

*El diputado*. Dir. Eloy de la Iglesia. Figaro Films, 1979. DVD.

*El diputado* tells the story of Roberto, a Marxist congressman who is running for the office of Secretary General. From the beginning, the audience is told his story from the future, almost as though it is a documentary. He explains his first homosexual experiences in the military and later in prison, once he is arrested as a politician of the Communist party. In prison, he meets Nes, who later sets him up with many young boys on whom to perform homosexual acts. Roberto tells his wife, Carmen, of his homosexual escapades, and she willingly accepts them. Nes becomes involved in an underground movement against the Communists (and homosexuals) and, for money, he agrees to set Roberto up with a minor. The plot is to catch Roberto in the act with the minor, Juanito, and force him to resign. The plan goes wrong when Roberto and Juanito fall in love, and Juanito becomes an extended part of Roberto and Carmen's family. The film ends in tragedy, as Juanito is murdered by the very people he was originally working for, and Roberto realizes that he will lose everything when he has to expose the truth and resign.

In this film, Eloy de la Iglesia combines politics and homosexuality in a way that becomes accessible to mainstream audiences. As Alejandro Melero Salvador had pointed out in his essay, there is an abundance of political references that were very specific to the time period, but which date it now. De la Iglesia, himself, has pointed out that the plethora of current (at the time) references largely makes the movie unrelatable on this level today. The storyline of homosexuality is of particular importance, though, as this was one of the first times that this taboo subject was presented to mass audiences in a way that they could ingest and process it. De la Iglesia is also taking advantage of the lack of censorship in this film by not only including homosexuality, but copious amounts of nudity, group sex, and drugs. We are shown scenes of fully naked men having anal sex and giving each other blow jobs. By dealing with Marxist politics and homosexuality, de la Iglesia embraced the newly found freedom to discuss things that were once illegal.

*Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón*. Dir. Pedro Almodóvar. Figaro Films, 1980. VHS.

*Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* is the story of the relationship between three very different Spanish women. Pepi is a wealthy heiress who grows pot on her balcony and had been planning on selling her virginity in order to become independent of her parents, before being raped by Luci's husband. Luci, an oppressed housewife, is a secret masochist, who married her cop husband in the hopes of being roughed up. Her hopes have been dashed, until she meets Bom, the sixteen-year-old pop-punk star. Bom treats Luci as her slave, and the two women begin a relationship. The film follows the sexual and drug-fueled escapades of the three friends as they attempt to enact revenge on the men in their life who have wronged them, and carouse the underground world of Almodóvar's

imagination, which involves bearded women, homosexuality, drugs, sex parties. The film ends with Luci getting beaten by her husband to the point that she is hospitalized, which turns her on. Bom is horrified that she has lost Luci to her abusive husband, and Pepi and Bom agree to live together and start a new life.

*Pepi, Luci, Bom*, one of the first feature-length films by Pedro Almodóvar, was a very low-budget production, and this fact was apparent while viewing it. The viewer sees none of the precision, clever camera angles and pacing that is so beautiful in later Almodóvar productions. What is of interest in this particular film, though, is Almodóvar's uninhabited use of sex, drugs, pop music, and sexuality. The opening scene involves a rape, but only after Pepi offers her "morsel" to the cop investigating her pot plants on her balcony. On Bom and Luci's first meeting, Bom urinates on Luci to show her domination, which, of course, turns Luci on. The three women attend a party where there is a contest to measure the lengths and widths of all the men's penises, and the winner gets to do whatever he wants with whomever he wants. There are extended scenes that show Bom's band playing, as she sings, "I love you because you're dirty. A pig, a whore and a delight. You're the worst that's come out of Murcia. And you're completely at my disposal...I put my finger up your ass. I make you go down on me. I beat you up from time to time. The terrorists have nothing on you." These are all examples of the absolute rebellion against the oppression of the Franco regime. It is the story of youth and the nihilist intent this new generation that was only interested in free sex and free drugs. It is also the story of a re-imagined family, as Luci, Pepi, and Bom become a sort of new family that rejects the traditional structure put forth by the Catholic Franco regime.

*Laberinto de pasiones (Labyrinth of Passion)*. Dir. Pedro Almodóvar. Alphaville S.A., 1982. DVD.

*Laberinto de pasiones* is a ridiculous story that follows the trajectory of many marginalized characters through a ludicrous narrative. At the heart of the story, a gay, Islamic prince is in hiding in Spain, while an Arab terrorist group (one of whom is in love with him and has slept with him, not knowing who he was) is hunting him down, and the ex-Islamic empress is attempting to attain the prince's sperm in order to create royal children. In addition to this outrageous plot, is the story of Sexilia, a nympho who can't stand sunlight because of a childhood trauma and Queti, the daughter of a dry cleaner, who has to endure being tied up by her father and raped every other day, because he is confused and believes her to be his wife, who ran away from him years before. The absurd story ends with the empress being impregnated with the royal sperm, the Islamic prince and the nympho falling in love and running away together, and Queti undergoing plastic surgery to become Sexilia and overtake her life now that she's run off with the prince (which includes sleeping with Sexilia's actual father, even though he still thinks she is his daughter).

This absolutely absurd, and almost plotless, film also includes a sadistic transvestite porn

star and copious amounts of drug use. Again, as in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, there are extended scenes which include pop-rock-punk bands performing. One band performs the lyrics: “Coke tones you up. Heroin hooks you. Grass gets you high. Bustaid relaxes you. Dexedrine blows your mind. Sosegon hallucinates. Opium knocks you out. Angel dust is a bust.” The entire time, this band is in drag. There is much more nudity in this film than Almodóvar’s last, and we see Sexilia having a threesome with two other men, and full frontal of Johnny, the Islamic prince, as he comes out of the bathroom after having sex with the empress. It is hard to place any one point of importance on this film, as it is completely all over the place, but I think one thing that it did convey was the absolute release of all sexual and social bonds in new Spanish cinema. On watching this film, one has the feeling that Almodóvar took the opportunity to completely exploit his freedom to show as much drugs, sex, homosexuality, transsexuality, and punk rock as he wanted. When Daniel Kowalsky talked about the bubbling of sexuality below the surface during the Franco regime, which burst through the surface afterward, I picture this film at the forefront. It seems an absolute opportunity to take advantage of addressing all the topics (at once) which were previously forbidden.

¿*Qué he Hecho Yo Para Merecer Esto?! (What Have I Done to Deserve This?)*. Dir. Pedro Almodóvar. Kaktus Producciones Cinematográficas, 1984. DVD.

¿*Qué he Hecho Yo Para Merecer Esto?!* is the story of a dysfunctional family living in a cramped apartment in Madrid. The film’s main protagonist is Gloria, a housewife and cleaning lady who is addicted to prescription painkillers. The film follows her struggles as she attempts to deal with her family, which include: her abusive husband, Antonio, a cab driver, who has a knack for forging handwriting, her two young sons, Toni, who sells drugs, and Miguel, who is openly sleeping with his friend’s father, and her mother-in-law, who is eccentric old lady who dotes on her son, collects large sticks in the park and locks up bottles of mineral water to keep from the rest of the family. Gloria cleans houses for a variety of people, including a writer and his wife, who attempt to employ Antonio to forge Hitler’s handwriting, so that they can fabricate a faux memoir to make money. One night, Gloria, tired of getting emotionally and physically abused by her husband, hits him over the head with a ham bone, and kills him. The movie ends with Toni and the grandmother moving to a village in the country, and Miguel moving back into his mother’s house to take care of her (he had earlier been given to the dentist, who was a pedophile).

The first scene of the film shows a man in a locker room shower at a martial arts studio, where Gloria is cleaning. The audience sees his completely naked body, and much of Gloria, as they have sex in the shower. Later, we meet Gloria’s neighbor and friend, Cristal, who is a prostitute who works out of her apartment. The audience sees many of her getting intimate with many of her clients, and, in a particularly funny scene, Gloria is also invited to watch, as the client is an exhibitionist. Gloris is shown sitting on the edge of the bed, next to Cristal and her client having

sex, looking bored and playing with her newly purchased curling iron. Once again, Almodóvar combines humor and sex, in this rather dark comedy. He is continuing to push the envelope by openly dealing with homosexuality, prostitution, nudity, sex, and drugs. Here, though, as opposed to his earlier films, we begin to see a more subtle and sensitive look at the life of this repressed housewife. There are some beautiful shots of the apartment complex and of the Madrid streets, and throughout the film, we're given peculiar views of being inside, looking out. For instance, as Gloria and her neighbor, Juani, are walking down the city street, the camera moves from inside store to store, looking through the windows and doors at the women passing by. As they walk by, the camera jumps to the inside of the next shop, showing us the products up close in the window displays, and the women farther behind them on the sidewalk. Almodóvar also put the viewer inside objects, as we look out at the characters, such as when Gloria is loading the washing machine, or when Cristal is looking for her ID in her closet. The audience is inside these small spaces, looking out. These shots, in combination with Gloria's cramped apartment and the closeness of the entire building, give the feeling of claustrophobia and suffocation, which mirrors Gloria's life.

*Matador*. Dir. Pedro Almodóvar. Compañía Iberoamericana de TV, 1986. DVD.

*Matador* is a film about a retired matador, Diego, his young, disturbed student, Angel, and a lawyer named Maria. Angel is a quiet, serious bullfighting student who is raised by a very strict, Catholic mother. He attempts to rape Diego's girlfriend in order to prove his heterosexuality, and then tries to turn himself into the police for the attempted rape. Once at the police station, he sees photos of murder victims and confesses to the detective that he has killed these people. He describes, in detail, how each was murdered, and he is incarcerated. Maria, who we find out kills men at the moment that she orgasms while having sex with them, becomes his lawyer. Early in the film, we see Diego masturbating to horror movies, and we watch him get turned on as women are being brutally killed. Diego and Maria meet while Angel is in jail and fall in lust with each other. The audience then finds out that Diego and Maria, in fact, have committed the murders for which Angel is being charged. At a key point in the film, it is revealed that Angel faints at the sight of blood, and he cannot, therefore, be the murderer. Everyone realizes that Maria and Diego are the murderers, and that Angel has visions of people being killed, which is how he knew the details. By this point, though, Maria and Diego have made plans to run away and kill each other in the throes of passion. The film ends with the main characters walking into the room directly after Maria has stabbed Diego, and then taken her own life.

In this film, we still have Almodóvar's favorite themes of sex and nudity, but now he has woven intense violence to the equation. There is a scene in which Diego is teaching his students the key moment of when to kill a bull, and exactly where to stab it. This lecture is interspersed with shots of Maria seducing a man, having sex

with him, and killing him at the exact moment she orgasms. We also see Almodóvar's style continuing to take form, as we have many beautiful shots of Madrid, particularly one of Maria standing on a bridge wearing a brilliantly colored cape that is floating in the wind around her. Diego is looking up at her from below, and we see her from his viewpoint, with the blue sky and clouds above her. There is also another scene where Eva, Diego's ex-girlfriend, goes to Maria's office to confront her about Maria's relationship with Diego. Maria runs away from Eva, and gets into the elevator, closing the gate so that Eva cannot follow. We see Eva from Maria's eyes, with the wrought iron gate creating curling arches around and above Eva's eyes, making her look like the devil. Also, throughout the entire film, there is a recurring theme of the color red. Early in the film, Angel and his mother are wearing red shirts in church, Eva dresses up in a completely red outfit to seduce Diego, Angel has a red jacket later in the movie, and in the final scene, Angel's therapist is wearing a red suit. The film ends with an eclipse, which gives everything a red shade, which happens to coincide with the death of both Maria and Diego. This is obviously used to tie into the theme of the matador throughout the narrative. In bullfighting, a magenta and yellow cape is used to incite the bulls, but a smaller, red cape is used during the stage of the fight when the bull is to be finally killed. In *Matador*, the audience sees Almodóvar really start to embrace a style, and we see a much more nuanced storyline and much more attention to visual detail and camera shots. All this is done as Almodóvar continues to push the limits of acceptability and continues to rebel against the strictures that were imposed by the Franco regime.