

## Antonio Banderas: Hispanic Gay Masculinities and the Global Mirror Stage (1991-2001)

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Madrid is just one more part of my life's adventure... It is one more stage. And now the train is going through Hollywood, but I am not going to be like Hernán Cortés. No... I am not going to burn my ships; I will make films wherever there is a good script... I am now 35 years old, and there is nothing definite in my life... although more and more it is getting to be so.  
(Antonio Banderas, qtd. in Fernández and Oliva 87)

The neo-imperialist thrust that defines Spain's economic redeployment in Latin America is well documented, although not well studied. Moreover, the analyses that exist are political or economic (Casilda Béjar) and, with only a few exceptions (Robbins), do not venture into the realm of culture. Consequently, this article resituates Spanish cinema of the 1990s out of the nationalist framework in which it is normally studied and into a postnational frame in which Spanish cinema legitimizes Spanish neo-imperialism in a global arena. However, because of its postimperialist condition, Spain's "global arena" is basically limited to the Atlantic. Here, I attempt to map out the Atlantic intertwining between neo-liberal/neo-imperial Spain and cinema by analyzing the body politics of Spanish actor Antonio Banderas, the postmodern (post- or neo-imperialist) Don Juan.

I also suggest that Spanish Atlantic cinema, so centrally embodied by Banderas, reflects the globalization of North American culture and politics. The United States, the first empire in history to exert global hegemony, wields its imperial power most intensely

on its nearest neighbor, Latin America. As a result, the United States developed an unprecedented interest in Latino, Latin American, and Spanish representations in the 1990s. In this context, I interpret the desire for and identification with the Hispanic masculinity that Banderas embodies as North American masculinity's global mirror stage (Lacan). The encounter with Hispanic masculinity is the stage on which North American masculinity finds its new global identity reflected, albeit, and as Lacan insists, in a distorted and fictional way (4). Moreover, given that Banderas's roles were originally associated with an excessive gay sexuality, I argue that North American masculinity became global as reflected by Hispanic gay masculinity. Thus, I posit the postmodern gay Latin lover as the first bio-political global subject (Foucault).

Why did Antonio Banderas (1960-), a Spanish actor of limited acting skills and a heavy Spanish accent (only shed much later) suddenly triumph in Hollywood? With the exception of Antonio Moreno (1887-1967), an actor of the silent film era, no other Spaniard has accomplished such a feat. When Banderas made his personal debut in Hollywood at the 1992 Academy Awards ceremony, Billy Crystal introduced him as the "sexiest man in the world" (Fernández and Oliva 163). Such overnight success is not unusual in Hollywood, but considering that Banderas is not French or Northern European, his rise to the top is meteoric even by Hollywood standards. Ironically, the quintessential representation of the Latin lover celebrated in Hollywood in the 1990s was found, molded and promoted in the 1980s by gay Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar, the ambassador and trend-setter of the new democratic Spain and all its excesses. Banderas's roles in Almodóvar films are either openly gay or tinged with sexual ambiguity, a point I will develop at the end of this essay. Banderas moved to Hollywood in 1991 to shoot *The Mambo Kings*, his first film as Latin lover. Thereafter, he appeared in *Philadelphia* (1993), *House of the Spirits* (1993), *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), *Of Love and Shadows* (1994), *Desperado* (1995), *Miami Rhapsody* (1995), *Assassins* (1995), *Never Talk to Strangers* (1995), *Four Rooms* (1995), *Two Much* (1995), *Evita* (1996), *The Mask of Zorro* (1998), *The 13th Warrior* (1999), *The White River Kid* (1999, also producer), *Play It to the Bone* (1999), *The Body* (2001), *Original Sin* (2001), and *Spy Kids* (2001). In *Spy Kids* he shifted to

safe, asexual roles as a father in a “normal” family of spies, the Cortezes. Banderas’s retreat into monogamous middle-class patriarchy represents the end of his initial phase as the Hispanic Latin lover.

Banderas’s career trajectory from 1991 to 2001 coincides with larger political and historical developments. He arrived in Hollywood in the early 1990s, a moment when different but interconnected historical events came together—the end of the Cold War and the neo-liberal globalization of the United States with treaties such as NAFTA and GATT, signaling a redefinition of United States policy towards Mexico and the rest of Latin America; the higher public profile of the fundamentalist religious right and gays; and the mainstream population’s (unwilling) acceptance of Latinos as a differentiated community. In 2001, the United States responded to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 by adopting an imperialist and defensive attitude towards the rest of the world, which finally led to the almost single-handed invasion of Iraq in 2003. One way Hollywood absorbed and dealt with these phenomena was through its representation of masculinity (see Jeffords) understood as hegemonic sovereign embodiment and representation of the nation or the national subject. Hollywood provides a new hero for every new problem. Banderas was able to embody and represent several contemporary issues concerning masculinity and national hegemony in a way that was satisfactory and profitable for Hollywood. He consolidates a new form of global sexualized masculinity that is desired and sanctioned by a global Hollywood, which became more dependent on foreign than on domestic revenues in the 1990s (Balio 60).

Except for *Play It to the Bone* (1999), Banderas played Latinos and Latin Americans rather than Spaniards in his American films. Note that his sexuality is tinted with homosexuality in *Play It to the Bone*, the only film in which his character is Spanish. Moreover, sometimes his characters are simultaneously gay and Latino or Latin American (as in *Philadelphia* [1993]). Thus, he can seductively play homosexuals, Latinos, Latin Americans, Latin lovers, and highly sexualized psychotics. However, one of the secrets of his filmic seduction lies in the fact that Banderas himself is not Latino, Latin American, gay, or a womanizing Latin lover. In fact, he is a very public family man. He firmly maintains the separation between representation and reality, a separation that Hollywood requires in

masculine seduction. When in 1997 *Playgirl* published fake pictures of Banderas's naked body, he threatened to sue (see *USA Today*). Nakedness is the site where physical seduction ends and reality threatens to invade; desire disappears and so does Hollywood.

Even though Banderas is a very contemporary response to Hollywood's representations of masculinity in the 1990s, he is heir to an old genealogy of highly sexualized foreign Hispanic and Latin masculinities (Rudolph Valentino, Ramón Navarro, Antonio Moreno) that shaped Hollywood films from the beginning. Yet, in the 1990s, heterosexual Hollywood showed a secret desire for the type of masculinity celebrated by the Spanish gay culture of the 1980s. Almodóvar and Hollywood liked the same man, since at that point it was no longer possible to define whether the masculinity portrayed by Banderas was "truly" heterosexual or homosexual. Both Hollywood and Almodóvar chose Banderas because of his excessive "Latin" masculinity. Moreover, the masculine excess of the Latin lover goes back to the Spanish nineteenth century. José Zorrilla, a Spanish romantic writer who capitalized on older Spanish and European versions of the same myth, created Don Juan, old-time paragon of the Latin lover.

Banderas has succeeded in films in which he plays secondary or marginal roles (*Philadelphia*, *Interview*, *Evita*). Although none of the films in which he is the lead actor have attained great success, except *Desperado* and *The Mask of Zorro*, they have secured his continuity in Hollywood. His American filmography indicates that his secondary or complementary nature is integral to his newly acquired Hollywood status. He is always the outsider, the signifier, and the mirror of "foreign masculinity," in a way that Arnold Schwarzenegger or Jean-Claude Van Damme are not. Banderas is complementary: he completes, complements mainstream domestic masculinity (Tom Hanks, Brad Pitt, Sylvester Stallone, or even powerful femininities, such as Madonna in *Evita*). He reflects an exterior masculinity. More specifically, he embodies "excessive masculinity," a hypersexualized masculinity forbidden to normative American maleness. The Latin lover vicariously represents the sexual excess that Anglo-Saxon or Protestant masculinity desires for itself. Thus, the tabloids publicized Banderas's possible bigamy under Spanish law in 1996, even after he divorced his first wife Ana Leza (Ban-

deras-Mall, "The World"), not so much as a moral or legal issue, but rather as the incontrovertible proof of his excessive masculinity. Banderas is part of a larger group of foreign actors, including Gerard Depardieu, Anthony Hopkins, Hugh Grant, Jackie Chan, who compensate for American masculinity's shortcomings. Respectively, they represent European emotion and depth, lost Victorian imperial elegance, and "Asian" bodily knowledge and skill, all of which American masculinity desires, but cannot master. Finally, and as with the coming into fashion of cigars, Banderas represents a very contemporary form of old-fashioned masculinity, a hypermasculinity, which Hollywood cannot do without even though it is no longer fashionable. In this sense Banderas is closer to Clark Gable than to Brad Pitt.

Banderas's arrival in Hollywood coincided with a surge of right-wing post-feminist masculinity (one articulated as a response or reaction to feminism), which Quentin Tarantino introduced, and actors such as John Travolta, Vince Vaughn, and Brad Pitt embody in movies like *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Swingers* (1996) or *Fight Club* (1999). The well-orchestrated message of this new masculinity is that men once again have license for sadism and misogyny, provided they temper it to a degree. The association between Robert Rodríguez and Tarantino in *From Dusk till Dawn* as well as Rodríguez and Banderas in *Desperado* may be a result of their apparently shared interest in representing and embodying this new form of masculinity. This new conservative masculinity has reappropriated some of the techniques, such as detail, fashion, fetishism, and masquerade that were used earlier to marginalize femininity. Banderas's guitar-case full of guns in *Desperado* outperforms the most stocked female purse in a Sirk melodrama. His long hair, his not-quite-white yet not-colored skin, his newly overhauled musculature, as well as his exotic Spanish accent, are part of the well orchestrated new masculinity. In Banderas, just as in the new American masculinity in general, the most right-wing elements of old-fashioned masculinity are combined with newer and "more feminine" ones in a well-balanced post-feminist look that is more manly than any man and more feminine than any woman. Although I will come back later to Banderas's Spanish beginnings, Chris Perriam's analysis of the articulation of Banderas's masculinity in Spain is pertinent to un-

derstanding his success at embodying Hollywood's new conservative masculinity. As Perriam points out, following Paul J. Smith's analysis of *Matador* (1986), Banderas's masculinity is marked by an excess that, in traditional film theory, is associated with femininity (objectification, masochism):

The desired, objectified, masochistic, and entrapped Banderas is spectacularly ubiquitous in these years and although his body very emphatically marks generational and class differences at a time of exceptional social and cultural change in Spain—marks an epoch, that is, in an immediately recognizable way for young audiences at the time—it also evokes the pleasures and anxieties in seeing . . . the eroticized and objectified male body in the place of the female body. (51-2)

Banderas's position in 1990s Hollywood has roots in the post-Reagan right-wing masculinity of the 1980s. As the 1970s loners à la Clint Eastwood (Bingham 163-246) became mainstream in the 1980s with hypermasculine and sadistic figures, epitomized by Arnold Schwarzenegger, they came to embody the new credo of the Reagan era. They were no longer marginals but righteous supermen determined to erase injustice from the face of the nation. As Susan Jeffords states:

The question [of masculinity] . . . must be answered not only in terms of the relationship between Hollywood films and U.S. popular culture but also in terms of the relationship between the Reagan presidency and the popular construction of national identity: to the extent that the president stands for the nation, and to the extent that a particular president constructs that standing in distinctly masculine terms, the national identity must itself be figured in relation to popular masculine models and narratives of masculine generation and power. (12)

However, towards the late 1980s, this almighty masculinity underwent a crisis as feminist, gay, and racial-ethnic groups questioned Reaganism and its politics just as the end of the Cold War globalized American hegemony and culture.

At this moment, masculinity underwent another mutation. In an attempt to preserve its hyper-masculine values inherited from the 1980s, and while adjusting to the demands of the 1990s, masculinity split into two. In most 1990s films, two actors portray separately the

old traditional masculine type and the new reactive one. The all-important “buddy film” of the late 1980s and early 1990s, which created the resulting masculine dichotomy, was able to head off attacks from the left. The white/African-American (police) buddy film is the most easily recognizable—Danny Glover and Mel Gibson in the *Lethal Weapon* series (1987-98); Samuel Jackson and John Travolta in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) also follow this tradition. According to Robyn Wiegman:

The shift in *White Nights* [representative of the interracial bonding of the late 1980s-early 1990s] from the stereotypic image of the black man as cultural traitor and outsider to citizen and father is obviously not a new narrative strategy within scenarios of interracial male bond. Its more traditional configuration—the black man as cop, symbolic father of the cultural order—has proliferated since the late days of the Civil Rights Movement when the impact of open black rebellion necessitated hegemonic recuperation around the sight of black men. . . . Through the black cop figure, a strenuous masculinity can be extended to black men who in representation and in their material existence are historically castrated by a culture terrified of black male claims to patriarchal manhood. (104)

Furthermore, one can extend the “buddy film” series to “Hispanic gay buddy films” such as *Philadelphia* and *Interview with the Vampire*, and to the “technological buddy film” such as *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), in which there are two terminators, the good and the bad, the motherly and the fatherly, instead of the single stalking terminator of the original film. Arnold Schwarzenegger becomes the nurturing and motherly terminator while Robert Patrick as the shape-shifting T1000 terminator takes the old role of the chastizing sadistic fatherly figure.

Quoting J. Willemsen, Steve Neale notes that in order to preserve the desirability of masculinity within a heterosexual matrix, films generate a complex dynamic of sado-masochism (fights and destruction, verbal silence) in which the disavowal of desire for the same sex is enacted alongside misogyny: “male figures on the screen are subject to voyeuristic looking, both on the part of the spectator and on the part of other male characters. . . . The repression of any explicit avowal of eroticism in the act of looking at the male seems structurally linked to a narrative content marked by *sado-masoch*-

istic fantasies and scenes" (16). Thus the Hispanic gay buddy films of the 1990s in which Banderas figures ironically point to a new logic of fragmented masculine representations that cannot be fully controlled by the heterosexual economy of the films and, thus, allow for the appearance of Hispanic and gay excess in mainstream cinema to complement and reconstruct the heterosexual economy that regulates masculinity. In the context of fragmented or double masculinity, Banderas embodies the second or complementary masculinity, which, in his case, is always marked as exterior but also as overtly sexual. He symbolizes the masculine excess that the cool and repressed Protestant masculinity of hegemonic United States is forbidden to represent directly without guilt (when guilt is involved Hollywood shifts to the horror genre). In a quick poll among friends about Banderas's desirability, most gay men like Banderas, while heterosexual women are evenly split between unconditional adoration and absolute disgust. Heterosexual men react with anxiety, unable to decide whether Banderas is a threat or a model. On one of Banderas's fan webpages many women talk about why "Banderas is God" (Antonio Banderas Fans). Without contradiction, some of them also refer to their lovely boyfriends and their happy relationships. In the "Banderas logic" registered on their own "buddy webpage," they have real boyfriends as well as an imaginary foreign Latin lover.

Although they often appear together, it is worthwhile examining separately the queer-gay and the Latin-o American vectors that Banderas embodies and mirrors in the formation of a globalized North American masculinity. For example, *Miami Rhapsody* contains a scene that captures the gay Banderas. He is a nurse, and throughout the first part of the film, he seems to be emotionally alone. The granddaughter of the woman for whom Banderas serves as caretaker (played by Sarah Jessica Parker) asks him whether he is gay. He denies it and eventually becomes involved with her. In other words, Banderas's image already connoted a gayness that certain films literally felt the need to deny. As late as 1999, in *Play it to the Bone*, Banderas parodies a confused boxer who had a phase of sexual experimentation with men.

Only recently have major American actors taken up the gay roles usually relegated to foreign actors. It is not a coincidence that

Banderas's debut took place in 1992, the beginning of Clinton's presidency, the most gay-friendly American presidency in history and the year the actor-actress Jaye Davidson changed the Hollywood landscape for gays with *The Crying Game*. The new acceptance of gay roles by mainstream North American actors must be placed in this historical context. Since the vogue of The Method, extreme personalities have become the ultimate showcase for acting in Hollywood. At least since *Rain Man* (1988, Dustin Hoffman) and through *Shine* (1996, Geoffrey Rush), most Oscars for the best leading actor have gone to portrayals of handicapped people or, more recently, to disturbed people, such as Denzel Washington in *Training Day* (2001). Although a thorough analysis exceeds the scope of this article, it is important to note that this tendency to perform extreme personalities is connected with the sado-masochist structure that defines mainstream masculinity, as I have discussed above for the buddy film.

The newest horizon for extreme performance has shifted to gay roles, as evidenced in mainstream actors from Patrick Stewart to Robin Williams. The acting of "gayness" has begun to be perceived as something that national actors can do in order to enhance their career. Significantly, after 1994, Banderas no longer performed gay characters. He now specializes in Latino-Latin American sexy characters and schizos. As Perriam states "[T]he comedy and action roles of later, Hollywood years went some way towards erasing or at least flattening out the perverse and excessive notes in Banderas's first career" (65). This does not present a greater acceptance of gay masculinity *per se*; rather it points to the deepening crisis of normative masculinity.

Banderas's other vector, the Latino-Latin American (he has performed the whole range from Latino, Cuban, Puerto Rican, to Mexican, Chilean, and Argentinean) draws on his association with the border film, which becomes the Western genre in the Hollywood tradition. The Western is the vehicle by which the American imagination has dealt with the border and, by geopolitical synecdoche, with Latin America, except perhaps Caribbean Latin America. The Western has represented and contained the problem of the border, its changes, and its American nationalization. The only form of Hispanic masculinity allowed in this tradition until recently was the

Mexican post-revolutionary drunkard soldier or bandit, the guy with pistols and long mustache portrayed so well by Alfonso Bedoya (*The Treasure of The Sierra Madre* 1948) or even Alfonso Arau (the director of *Like Water for Chocolate* 1992) in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969; Fregoso 29). Banderas has been entrusted to portray this aggressive and lawless masculinity in *Desperado*, *Four Rooms*, and *The Mask of Zorro*; yet he brings to these films the finesse that only white Europeans can deliver and that the yuppie pony tailed high-mass culture of Hollywood has demanded in the 1990s. In *Mambo Kings*, *Miami Rhapsody*, *Two Much*, and *Original Sin* Banderas has also played the Caribbean, a new strand in North American portrayals of Latino types. In the past, Caribbean identity, from Desi Arnaz to Tito Puentes, appeared more through music than film. Banderas has made the Caribbean type more of a film staple. The transition from Caribbean musician to film type is captured in *The Mambo Kings* when Desi Arnaz Jr., portraying his own father, offers the characters played by Banderas and Armand Assante their first job.

Finally, Banderas has played South American characters in *House of Spirits*, *Of Love and Shadows*, and *Evita*. These characters all register magic realist traits (for example, Ché Guevara transformed into a common man, appears as the narrator in *Evita*). Also in these three films in which the geographical and political distance from the United States is greater than in the Mexican and Caribbean films, Banderas plays a more traditional "middle of the road hero" (Lukács). He is the leftist engagé "good guy" liberal North America wants to see in every representation of Latin American dictatorial realities (although even under the guise of the revolutionary man Banderas does not shed his excessive masculinity). Perhaps the only remarkable feature of Banderas's South American roles, beyond the clichéd and prescribed magic realist aura, is that he has learned to sing (*Evita*) thus diversifying his masculine qualities (traditional masculinity à la John Wayne does not usually sing, Roy Rogers notwithstanding).

In the late 1990s, as the Latino-Latin American presence in Hollywood was finally being accepted in more positive terms, Banderas played historical roles that further dilute the Hispanic and gay identities Hollywood gave him in the early 1990s. In *The 13th Warrior*

he plays an Arab ambassador in the middle ages; *The Mask of Zorro* takes place in the nineteenth century; and *Original Sin* is situated in colonial Cuba. Even *The Body* is about a Latin American revolutionary turned priest involved in archaeology in Israel. As a result of Banderas's new Latino-Latin American roles, recently diluted into a generic Hispanic type, he is no longer a national or Spanish actor. He cannot make films in Spain. When he returns to Spain, he bears his status of Hollywood Hispanic. So far, only Carlos Saura has managed to hire him for a Spanish film (*Dispara* 1993) probably due to an earlier contract. However, directors like Julio Medem, who wanted Banderas for *Tierra* (1996), no longer have the appeal and economic power to lure him (Fernández and Oliva 189-90). Even Almodóvar would have a hard time hiring his beloved boy again. In one of the most interesting reversals in Banderas's filmography, *Two Much* was produced in the United States with a Spanish director (Fernando Trueba) and then released in Spain with the aura of a North American film, albeit Caribbean via Miami. In a word, Banderas has become the global free-floating signifier of hispanicity, as well as its zero degree.

Although Banderas is the first actor to embody the global mirror stage for North American masculinity, it is interesting to place the Banderas phenomenon within Hollywood film history. He is the first Spanish actor to succeed in post-silent Hollywood. Antonio Moreno was known mostly in the silent era; Xavier Cugat and Luis Buñuel are as close as Spain ever got to the sound era of Hollywood; Julio Iglesias is primarily a musical phenomenon. Yet, Banderas is the first "Hispanic" actor to be celebrated as such by sound-era Hollywood, thanks to a tradition that began with Antonio Moreno, Ramón Novarro, and Rudolph Valentino and continues through César Romero, Ricardo Montalbán, José Ferrer, Anthony Quinn, Martin Sheen, James E. Olmos, Raul Julia, Cheech Marin, Jimmy Smits, and Andy Garcia. Desi Arnaz's career focused on television, a different medium with a logic of its own.

Moreno, Novarro, and Valentino represent the first foreign and excessive masculinity in Hollywood's history. Valentino overshadowed Novarro in the role of Latin lover, but because of the former's early death, Novarro recaptured the monopoly of the position and made a more successful transition to the sound era than Moreno.

Valentino's Italian origin allowed him to play the role of Latin lover. However, because xenophobia towards Southern Europeans was still very much part of North American national discourse, he was not identified in a meaningful way with the contemporaneous United States political agenda. He was simply transported to the exotic landscapes of otherness, including Argentina. In *The Sheik* (1921), for example, Valentino is orientalized as sheer other, a polygamous Arabian sheik who tames adventurous English women with a flair for feminism. The seduction of an American woman would have severed the distance that makes the Orient a place of otherness. The same follows for Novarro's *Mata Hari* (1931) in which he plays a Russian official seduced by Greta Garbo.

Because Valentino's masculinity could not be fully othered as foreign, as in Banderas's case, he was identified with effeminacy, the contemporary term for what we have now renamed queer sexuality. As Gaylyn Studlar demonstrates, Valentino's past as a dancer explains the contradictions of his excessive yet "effeminate" sexuality. Novarro's actual and closeted homosexuality seems to have helped him in the calculated portrayal of excessive masculinity. Although Valentino's short career never took off, Novarro and Antonio Moreno initiated the genealogy of exterior and excessive masculinities centered on the romantic myth of the Latin lover. Ramón Novarro was marketed as "The New Valentino," although his career declined after *Mata Hari* (1931). Yet, Valentino, Novarro, and Moreno became overnight stars thanks to a single film, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921), *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1922), and *The Spanish Dancer* (1923), respectively. Moreno did not work in Spain until after his Hollywood career had declined (Méndez Leite 276-77). Unlike his predecessors, Banderas gained popularity without a particular film; in fact, many of his films were not very successful. He is more of a personality than an actor. Banderas is overdetermined by the genealogy of the queer or sexually excessive Latin lover inaugurated by the first generation of Latin actors. The next generation of actors, César Romero (1907-1994), Anthony Quinn (1915-2001), and Ricardo Montalbán (1920-), the first of Cuban descent and the last two Mexican, embodied different forms of masculine otherness mobilized by Hollywood in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s alongside other actors like Egyptian Omar Sharif. The three actors have been

used as signifiers of various forms of otherness: Greek, Eskimo, Mexican, Native-American, Italian, Mongolian, or extraterrestrial. Their ability to play any form of otherness seems to be connected to a narrow sexual range: their excessive sexuality is never associated with any form of queerness or gay identity. This shift could point to the fact that the relation between otherness and excessive sexuality is determined by the historical context of the Cold War.

Finally, their Latino-Hispanic condition has been acknowledged with the last generation of contemporary actors such as Raúl Julia (1941-1995), Martin Sheen (1940-), James E. Olmos (1947-), Cheech Marin (1946-), Andy García (1956-), and Banderas (1960-). However, even after *Zoot Suit* (1981) Olmos continued to play roles as all-purpose other in films such as *Blade Runner* (1982), a film so paranoid about the early 1980s Japanese threat that it simply used a Latino actor to condense all forms of geopolitical otherness represented by the film. Olmos plays the origami-making policeman who follows Harrison Ford everywhere and, as a trickster, reminds Ford of his situation. Currently, Olmos and Banderas are the two main players of Latino/Latin American/Spanish male hispanicity in Hollywood. Although Olmos and Banderas belong to two different generations of actors, they both developed their film careers in the early 1980s and flourished in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Unlike Banderas, Olmos went through television (*Miami Vice*) in order to consolidate his film career. As Newman states, Olmos is historically important to a periodization of the Latino image:

Large-scale cultural transformations are never determined by one factor in isolation, much less by one televisual image, but, for the sake of periodization of representation of US Latinos on film and television, it can be said that the trope of Latino sacrifice is fully operative by November 22, 1985, the air date of the *Miami Vice* episode "Bushido" directed by Edward James Olmos. . . . The embrace between Castillo and Gretskey locates this episode within the narrative formulas, emergent in the mid-eighties, that adjusted the World War II, Korean War, and Cold War war-story formulas and those of the buddy films of the seventies to the entertainment industry's long-anticipated recuperation of the Vietnam War as a historically distant storyline. (63)

The big difference between Olmos and Banderas lies in their

status as insider and outsider respectively. To Hollywood's eyes, Olmos will always remain marked by the domestic problem of race and ethnicity. With Banderas, however, the type of Hispanic differentiation that had always existed in Hollywood ends; he is the pan-Hispanic actor who can do it all. As Carlos Cortes points out, Mexican and Latino characters have historically ranged from white to colored: "Movies have tended to differentiate Latinos on the basis of 'coloredness' and 'whiteness.' According to the Hollywood canon on race and class, 'Spanish' Latinos, particularly Zorro-type upper-class ones, functioned as white. Dark Latinos functioned as colored. When it came to Latino-Anglo screen love, this racial differentiation was further complicated by a movie gender gap" (83). Conversely, the geopolitical difference between both actors explains the contrast in sexuality: the normative heterosexual roles played by Olmos stand out against the "gay-tinted" characters portrayed by Banderas. But historically, from the Romero-Montalbán-Quinn generation to the new one of Olmos-Banderas-Marin-Sheen-Garcia, a specialization has occurred from general otherness to specialized Latino-Latin-American-Spanish otherness. Banderas is as specialized as Marin; "sexy" is as specialized as "funny," which does not mean the same amount of work or recognition. This specialization triggered by domestic heterosexual Latino masculinity has made room for the reemergence of the excessive outsider gay Latin lover.

Banderas's appearance points to the emergence of a global masculinity. The above genealogy of American and Hispanic masculinities, as well as Banderas's position within it, points to the fact that masculinity is now negotiated globally rather than domestically (as in the white/African-American buddy film). The combination Latino/Latin American and gay, parallels the combination of African American and drag queen (RuPaul, *Paris is Burning* [1991], *The Crying Game* [1992], and *The Fifth Element* [1997]). The doubling of difference (racial-ethnic and sexual) is the most important characteristic of the Banderas case and points to the formation of what I have called above "the global mirror stage." The fact that racial and sexual differences are combined and negotiated around masculinity rather than around femininity (as in the nineteenth-century Latin American foundational fictions studied by Doris Sommer) indicates that two vectors position global masculinity rather than

one. Unlike Arab terrorists or post-cold-war Russian dictators and political pretenders, Banderas as outsider threatens while remaining desirable.

In contrast to previous negotiations with foreign masculinities, be they German Nazi or sophisticated French masculinity, Banderas combines both identification and desire. Lacan posits that identification (and desire) is always tangentially bound to failure. As Lacan explains, when the subject identifies with its image in the mirror, this identification “situates the ego . . . in a fictional direction that will forever remain irreducible to any single individual . . . [in] discordance with his own reality” (4), because the other (a Hispanic gay other in our case) is part of that identification. Thus, the identification with and desire for Latino/Latin American-gay masculinity is (mis)placed on Banderas’s body because it is the “wrong” body: heterosexual, Spanish, and European. As Slavoj Žižek, following Lacan, reminds us, mis-identification guarantees the success of identification and desire. Thus a Hispanic gay mis-identification legitimates the new global symbolic order as well as the central place occupied by North American masculinity in it. Following Lacan, one could also say that the other—with a small “o”—serves as the desiring and identification referent that keeps the traumatic effect of the real, the thing that cannot be represented, at bay. Latino/Latin Americans and gay people are both unavoidable and traumatic to the hegemonic United States. To borrow from Roosevelt, one could rename this political approach “the sexy neighbor policy.”

In order to explain the historicity of the global mirror stage as well as the culmination of its formation in the early 2000s, it is important to move to musical performance. The young performer who was supposed to become the new great Hispanic actor and to occupy center stage in Hollywood was Ricky Martin, the first Latino/Latin American man to achieve widespread fame and mainstream recognition in the United States media. His popularity peaked with his performance of “The Cup of Life” at the Grammy Awards in February 1999. He was able to represent otherness in a more specific way (a Latino lover instead of a Latin lover) than could a Spaniard like Banderas. Yet, the moment Latin (lover) sexuality and non-foreign otherness (Latino) collided in the body of Ricky Martin, the delicate and global balance between identity and desire achieved by

Banderas's global mirror disappeared. As a Puerto Rican performer, Martin was too close to home to keep that balance. As a result, his career was reduced to a discussion about his possible (closeted) gay identity; after all, excessive sexuality, when domestic, is always suspected of homosexuality. Camille Paglia asked "Ricky Martin—superstud or closet case?" in the title of her *Salon* column:

Since we are both [Paglia and her companion] longtime idolators [sic] of the hip-swiveling John Travolta of 'Saturday Night Fever,' 'Grease' and 'Urban Cowboy,' I've been steadily pondering the Martin paradox. There's something uncontrolled and vaguely queenly about Martin's pelvic gyrations that wasn't part of the Dionysian tribal humping of the early, ecstatic Elvis Presley or the lascivious Tom Jones. There's also an unsettling disconnect between Martin's Latin body language and his WASPish, sanitized teeny-bopper persona, which would fit right in on 'The Donna Reed Show.'

Martin lacks the louche [sic], brooding, seductive, heavy-lidded magnetism of men of the world from Cesar Romero and Ricardo Montalban to Julio Iglesias and Antonio Banderas, with their languid bedroom eyes.

Martin's Latino hybridity between domestic and foreign, American and Puerto Rican, was constructed as unstable, undesirable, and ultimately as "flawed"; Martin had to be gay, since he was not as "masculine" as his predecessor Latin lovers.

The global mirror stage of masculinity articulated by Antonio Banderas ends with Ricky Martin, when the delicate balance between desire and identity cannot be kept in geo- and biopolitical check. Instead, domesticity brings excessive masculinity too close to home and, as a result, such masculinity no longer is perceived as foreign and excessive, but rather as gay—and thus as traumatic or real. Thus Martin, unlike JLo, another Puerto Rican performer defined by her female yet excessive "rear" sexuality, never moved to filmic center stage in Hollywood. Simultaneously, and to see how historical this global mirror stage is, it is worth mentioning that Javier Bardem, another Spanish actor, has more recently triumphed in Hollywood. But Bardem can no longer occupy the position of the Hispanic Latin lover. He is just a very good professional Spanish actor, who lacks Banderas's global aura. Thus in the 1990s Banderas comes to embody the global mirror of masculinity; it begins and

ends with him.

The Spanish phase of Banderas's filmography can help us understand why he is able to embody the global mirror of masculinity that Latino performers and actors cannot. Banderas made several films before his professional collaboration with Almodóvar, some of which are part of canonical Spanish cinema (*Zancos*, 27 horas) and others are not (*Delirios de amor*, *Caso cerrado*). As a result of his popularity, some of these films were reissued in the United States. Although he worked in Almodóvar's early *Labyrinth of Passion* (1982), he became nationally known as a result of his appearance in *Matador* (1986), and then consecutively, *The Law of Desire* (1987), *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988), and *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (1989). In these four years, Banderas went from playing a repressed homosexual (*Matador*), to an obsessive homosexual (*The Law of Desire*), a nerdy heterosexual (*Women*), and finally a heterosexual psychotic stalker and lover (*Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!*). In the 1990s, as Almodóvar's law of desire dictated that his film plots become increasingly heterosexual so that his work would maintain its centrality to Spanish national culture, his characters became more closeted. Rather than misogynistic *à la heterosexuelle*, *Tie Me Up* is misogynist by displacement, since homosexual desire is still at work, although in heterosexual drag (Hart 74). As a result of Almodóvar's heterosexualization of him, Banderas himself came out of the "homosexual closet" in which the director had put him and finally started to assume heterosexual roles (*Tie Me Up*). However, the homosexual trace of sexual excess that initiated his career has stayed with him, and Hollywood has capitalized on it.

As I noted earlier, both Spain and the United States were undergoing important historical transitions at the time Banderas became popular in the 1980s and the 1990s, respectively. Franco died in 1975 and Spain transitioned to democracy, while the United States assumed a new global hegemony. The first ten years of the Spanish "transition" were marked by instability and a certain freedom to celebrate new realities (Vilarós, Moreiras). Because this historical moment was perceived as "liberatory," Spanish reality took a carnivalesque turn, in the Bakhtinian sense. The disappearance of the old (Francoism) and the arrival of the new (the repressed domestic reality and the unavailable exterior modernity) were celebrated through

excess. Excess compensates for the shortcomings of the institutions in crisis. In this carnivalesque transition, unofficial and subaltern cultures, such as the gay, which can portray historical excess through representations of masculinity, took cultural center stage, and the critical leftist culture, which relied on realism, was sidelined. Almodóvar's cinema celebrated the arrival of the new and mourned the departure of the old. Gay culture's marginal position has always forced gays to reappropriate official culture and exaggerate it (as it does with masculinity). Another way to official reappropriation is camp (Bergman, Meyer, Yarza). Unlike the realist film tradition privileged by the left, Almodóvar's films were able to preserve and capture Francoist culture as camp. The carnivalesque and exaggerated narratives of his films managed to subvert and enjoy official Francoist culture. Almodóvar, unlike the left culture, ensured the cultural transition from Francoism to democracy.

Certain sectors of gay culture celebrate heterosexual hypermasculinity à la Banderas because they desire to appropriate an ideal masculinity; put differently, some gays desire heterosexual hypermasculinity while reterritorializing it as gay. The double movement—desire for heterosexual masculinity and gay reterritorialization of heterosexuality—signifies gayness and simultaneously criticizes heterosexual masculinity as aberration through excess. Banderas is the human embodiment of Almodóvar's carnivalesque celebration of masculinity and Spain. On the one hand, Banderas represents the old-fashioned official Spanish masculinity that the left scorned as part of what, for lack of a better word, can be called an *españolada* (clichéd national Spanish culture). On the other hand, Banderas, with his excessive, gay, and celebratory acting, embodies the new Spain: the outrageous open Spain that is ready to embrace the extreme, the new, the unexpected. Banderas is the Janus of Spanish masculinity's history. However, after the Spanish right's rise to power in 1996, carnivalesque and excessive representations were no longer possible, especially if they were produced by gay culture. The Spanish transition was over, and even Almodóvar's filmmaking became more heterosexual, normative, and self-repressed in the second half of the 1990s. Had Banderas started his acting career in the 1990s, he would not have triumphed nationally.

Banderas is the byproduct of a global conjunction between  
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Spanish and North-American histories. However, it is important to understand why Spain, among all countries, has been appropriated by Hollywood when dealing with excessive masculinity. Spain has a long tradition in the production of hypersexual masculine characters such as Banderas's. It seems as if the country had always been an imaginary factory for the cultural production of sexual stereotypes. However, strictly speaking, the sexualization of Spain is a recent phenomenon that coincides with the modern geopolitical and capitalist reorganization of Europe in the nineteenth century (Buzard 134). After the Napoleonic wars, when the new geopolitical and economic divide between northern and southern Europe is consecrated, romanticism takes care of representing this divide with all its biopolitical details, from race to sexuality.

At practically the same time, two literary characters were, if not invented, at least consecrated in the mid-nineteenth century: Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844) and Mérimée's *Carmen* (1845). Don Juan and Carmen constitute "modern love" in the sense that seriality and sex are combined in their representations for the first time and, thus, love enters modernity's time and history. In both cases, the texts also cross the new European border. Don Juan is the romantic Spanish recuperation of a European myth (Mozart, Molière, Byron) of an originally Spanish character—a secondary character of Golden Age theater (Tirso de Molina) and popular ballads. Zorrilla's *Don Juan* (1844) was a nationalist response to, an emasculation of, Spain's imperialist decline. Most Latin American colonies gained independence in the earlier decade (1810-1825), and French and British capital invaded Spain in the 1850s with the building of the railroads. *Don Juan* is a melancholic allegory of Spain's imperialist past, now celebrated as individual bourgeois sexual prowess, rather than as imperialist military might; yet his conquests take place in the dominions of the bygone Spanish empire (such as Italy). This well recognized Spanish stereotype explains the national origin of the Latin lover. The Spanish nation and its (masculine) subject have been culturally connected since at least the nineteenth century. In other words, Banderas had Spanish cultural history on his side. *Carmen*, in turn, is the romantic displacement of the crisis of French masculinity to the South. The goal of *Carmen* is to solve such a crisis in foreign territory: French masculinity reinvents southern Europe

(Spain) as female in order to solve its own domestic problems in new feminized orientalist territory. In this way, European romanticism conjures and exorcizes the problem of domesticity and the new south-north divide.

Enter exotic southern Europe, and more specifically Spain: the new European sexual theme park of the nineteenth century. I have elaborated elsewhere the genealogy of Spain as “sexual theme-park,” although only for the nineteenth century (“On the Inception”). Hemingway repositions Spain in the geopolitical shift from British to North American imperialism after World War I by reintroducing the Spanish theme park to the ever increasingly global North Americans. Searching for places where his homoerotic longing for old-fashioned masculinity could wander free, Hemingway found in the Spanish Civil War the last war that allowed him to combine old good masculinity and progressive politics. For Hemingway it was a macho leftist war.

In the late 1960s, when Spain’s population finally migrated to urban areas and agriculture was no longer the main sector of production, tourism, the tertiary sector, emerged as the main industry of Spain. Not steel but tourism (Schubert 209). At the same time that Spain shifted from an agricultural society to a service society that catered to foreign tourists, large numbers of Spanish workers were emigrating to northern Europe. This economic shift allowed the theme park-like imaginary to carry romantic Spain into the twentieth century and, simultaneously, turned Spain into a post-modern country by the last third of the century. Before Disneyland became the model for theme parks and postmodern themed culture (Gottdiener), Spain had already existed as a theme park nation. Although, thanks to Hemingway, Spanish femininity became more prominent than Spanish masculinity, the matador/Latin lover genealogy persisted and consolidated during Francoism. Almodóvar’s film *Matador* or Madonna’s video *Take a Bow* (1994) continue this tradition. In *Matador*, the young Banderas is watching the enactment and criticism of the Hispanic theme park he will embody for a global audience in Hollywood in the 1990s.

Banderas is heir to this European romantic genealogy of Spain as sexual theme park, consolidated during late Francoism as post-modern national culture. But Banderas inverts his forebears’ para-

digm as he plays both Don Juan and Carmen (hence the ambivalence that Perriam notes in Banderas's actorial body and career as both subject and object of sexual desire and identification). The new Don Juan is sent by Hollywood to seduce and rob the Latino, Latin American, and gay neighborhoods' honor and keep them quiet. If Zorrilla's Don Juan was a response to Spanish imperialist decadence, Banderas's rise as global Hispanic lover in Hollywood coincides with the global expansion of Spanish capitalism over its former colonies. Thus, Banderas responds to a moment of Spanish neo-imperialist hubris rather than to one of postimperialist decline. Like Carmen, Banderas is endowed with sexual excessiveness, is summoned, empowered, allowed to seduce, and then finally annihilated, dismissed, or domesticated into respectable middle-class patriarchy. As in the French representation of Carmen, one solves two problems by mobilizing an imaginary Spanish character: the domestic (Latinos, gays) and the foreign (Latin America, the new NAFTA neighborhood). Hollywood, as usual, rather than inventing something new, recycles cultural representations and plots that already have proven to work elsewhere (here, nineteenth-century Europe). Ultimately, Banderas, unlike any Latin American or Latino actor, has the advantage that, by imperial privilege, he can represent the entire spectrum of "hispanicity" all the way back to Don Juan and Carmen without fully alienating any party involved.

Yet he plays to the needs, anxieties, and desires of a newly globalized North American masculinity, which also sets the geo- and biopolitical limits of his actorial success. In declarations to *The Guardian* in 1996, Banderas claimed: "Latin is what I am. I'm pretty proud of it. Whatever I do I'm going to be the Latin lover forever. That's my fate. Until they start saying: 'He was a Latin lover' when I get old and fat and my hair is greasy" (Gristwood). Banderas is aware of his historical conjunction. His masculinity is up for grabs, or if one could generalize the headlines of a cover of *The Advocate*, Banderas is not only a "gay for pay" but "Hispanic (gay) masculinity for pay." Although to date it remains a project, Banderas keeps talking of producing a filmic version of the *Don Juan*, the ur-Banderas, the forebear of his own genealogy (Fernández and Oliva 202).

Banderas's overnight success in Hollywood in the 1990s is due to the specific historical formation of global masculinity against the

reflection of a gay-Hispanic mirror. In this way, the gay-Hispanic mirror fully reflects the new North American (masculine, heterosexual) global order and also legitimizes Spain's neo-imperialist global position in Latin America. This is the global mirror stage of the neo-liberal/neo-imperialist North American symbolic order, in which gay Hispanic masculinity reflects back North American masculinity through a heterosexual Spanish body (the wrong body that enables the mirror stage) and, by so doing, also legitimizes Spain's hegemonic position in what can only be considered a Hispanic-Atlantic globalization.

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