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Performing Fatness: Oversized Male Bodies in Recent Spanish Cinema

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Every actor undergoes a certain degree of physical transformation in preparation for a role. This could be as simple as changing hairstyle or as drastic as completely altering body shape. Regardless of the complexity of the makeover, this very physical aspect of characterisation is undoubtedly a major part of any performance. Major body transformations are often highlighted in the advertising campaigns of some films as a means to attract audiences. In biopics, for example, the process might have resulted in an actor achieving a remarkable resemblance to the real-life character s/he is impersonating – the classic example is Robert De Niro, who gained around 30 kilos to portray the older version of boxer Jake LaMotta in Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980). In an action movie, in an epic or a superhero film, physical changes usually involve packing up a lot of muscle bulk in a short period of time, such as Chris Hemsworth's recent transformation for his role in *Thor* (Kenneth Branagh, 2011). Some roles require actors to lose a lot of weight, for instance, Christian Bale for *The Machinist* (Brad Anderson, 2004). There are also shortcuts – Eddie Murphy wore a fat suit for *The Nutty Professor* (Tom Shadyac, 1996) and its sequel (Peter Segal, 2000).

The field of Fat Studies has gained critical momentum in recent years, and its impact on Film Studies is becoming increasingly evident. Yet, fat bodies are rarely discussed in the context of masculinities and Men's Studies. In *Fat Boys*, a pioneering book-length study on representations of fat men in art, literature and popular culture Sander L. Gilman offers some answers as to why that may be. The title of his introduction, 'Fat is a Men's Issue' (2004: 1-35), is an explicit response to Orbach's much-critiqued argument in *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (first published in 1978).¹ He argues

both that the cultural association of women and fat ignores the history of fat men in ancient Greece, nineteenth-century medical discourses and Western literary history. His examples demonstrate a persistent association of male obesity with failed masculinity, deviance and disability.²

There is now a well-established body of scholarship that reads actors' physiques as a tool to interpret and analyse films. Some recent studies discuss fat masculinities in cinema, but most of these have focused on well-known Hollywood actors, genres or Hollywood cinema more generally.³ In *Transgressive Bodies*, Niall Richardson examines the representation of fatness in recent mainstream film and popular culture. His findings imply that contemporary representations of fatness follow the pattern described by Gilman: 'the suggestion of fat has always been that the character is lazy, undisciplined' (2010: 96). In his study of fat masculinities in film noir, Christopher Forth agrees that 'fat has been gendered as "feminine" in the Western cultural imagination' and argues that in film noir fat manhood is generally associated with 'looseness, immorality, weakness and cowardice', and thus a threat to patriarchy (2013: 389). In the context of Spanish cinema, Pavlović's ground-breaking *Despotic Bodies and Transgressive Bodies* (2002) lucidly explores the connections between national identity and visual depictions of the body during Franco's dictatorship and the transition. My own work with Martínez-Expósito (2007) investigates the prominence of male bodies and male nudity in Spanish films of the democratic period. In both cases, fat male bodies are discussed, but not in much detail. This chapter aims to provide a better understanding both of fat masculinities and how fatness might affect an actor's performance, in the context of contemporary Spanish cinema. I will start by exploring two stars whose performances of fat masculinities has fundamentally different meanings (Santiago Segura as Torrente for the famous

saga, and Javier Bardem as Santa in León de Aranoa's *Los lunes al sol/Mondays in the Sun* (2002)), to then focus on *Gordos/Fat People* (Daniel Sánchez Arévalo, 2009), a film that confronts the issue of fatness directly and that usefully complements the other two cases.

Santiago Segura and the *Torrente* saga

The highly profitable *Torrente* saga (with 5 instalments so far – 1998, 2001, 2005, 2011, 2014) seems the ideal starting point for a discussion of fatness as performance in contemporary Spanish cinema. Santiago Segura, the saga's director and protagonist became famous for putting on inordinate amounts of weight for the role (an average of 30 kilos in the first four films – see Belategui (2012)). A crucial aspect of the discussion here is the very public spectacle that Segura makes of his physical transformations for the role, including, in 2005, a regular weigh-in on national television in the run-up to the release of *Torrente 2* (see Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito 2007: 30). The *Torrente* films are among the clearest illustrations of what could be regarded as the 'performance' of fatness in Spanish cinema. Since the leading actor is also the director of the films, as well as the main orchestrator of the whole phenomenon – which sustains his production company 'Amiguetes Entertainment' – he has control over the character's performance on and off-screen (as amply demonstrated by Triana-Toribio (2004)). Although part of the appeal of the saga relies on relatively high-profile cameo roles by famous Spanish (and some international) celebrities, actors and television personalities, this is mostly a one-man show. The importance of fatness as an essential part of Torrente's persona is evident in the film, but Segura's constant promotion of this particular aspect of his performance as Torrente underscores its significance. In his numerous public

appearances, he makes it very clear that becoming fat is an essential part of his preparation for the role, of the character's identity, and, ultimately, of the films' refusal of dominant discourses of beauty. Performing fatness, in the case of *Torrente*, is as much a performance of abjection as it is a refusal to conform to what the films present as imposed and foreign models of physical and behavioural normalcy.

Torrente is an overweight middle-aged former policeman who, having been expelled from the police force, decides to continue working by himself, imposing his own, bigoted and out-dated, vision of Spanish society on those around him, also taking on some very ambitious missions along the way. These missions are usually related to a controversial and embarrassing aspect of Spain's current affairs, such as the sovereignty of Gibraltar or, most recently, the failed Eurovegas project (for *Torrente 5*). The crucial importance of Torrente's obesity is perhaps best illustrated by the amount of press coverage generated when rumours of a 'slimmer' version of the infamous detective for the fifth instalment of the saga started to circulate at pre-production stage (see, for example, *Cinemanía* 2013). In interviews at that time, Segura claimed that, fifteen years since the start of the first film in the saga, his older self could not put up with the health consequences that come with this process. The reason he gave was that, while he really wanted Torrente the character to be an obese 'excessive' man, he, the actor, could not cope with that (Belategui 2012). The prospect of a slim Torrente was ultimately too unbearable: appropriate for the start of the film when Torrente has just completed a prison sentence, but unthinkable for the character. During the promotional campaign of *Torrente 5*, Segura argued that he felt so sorry for the character when he saw early footage of the film, that he had to put on weight again (González-Alegre 2014). The actor and the character gradually gained 17 kilos in three months of filming, further blurring the distinction between the two.

In her recent study of Phillip Seymour-Hoffman, Benson-Allot argues that fat actors have been typecast as ‘overgrown children’, ‘fools’, ‘grotesques’, ‘corporeally intuitive detectives’, ‘appetitive villains’ and ‘effeminate failures’ (2013: 203). Most of these adjectives have indeed been used by reviewers and academics in their analyses of the Torrente character (see, for example, Esquirol and Fecé 2001). Torrente’s awkward body language, his often-infantile facial expressions, and a limited range of comical one-liners also point in that direction. Benson-Allot’s words, however, refer to actors that are fat, not those who, like Segura, become fat for a role. Performing Torrente is, at least in part, performing fatness. A key aspect of the preparation for the role is to put on the weight, making a big spectacle out of it in order to build expectation for the release.

A considerable part of Torrente’s comic value resides in the fact that he behaves like an action hero and seems blissfully unaware of his physical limitations. In his frequent erotic dreams, he is a *macho ibérico* (Iberian male) whom no young attractive woman of any nationality can resist. In reality, however, he seems more interested in masturbating in his car with his much younger and intellectually challenged male assistants. The visual absence of the protagonist’s penis in the frustrated masturbation scenes and erotic dreams contrasts with his frequent phallic jokes and the inescapable phallic imagery that often surrounds him, thus drawing more attention to Torrente’s sexual complexes. In his erotic dreams, his large stomach (often exaggerated through low camera angles and profile shots) overshadows the rest of his body, especially his genitals. Thus, fatness is visually associated with his sexual frustration, not only because the fat body makes the penis shrivel in comparison, but because it also creates an uncomfortably obvious physical contrast between Torrente and the sultry women who surround him in his dreams. This is also clear in the

famous opening credits segments. The credits are elaborate parodies of Hollywood sagas led by global icons of masculinity, such as James Bond, Bruce Lee, Rambo or the *Lethal Weapon* and *Mission Impossible* films.⁴ In those sequences, as well as in the absurd narratives and impossible scenarios elsewhere in the films, Torrente's farcical and excessive performance also questions imposed models of masculinity that are often uncritically accepted by film audiences around the world. Those models are usually excessive and very problematic in themselves (as argued by Susan Jeffords (1994)), and yet somewhat credible for some mainstream audiences. Despite an implicit refusal of those foreign models of hegemonic masculinities, the carnivalesque atmosphere that characterises the *Torrente* films also contributes to perpetuate the Hollywood standard as the norm and Torrente's politically incorrect worldview as cathartic, but ultimately undesirable. Torrente's obese body is *itself* the cause of laughter, the butt of the joke, and intrinsically associated to his out-dated and despicably prejudiced attitude.

The vision of an overweight, unkempt middle-aged Spaniard seems doomed to failure in contexts and settings that may seem suited only for Hollywood supermen. In the *Torrente* saga those (usually foreign) muscular men always play the role of villains. The Spaniard, of course, has the last laugh, as, against all odds, he often succeeds in his action-packed missions and defeats those intimidating opponents. Yet the triumph always comes as a result of coincidences and good luck, and not due to the former detective's competence or skills. On the contrary, his fatness is rendered the cause of all trouble. In *Torrente 4*, for example, he frustrates a plan to escape prison because the access to the undercover tunnel that had been built by other inmates was not big enough for him. The image of Torrente's behind - in close up and at one point occupying most of the frame, as it gets stuck on the entrance hole - is

meant to be one of the most hilarious moments of the film, especially since *Torrente 4* was also released in 3D, adding to the effect. In a scene which could be read as yet another metaphor for his sexual frustration and his obsession with penetrative sex, the whole tunnel collapses when he tries to release his body from the hole, thus frustrating the whole plan and accidentally killing his mates, who were already inside the tunnel.

As funny as this character might seem to be, then, and as much as we may interpret his racist and sexist behaviour as part of the joke (cancelled out by their very excessiveness), there is a sombre aspect to the way in which Segura's performance draws attention to Torrente's obesity. Fatness is used for laughs, but here it is also connected to a much more sinister side of Torrente's character. He is in the habit of stealing food from restaurant tables or bins, often tricking vulnerable people in order to achieve his goals. He seems to have little regard for anyone other than himself and shows no remorse or compassion of any kind. His insatiable appetite might be the cause of his obesity, but, as Forth has found in the context of film noir criminals (2013: 391), fatness can also signify the excessiveness and lack of control that define other areas of the character's life, including, in the case of Torrente, his troubled sexuality and his bigoted worldview. Benson-Allot found a similar pattern in some of the roles played by Seymour-Hoffman: 'the cultural invisibility already associated with overweight bodies', she argues, can be used as a cover (2013: 205). In all its excessiveness, Torrente's abject and uncontrollable body creates the necessary distance to overlook the real ugliness that his character hides behind layers of fat and the laughter provoked by the endless absurdity it is meant to provoke.

Javier Bardem in *Los lunes al sol*

Together with Segura (and, more recently, Antonio de la Torre, as we will see later), Javier Bardem is perhaps *the* Spanish actor best known for his physical malleability. Achieving notoriety early on in his career for the ‘*macho ibérico*’ roles in the ‘Iberian Portraits’ trilogy directed by José Juan Bigas Luna in the 1990s, he has since made an internationally successful career out of roles that have actively resisted that initial typecasting.

The first Spanish reviews of *Los lunes al sol* (Fernando León de Aranoa, 2002) referred to Bardem’s expanding waistline and receding hairline as somewhat incompatible with the actor’s reputation as a sex-symbol: ‘Da la impresión de que Javier Bardem ha desaparecido en la película y que otro, más gordo, calvo, más afeado, es decir, su personaje, se ha apropiado de él’ [It would appear that Javier Bardem has disappeared in this film and that someone else, fatter, bald, less attractive; in other words, his character, has taken over] (EFE 2002). The rather simplistic contrast established in this review between Bardem, the actor (usually in very good shape and perceived as attractive) and Santa, his character in *Los lunes al sol* (fat, bald and perceived by this journalist as unattractive) is revealing. The statement shows how actor/real person and fictional character are mixed up in ways that highlight the value of Bardem’s very physical performance in this role. It also illustrates the long-term impact that other iconic performances (in this case the by then ten-year-old roles in the Bigas Luna trilogy) might have in an actor’s career. This is a distinction usefully explained by Barry King, who differentiated between ‘impersonation’ (the actor’s ability to transform his body and body language to take on different personas for each role), and ‘personification’ (the long-lasting effect of a specific performance in other roles played by the actor (King 1985: 42)). In the interview with Bardem included in the aforementioned article, the actor confessed

that he gained weight for the role (around 10 kilos) in part coincidentally as a result of giving up smoking, but also because the role required a certain physical build of someone who is always eating and drinking.⁵ He added:

Si a un actor le piden que sea guapo, debe luchar con uñas y dientes por ser guapo (...) Un actor es simplemente un vehículo para contar una historia, mejor dicho, es el vehículo para contar la historia. [If an actor is asked to appear handsome, s/he should fight tooth and nail to look handsome (...) An actor is a mere vehicle to tell a story, or more exactly, he is the vehicle to tell the story] (EFE 2002).

In Bardem's case, then, 'telling the story', delivering a credible performance as a middle-aged unemployed former shipbuilder in *Los lunes al sol* would rely, to some extent at least, on his ability to make audiences forget those past performances that had built his reputation as a muscular sex symbol. As I will argue, however, it was because of Bardem's personification that Santa's fatness acquires a radically different signification in this film compared to Segura's in the *Torrente* saga.

Santa can be immediately associated with Santa Claus, not only for his name, but also for his appearance (namely, his large build and beard). Unlike in the case of *Torrente*, it could be argued that Santa's large build had been an asset for his former profession. Although, as Whittaker has pointed out, his body is now 'a body of consumption rather than production' (2011: 136), the narrative also suggests that Santa used and continues to use his larger size to legitimise his position as a leader: previously during the workers' revolts, and now as a sort of spokesperson for the group of former colleagues who, now mostly unemployed, meet regularly at the bar. As Bardem said in the interview with EFE (2002), his character is a *pícaro* [rascal]: constantly showing off about his travels and skills that he is supposed to have (but has

not), he inhabits the space around him in ways that exude confidence. His use of space mirrors the kind of territorialism displayed by Raúl, Bardem's character in *Jamón, jamón/Ham, Ham* (Bigas Luna, 1992)⁶, in sharp contrast with Torrente's farcical awkwardness and recklessness. Far from being a clownish figure or the object of laughter, Santa is the one in charge of the jokes. He is also highly respected by his former colleagues, who seem to accept his role as leader and even protector of the group unquestionably. This is visually emphasised in frequent medium shots where his profile occupies most of the frame. He often proudly directs attention to his paunch by resting his hands on top of it.

As mentioned earlier, profile shots of overweight characters can be used for comic effect, to highlight the protruding belly (as in the opening credits of *Torrente 2: Misión en Marbella*). (FIGURE 13) In Santa's case, however, the profile shot is used in climatic moments, such as when he is delivering one of his monologues about the shipyard and what he and his former workmates should do about their futures. The visual emphasis on his large body during these scenes highlights the fact that he carries the 'moral weight' of the story on his shoulders. In a panel discussion on Spanish television following the screening of *Los lunes al sol*, Bardem and León de Aranoa explained that Santa was meant to be centre of gravity, the character who is more grounded and who helps build a strong group mentality among his former co-workers (RTVE 2010). This aspect of the character relies very much on his size, his weight, but also on the way in which Bardem's performance qualifies his fatness as a tool to define his masculine identity.

Figure 1. Santiago Segura in the title credits of *Torrente 2: Misión en Marbella* (Santiago Segura, 2001). Amiguetes Entertainment and Lola Films.

Although Santa provides some comic relief in the midst of the tragic reality that surrounds him, his sizeable body and his swagger come across, not as laughable or pathetic (as they did with Torrente), but as commanding and even threatening.⁷ In one scene he visits the old offices of the shipyard and challenges the only (male) administrator left in charge of the closing-down operation. Helping himself to an old welding mask that lay abandoned, he wears it and moves around defiantly, as if marking and reclaiming his former territory, occupying space in ways meant to intimidate the initially self-assured clerk, who grows increasingly defensive, slouching over his desk. The welding mask gives Santa the appearance of a frightening, cartoonish villain, reaffirming his power and giving credibility of his threat that ‘como vaya a la central, salimos todos en los periódicos’ [if I go to the headquarters we will be in the papers], his way of saying that there will be blood. In other words, the mask perfectly complements Santa’s fatness as part of his performance of defiant masculinity.

His resourcefulness and his sense of entitlement are played out elsewhere in the film. He helps himself to items in the supermarket that he does not pay for, he openly refuses to pay for his ferry ticket to cross the Ría de Vigo. He repeatedly disobeys a court order to pay the council for a lamppost he broke during a demonstration. Eventually, persuaded by his solicitor, he agrees to pay, only to break it again immediately after paying, right in front of his startled solicitor. His role as the leader of the pack is confirmed in the ultimate act of social defiance at the end of the film, when he takes the lead, as the group breaks into the ferry *Lady España* and sails into the Ría.

When comparing Torrente and Santa, Richardson's distinction between 'bulk' and 'fat' is particularly useful. As he explains, bulk is crucial for men in some competitive sports including rugby and bodybuilding, it denotes strength and power; fat, however, 'denotes inactivity, slothfulness and the ultimate feminine trait – passivity' (Richardson 2010: 94). In the *Torrente* saga and *Los lunes al sol* there is a clearly gendered representation of fatness. Bardem's larger size for his role in *Los lunes al sol* could be read in terms of 'phallic swelling', as Hennen (2005: 35) has done in his reading of the gay 'bear' body. His size and his previous on- and off-screen history as a rugby-playing, muscular *macho* add to his performance of masculinity, which here comes across as phallic, as bulk. In contrast, Segura's self-deprecating public persona draws more attention to Torrente's fatness as incompatible with the old-fashioned understanding of Iberian masculinity that the delusional character strives to embody. Segura and Bardem are both clear examples of how iconic performances can and do impact an actor's career, regardless of how wide-ranging their roles might be.

Antonio de la Torre in *Gordos/Fat People*

The film *Gordos* (2009) offers a different perspective on fatness and, especially, fat masculinities. As clear from the title, Sánchez Arévalo's second feature-length film takes fatness as its main theme. The whole narrative is structured around the weight-loss process of six main characters, staged in four 'acts': 'Honesty', 'Action', 'Perseverance' and 'Victory'. Although there is no space here to go into much detail for each of the main characters, it is worth pointing out that excess weight in the four women and the gay man is seen as a direct result of emotional problems: loneliness, instability, sexual dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and so on. Excess weight as a

problem is gendered to the extent that it is even discussed in relation to pregnancy in two cases.

As was the case with *Torrente* and *Los lunes al sol*, press coverage at the time of the release of *Gordos* focused on the actors' physical transformation. This process was particularly important in this film, as actor Antonio de la Torre had to gain 33 kilos and then lose them all over again *during* production, in a space of 8 months: it took him half of that time to put the weight on and the same again to lose it. The publicity campaign for *Gordos* is a good example of how physical transformations add value to the performance and are often used to sell the film. In this case, the emphasis on the physical transformation of the actors was amply discussed in interviews (some of these are archived in RTVE 2013), and echoed in reviews.

Writing for *El País*, Cuéllar starts his piece on *Gordos* stating: 'Adelgazar más de 33 kilos en cuatro meses es posible' [It is possible to lose 33 kilos in four months]. Here, reality and fiction *do* overlap, since de la Torre's weight loss was real, but the comment had nothing to do with Enrique, the character played by de la Torre, and everything to do with the actor's performative potential, 'un actor de peso' [a weighty actor], as described on the headline (Cuéllar 2009). In ways that echo the contrast established between Bardem, the 'handsome' actor, and Santa, the overweight character, the article also describes de la Torre at his usual 69 kilograms as 'Espigado, pelo pajizo, ojos color mar, atractivo (...) con el poder mágico de encandilar' [Tall and slim, layered hair, blue eyes like the sea, attractive, with a magic ability to dazzle you].

Four months later, at 102 kilograms, the article continues, de la Torre is described as 'bruto, parecía más bajo, sus movimientos eran torpes, un tanto zafios, y su mirada ya no era la misma' [brutish, almost shorter, his body language was

awkward and coarse, and he had a very different look in his eyes]. In press interviews, director and cast emphasised the role of specialist doctors and nutritionists (their names appear in the film credits), and also the methods used to gain and lose the weight.

The film starts with an extract of the American-style television show led by a very fit Enrique, where he promoted the miraculous fat-busting pills 'Kiloaway' using his own 'before and after' photographs as testimonial for the effectiveness of the product he is selling. The elaborate sets of the show are immediately juxtaposed with the bare surroundings of an after-hours bingo, where Enrique, who has now gained all the weight back, is watching what we assume is a re-run of his 'Kiloaway' show. The contrast that *El País* article established between the thin and obese versions of de la Torre, the actor, could well apply here to the visual juxtaposition established between Enrique, the dishy, smart, heroic television presenter, and Enrique, the reckless, lazy and morbidly obese casino patron who watches his previous self in that illusory mirror: the television set. (FIGURE 2) Another obese casino patron recognises Enrique from the television and takes a photograph with his smart phone as *real* proof for his wife that, as he keeps telling her, the pills are a rip-off. Cut to a Weight-Watchers style meeting, where the thin, attractive team leader Abel (Roberto Enríquez) welcomes his new group of customers as he walks around the room tilting body-size mirrors towards each one of them and asks them to get undressed. The play with mirrors continues, then, but this time the emphasis is not on visual (mis)recognition, as in the previous scene, but on exposure of the group members' true selves and the reasons that have led them to become fat, and why they may want to change their bodies.

Figure 2. Antonio de la Torre in *Gordos* (Daniel Sánchez Arévalo, 2009). Canal + España, Filmanova, Gobierno de Cantabria, Instituto de Crédito Oficial (ICO), Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (ICAA), Televisión española (TVE), Tesela Producciones Cinematográficas.

From the outset, then, *Gordos* deals with fatness as a mask, a cloak that, only in some cases, may be hiding something, be it an unplanned pregnancy, or something more abstract: loneliness, or self-hatred. As in the previous case studies, fat is visually emphasised with profile shots and low angles that highlight the characters' shape. Sometimes the bodies almost fill the frame. In the casino scene, the man who takes Enrique's photograph remarks that he does not even fit into the frame. This is done partly for comic effect – the casino snap reverses the 'before' and 'after' promo shots by having obese Enrique positioned just in front of his thinner self on television – but elsewhere in the film, the fat bodies are highly aestheticised. In some instances, such as in the 'before' and 'after' shots of Enrique in the opening credit sequence, the camera turns fat bodies into desirable commodities. Some of the images, including the 'before' shots of Enrique that open the film (inviting our gaze at the semi-nude fat male from the start of the film), or the lone male nude figure used for the poster and later as icon in DVD menu, resemble paintings by Fernando Botero or Lucian Freud, or the more classical beauty of Rubens.

As Stearns observes, 'until the twentieth century fatness was associated with prosperity' and plumpness with 'good health in times when many of the most troubling diseases were wasting diseases' (cited in Gilman 2004: 11). This same association applies to the popularity of more rounded bodies in the gay community around the time of the social panic caused by the first outbreaks of AIDS (see, for

example, Llamas 1995). In *Gordos*, the use of medium close-up and close-up shots of nude obese bodies throughout the film emphasises their haptic quality. The desirability of these bodies is perhaps best symbolised by the fact that a video recording of Andrés and his wife (also obese) having sex goes viral. The video had been secretly filmed and uploaded by their mischievous teenage children as a revenge for a family feud that ended with their parent's separation, but it ended up being instrumental in bringing the family back together. In watching the video online on their computers (another mirror), Andrés and his wife, separately, miss the fun that they used to have. The vision of their nude bodies engaged in sex also reignites their physical attraction for each other. Conversely, Abel's aversion towards fatness and large bodies, despite his profession, ends up breaking up his marriage, as he could not stand the vision of his pregnant and slightly rounder wife.

The performance of fat masculinities in this film, then, breaks some taboos and myths highlighted in the previous two case studies. Fatness is not solely depicted as comic or abject as in the *Torrente* saga, nor as a symbol of phallic masculinities, as in *Los lunes al sol*. The emphasis on gazing at those large bodies as reflections of our inner selves is symbolised by the important role of the mirrors and the television or computer screens throughout the film. This rare invitation to gaze at large nude male bodies, be it those on the screen or our own reflection on the mirror, as a way to investigate what may hide behind the layers of fat, could be interpreted as judgemental, and yet some characters decide to stay fat and, as discussed, fat bodies are at times presented as desirable and explicitly sexual.

Two problematic aspects about the representation of fat bodies in this film remain: the gendered representation of fatness, and the link between fatness and Enrique's troubled sexual identity. These instances can be illustrated by briefly

returning to the opening credit sequence and also his last scene as Enrique, the ‘real’ person, not the television presenter. The ‘before and after’ shots of Enrique that open the film (part of his ‘Kiloaway’ presentation on TV) emphasise his fat/thin silhouettes against a plain white background. The ‘before’ shots seem to perpetuate the association of fatness with passivity through poses that could be described as emasculating: Enrique sits down on the floor, then on a chair with his legs spread, in two of the images almost submissively averting his eyes, in others he is shyly facing the camera with a certain look of shame in his eyes. In sharp contrast, the ‘after’ shots show Enrique staring directly at the camera, defiantly, in poses that emphasise his fitness and strength. In one of the shots he looks as if he were ready to punch the viewer, in the manner described by Dyer in his study of the male pin-up (1992).

Conclusion

The three case studies discussed here show how changes in an actor’s body shape often attract significant attention from the media, and are proactively used to promote the films. While this is by no means exclusive to male actors, fatness in males destabilises and threatens traditional and hegemonic notions of ‘masculinity’. As Gilman argues, ‘being obese, fatter than fat, changes what the culture represents as male’ (2004: 9). My examples have shown how the Spanish press draws significant attention to the way in which an actor’s weight can drastically alter our perception of that actor in negative ways: they highlight how fatness makes the actor unrecognisable, it changes their body language, makes them appear older, even shorter. Yet, despite a tendency in some of these films to use fatness in men as a means of emasculating the character and making them either a source of laughter or pity, fatness can also be used to hide something more serious (in the case of Torrente

and his bigoted worldview, for instance), and even to *reinforce* traditional notions of hegemonic masculinities (namely, Santa's bulk). The way in which we read fat in films can be influenced by an actor's public persona and off-screen performances of that fatness, but it can also be hugely influenced by their on-screen history. In Bardem's case, for example, his early roles as a stereotypical *macho* seem to have marked his acting style in ways that influence how his fatness is performed and perceived in *Los lunes al sol*. In the case of Santiago Segura, it works in the opposite direction: Torrente's version of farcical and excessive fat masculinity has become the actor's signature performance, affecting how we perceive the actor in other films, even when slim. Similarly, some spectators might think of Enrique's voracity in *Gordos* when watching Carlos (Antonio de la Torre) consume human flesh in *Canibal/Cannibal* (Manuel Martín Cuenca, 2013). Benson-Allot argues that an actor's fat body shouldn't necessarily be read as abject and that, instead, it can imply 'that the body's representational contract is a social construction, just like any element of gender' (2013: 212). *Gordos* is an ideal illustration of this point, as fatness is portrayed as something transitory and changeable. Unlike race, for example, fat can be 'lost' or 'gained' and as such it is not necessarily an essential part of anyone's identity. Early in the film, a female character suggests that she might look fat, but she is not a 'fat person' (the distinction between 'estar gordo' and 'ser gordo' in Spanish makes this contrast more evident). In a film where mirrors play a crucial role, Enrique's changing shape *during* the film also works as a mirror in itself: just like his poses and attitude change noticeably in the 'before' and 'after' photographs of his 'Kiloaway' presentation, the radical ways in which his performance as thin or fat is gendered as more or less 'masculine' respectively during the film is very revealing. De la Torre's performance of fatness, then, goes hand-in-hand with his performance

of masculinities. More importantly, Enrique's interaction with his television audience, encouraging them to lose weight with the pills that he advertises, is a constant reminder both of the fakeness of that television performance (in reality he didn't stay thin, he is nowhere near as confident as he pretends to be there) and of the fact that his role elsewhere in the film is also a performance. Finally, the film's emphasis on mirrors also reminds us of the important fact that a performance relies not only on an actor, but also, as Bial has argued, on the spectator (2004: 57). The performative spell is broken with Enrique's very final line: 'el triunfo es dejar de mirarme a mí y empezar a fijarte en ti' [victory is to stop looking at me and start looking at yourself].

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Endnotes

¹ See, for example Diamond (1985), who argues that Orbach's argument perpetuates fat as a problem and thinness as the solution.

² In the USA the Federal Equal Opportunity Commission ruled in 1993 that severely obese should be included in the statutes that protect the disabled against discrimination (Gilman 2004: 3).

³ I am referring to Benson-Allot's (2013) study of 'the queer fat' of Seymour-Hoffman, Harris' work on Depardieu (2013), Richardson's discussion of gendered fatness in recent comedies (2010: 83-100), or Forth's study of fat men in film noir (2013). All of this work has been published since 2010.

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⁴ The Bond-style credit sequence became a staple offering of the films from *Torrente 2: Misión en Marbella/Torrente 2: Mission in Marbella* (Santiago Segura, 2001) onwards, but the clearest example is perhaps *Torrente 3: El Protector/Torrente 3: The Protector* (Santiago Segura, 2005). The titles of the films are also parodies of Hollywood blockbusters featuring iconic males. *Torrente, el brazo tonto de la ley/Torrente, the Stupid Arm of the Law* (Santiago Segura, 1998) was a twist of George Cosmato's film *Cobra, The Strong Arm of the Law* (1986), starring Sylvester Stallone. The title of *Torrente 4: Lethal Crisis* (Crisis Letal) (Santiago Segura, 2011) is a spoof of the *Lethal Weapon* saga starring Mel Gibson, while the 'Missions' in both *Torrente 2* and *Torrente 5: Misión Eurovegas/*

Torrente 5: Mission Eurovegas (Santiago Segura, 2014) are clear references to the *Mission Impossible* saga, starring Tom Cruise.

⁵ In a round table with the director and co-protagonist Luis Tosar on Spanish television some eight years later, however, Bardem argued that it was his idea that Santa was fat. This was because he had already gained a few kilos after giving up smoking, but also because he and the director agreed that it would give the role the kind of ‘heavy weight’ that would bring the group of unemployed men together (RTVE 2010).

⁶ See Fouz-Hernández 2005 for more on the usage of mirrors in *Jamón, jamón*.

⁷ Another character in the film, Lino (José Ángel Egido) embodies a more negative side of fatness. In his case, the emphasis on weight (pointed out by Santa in one occasion) is linked to the issue of ageing as an added handicap in a competitive job market. This is visually emphasised in close up shots of his plump and wrinkling face, and his unsuccessful attempts to appear younger by wearing his son’s clothes and even dyeing his greying hair black.