

Powerful Women and Historical Representation in Spanish Cinema

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This paper explores the representation of history in contemporary texts and the idea that historical narratives are constructed and reconstructed to suit intended social and political messages of their time. It focuses on two recent Spanish historical dramas which explore the lives of prominent Spanish women: Juana la Loca (Aranda, 2001) and Teresa, el cuerpo de cristo (Loriga, 2007). Both women have demonstrated an enduring popularity; their fascinating personal histories, and particularly the myth of madness that has haunted them throughout the centuries, being repeatedly reinvented across numerous art forms and for different purposes. The paper examines how these films sit within the political and cultural consciousness of the time in which they were produced, and also how fictional conceptualisations of powerful historical women are constructed to reflect alternative purpose and agenda.

History is not something absolutely contained in the past, entire unto itself, but is made, tested and remade in the present

—Monk & Sargeant 2002, 200

Unlike historical representations in which a collective memory is explored through an entirely fictional character, historical dramas which focalise actual historical figures highlight the process of rewriting history. Additionally, the intertwining of the fictional and the historical underscore alternative purpose and agenda, usually linked to contemporary commentary. After the death of Franco, Spain experienced a more accelerated rate of change than other European countries. Its culture and identity is therefore arguably more mobile than most, even experiencing flux and fragmentation. This paper will ask whether this cultural fragmentation results in what Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas term a “misremembering of the past” in which the filmmaker is able to “disorientate the spectator in spatial and temporal terms by playing with the chronology of events or subjective points of view” (2001, 42). It will examine how this “disorientation” occurs when the subjective point of view is that of a historical woman of power whose narrative has been rewritten for different purposes through the centuries, how these women are represented on screen in order to fit the genre iconography and audience expectation attached to heritage cinema, and what these representations mean for the women who have been reproduced and reinterpreted for film.

This paper will explore these ideas by focusing on contemporary representations on film of two powerful historical women: Juana of Castile and Teresa of Ávila. They both have fascinating personal narratives of rebellion and deviation from norms, which resulted in proclamations of madness by their contemporaries and subsequent commentators. They have both experienced enduring popularity and repeated reinvention across numerous art forms. Despite this popularity, there is a distinct lack of studies attempting to analyse the political positioning of films or cultural products made about them, which actually have a lot to say about contemporary society.

Juana and Teresa were mistreated in life, and have continued to be mistreated through re-invention in the arts. They are troubled and dichotomous figures and, as such, a rich site for contestation and explorations of political Zeitgeists for fiction makers. The creation of a madness narrative by their contemporaries has allowed for the development of myths, which have been perpetuated and reformulated to suit certain political ideologies and perspectives through the centuries.

Working Towards Definitions of Heritage Cinema

Heritage films are usually either:

The reproduction of literary texts, artefacts and landscapes which already have a privileged status within the accepted definition of the national heritage

and / or

the reconstruction of a historical moment which is assumed to be of national significance (Higson 1997, 27).

Heritage films are seen as a spectacular cinema, where the emphasis lies in the artistic sentiment and construction. Upon popular review, they are often privileged for their cultural significance and contribution to national identity over audience popularity and profit. However, film studies critics tend to think of them as “aesthetically conservative and uncinematic”, (Monk & Sargeant 2002, 200). They are often defined by these critics as what they are not, that is, in binary opposition to realist working-class narratives, leading to criticisms of a construction of a national identity based around one class, one ideal and one self-contained space. Higson sees it as “transform[ing] the heritage of the upper classes into the national heritage” (Higson 1993, 114). There is an underlying suggestion here that heritage film, therefore, is inherently unrepresentative of historical reality and likely severely lacking truth at its core. However, this

binary view of heritage film is quite reductionist, and more recent definitions have expanded to include broader historical narratives.

The visual image tends to be passively accepted and thought of as factual and accurate, rather than an interpretative depiction. Throughout Higson's work, he develops this idea, which he terms a "nostalgic gaze". He sees heritage films as supposedly creating an authentic discourse through their cultural engagement and in the construction of a national identity, which encourages an uncritical consumption of an ideologically conservative past. They are largely representative of a constructional narrative and *mise-en-scène*, which bears little resemblance to the truth. However, this view of the way in which history is produced and consumed becomes more complex as debates around historical accuracy and accepted versions of history continue. Increasingly there seems to be more of a concern with being visually accurate rather than narratively so. As production values increase, the image is privileged over archival knowledge, but also as a response to societal privileging of the image over the written word (Monk & Sargeant 2002, 222). An accurate reproduction of the look of the period is key to convincing the audience of historical accuracy, even though the narrative may be mainly conjectured or recreated to instil a particular political message. Kara McKechnie claims that the popularity of a historical film is often dependent on audience perception of historical accuracy based upon their experience of what has gone before (in Monk & Sargeant 2002, 218). Often, audience experience of what has gone before is formed mainly from the previous consumption of films and other cultural products, making the concept of historical accuracy on film somewhat self contained and meaningless. However, it appears that this pattern of historical consumption may be changing as other concerns take precedence over historical accuracy. To take an obvious example, the portrayal of Henry VIII in the immensely popular British television series *The Tudors* as a historically inaccurate lithe and attractive Jonathan Rhys Myers, did not reduce the popularity of the series. It was perhaps its reflection of contemporary issues in the foregrounding of political scandal, ideological conflicts and explorations of sexuality which held its popularity.

Historical narratives, particularly monarchical narratives, are often popular under a right-wing government. The average cinema goer invariably experiences a tightening of the purse strings during right-wing rule. Because of historical narratives' links to national identity, they can be popular as a reaction to globalisation anxiety, which is usually hyped in times of austerity. They often present an idealised past in contrast with the contemporary reality, thereby containing strong elements of escapism. Additionally, because right-wing

governments are often coupled with economic change and hardship, a nostalgia for better times is induced. Regimes can use this nostalgia to their advantage:

Seeing history repeating itself and discovering the existence of similarities between past and present may provide the viewer with a sense of reassurance and placate the urge for change. The production of history films in times of crisis and uncertainty has the potential to put present problems in perspective and the resulting 'appeasement' can play into the hands of the ruling regime (McKechnie in Monk & Sargeant 2002, 220).

This pattern of historical consumption imbues the concept of nostalgia with negative connotations; that is, it is linked to conservatism and the act of looking back and longing for a fictional past which is mainly populated by the upper classes, and epitomised by the image of the country house.

The Representation of History on Screen

Historical narratives are ostensibly created by selecting key facts to support the intended argument, and filling in the gaps using a combination of secondary sources and imagination. No recounting of history will therefore be objective or pure truth. In order to transform a set of facts into a narrative, the producer of the text must make many choices: whose viewpoint to portray, which questions to address, who to include and who to leave out, where to begin the narrative and where to end it, to name a few. In addition to this selection process, filmmakers have formal considerations which can compete with their vision, for example genre conventions, budget constraints, aesthetic qualities, requirements set out by the studio and investors, and the political direction they wish to take. Given that film is such an accessible route into history for audiences, these aspects are important to consider. The visual provides a more rich and meaningful account of history than a more academic traditional textbook approach, and film texts tend to create an accepted "easy" version of history, in which academic historians would question popular conceptions they produce and perpetuate (Chopra-Gant 2008, 86; Williams 2003). Audiences rely on filmmakers to take decontextualised historical facts and piece them together into a coherent narrative.

In addition to the fact that narratives channelled into the film medium are ostensibly shaped by filmic conventions in favour of historical accuracy, filmmakers more than likely perceive themselves as storytellers before they think of themselves as historians. It requires imagination to update a historical text in order to make it appeal to contemporary audiences. Filmmakers often juxtapose the authentically historical *mise-en-scène* with narrative reconstructions of the past idealised to suit the desires of consumers. Many

historical dramas are, in fact, fictional stories set within a historical backdrop. They may be based in an important historical time or event, but the main narrative focuses on lives of purely fictional characters (for example *Titantic*, Cameron 1997, *Gangs of New York*, Scorsese 2002, and *El laberinto del fauno*, del Toro 2006). Alternatively, there are films which relate historical events reasonably accurately as a collective memory. When discussing the events of 9/11, Mike Chopra-Gant observes that real life events were often reconceptualised into a sequence from a film by the people at the scene. However, he goes on to point out the dangers of films made about such events, which appear to represent accurate facts detailing a collective memory, as these films will be the main and only access point into this historical event for many people (pp. 88 - 93). These are two extreme examples, but they represent the polarised viewpoints clearly; on the one hand, historical films can be very obviously fictional, whilst on the other they can appear to represent reality. However, both forms are subjected to a series of choices on the part of the filmmaker, and both are forced into a filmic construct. Ultimately, both contribute towards a collective image of what history should look like, therefore occupying a unique space somewhere just outside of the history textbook, between the image and the imaginary.

With these concepts of the construction of the heritage genre and the ways in which history is recreated in mind, this paper will go on to examine two women of power from Spanish history; Juana of Castile and Saint Teresa, and their most recent representations in Vincente Aranda and Ray Loriga's films respectively. Heritage films, in particular, are a key marker of the political and cultural Zeitgeist at the time of production. They tell us more about the time in which they were made than the time in which they are set, particularly when they use actual historical figures, as the process of rewriting is foregrounded. What is chosen to be represented on screen of a country's cultural heritage, and how this narrative is manipulated can often point towards a relevant contemporary discourse formation or political occurrence. Both of these films were made in the first decade of the twenty-first century, a time of fragmentation and flux for Spain politically. After eight years of right-wing rule, Spain elected a socialist, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in 2004, who brought about many changes. The focus was taken away from international issues and placed on social issues, many of them gender based; he reformed laws regarding same-sex marriage, divorce, abortion, domestic violence, child-care support, equality in the workplace and access to employment. This social progression for Spanish women in particular over the two governments, therefore, was polemical, and is represented in the two films through the powerful female protagonists.

Juana of Castile

Juana I of Castile, born in 1479 to two of the most successful Catholic Spanish monarchs, Isabel and Ferdinand, came to be her mother's successor following a series of unfortunate deaths. Her parents' intentions for her were simple: to marry the Archduke of Flanders in order to create an alliance across Europe for Spain. Little did they realise that this same alliance would come to threaten their newly established kingdom in the form of Juana's greedy husband and his power-hungry advisors. Juana was extraordinarily successful at bearing children, and this ability, and the children themselves, were used against her in abusive mind games. She was deemed mad with jealousy and not capable of ruling over her kingdom, and as such was imprisoned by three separate generations of men – first her father, then her husband, then her son – until her death in 1555.

Juana's story has experienced many revisions through the ages, but has been a mainstay of Spanish historical narrative. It has taken many forms; she has been portrayed during the romantic period in paintings, in operas of the nineteenth century, in plays and poetry of the twentieth century, and more recently in novels and films. These portrayals vary greatly; some choosing to portray her as simply mad, others preferring a more sympathetic approach in which she is a victim and a humanist. She represents a turning point in Spanish history, "a hinge at a key historical junction" as Maria-Elena Soliño (in Gómez et al. 2008, 177) astutely puts it; the transition from the nationalist ideals and Catholicism of her parents, to her son's imperialism and alternative ideas resulting from his Habsburg upbringing. Her political narrative has been swallowed up by the weight of the achievements which sandwich hers. She left little evidence of her life behind written in her own hand, leaving historians to postulate based on evidence left by men who were trying to create a myth of madness (Gortner 2008, 434). Gómez, Juan-Navarro and Zatlín further this idea in claiming that the historical narrative we have access to today is based only on paintings (2008, 15). She therefore provides an ideal caricature around which filmmakers can create their own narrative. History is interpreted in many ways, and the question of whether Juana was actually mad or not is open to the interpretation of the consumer of the text, which makes her narrative an interesting coupling with film and fiction. When Juana's historical narrative, fictional accounts and film conventions are intertwined, the result could be very far delineated from the truth. Juana is a product of both history and fiction; a victim of a patriarchal desire to create a coherent history for Spain, and an audience desire to portray her as mad.

Paul Julian Smith claims that Aranda's *Juana la Loca* (2001) parallels the incoherence of the Spanish heritage genre itself. He argues that the film's mise-en-scène lacks historical authenticity and aesthetic, and that the magnificence of a historical narrative cannot be juxtaposed with a domestic tragedy. However, he sees this ambiguity as the film's distinctive quality, whereby Juana's neurosis highlights what he sees as a neurosis inherent in Spanish heritage films (Smith 2006, 112). This adaptation of Juana's life appeals to the Spanish preference for privileging the domestic narrative of the individual over the collective and epic in historical fiction. It enters into a mythologizing discourse which de-marginalises a sidelined character (sidelined in terms of her historical narrative and political status) and gives her a subjective voice. It incorporates the notion of the private, individualised historical narrative into the mise-en-scène with its use of muted colours and lighting. An impression is created reminiscent of a private war narrative or similar internalised discourse, helping to foreground Juana's personal, domestic storyline, whilst also being set in grand surroundings, reminding the viewer of the historical heritage backdrop. Additionally, it portrays the constant dialogue and clash between politics and matters of the heart and, in so doing, shows that the concept of madness has actually been displaced; it is the court and the political system which induces a lust for power that has gone insane.

It is helpful to bring in Higson's definitions of the genre here in order to analyse what the prioritising of the spectacular image in this film is attempting to project in ideological terms. Rather than conforming to ideas of either conservative heritage films or more liberal working class narratives, *Juana la Loca* situates itself, quite intentionally, somewhere between the two. With its foregrounding of the spectacular heritage image juxtaposed with the domestic internal narrative from a female viewpoint, audience expectation is subverted and the film is able to present social commentary with greater clarity. Narratives of monarchs in crisis are particularly good indicators of political disquiet at the time of production. The narrative is certainly portraying an articulation of a conservative anxiety at potentially left-wing ideals in its re-representation of Juana as a great monarch. Its re-writing of accepted versions of bad moments in history as good are apparent when compared with *Locura de amor* (Orduña, 1948), a film about Juana produced under the rule of Franco as a political vehicle to extol his agenda. The foregrounding of luxurious mise-en-scène runs the risk of sidelining this potential left-wing ideology. However, the more progressive themes counterbalance the conservative; resistance to authority, sexual freedom and the representation of a strong female character all work towards an expression of the contemporary female condition.

Narratives about the fall of a powerful figure are ever popular and constantly re-mythologised, particularly those which were reported as mad, our fascination with them reflecting feelings of political instability. Aranda attempts a more modern and sympathetic reading of Juana by presenting her madness as passion and natural eroticism towards her husband, an instinctual mothering ability, and her challenging of the ideas of the time as forward thinking, all of which seem normal for the contemporary audience, but were progressive and went against dominant ideas of female behaviour at the time. It is not just the lust for power in others which results in her imprisonment, but also her humanist and socialist ideals which threaten the imperialistic ambition. As Bethany Aram (2005, 167) argues, "Juana's contemporaries [...] depicted her 'madness' based on shifting political interests". Current historical opinion actually points towards the idea that Juana reclaimed the madness narrative and made it her own for political reasons. Mainly that in disinheriting herself, she disinherited her power-hungry husband, but secured the future for her children. She was also a close follower of Erasmus' writings, which "denied the 'madness' of madness itself – depicting folly as a necessary, pious, and even reasonable escape from social conventions and political responsibilities" (Aram 2005, 168). In the film, then, her gender and more so her body, are used to represent the disorder of the state. Or as Soliño puts it "Juana provide[s] a docile body on which to remap the history of a hegemonic Spain" (in Gómez et al. 2008, 193). This alignment between Juana's body and the state is not only displayed in the portrayal of her madness, but also in the representation of the crossover between Juana's sexuality and motherhood. She sees her pregnancies as little more than the consequence of her passion which she expels from her body with little effort, and she gains sexual satisfaction from breastfeeding her children. Some see this representation as Aranda sidelining the political in order to bring the erotic to the forefront (see 'Woman, Nation and Desire' in Gómez et al. 2008 pp 228 - 242). However, it can also be read as an intertwining of the erotic and the political. That is, Juana gains pleasure from acts that were frowned upon, particularly for a queen. This portrayal represents contemporary anxiety over political determinants that control women's bodies.

However, the film falls short of expressing a progressive feminist discourse, the reasons for which go beyond the limits of representing a historical narrative. For example, the portrayal of Juana as motivated by sex and her sexuality, whilst progressive for her time, is based around a misogynistic notion of phallogocentric desire, as emphasised by certain camera shots which appear to imbue the male form with mystification (Gómez et al. 2008, 235). The use of a woman as a temptress for Juana's husband, Philip, who uses magic to ensnare

him, takes the blame away from him and places it firmly on the side of femininity. The pitting of women against women, and the deceptive means of seduction reinforce negative, outdated gender stereotypes. Furthermore, if we contrast the seductress' use of her sexuality with Juana's, we are presented with a difficult dichotomy in which the unnatural succeeds.

Teresa of Ávila

Teresa was born in 1515; a time when Spanish state and church were experiencing tumult and change, conducting tension and power battles with each other, and Juana of Castile was being forcibly abdicated to be replaced by her Flanders born son. Both Teresa and Juana battled with a power-hungry patriarchy which used corrupt political means and the creation of madness myths to attempt to remove them from positions of power. They were both independent thinkers, ahead of their time, which threatened patriarchal stability. They were both victims of the formation of an absolutist and misogynist discourse in the form of the new Catholic order, which sought to oppress and wield power.

Notable episodes of Teresa's life are often those of acts of resistance and defiance against her surrounding patriarchal structures; running away from home at age seven in search of martyrdom in the land of the Moors, joining a convent without her father's knowledge or consent; establishing new convents with rules that went against existing structures. Teresa was a free-thinking theologian who struggled to find her place in the Spain of the inquisition as a Christian of Jewish descent. Because of her background, she was already regarded with suspicion, but more so when she started experiencing visions and made a full recovery from a coma state. Behaviour that was regarded as religious eccentricity was severely punished at this time, particularly in women, who were more prone to being accused of devil possession. On top of all this suspicion, self doubt and illness, the use of spiritual literature by the "unqualified" (among others, all women) was restricted. However, strength of character prevailed, and Teresa succeeded in establishing fourteen new Carmelite houses stretching from Burgos to Sevilla, an extraordinary effort of tireless work.

Loriga's *Teresa, el Cuerpo de Cristo* (2007) resonates with Aranda's *Juana la Loca* in many ways. Loriga chooses to express Teresa's passion through sexuality, which has been highly controversial. The film opens with an illicit encounter between her and a nameless unknown, this deviance from the norm being cited as the reason for her joining the convent. This plotline is perhaps

loosely based in truth, although Archbishop Rowan Williams in his biography of Teresa cites the incident as a mere flirtation rather than a sexual encounter (Williams 2003, 2). However, the decision not to provide the viewer with any background into this part of Teresa's narrative or introduce her lover as a character at all is purposefully provocative. The film goes on to portray Teresa in many compromising controversial positions: dressed in red in a sacrificial submissive pose and covered in long spears piercing her body, the DVD cover shows her naked arms and shoulders being embraced by a man's hands bearing Christ's stigmata. Scenes during which she is praying are represented equally as controversially, linking her visions and her sexuality by portraying her as experiencing orgasmic joy from them. Despite the controversy these types of images have created however, some of them are actually borrowed from Teresa's writing:

She records that she was 'sometimes' given a vision of an angel standing by her, with an arrow in his hand, with which he pierced her inmost parts; with its withdrawal she felt an exquisite mixture of pain and joy and an intense desire for God (Williams 2003, 5).

On a textual level, Teresa's sexuality is used as a way of expressing her passion for her faith, and can also be seen in a more overt way as a criticism of portrayals of Christ as sexually appealing, but we can also read these portrayals of sexuality as expressions of the liberation which was occurring for Spanish women in terms of political policy making in the early 2000's. Filmmakers identify a need in the audience to be able to relate to the protagonists in terms of current social developments and debates. This need is often achieved by sexualising historical characters in a way that is actually highly unlikely to be an accurate representation. Additionally, Teresa's self induced pain, linked to her passion for her faith, reflects the "self induced" pain of many in society who conform to rigid constructs, cannot express themselves freely and do not follow their passions. Also, as in *Juana la Loca*, patriarchal constructs, including religion, are under threat, thereby placing the female protagonists, in particular, in a dangerous position. The viewer is informed of this threat from the outset by the voiceover which states "Castile, the mid-sixteenth century. Valdés, the head of the Holy Office, is filling the dungeons in search of the Devil. The glory of the Conquest fills the tables of those in power with gold, while the people live in poverty and ignorance. Heretics offer their naked bodies to the Lord in orgiastic liturgies. Illuminati, heretics, Lutherans, Huguenots... Our church is attacked from without and grows dark within. Bodies are burned in the squares to save souls. All hearts are governed by fear". We can link this portrayal to contemporary anxiety with a conservative government which is

responsible for ever increasing invasions of privacy and creation of fear narratives by for example, exaggerating the terrorist threat.

Through Teresa's visions, Loriga also explores concepts of the real and the imaginary. He allows the audience access to the potentially inaccessible sphere of the mystic visions, thus blurring the lines of heritage cinema definitions. Any story retold, particularly revised for a new format, is subjected to a process of symbolisation and displacement, but additionally in cinema, there is a change from the textual to the visual. It is easy to forget that cinema began as a moving image without sound, but Loriga transports the viewer back to these roots in the emphasis of the visual through the mystic visions and imagination. This emphasis on the visual, and additionally by Loriga on the imaginary, allows for a different form of accessibility into history. As Paul Julian Smith puts it: "In the translation process which takes place from the word to the image, you gain as much as you lose once you get rid of the literal text" (my translation) (Smith, 2011, 321). Instead of taking away from historical accuracy as one might presume, the mystic visions rather add to the sense of historiography. They are portrayed almost as live versions of paintings, but with physical bodies instead of pictorial representation. This visual representation is combined with a disorientating cinematography of fast paced editing which reproduces the psychological and physical experience of the visions, and thus allows the audience access to a personal, internal world. As with Aranda's film, Loriga presents a mixture of heritage style *mise-en-scène* with access to a feminine internal narrative, providing space for nostalgia whilst also commenting on the contemporary *Zeitgeist* and the current female condition.

The concept of individual identity and independent thought is very important to Loriga. He believes philosophy and other such analytical subjects should be privileged in schools over more formal ones (see Pearson 2004, 222 - 241 in which Loriga is interviewed). So we can see why the character of Teresa in particular appealed to him, and he portrays her free-spirited intelligence well. He sees identity as a fluid concept, which takes on different roles on a daily basis. We can see this idea of identity in his portrayal of Teresa as a woman as well as a nun. In fact, he portrays her as woman first, nun second. For example, constantly showing her naked body reinforces concepts of femininity and desire to the viewer. Here, he is criticising patriarchal constructions of religion which, among other things, androgenize the ordained.

As *Teresa el cuerpo de Cristo* was produced and released under a right-wing government, we can read the film as an expression of dissatisfaction with current conditions. Perhaps Loriga is articulating concerns with a return to

tradition and a state-aligned religion which devalues women. Loriga's film resists many dominant definitions of the heritage genre; its presentation for example of the negative aspects of religion and Spanish heritage through the images of the torture chambers of the inquisition, and its lack of typical heritage shots of landscapes or historical buildings. We can clearly see this defiance by examining the *mise-en-scène*, which defies Higson's definition of *mise-en-scène* in heritage cinema:

The heritage film often seems to [...] weave its (often upper class) romances around authentic period details. The *mise-en-scène* of power, the spectacle of privilege: so many of these films construct a fantasy of extravagance, decadence, promiscuity, and passion. Class, gender, and race relations, and the values of the ruling elites, are in effect re-presented as just so much *mise en scène*, elegantly displayed in splendid costumes, language, gestures, and all the props (the properties) of the everyday life of one or another class. The history of exploitation is effaced by spectacular presentation. The past becomes once more unproblematic, a haven from the difficulties of the present (Higson 2003, 84).

Whilst the film does portray authentic period details, a *mise-en-scène* of power, a spectacle of privilege and extravagance, it ultimately uses these devices to criticise class and gender relations within the narrative, thereby commenting on contemporary class and gender relations. Additionally, Loriga explores contemporary issues through the presentation of historical narrative. For example, Teresa's self induced physical punishment parallels that of many women today in the form of eating disorders or painful beauty techniques conducted in order to conform to an ideal. The past is not presented as unproblematic here, because the present is not, and we are perpetually acting out a narrative of oppression.

Conclusion

History is a discipline of enquiry into the past; heritage is an attitude towards the legacy of the past (Dyer quoted in Higson 2003, 53).

Both *Juana la Loca* and *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo* privilege visual authenticity and the invocation of historical artwork. Underneath the visual lies a political narrative; a reproduction and reinterpretation of history as well as a contemporary commentary. This ambiguity between the historical and contemporary results in decisions on the part of the filmmakers, often based upon speculation and a desire to represent history in a contemporary sense, which are not always sustainable historically, and which appear at first glance to be a "misremembering of the past". This fluctuating representation of history, however, reflects a contemporary Spain which is still experiencing the

aftershocks of a dictatorship and civil war. Filmmakers are not broadcasters of historical occurrence; their main directive is to entertain. There is a need in the recreation of history, in any form, to be selective in order to meet the demands of the context, in the case of film often in order to meet the demands of the drama. There is no apology made for inaccuracies and creative exploitation of the source material, and indeed there is no need for one as their popularity indicates, and besides, historical “accuracy” should not be mistaken for factuality.

Both films, but particularly *Teresa el cuerpo de Cristo*, challenge dominant commentaries on heritage cinema which suggest that in order to present a liberal forward-thinking view, one must be dismissive of the past. Nostalgia does not have to be conservative, it may just require some rewriting or a different approach. The representation of the female protagonists’ sexuality and desire would seem like an obvious counterpoint to traditional heritage cinema definitions here, but it is more complex than that. Rather than simply a commentary on current female sexuality, these representations offer Spanish history a chance to liberate the women who have been oppressed by patriarchal narratives for centuries.

Equally as intriguing is the idea that films such as these are perhaps actually more historically accurate, as their misrepresentation of the historical source material results in a potentially more accurate representation of psychological and emotional issues (Smith, 2011). This ambiguity results in audience disorientation, which enables the filmmakers to manipulate the narrative to reflect contemporary issues.

The portrayals of Teresa and Juana’s madness as a culturally constructed consequence of their refusal to adhere to the feminine passivity expected of the time, provides the viewer with a contemporary reading of them as female historical figures. The promotion of their sexual desire, naturalisation of the body and its maternal functions, and outward displays of difference are in keeping with contemporary thought on human sexuality and natural uses of the body. The court’s belief that breastfeeding is not a suitable activity for a queen taps into contemporary debates surrounding breastfeeding, and rhetorics which control women’s bodies. By linking Juana’s madness with natural uses of her body as opposed to her heart and emotions as in previous representations of her in film, Aranda comments on contemporary debates about the female body as maternal and sexual. Castration anxieties are played out through the removal of a servant’s hair and the placing of a knife to Felipe’s throat (the knife itself a phallic symbol). However, these castration anxieties are mostly threats

never followed through, and coupled with the pleasure Felipe experiences from watching the suffering of Juana as a result of her passion, the potential feminist narrative is arguably undermined.

The privileging of the individualistic narrative over the historical and political also adheres to this trend of contemporary thought. Historical narratives are becoming less often based in notions of national achievement and reinforcement of political narrative through explorations of the past, but rather in examinations of personal experience through which the audience can relate on a personal level as opposed to a collective one. This approach contributes to a collective understanding of history which is based in personal experience, allowing for more open and varied interpretations, which contributes to a complex web of different cultural perspectives and influences.

The madness narratives and the numerous reinterpretations over time contribute to the “disorientation” of historical texts as pointed out by Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas. When the subjective point of view is through the eyes of a female with power, but more than that, a powerful female who is mad, the viewer becomes pliable and subject to an underlying didactic narrative, because of the fluctuating positions of identification. The practice of consumption becomes an uncomfortable experience as notions of desire and representation are challenged.

So is there a future for Juana and Teresa with a rewritten narrative that precludes them from madness? The image of a queen driven mad with jealousy and a nun expressing her love of God through sexual desire resonates more clearly if we understand that these ideas were an elaborate fiction created for art which gradually turned into “historical fact”. Juana’s narrative appealed to the artists of the romantic period, who were interested in creating myths and sentimentality, and in representing tragedy and entrapment. Similarly, Teresa’s narrative takes on a supernatural, mythologised and theatrical element in Bernini’s sculpture of the seventeenth century. These artworks were based on a myth originally created for political ends by men wishing to undermine Juana and Teresa. If we are to understand that all narratives since then have been based upon these artworks, then surely Juana and Teresa are due a revision in the popular consciousness. Perhaps on the surface their popularity appears to be down to their madness. However, there is another aspect which stands out throughout the different adaptations and remains true no matter in which age the text is produced and consumed; the personal tragedy, disempowerment and entrapment Juana and Teresa suffer is representative of the collective Spanish experience, more specifically, the collective experience of Spanish

women. They stand out as figures defined by their gender: they were disempowered on the basis that women were not fit to possess any form of influence; their bodies were used against them as political tools; and their passionate femininity was redirected into the creation of a gendered madness narrative. Perhaps this reading provides a reason for their popularity: even in today's post-feminist environment, Juana and Teresa are feminist icons.

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