

<p>Institution: Oxford Brookes University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 36 - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>Title of case study: Research-informed discourse on homosexuality benefits Spanish gay communities</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Dr Alberto Mira's (Reader, Oxford Brookes University 1999-Present) research bridges the gap between academic studies and ideas within the gay movement and non-homophobic media needing concepts and evidence to construct discourse. Dr Mira's work on cultural history of homosexuality and gay authorship and spectatorship have had an impact on public perceptions. Dr Mira's work has also been used in non-academic writers' conferences, librarians' associations and a number of gay groups. Key areas explored by Dr Mira's work includes: gay vs queer paradigms, appropriation as a mechanism of gay spectatorship, gender as a cultural position, how gendered voices are constructed and articulated textually, ideology and construction of gender images, spectator's investment in gay characters, reading and interpreting gender in film, gay subtext, camp. Dr Mira's work has engaged with academic debates and illustrated them in divulgative talks and articles.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Dr Mira's work since 1999 has been about providing theoretical tools and analyses to make gender into a category that can be used inclusively in media representations: for instance, rather than suggesting that "some" writing (filmmaking, art, etc.) is gendered, the fact is gender is an aspect of all writing, it is relevant to all readers and is the result of deep cultural constructions rather than just individual desires or identities.</p> <p>Given this goes against the grain of popular ideas held in the media on non-straight sexualities, work to convey the basic tenets of queer theory into the public arena has been slow. The first theoretically informed popularization of the ideas mentioned above came in 1999 with <i>Para entendernos</i>, an encyclopaedia of gay and lesbian culture. It engaged with theoretical interventions by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler among others in a range of short entries on literature, film and history, markedly different to gossipy and untheorized discussions that had taken place in divulgative works. At last there was a general reference source to discuss homosexuality in history and the arts without falling into essentialist or homophobic traps. In 2004, <i>De Sodoma a Chueca</i> focused on XX Century history. A wide range of cultural manifestations (decadent poets, Republican, Francoist legislation to canonical authors such as Lorca or Cernuda, repression and censorship and gay lib) were interpreted in the light of theoretical contributions. Now the general theoretical insights were applied more specifically to Spanish examples. <i>De Sodoma a Chueca</i> became a key source to find a narrative in Spanish experience of homosexuality and its interpretation. Finally, <i>Miradas insumisas</i> (2008) is an even more specific work that still deals with film theory and gender to suggest ways in which gay audiences read films and gay filmmakers work their sources of inspiration into them. These three main works have been supported and complemented in recent years with a number of articles, interviews, interventions on TV and radio, and features in gay magazines.</p> <p>The main achievements of Dr Mira's research items discussed in this impact case are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of academic discussion of pre-1975 discussion of gay identities (Mira 2004) through historical and archival research. Academic discussion of articulation of gay identity in Spain against the background of construction of Anglo American identities (Mira 2004, Mira 2007a, Mira 2007b, Mira 2011a) Introduction of theorization of gay spectatorship in public debates as part of the history of gay experience in Spain (Mira 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2011c). <p><i>Miradas insumisas</i> underlines the way in which gay audiences select, distort and produce certain meanings in certain film: gay experience prepares certain spectators to read films in a certain way, whether trying to find an experience of resistance towards sexual orthodoxy, establishing a homoerotic gaze or contributing to the cultivation of self-image. Extensive interviews with gay film spectators were used for the writing of this volume, which were used to illustrate and develop basic</p>

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points. The second part of this volume combines proposals by Janet Staiger (in *Perverse Spectators*, 2000) on “real audiences” and Brett Farmer (in *Spectacular Passions*, 2000) more psychoanalytically underpinned, together with personal research through interviews to propose ways in which audiences have assimilated film. There was a discussion on the ways notions such as “gay identity” might have their limits when dealing with Spanish cinephilia (how gay identity and watching films were perceived as separate or continuous experiences was a key question in interviews carried out as preliminary research).

Among the notions put forward in previous works that elicited more interest (and some confusion) in gay cultural associations and radio interviews was the concept of “camp”, adapted into Spanish culture from work by Richard Dyer and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In public fora (public talks, gay centers, internet discussions), it became clear that one of the aspects of camp that Spanish audiences did not quite comprehend is that it is a fluid concept. It is not that “some texts are camp” but the emphasis should be on the way gay audiences read certain texts (musicals, melodrama, Disney movies are specifically studied). This opened the way to an article for a collection which was based on Mira’s personal experience on the Broadway musical as a tool to cultivate gay identity. The remit of the collection where the article was included (*Homoerotismos literarios*, edited by Rodrigo Andrés) was to discuss texts that were somehow important to gay people in Spain. Mira 2011c develops some of the insights on camp and appropriation in Mira 2008a applying them to the Broadway musical. The article makes explicit reference to D.A. Miller’s volume *A Place for Us* (1998) as well as essays by Dyer (“Judy Garland and Gay Men” 1986, “It’s Being So Camp As Gets Us Going” 1977) and proposes mechanisms for appropriation of certain texts that are specifically linked to gay identity.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

BOOKS

2008a: *Miradas insumisas*, Madrid: Editorial Egales S.L ISBN: 978-8488052513. AHRC-funded research leave AH/E000975/1, £ 18,435, ‘Film cultures and gay communities in Spain 1960-1980 (2006-2007)

2004: *De Sodoma a Chueca: historia cultural de la homosexualidad en España 1914-1990*, Madrid, Egales ISBN: 978-8495346650. AHRB Grant 2002-2003

1999: *Para entendernos. Diccionario de cultura homosexual, gay y lesbica*, Barcelona, Libros de la Tempestad. ISBN: 978-8479480387

RELEVANT ARTICLES

2011a: “Nuevas perspectivas, nuevas cartografías: de los gay studies a la teoría queer”, in *Secuencias*, 34, pp.13-31 (Journal article)

2011b: “Poetas en el cine: paradigmas teóricos en dos narrativas biográficas. (*Little Ashes* y *El cónsul de Sodoma*).”, *Revista Lectora*, 17 (pp. 123-138) , Universidad de Barcelona.

2011c: “‘I Feel Pretty’: notas sobre el musical de Broadway y experiencia gay”, *Homoerotismos Literarios* (coord. Rodrigo Andrés), Icaria, Barcelona, (pp. 171-194), ISBN: 978-84-9888-311-4.

2011d: “Hetero-queer: fluidez de género en las fantasías biográficas de Guy Maddin”, in *Imágenes del Eros*, Fran Zurian, ed. Madrid, 8 y medio (pp. 226-239)

2008b: “Cinefilia camp y underground homosexual en *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto!*”, , (Roberto Cueto, ed.) , ISBN: 978-84-482-5169-7

2007a: “¿Quién teme al intelectual gay? Sobre las dificultades para una reflexión gay en España”, *Primera plana. La construcción de una cultura queer en España*, Juan Antonio Herrero Brasas (ed.), Egales, pp. 282-291, ISBN: 84-8805-26-X

2007b: “”, *Orientaciones*, número 11. (pp 95-118)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Many accounts of gay literature and film in Spanish now reference some of Mira’s works. The books and articles have great prominence in key gay publications and, very unusually for Spain, they have crossed over to non-gay publications (newspapers like *El País* or *El Mundo*, film magazines like *Fotogramas* or national TV). It is important to note that such media tend to shy away from featuring items on gay activism or gay culture, therefore Mira’s work is unique in articulating theory and presenting it to general audiences. It also constitutes authoritative,

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historically and theoretically informed, discourse on gay issues. The following is just an overview with some examples of how the impact of the work has featured in different media.

At the time of its publication in 1999, *Para entendernos* was not only ground-breaking but also controversial. It was praised in the press by writers and intellectuals (i) a positive review by Vicente Molina-Foix in *El País* (a) who saw this as a great tool to construct non-homophobic and authoritative discourse on homosexuality. *Para entendernos*, which went through a revised edition in 2003, is still, to date, a book that sells in gay bookshops, particularly to young gay readers and those readers' parents, as the manager of Barcelona gay bookshop Antinous will attest (ii) and it has gradually found its way in Latin American gay cultures. This was the first book on gay issues to be stocked in the reference section of the Biblioteca Nacional in Spain(c).

This was followed by a more academic history of homosexual cultures in Spain published in 2004, *De Sodoma a Chueca*. Like its predecessor, it was bought by libraries throughout Spain as an introduction to issues on gay culture. It is widely accessible in library catalogues as the main reference book for gay culture. When a gay activist became angered by certain homophobic comments made by the Queen of Spain, she gave her a copy of *De Sodoma a Chueca* (d). Between 2005 and 2011, Dr Mira was invited as speaker to several gay associations (in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Gijón) to discuss aspects of the book. Talks were covered by the local press. The main ideas of a talk given in Gijón, Asturias, are summarized in this item from the local newspaper *La voz de Asturias* (e).

The three main inputs by Mira (1999, 2004 and 2008a) are accessible through public libraries. *Para entendernos* and *De Sodoma a Chueca* were included in a leaflet published by the network of public libraries of the Catalan government with recommendations on books on gay and lesbian issues; they are both recommended in this bibliography (f). Another example of Mira's work being promoted by public libraries when selecting books on gay and lesbian issues can be found here (g). The following article on the situation of Gay and Lesbian writing in public libraries makes several references to Mira's work and gives an idea of its centrality in articulating gay culture for wide audiences (h).

Among the key objectives of Mira's research was to construct a historical discourse not based on homophobic premises, therefore talks at gay associations and on the radio was addressing its target audience. Mira was invited to award-winning novelist and essayist Luis Antonio de Villena's radio show *Las aceras de enfrente* to discuss gay cinema and gay icons (i). *Las aceras de enfrente* is the only National Radio programme focusing on gay issues. The book was also the subject of a section in a RTVE programme on gay issues. The title of the programme was *Miradas 2* and the clip includes mention of the innovative aspects in Mira's work as linking the notion of gay cinema to spectatorship and appropriation (j). This was complemented with a number of articles in gay magazine *Zero*, and some contributions to a gay culture blog (k). *De Sodoma a Chueca* is a key reference in historical discussions of homosexuality in Spain (referenced in the Wikipedia article on "Homosexualidad en España" (l), "Homosexuality in Spain"), quoted in newspaper articles and magazine pieces as an authoritative source. In 2008, Alberto Mira was invited to contribute to a bibliographical syllabus to be used as reference in Catalan libraries. *De Sodoma a Chueca* is still selling and has gone through a second edition with publishers Egales. The proprietor of Madrid gay bookshop Berkana has also acknowledged the popularity of Mira's work among gay essays (m).

Publication of *Miradas insumisas* (2008) built on this pedagogical task of providing journalists and the general public a repertoire of perspectives into Film. Divided into two sections, the first was about how homosexual perspective was presented on film, the other dealt with gay appropriations and perception of film. This was covered in the press, film magazines and on television and again has been quoted as a key reference to discuss film and homosexuality. Leading newspaper *El País* was interested in Mira's ideas and requested a special article shortly after publication (n). The article was based on one of *Miradas insumisas* key ideas on how gay audiences actively read films in ways that match their experience. The book was awarded "Best Essay of 2008" (o) by the popular gay website dosmanzanas.com. This is still one of the main sources for gay journalism and

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reviews in Spain.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- a) http://elpais.com/diario/1999/11/17/cultura/942793209_850215.html
- b) Corroborative statement author 1. Antinous Gay Bookshop Manager, Barcelona;
- c) <http://catalogo.bne.es/> Title search '*Para entendernos*'
- d) <http://www.dosmanzanas.com/2010/05/mili-hernandez-regala-a-la-reina-sofia-de-sodoma-a-chueca-aprovechando-su-visita-a-la-feria-del-libro-de-madrid.html>
- e) <http://archivo.lavozdeasturias.es/html/278885.html>
- f) <http://www20.gencat.cat/docs/CulturaDepartament/DGCC/Documents/Arxiu/SIS/bibliografia%20tematica%20-%20cglit.pdf>
- g) http://www.vilanova.cat/doc/doc_81414307_1.pdf
- h) <http://bit.ly/1fdnNpx>
- i) <http://www.rtve.es/alacharta/audios/las-aceras-de-enfrente/>
- j) <http://www.rtve.es/alacharta/videos/miradas-2/miradas-2-cine-doble-lectura/196072/>
- k) <http://autores.universogay.com/albertomira.html> (n.b. Universo Gay is a webpage, the link lists Mira's articles available).
- l) http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexualidad_en_Espa%C3%B1a
- m) Corroborative contact 2. Manager Libreria Berkana and Egales Publisher (Egales is Spain's largest gay publishing company) She will also provide some comparative data on how my book *Miradas insumisas* sold in relation to other books she stocks. She is also the owner and manager of Madrid gay bookshop Berkana and can provide information and feedback on reactions and impact.
- n) http://elpais.com/diario/2008/07/19/babelia/1216422381_850215.html
- o) <http://archivo.dosmanzanas.com/index.php/archives/5729;>
<http://archivo.dosmanzanas.com/index.php/archives/6127;>