-dressed for the duration of the film, removes his wig to reveal to his romantic interest that he has been deceived from the outset. Instead of the flirtatious woman he has presented himself as, Lemon is, in fact, a man. In response, the lover remains undeterred and offers the following reply: "No individual is without flaws." This conclusion may be seen to reflect the fissures in the Hays Code that emerged at the end of Hollywood's golden age and the beginning of the 1960s, marking a shift in the landscape of contemporary cinema. The new wave of filmmaking that emerged in this period was characterised by a willingness to explore narrative themes that had previously been censored. In this sense, the 1970s would witness the emergence of a rupturist cinematic narrative, lauded by movements such as the New Hollywood Cinema. This narrative would address homosexuality through initially implicit approaches and alternative or experimental treatments. One example is the 1961 film *The Slander*, directed by William Wyler and starring Shirley MacLaine and Audrey Hepburn. The plot revolves around two professors who are slandered by rumour with the implication of a secret sexual relationship. However, at the film's climax, it is revealed that the former has genuine feelings of love for the latter. Another example is the celebrated film *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962). The film employs an implicit approach to homosexuality, portraying a character who appears to be surrounded by men and whose ideals prevent him from pursuing a domestic life. Nevertheless, the underlying tension in certain scenes suggests the possibility of a veiled sexuality in this hero, though it is not explicitly expressed.

As the decade progressed, homosexuality began to emerge as a narrative device in a variety of genres, including tragedies, horror films and, to a lesser extent, comedies. One notable example is Bruce Kessler's 1969 film *The Gay Deceivers*, in which the protagonists feign homosexuality to avoid military service. This narrative strategy of treating homosexuality as a parody rather than reality has an international commercial trajectory that predates the canonical Spanish film *No desearás al vecino del quinto* (*Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Fifth Floor Neighbour*) (Tito Fernández, 1970). These profiles were initially met with social criticism but were subsequently re-evaluated once it was established that their homosexuality was not genuine but rather a pretence. This resulted in their reintegration into the system of LGTBQ+ representation in commercial cinema during the 1960s and early 1970s. This results in the entrenchment of a cultural discourse that inscribe homosexuality in the taboo, at the very least representing it in one way or another. In order for an identity to be established, the trait in question must be recognisable and explicable within a discursive-cultural framework in which the subjects of suspended identity figure (Brady and Schirato, 2010, p. 6). This enables the representation, however questionably configured, to offer an opportunity for the evolution of its proposition in the constancy of its repetition, which total invisibility would not provide.

By the conclusion of the first half of the twentieth century, Alfred Kinsey et al. had developed a more nuanced understanding of non-heteronormative sexual identity and had begun to challenge the inflexibility of its treatment. He expressed his astonishment at the number of psychologists and psychiatrists who had come to believe in only two categories of men and women: those who are heterosexual and those who are homosexual (2003, p. 895). Kinsey et al. regarded the incompatibility of heterosexual and homosexual descriptions as absolute characteristics. Instead, he proposed a seven-point sexual orientation scale, representing a continuum and including 'exclusively heterosexual', 'mainly heterosexual, occasionally homosexual', 'equally heterosexual and homosexual', among others (Stock, 2019, p. 298), with the aim of providing greater nuance to the classifications.

2.2. Transition Cinematography

In certain national feature films of the 1950s, Melero has pointed to an implicit representation of homosexuality, but 'more or less obvious, beyond the readings on the inconvenience of these representations being so derogatory to the homosexual character' (2014, p. 193). It is the audience's recognition of the character as a "sissy or a bujarra" (2014, p. 193) that creates a certain complicity with the audience in a humorous way, without explicitly revealing further details of the character's, in this

case, sexual identity. As has been pointed out, these clichés form a fundamental part of the system of cultural representation of homosexuality on the screen, which has been studied especially in the last decade and which tends to correspond to male homosexuality.

For his part, Eloy de la Iglesia, during the transition period, "showed a marked interest in topics such as homosexuality, drugs, terrorism, prostitution and sexual perversion" (Melero 2010, p. 220). From this marginal context, de la Iglesia, along with others such as Jaime Chávarri and Cecilia Bartolomé, sought to denounce the visual representation of profiles far removed from heteronormativity. In any case, even in this cinema, dissident sexualities are not visible in urban public spaces (Codesido-Linares et al., 2022, pp. 132-133). In the LGTBIQ+ cinema of these years, the Catalan capital offers distinctive and differential settings, such as the theatre and cabaret in *Cambio de sexo (Change of Sex)* (Vicente Aranda, 1977) or *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño (A Man Called Autumn Flower)* (Pedro Olea, 1978). At the same time, as Gómez and Gómez point out, "these characters are subjected to a process of 'heteronormativisation', as they are shaped to be assimilated by the heterosexual public" (2023, p. 170). We will elaborate on some related features in the analysis.

3. Methodology

The narrative feature sought in terms of representation of homosexuality would be any visualisation of homosexuality beyond the sexual identity of the character. Thus, characters were included if they exhibited homosexual behaviour at some point, even if only occasionally, or if they could be implicitly identified as homosexual in the story. The criteria for selecting the sample of films include the following aspects

- Periodisation: belonging to the chosen period.
- Pragmatism: historical relevance of the film.
- Diversity: different perspectives, different social contexts, etc.
- Relevance: narrative features related to homosexuality.
- Extension: evolutionary, covering the period with a certain homogeneity.

According to Huerta, late Francoism encompasses "the convulsive interval between 1966 and 1975" (2012). Monterde, on the other hand, sets different time limits: 1973-1976 for late Francoism, 1977-1982 for the transition, and from 1983 for democracy (1993, p. 26). In order to study the transition from late Francoism to the Transition, this research takes into account the years before and after Franco's death. The year 1975 has been chosen as the central year, dividing the study into two equal periods of five years before and after his death, so that the research covers the period from 1970 to 1979. In this way, it covers the second half of the period known as late Francoism, according to Huerta, as well as the years that Hopewell (1989) identifies as key years in the Spanish transition in the cinematographic sphere, namely 1977 and 1978.

The total population consisted of 1090 films produced and released during the decade. The proposed criteria were applied to this corpus of films: periodisation, pragmatism, focus, relevance and diversity. This resulted in a representative sample of 52.3% of the 1090 films produced, which consisted of 580 films examined in the search for representations of both male and female homosexuality in the 5 years before and after the end of the dictatorship. After screening, we obtained a total of 74 films that presented narrative features related to female or male homosexuality.

3.1. The Analysis Model

The narrative analysis is carried out by understanding the character as "a psychological and action unit that must be studied in the story as a narrative category, where a series of characteristics that we must describe are combined" (Pérez, 2016, p. 538). To this end, we establish a set of variables for the study of its representation, and we pay attention to its evolution in the plot. "As long as there is an evolution, it must be considered from the physical, psychological and sociological dimensions" (Sánchez-Labela, 2016, p. 293). The recurrence of profiles throughout the decade is also observed. Attention is paid to the narrative analysis of the character based on Hjemslev's theories of content and expression, substance and form, as he states that 'the form of content, which is independent of meaning and has an arbitrary

relationship to it, gives form to a substance of content' (1974, p. 79). Chatman expands on this idea by pointing out that it is necessary to distinguish between discourse and its material manifestation, whether in words, images or other forms, this manifestation being the substance of narrative expression (1990, p. 24). Francisco García García expressed the following:

Insofar as the text does not cease to be an object, it can be observed from different perspectives and, with all due respect, insofar as it is the property of the different agents of the communicative act, that is, of writing, reading, disseminating or archiving, it is the object of different strategies of appropriation (2000, p. 45).

We will analyse how homosexual characters have been constructed in terms of age, personal care, cultural level, socio-economic level, social openness and family ties. Through this research, we hope to shed light on a crucial period in Spanish film history that presented explicit, novel and pioneering representations of sexual diversity.

3.2. Phases of the methodology

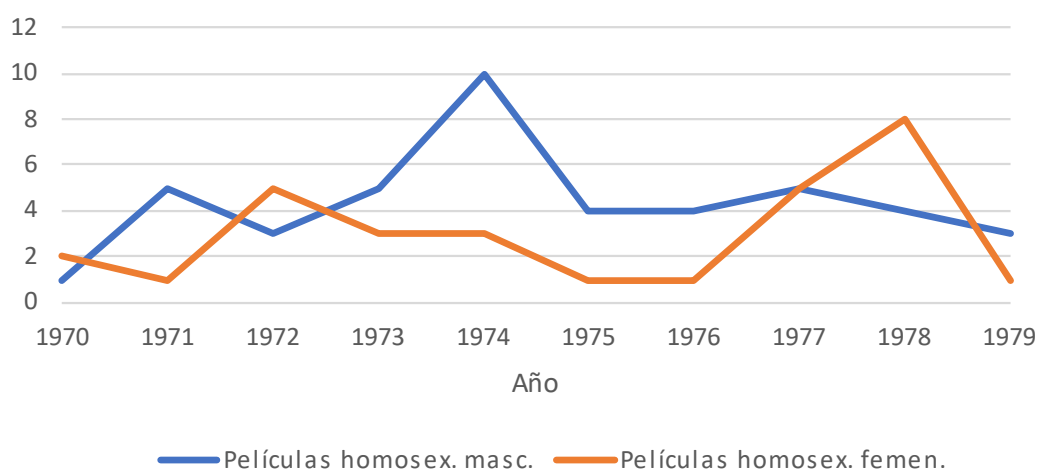
1. Bibliographical review: works on the representation of homosexuality in Spanish cinema are consulted in order to understand the context and trends in film representation during the period under study, including contributions by Alfeo, Melero and Lomas, among others.
2. Exploring the relationship between homosexuality and social change during the transition from Francoism to democracy, in order to assess the variables mentioned: age, personal arrangement, cultural level, socio-economic level and social openness.
3. To study the cinematographic representation of homosexuality: characteristics, profiles and evolution.

In summary, our methodology combines narrative approaches to understand the complexity of the representation of homosexuality in cinema from late Francoism to the transition. According to Alfeo, "the representation of grooming is one of the easiest ways of qualification/disqualification when constructing models of representation" (2003, p. 120). We will use a Likert scale (1932, p. 47) to measure these aspects, ranging from 'very neat' to 'very careless' in the case of physical appearance, and from 'very high' to 'in misery' in the case of socio-economic status.

4. Analysis

From 1970 to 1979, 44 films were found to contain depictions of male homosexuality, compared with 30 films containing depictions of female homosexuality.

Figure 1. Recidivism in the visual representation of male and female homosexuality in a number of films from 1970 to 1979.



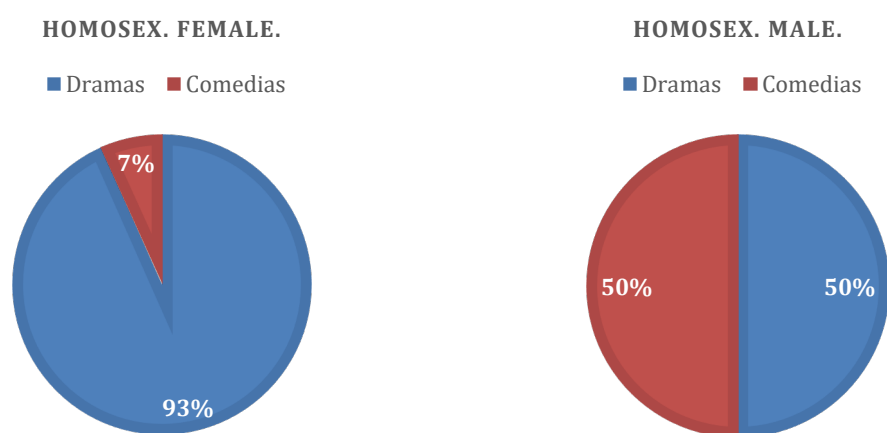
Source: own elaboration, 2024.

In the initial years of the decade, films centring on queer themes, such as *Mi querida señorita* (*My Dearest Senorita*) (Jaime de Armiñán, 1972), *Una pareja... distinta* (*A Different...Couple*) (José María Forqué, 1974) and *El insólito embarazo de los Martínez* (*The unusual pregnancy of the Martínez family*) (Javier Aguirre, 1974), played a pivotal role in shaping a distinct LGBTIQ+ discourse within the Spanish film industry. Melero, for instance, characterises *La Coreia* (1976) as a film that "illustrates how the inaugural Spanish gay cinema was created from nothing, beginning from scratch and without any guidance" (2010, p. 197). Similarly, the change of discourse has no impact on the frequency with which gay characters or features related to male homosexuality appear in a secondary role in the stories. *La insólita y gloriosa hazaña del cipote de Archidona* (*The exceptional and laudable achievement of the character from Archidona*) (Ramón Fernández, 1979) could serve as an illustrative example of a film from the latter part of the decade that features the portrayal of an effeminate male character within the context of a Spanish village, albeit in a somewhat ornamental capacity. It is noteworthy, however, that the character is no longer a mere source of ridicule, nor is his presence diluted within the narrative.

The visual representation of male homosexuality increased notably before female homosexuality, reaching a clear peak before the end of the dictatorship. In 1974, several films depicted male homosexuality. These included the dramas *Larga noche de julio* (*Long Night in July*) (Luis José Comerón) and *La madrastra* (*Stepmother*) (Roberto Gavaldón), the commercial comedy *Una abuelita de antes de la guerra* (*A Prewar Grandmother*) (Vicente Escrivá), and the thriller *El asesino de muñecas* (*Dolls killer*) (Miguel Madrid).

Among the feature films with female homosexual representation that correspond to the slight peak in 1972 are those of the fantastic genre. Notable examples include *La novia ensangrentada* (*The Blood-Spattered Bride*) (Vicente Aranda), *La mansión en la niebla* (*Murder Mansion*) (Francisco Lara Polop) and *La noche del terror ciego* (*Tombs of the Blind Dead*) (Amando de Ossorio). In the second and more pronounced surge in 1978, the narratives are predominantly erotic, with only a few exceptions.

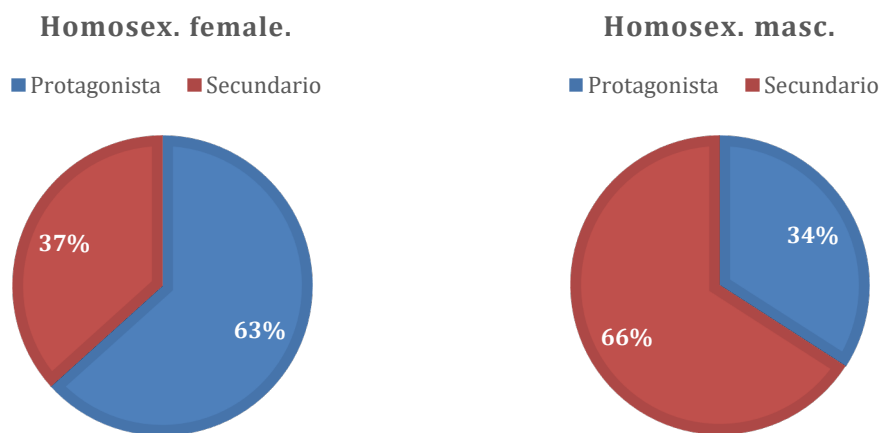
Figures 2 and 3. Dramatic or comic predominance of the respective narratives.



Source: own elaboration based on data collected from the viewings, 2024

The majority of male characters with homosexual traits occupy a secondary role in the plot, whereas female protagonists are more frequently depicted in portrayals of female homosexuality. It is also noteworthy that the two projections differ in tone, with a greater presence of comedy in the representations of male homosexuality than in those of female homosexuality. In the absence of a comic cliché, feminisation is ridiculed to a lesser extent than masculinisation. Consequently, the "visible" lesbian is presented as a woman with unbridled appetites. She is configured as a charismatic and sexualised vampire, which confines her to the dreamlike and unreal world of genre cinema. This effectively excludes her from the everyday life of the audience (Garay and Álvarez, 2017, p. 65).

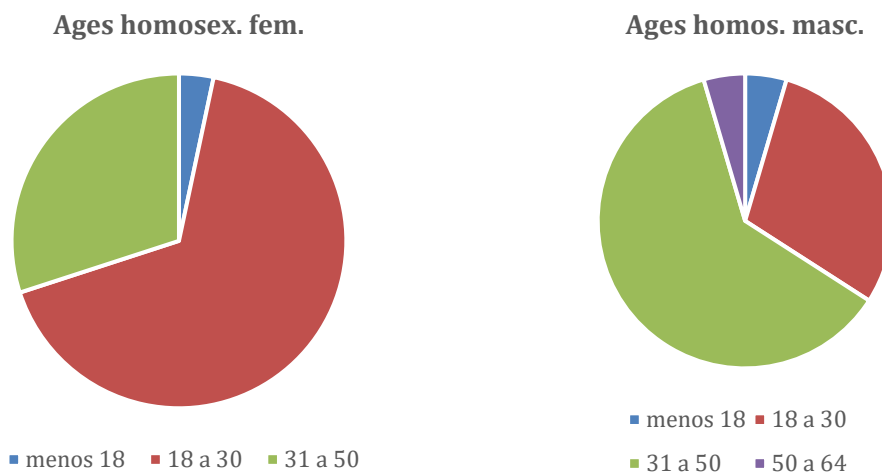
Figures 4 and 5. Level of presence of male and female homosexual traits in the characters' stories.



Source: own elaboration based on data collected from the viewings, 2024.

A total of 30 films were identified as featuring elements of female homosexuality. Of these, 19 main characters and 11 supporting characters were identified. The former category includes such films as *La novia ensangrentada (The Blood Spattered Bride)* (Vicente Aranda, 1972), *Emma, puertas oscuras (Emma, Dark Doors)* (José Ramón Larraz, 1974), *El límite del amor (The Edge of Love)* (Rafael Romero-Marchent, 1976), *Me siento extraña (I Feel Strange)* (Enrique Marti Maqueda, 1977) and *Carne apaleada (Battered Flesh)* (Javier Aguirre, In 1978), some of the supporting actors were featured in *Manchas de sangre en un coche nuevo (Blood Stains in a New Car)* (Antonio Mercero, 1975), *La muerte ronda a Mónica (Death Haunts Monica)* (Ramón Fernández, 1977) and *Cartas de amor a una monja (Love Letters of a Nun)* (Jorge Grau, 1978).

Figures 6 and 7. Age ranges of the characters presenting male and female homosexual traits.



Source: own elaboration based on data collected from the viewings, 2024.

It was also observed that the male and female characters exhibited a tendency to be portrayed as considerably younger than their actual age. While there has been a decline in the portrayal of male homosexuality in a mature manner, there are still instances where this occurs beyond the age of fifty. One such example is the character played by Antonio Ferrandis in *Parranda* (Gonzalo Suárez, 1977). However, this is not the case with representations of female homosexuality, which have practically disappeared.

4.1. Female Homosexuality

Of the 30 films in which female homosexuality was depicted, 28 were classified as dramas and only 2 were categorised as comedies.

These characters are repeatedly depicted as being well-dressed (9) or very well-dressed (7), although there are numerous instances in which their physical appearance is described as moderate (4), low (9) or very low (1). The bisexual Duchess of Alba, as portrayed by Irina Demick in *Goya, historia de una soledad (Goya, a Story of Solitude)* (Nino Quevedo, 1970), is one of the most luxuriously dressed characters. Additionally, the aristocratic wife, Lucía Bosé, who leaves her husband, José Luis López Vázquez, for another high-society lady in *Manchas de sangre en un coche nuevo (Blood Stains in a New Car)* (Antonio Mercero, 1975), as well as the affluent woman besieged by fantasies about her neighbour, played by Florinda Volcan, in *Una lagartija con piel de mujer (A Lizard in a Woman's Skin)* (Lucio Fulci, 1971). In contrast, the prisoners in *Carne apaleada (Battered Flesh)* (Javier Aguirre, 1978) represent the opposite extreme in terms of costume and appearance. No distinctive features are discernible in their oral expression or tone of voice. Furthermore, while Esperanza Roy's characterisation in *Carne apaleada (Battered Flesh)* deviates from her typical hairstyle, the portrayal of these characters deviates considerably from the butch profile, instead aligning with the conventional feminine archetype. It is notable that the other characters in these films do not make any mention of the physical beauty of the leading ladies in the scripts. Nevertheless, the majority of the actresses are recognised for their attractiveness, as evidenced by the following examples: Silvia Tortosa in *Clímax* (Francisco Lara Polop, 1977), Charo López in *El límite del amor (The Edge of Love)*, Rocío Dúrcal in *Me siento extraña (I Feel Strange)* (Enrique Martí Maqueda, 1977), and María Elena Arpón in *La noche del terror ciego (Tombs of the Blind Dead)* (Amando de Ossorio, 1972).

The socio-economic level of these profiles was found to be predominantly lower-middle (14), followed by upper-middle (11) and some middle (5). With regard to the cultural sphere, there are few low-level profiles (2), the majority being in the lower-middle (15), middle (9) and upper-middle (4). The lowest scores in the cultural and socio-economic profiles correspond to films of an eminently erotic nature, which reflect current trends in filmmaking. These include *Las que empiezan a los 15 años (The Beginning at Fifteen)* (Ignacio F. Iquino, 1978) and *Las eróticas vacaciones de Stela (Intimate Confessions of Stella)* (Zacarías Urbiola, 1978), as well as *Escalofrío (Satan's Blood)* (Carlos Puerto, 1978) and *Cartas de amor a una monja (Love Letters of a Nun)* (Jorge Grau, 1978). In a few cases (3), the marital status of the characters is not specified. In the majority of cases (17), the characters are single, while in a dozen stories, the characters are married women. Additionally, the profession of the characters is not specified in a considerable number of instances (11), although there are examples of artists (3), servants (2), nuns (2), and on rare occasions, pianists (1), teachers (1), models (1), prostitutes (1), writers (1), or students (1).

Another aspect observed was that of family ties, although in the majority of cases (19), no data were recorded in this regard. In many instances, the families in question were characterised by a lack of cohesion and integration (7), although there were also instances where the families demonstrated a capacity for integration (4). In no case was social openness absolute, as evidenced by the example of *Manchas de Sangre en un Coche Nuevo (Blood Stains in a New Car)*, in which the lesbian couple throws a party to which they invite friends from the same group. In the remainder of the cases, social openness is consistently rated as medium-low (19).

Two distinct profiles can be identified in the portrayals of female homosexuality. The first category of films has narrative weight in the plot, as would be the case in the majority of films in the death throes of the dictatorship, often of the fantasy genre or a thriller. The second profile serves a primarily ornamental function within an erotic discourse, a common trope in the sexploitations of 1977 and 1978. It is noteworthy that during the "uncovering" boom of the Transition, these merely erotic approaches do not coexist with the others, as the stories of greater narrative weight in the elaboration of female homosexuality's features disappear until the following decade.

4.2. Male Homosexuality

In order to gain insight into the portrayal of male homosexuality in film, a total of 44 films were considered. Of these, 22 were of a dramatic nature, while the remaining 22 were of a comedic nature. It is also noteworthy that when male homosexuality is a significant element in the narrative, it tends to

result in dramatic outcomes. As a narrative element that is implicit in the subtext and configuration of a subplot, it has been observed with some regularity in food-themed comedies.

In these profiles, the personal grooming was either careless (12) or average (18), as would be the case with the characters in *Parranda* or *La semana del asesino* (*The cannibal man*). Those who are either very well dressed (7) or fairly well dressed (6) include Serafín (Tomás Zori) in *El insólito embarazo de los Martínez* (*The unusual pregnancy of the Martínez family*), Álvaro (Ramiro Oliveros) in *La madrastra* (*Stepmother*) and Lluís (José Sacristán) in *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño* (*A Man Called Autumn Flower*). The visual representation of kinesics is somewhat more diverse in the portrayal of male homosexuality than in the case of female homosexuality. In commercial comedy, characters who feign homosexuality but ultimately are not, as well as male characters who are implicitly homosexual, exhibit a pronounced affectation in both non-verbal language and oral expression, which contributes to a perception of effeminacy. As has been previously noted, however, this masculinisation does not appear in parallel in the representation of female homosexuality.

While some male actors playing characters with homosexual traits have been perceived as attractive, such as Ramiro Oliveros, Simón Andreu, or José Sacristán, physical beauty is not a consistent feature in the visual representation of male homosexuality. A review of the filmography in question reveals that neither the potential quality of physical attractiveness nor the sensuality of homosexual male characters is a significant element in the substance of their respective narratives.

The socio-economic level of these profiles is predominantly lower-middle (21), middle (11) and upper-middle or upper-upper-middle (5), with three cases in the lower level. Among the more affluent characters are Luis (Mario Pardo) in *La espuela* (*The Spur*) (Roberto Fandiño, 1976), Don Siberio (Pedro Osinaga) in *Cuentos de sábanas blancas* (*Tales of the White Sheets*) (Mariano Ozores, 1977) and Roberto (José Sacristán) in *El diputado* (*Confessions of a Congressman*) (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1978).

The cultural level would be medium-low (27) in most cases, medium (9) and medium-high (5) with no very high profile. As for their marital status, most are single (31), or unspecified (7), although some are married (6). The profession is not indicated in quite a few cases (13) and there is a recurrence of professions related to creativity and art (9), such as actor, photographer, cabaret performer or artist. There are also dressmakers (2), butlers (2), some students (3), as well as brothel employees (2) or pimps (2).

Most families were either unknown (26) or had undergone a process of integration (10) or disintegration (8). Concurrently, the majority of the characters exhibited low (10) or medium-low (14) levels of social openness. However, instances of medium (11), medium-high (5), and high (4) openness were observed in films such as *Una pareja distinta* (*A Different...Couple*) and *¿Podrías con 5 chicas a la vez?* (*Can You Be with 5 Girls at Once?*) (Ignacio F. Iquino, 1979) or *¿Podrías con 5 chicas a la vez? Doctor, I Like Women, Is It Serious?* (Ramón Fernández, 1973), the latter being a film in which the homosexual collective is portrayed outside of Spain.

4.3. Narrative-Visual Representation

In the years preceding the transition, the conventions for the cinematic representation of explicit narratives of homosexual representation began to emerge. Hartson highlights the fact that the leading actor, Vicente Parra, has frequently portrayed the role of the conventional "gallant" in the cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. He goes on to illustrate how the film directed by Eloy de la Iglesia, *La semana del asesino* (*The cannibal man*) (1972), deliberately exploits the actor's image of normative masculinity in order to unmask it as a construct. In the film directed by De la Iglesia (2015, p. 135), Parra's character evolves from that of a self-assured conqueror in his previous filmography to that of a kind of victim, terrorised by his circumstances. This transformation is shaped by the psychological pressure exerted on him by the film's concealment of his sexual orientation.

One of the key differentiating aspects in these representations is the distinction between explicit and implicit variables. In the latter case, male homosexuality is visually represented, yet its presence is not explicitly indicated. This can be observed in instances where the character identifies as homosexual or is alluded to by another character in the plot. It is also common for the character to be explicitly indicated as homosexual, but for this to be disavowed before the story reaches its conclusion. This is exemplified in the 1970 film *No desearás al vecino del quinto* (*Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Fifth Floor Neighbour*), in which the character played by Alfredo Landa is ostensibly homosexual, but this is in fact a ruse to attract the opposite sex. This narrative approach is a recurring theme in the films produced during the final years of Franco's regime. This is exemplified by the character portrayed by Andrés Pajares in *Los novios*

de mi mujer (My Wife's Boyfriends) (Ramón Fernández, 1972) and the character portrayed by Pedro Osinaga in *Cuentos de sábanas blancas (Tales of the White Sheets)* (Mariano Ozores, 1977). These examples continue to be regarded as valid representations, despite their adherence to heteronormative conventions in terms of their outcomes. Such narratives appear to align with the eutelic tradition, wherein characters, liberated from the farcical elements at the conclusion of the story, have attained their latent objectives, which often contradict their initial portrayal. This is a recurring theme when a male character with homosexual characteristics assumes a prominent role in the plot. Therefore, it can be observed that there are a considerable number of representations of male homosexuality in late Francoist commercial comedies. However, these representations appear asexual and innocuous in the plot twist. These characters, in contrast to the conventional wisdom of the period, are not presented as a threat; rather, they are integrated into the overall comedic tone of the narrative. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the existence of exceptions to this rule. In the comedy directed by Mariano Ozores, *Tío, ¿de verdad vienen de París? (Uncle, do they really come from Paris?)*, for example, the character in question is not presented as a threat to the narrative. In the 1975 film, the antagonists are a group of gay men who run a nightclub where they recruit minors. The most recognisable face of this group is the actor Emilio Laguna, who plays the quintessential gay omiso in cinema during the final years of Franco's dictatorship.

Concurrently, the drama accentuates the representation of female homosexuality. In at least five instances, the protagonists are subjected to sexual assault and/or murder at the conclusion of the narrative, as observed in *El límite del amor (The Edge of Love)*, *Me siento extraña (I Feel Strange)*, *La novia ensangrentada (The Blood-Spattered Bride)*, and *La casa de las muertas vivientes (Night of the Scorpion)* (Alfonso Balcazar, 1972). Furthermore, the narrative frequently concludes with the queer female protagonist engaging in or facilitating murder, as observed in *Emma, Puertas oscuras (Emma, Dark Doors)*, *Una lagartija con piel de mujer (A Lizard in a Woman's Skin)*, and *El caso del cabaré (The Cabaret Case)* (Fernando Merino, 1974).

During the Spanish Transition, and specifically in 1977 and 1978, new discourses emerged in Spanish cinema that dealt explicitly and prominently with LGTBQ+ themes that had previously been censored due to their explicit nature (Codesido-Linares et al., 2022, p. 125). The historical context in Spain at the time was characterised by significant social and political upheaval. In 1977, the first general elections were held, accompanied by street demonstrations that resulted in the loss of several young lives (Álvarez Junco, 2022, p. 177). Concurrently, political parties, including the communist one, were legalised. Additionally, this period saw the representation of male homosexuality vindicated in several narratives that were notable for their quality and well-received by the public. Nevertheless, the sacrifice of the homosexual character is a requisite element in these narratives of full visibility. In the absence of an eminently tragic end for the protagonist, he is depicted as experiencing personal misery throughout the narrative. 'The construction of the "good man" is facilitated by the encouragement of identification with the "sad homosexual"' (Gómez and Gómez, 2023, p. 170). Two examples of this are *A un dios desconocido (To an Unknown God)* (Jaime Chávarri, 1977) and *Los placeres ocultos (Hidden Pleasures)* (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1977). The approaches to representation in the latter years of the dictatorship and the initial stages of the Transition period can be seen to exemplify the systems alluded to by Hall, which entail "different ways of organising, grouping, arranging and classifying concepts, and of establishing relationships" (1997, p. 4) within the configuration of male homosexuality in the media.

The representation of female homosexuality increased during the Transition, reaching its maximum recurrence in 1977 and 1978. As Codesido-Linares observes, this period also saw the greatest recurrence of explicit content of a sexual and violent nature in the entire decade (2022). With the "uncovering," female homosexuality becomes an erotic plot feature, while male homosexuality is vindicated, albeit with the continued inclusion of punitive features that condition its representation, as has been previously noted.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of analysing the representation of male and female homosexuality in Spanish cinema has been successfully accomplished. Two parallel trajectories can be identified with respect to the cinematic representation of homosexuality throughout the 1970s. With regard to both male and female

homosexuality, there are notable differences in the models of representation that emerged prior to and following Franco's demise.

In the final years of the Francoist era, two distinct modes of representation of male homosexuality emerge. One such representation can be observed in comedy, wherein homosexuality is either feigned – if the character has desired to appear as such throughout the narrative – or entirely irrelevant to the plot. The other represents homosexuality as a plot feature in suspense stories or thrillers, such as *The Killer's Week (The cannibal man)* or *Largan oche de julio (Long Night in July)*. In these stories, the character with homosexual traits is depicted as a murderer.

Concurrently, female homosexuality represents a prominent narrative element in the fantastical cinema and fantasy-horror of the latter years of the dictatorship, with films about vampirism serving as a primary source of inspiration. Furthermore, it manifests as a narrative element in thriller and suspense stories, as evidenced by examples such as *Emma, puertas oscuras (Emma, Dark Doors)*, and *El caso del cabaré (The Cabaret Case)*. Conversely, lesbian characters are not typically relegated to the background and are not absent from the narrative unless they are integral to the plot. This is in contrast to the frequent portrayal of homosexual male characters in supporting roles in late Franco-era comedy.

In the initial period of the decade, male characters with homosexual characteristics are confined to roles with limited purchasing power, with only a few exceptions. These roles typically entail positions as servants, butlers, or employees in brothels. In contrast, representations of female homosexuality appear inverted in this sense, with the socio-economic status of the characters being higher in the first half of the decade. By the beginning of the Transition, representations of homosexuality had become less prevalent. For example, the unfaithful, lesbian aristocrat, as embodied by Lucía Bosé in *Manchas de sangre en un coche nuevo (Blood Stains in a New Car)*, had disappeared from the screen.

In the latter half of the decade, discourses on women's freedoms, which had previously been indirectly registered in the narratives of preceding years, effectively disappeared from filmic narratives. With the advent of the Transition, the portrayal of lesbian characters became less pronounced, with their representation serving an explicitly erotic function. Consequently, the evolution of their characters became less significant to the plot.

Conversely, the low socio-economic and cultural profile of these representations may be indicative of the social exclusion of the collective, but this is not the sole factor. The period was marked by an international economic crisis, which had a significant impact on the various cinematic representations in the latter half of the decade.

In conclusion, we present a summary of the research findings. The initial point of interest is the comparative advancement of discourse on male homosexuality in comparison to female homosexuality. The representation and narrative of male homosexuality emerge at an earlier point in time and with greater frequency than those of female homosexuality, thereby establishing a pattern in media discourse in relation to women.

The second point pertains to the eroticisation of characteristics associated with female homosexuality, which is not as prominent in representations of male homosexuality. Once more, it would appear that this configuration is designed to appeal to a conventional masculine gaze. Additionally, the portrayal of female characters as youthful and the dearth of representation of mature women's sexuality warrant attention. The results offer insight into the manner in which homosexuality was represented in Spanish cinema during that period, highlighting certain recurrent socio-demographic and aesthetic patterns.

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