

# Mrs Bates, I Presume?... Or Decomposing Identification in Leitão de Barros' *Inês de Castro*

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Can horror and sympathy co-exist? Might a film viewer affirm rather than repudiate a horrifying, grotesque body? And if such a reclaiming of the repugnant is possible, to what extent might popular/national tradition and viewer expectation aid us in bypassing conventional notions of the monstrous? As a case for inquiry, one can turn to José Leitão de Barros' *Inês de Castro* (Portugal/Spain, 1945), a film in which not only do divergent processes of identification supplant conventional psychoanalytic models, but moreover, such alternatives are historicized and function intertextually with popular culture. Together with the disruption of conventional paradigms, *Inês de Castro* interrogates the very need for an all-encompassing, excorporative identification process. The film instead draws upon viewer expectation and popular tradition to supplant both ego and essentialized ideals with a more abstract form of identification, one which nonetheless forces the viewer at once to relate positively to a body which cinematic convention would repudiate, and moreover to perceive this body as *subject*. What is of particular consequence is that the film accomplishes this in the context of a seemingly classical cinematic discourse, one in which many conventional inscriptions of femininity remain intact, yet are offset by more progressive underpinnings which erupt through the fissures of both the stylized narrative and the spectatorial address.

## **The Queen Is Dead. Long Live the Queen!**

A costume epic, *Inês de Castro* frustrates any rigid categorization of the grotesque, intersecting popular tradition, historical anecdote, and horror to relate the tragic decapitation and post-mortem coronation of the mistress of Portugal's *infante* Dom Pedro. These events, dating from the fourteenth century, have provided impetus for literary works of all genres in both Spain and Portugal. Leitão de Barros' film is highly influenced by German expressionism in its chiaroscuro lighting and penchant for affective excess. A Portuguese-Spanish co-production, *Inês de Castro* became the first Portuguese film to be screened abroad, showing in Barcelona in February of 1945 and in France and Switzerland later that same year. Its appeal in the French-speaking world was assured by the popularity of Montherlant's 1942 play, *La reine morte*, and this title, moreover, was used for the French release.

*Inês de Castro*'s storyline follows closely the fifteenth-century chronicles of Pero López de Ayala, Fernão Lopes, and Rui de Pina, which have provided us with an outline of the historical anecdote. The film opens in 1335 with the arrival in Portugal of Doña Costanza (Portuguese Dona Costança), daughter of Don Juan Manuel of Castille, to consummate an arranged political marriage with the *infante* Dom Pedro, intended to secure peace throughout the Iberian Peninsula. She brings with her a lady-in-waiting of Galician origin, Doña Inés

(Portuguese Inês) de Castro. The *infante* falls madly in love with Inês rather than with his bride. Fearing a threat to the desperately needed marriage, Alfonso IV, the father of Dom Pedro and monarch of Portugal, orders Inês exiled from his kingdom. Upon the death of Dona Costança in 1345, Dom Pedro resumes his relationship with his beloved, who bears him four children. Following the advice of his counselors and fearing future opposition to the throne, Dom Alfonso orders Inês decapitated in the name of the state. When Alfonso dies some two years later and Dom Pedro subsequently ascends to the throne, the noblemen responsible for the death of Inês, Pero Coelho and Alvaro Gonçalves, are executed in the most brutal of manners; one's heart is pulled out through his chest and the other's through his back. Dom Pedro subsequently orders Inês's beheaded and badly decayed body exhumed and placed (in coronation robes) on the throne. The film concludes as the court pays regal respects to the "queen" in a morbid ceremony of *besamanos*.

A brief discussion of the film's literary antecedents and their role in the creation of a popular myth are essential to an understanding of the impact of *Inês de Castro's* marriage of a national tradition and the cinematic grotesque upon the Portuguese spectator. Castro's many literary incarnations, though underscoring her sensationalist appeal, have problematized the separation of historical fact from fiction and have rendered her name synonymous with the coronation of her badly decomposed body.

Celebrated in poetry and theatre in both Spanish and Portuguese, the story of the decapitation and post-mortem "reign" of Inês de Castro has constituted one of the prime episodes of Portuguese cultural tradition. Together with the episode dedicated to the story in Camões' *Os Lusíadas*, Inês de Castro was the subject of a Renaissance play in Portuguese, António Ferreira's *A Castro* (1557) and a Golden Age drama in Spanish, Vélez de Guevara's *Reinar después de morir* (1652). Both plays foreground the subjectivity of the female protagonist, who occupies considerable stage time. Outside of the Iberian Peninsula, Inês has returned to the stage on numerous occasions, among these an eighteenth-century opera by Paisiello, a "musical drama in two acts" (authorship unknown) performed in London's Haymarket in 1799, an 1830 ballet entitled *Pietro di Portogallo*, and what appears to have been a ridiculously over-acted, unintentionally burlesque pantomime starring Antonietta Pallerini, also performed at the King's Theatre of the Haymarket in 1833 ("Ines de Castro in Opera and Ballet": 18). More recently the historical anecdote was the source of the celebrated 1942 play by Henri de Montherlant, *La reine morte*, and of a highly acclaimed ballet performed in 1952 at the Casino in Cannes, which featured Roselle Hightower and George Skibine as the star-crossed lovers.

The theatrical retellings of the tragedy are considerably distinct in intent and impact from Leitão de Barros' film, yet sensationalism appears to have been a common thread uniting a good number of the works. All, moreover, draw upon national iconography and myth. The film, a typical example of the classical cinema, inscribes these cinematic codes into the broader context of a national literary tradition, particularly those aspects predicated upon the morose. The film's penchant for morbidity recalls a nineteenth-century literary precursor surprisingly similar to the grotesque realm of the 1945 film. A sub-category of Portuguese Romanticism, *ultra-romantismo* (which had its apex in the 1850s) conflates the ideal of a love transcendent of death with the somber imaginary of desecrated tombs and entwined skeletons. A literary movement which exaggerates the norms of Iberian Romanticism, the moroseness of the movement, and its obsession with violent crimes, *ultra-romantismo* functions as a link between Romanticism and Realism. In its extremities, it recalls the nightmarish visions of Goya's black paintings, themselves deemed precursors of both

Romanticism and Surrealism. Replete with the morbidity of the eighteenth-century Castilian poet/essayist José Cadalso's *Noches lúgubres* (1792) or of Spanish romantic poet José de Espronceda's *El estudiante de Salamanca* (1839), such poems as António Augusto Soares de Paz's "Os Noivados do sepulcro" ("The Lovers of the Sepulchre") creates an atmospheric precedent to the film's morbid extremity. The unsophisticated Portuguese spectator is conditioned through his/her superficial familiarity with the historical anecdote, to anticipate the film's grotesque final scene. An educated viewer, moreover, will recognize the film's romantic excess and expressionistic atmosphere as part of a longstanding Iberian literary motif. In either case, the film's morbid depiction of the crowned corpse is expected and perhaps *required* by the Portuguese viewer, particularly given the cultural baggage connected with the medieval historical anecdote.

The film's concluding moments, moreover, have a cinematic precedent in Portugal, for the historical tragedy was brought to the Portuguese silent screen in 1910 in a film produced by Filmes Ideal, a company founded by Júlio Costa, an entrepreneur who had gained control of film production and distribution in Portugal. *Inês de Castro* was a lavish, stylized film which played for a record two weeks in Lisbon (Ribeiro: 8-9). The pomp of the silent film anticipates that of Leitão de Barros, whose 1945 film has been praised for its eloquent framing and masterful crowd scenes, yet censured for other technical deficiencies and a certain awkwardness when massive spectacle is absent (Pina: 21-22). Leitão de Barros, a painter, journalist, and playwright, is best known as the innovator who introduced sound to the Portuguese cinema with his 1931 film *A Severa*. The director, who was instrumental in the creation of Tóbis Português (an organization which promoted Portugal's film industry, facilitating the construction of a studio on a farm north of Lisbon and the founding of a union for cinema professionals), filmed *Inês de Castro* in Madrid's Roptence Studios, initiating a series of co-productions between Portugal and Spain, obviously a ploy to solidify culturally the close relationship between national dictators Franco and Salazar. Among the surprisingly few critics who, to date, have commented on the film, Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa has indicted *Inês de Castro* for its sensationalist appeal and for its emphasis on spectacle over poetics. These comments, which indicate a thorough knowledge of earlier literary deployments of the theme, open doors for debate, especially when the film is considered in the context of both a national cultural iconography and classical European cinema at large.

### **The Abject Gift of Love**

Dom Pedro was known to be a monarch of great popular appeal with a deep affection for even the most impoverished of his subjects. His lover's body, moreover, not unlike another famous corpse, that of Eva Perón, became a symbol of popular resistance to tyranny and oppression. Such popular tradition allows horror and sympathy to co-exist as the grotesque image confronts the spectator, who in turn identifies with the body in a manner contrary to the norms of the classical cinema. A recent study by Kaja Silverman posits a model for a like identification not predicated upon the ego or essentialized ideals. Her *Threshold of the Visible World* draws upon Lacan's notion of "the active gift of love", a concept originally elaborated in Seminar I which theorizes one's ability to perceive the loved subject's "being" and "particularity" (Silverman, 1996: 276). For Silverman and Lacan, such love is contingent upon recognizing the other as a subject and not merely an object, or extension of the self. Silverman's discussion, originally intended to offer a psychoanalytic description of romantic love, looks back to sources as divergent as Max Scheler's examination of "excorporative" identification and Luce Irigaray's notion of masculinity as a desire for the same to suggest how identification can function in a way that results in neither the triumph of self-sameness,

nor craven submission to an exteriorized but essentialized ideal" (1996:79). Of particular interest to Silverman is how the active gift of love can allow us to relate in a positive manner to bodies "which we have been taught to abhor and repudiate" (79). Such a concept of active love informs en-gendered debates on identification inasmuch as it opens doors to non-idealized inscriptions of femininity. Of particular consequence is the manner in which it refutes traditional mandates of masquerade and facilitates a reassessment of the grotesque, thereby positing new paradigms of identification. When the non-idealized inscription of femininity, implied by a conventionally horrifying image, converges with national tradition and viewer expectation, the resulting reinscription can be especially politicized.

In the sequence in Leitão de Barros' film in which the Portuguese court is forced to celebrate a headless, decomposed corpse as both royal consort and mother to the country's heir apparent, the horrific image refutes conventional taxonomies of the grotesque. In her introduction to *The Female Grotesque*, Mary Russo distinguishes between two types of grotesque, the comic and the uncanny. Associated with the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, the comic grotesque is related to the realm of the socio-political and constitutes one of the primary concerns of recent critical analyses of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin views the grotesque as "blended with the world, with animals, with objects" (27) and identifies it with the lower bodily stratum. The grotesque body is contrasted with the static, self-contained, classical body in that it is "open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing; it is identified with non-official 'low' culture... and with social transformation" (Russo: 8). The uncanny grotesque, on the other hand, is associated with the work of Wolfgang Kayser and with Freud's essay "On the Uncanny." Russo relates this type of grotesque to the psychic register and to the "bodily as projection of an inner state" (9).

Russo offers a taxonomy of stereotypical female grotesques in Western iconography and mentions the Medusa, the Crone, the Bearded Woman, the Fat Lady, the Tattooed Woman, the Unruly Woman, the Hottentot Venus, the Starving Woman, the Hysteric, the Vampire, the Female Impersonator, the Siamese Twin, and the Dwarf. She stresses that typage, despite its limitations, is a valuable aid in "recalling the persistence of those constrained codings of the body in Western culture which are associated with the grotesque" (14). Leitão de Barros' film draws upon an iconography distinct from Russo's extensive list, yet by implication underscores the gaps in the traditional taxonomies Russo refutes. *Inês de Castro's* grotesque is predicated upon mutilation and decomposition, not upon generic deformities. Such horrific spectacle, moreover, offers a unique relationship to the visual dynamics of the look, the beheaded, decomposing body of Inês de Castro becoming the object of both the diegetic look and that of the viewer, yet being deprived the agency to look back.

What specifically then is this body? Inasmuch as Dom Pedro's primary motive in displaying the remains of Inês de Castro in coronation regalia is to legitimize his relationship with his mistress and by extension, her son's claim as heir to the throne, then the body on the throne is a *maternal* corpse. Julia Kristeva has articulated that symbolic matricide is necessary for the fledgling subject to assert her/his own identity, leading to the ultimate abjection of the maternal body. Although not murdered by her offspring, the death of a mother in this case is essential to the preservation of the royal *status quo*. The mother is abject, not from a psychoanalytical perspective, but from a socio-political one. If Leitão de Barros' spectator comes to identify with the corpse through an "active gift of love," is this very identification not an identification with the abject, with social marginality?

## **Femininity at a Loss**

Unlike its theatrical antecedents, which place particular emphasis on female subjectivity, Leitão de Barros' film follows suit with many of the conventions of the classical cinema narrative. This is evidenced from the voice-over which introduces the film; an authoritative male voice describes the tombs of Dom Pedro and Inês de Castro as the camera discovers a series of carvings depicting the tragic life and ultimate decapitation of the *infante's* mistress. At the close of the film, the same voice comments on Inês' role in popular tradition in both Spain and Portugal as her body is once again laid to rest. The extra-diegetic, authoritarian voice of the male, which is privy to a broader historical context, is contrasted with the female voice, which perpetually is confined to the interior of the diegesis, recalling Kaja Silverman's claim that "dominant cinema...holds the female subject more fully than the male subject to the unity of sound and image, and consequently to the representation of lack" (1988:51). Their confinement to the interior of the diegesis aside, the female figures in *Inês de Castro* occupy surprisingly little screen time for a film bearing the name of a female protagonist. Dom Pedro undisputedly functions as the film's center of attention, and a good deal of emphasis is placed on his desire for revenge following the death of Inês. Once again, such defiantly male focus lies in direct contrast to the theatrical works from the Portuguese Renaissance and the Spanish Golden Age.

The film opens in Castille as the marriage contract between Dom Pedro I and Dona Costança is sealed. Significantly, all the players in this sequence are male, suggesting that the female is granted no agency in both the familiar and historical domains. Inês is introduced in the following scene as she and her mistress travel to Portugal. The first female voice to be heard is that of Inês who comments on Costança's future as queen. As the two women arrive at the Portuguese border, a *méconnaissance* occurs which sets the tone for much of what is to follow. Dom Pedro and his companion muse about the women and ponder which is the *infante's* future bride, erroneously assuming her to be the blonde. Hesitant to leave Spain, Inês urges Costança to cross the bridge alone to meet her future husband.

When we again see Inês, she is entertaining her mistress by playing a lute and singing a traditional Galician *cantar de amiga*, a popular medieval verse form which perhaps represents the first feminine voice in the Iberian literary tradition. Dom Pedro approaches and stresses that he knows the song, but that in Portugal it ends differently. He gently takes Inês's hand and plays the variant. A close-up on the hands foreshadows the monstrous image near the end of the film in which the courtiers bow to kiss the decayed hand of the dead "queen." It is significant to stress that the lovers are brought together by the popular tradition of the *cantar de amiga*, thereby re-inscribing the film into a longstanding, *feminine* national tradition. Although the voice of authority introducing the film has intimated that the legend of Dom Pedro and Inês is known to all Portuguese, the film is quite distinct from its literary and theatrical antecedents inasmuch as it fails, despite its nod to the *cantar de amiga*, to offer a narrative space in which a female voice may speak. The legend is indeed familiar, but it is repackaged in conformance with the classical cinematic norms of the mid-1949s. Moreover, it is superficially repackaged in the patriarchal discourses of the dictatorship of its co-producers.

While Inês' voice is assigned to the interior of the diegesis, her body becomes a captive of the gaze. The relationship between Castro and Dom Pedro is initiated through a highly conventional exchange of looks as Dona Costança and her lady-in-waiting arrive at the Portuguese border. And such objectifying gaze dynamics serve to propel the narrative at key junctures. Following the birth of Costança's first child, an advisor spies Inês and Pedro as they embrace in the chiaroscuro of a dimly-lit antechamber. His gaze at the shadows of the

lovers recalls the German expressionist film tradition and foreshadows the grotesque form which Inês de Castro's body will ultimately assume. Unaware of the advisor's gaze, Inês has yet to "see herself being seen."

Her awareness of the look directed at her is first established at a banquet held to celebrate the christening of Costança and Pedro's son, the *infante* Fernão. Costança, recovering from the childbirth, cannot attend the festivities; Inês, who has served as the child's godmother, sits at Pedro's side. Baited by a maidservant, Costança emerges from her chamber to gaze at the banquet from a distance. An eyeline match is articulated between herself and Inês, and the latter becomes cognizant that her affections for Dom Pedro have been apprehended. From that point on, Inês herself is denied access to the visual dynamics of the look, for she avows to her lover that she can no longer allow her eyes to meet another's; Pedro's mistress must hide in self-imposed seclusion from looks and mockery. Inês is thus inscribed into the visual dynamics of the film, yet is nonetheless denied the ability to look back. Her ascension to active agent of the look would imply a threat both to her life and to the cover of her affair. Inês is not only silenced, but moreover, she is blinded.

Like Ferreira's renaissance play, Leitão de Barros' *Inês de Castro* makes certain concessions to bienséance, a condition of theatrical "appropriateness" dating back to Aristotle's *Poetics* and later recouped and reinterpreted by the French playwrights of the seventeenth century. *Bienséance* fosters an environment conducive to tragedy. According to this code, in a work such as *Inês de Castro*, both language and action must befit the dignity of a royal court. Violence or vulgarity would impede the audience from feeling pity for the royal participants. In Leitão de Barros' film, when Inês is beheaded, the violent action is suggested rather than graphically depicted. It is, however, intercut with scenes from a hunting expedition on which Dom Pedro has taken his sons. A frantic montage ensues, and the slaughtering of a deer supplants the blow which decapitates the *infante's* mistress. We see in close-up Inês's blood-soaked arm falling lifeless at her side. Leitão de Barros furthermore avoids the blatant depiction of other violent acts. Specifically, the brutal deaths of Pero Coelho and Alvaro Gonçalves are not shown, but rather implied when a vessel containing their hearts is brought to Pedro as he sits at his dinner table, a sequence bordering on the uncanny inasmuch as it reflects the protagonist's turbulent mental state. Once again, popular tradition speaks for itself, and the viewer needs not see the graphic depiction of body parts in order to understand what has transpired.

Despite these few concessions to subtlety, *Inês de Castro* allows the royal mistress's corpse to be at least partially revealed in its penultimate sequence. Apprised following his ascension to the throne that Portugal needs a queen so that his heirs might be legitimate, Dom Pedro asserts Inês de Castro to be his rightful consort. Having assembled the court in the throne room of the castle, the king stands before a closed curtain and announces that his country already has a queen. As the curtains part, he introduces Queen Inês de Castro. A cut from Pedro to the court reveals looks of horror and disgust. The ensuing point-of-view shot depicts the monstrous spectacle -- the (supposedly) decomposed, headless body of Inês sporting a wedding dress and a crown. The spectacle is extremely theatrical, the proscenium in which the body is displayed suggesting a play within a play. Moreover, in the medium-long shot in which the corpse is revealed, the body is completely covered by the wedding dress. The spectator of Leitão de Barros' film is thus doubly distanced from the horror. Yet s/he is conditioned by popular tradition to know that the corpse is indeed decomposing. One by one, the members of the court are invited to approach the throne and kiss the hand of the dead queen, as smoke from censers competes for the viewer's attention. The bishop falls

(presumably) dead, unable to touch the monstrosity on the throne. A close-up of a courtier as he kisses the skeletal hand recalls Inês' delicate fingers playing the *cantar de amiga* on the lute. Although lasting only for a split second, this close-up on a detail of Inês' body is the only instance in which her state of decomposition is explicitly shown. The link with the *cantar de amiga* reinscribes the popular into the film.

### Identifying (with) Corpses

Such a choice perhaps frustrates viewer expectations, particularly in light of the role of decomposition in literary and aesthetic tradition, Iberian iconography notwithstanding. Corporeal decay is not only an intrinsic component of Portuguese *ultra-romantismo*, but moreover, it has provided, throughout the ages, an impetus for morbid fascination. This is evidenced in the realm of international popular culture and spectacle as well as in more highbrow forms of expression. A case in point is emigré Argentine Manuel Puig's novel *Boquitas pintadas (Heartbreak Tango)*, which examines the fantasies used by the residents of a backwater Argentine town to escape from their mundane existence. Puig describes a Sunday ritual in which townspeople lift the cover on a collective pauper grave to observe corpses in various stages of decay. There is no attempt made by the gawking viewers to perceive the dead as subjects; they are simply objects of curiosity. Such a sequence recalls Vanessa R. Schwartz's extensive study of the role of the Paris morgue as a form of morbid entertainment in *fin de siècle* Paris. Constructed in 1864, the morgue featured a *salle d'exposition* where two rows of corpses were displayed behind glass, ostensibly so that visitors could file past and ultimately identify them. Schwartz describes the spectacle that the morgue offered:

Most often, however, the Morgue was celebrated as public theater. Emile Zola remarked in *Thérèse Raquin* that it was a "show that was affordable to all ... The door is open, enter those who will..." In a time of increasingly private and commercial entertainment, the Morgue was open and free, and the display of dead bodies existed for the public to come and see...Why did this show attract so many visitors? The historical record does not offer many direct answers ... The vast majority of visitors probably did not go to the Morgue thinking they actually might recognize a corpse. They went to look at real dead bodies under the pretense of acting out of civic duty. This was public voyeurism-flâneurie in the service of the state. (89-90)

Schwartz describes an 1886 case in which the body of a four-year-old girl, which revealed virtually no signs of injury, attracted some 150,000 visitors to the Morgue. The little body was clothed in a dress and seated on a chair covered with a red cloth, which emphasized her deadly pallor. The popular press offered images of both the dead child and her onlookers, and *Le Journal Illustré* created an illustrated serial novel around the mystery. When the child was eventually buried, a photograph of her was kept on display at the entrance to the Morgue, underscoring the dead child's role as cultural fetish. One might question whether the child's body inspired sympathy in the public, or whether it existed, as Schwartz suggests, as endemic of the "morbid attraction" the morgue represented. Once again, the spectacle proffered by the morgue implies the objectification of the corpses on display. Perhaps it is their very state -- can a corpse have agency? -- that problematizes our perception of them as subjects. Moreover, such objectification prevents an "active gift of love," precluding identification with the repudiated body.

In the film medium, one of the most familiar images of a corpse is that of the decaying body of Mrs. Bates in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, an image which inspires horror primarily because of the unexpected nature of its revelation. One must contrast the depiction of Inês de Castro's decaying corpse with Hitchcock's image. For the Portuguese spectator, it is *assumed* that the film will conclude with the coronation of the dead body. While Mrs. Bates, moreover, is shown in close-up, Inês' corpse, with the exception of the close-up on her hand, is virtually unseen. The headless body is covered by a wedding dress and resembles a broken doll propped on the throne. The grotesque here is not only expected, but more significantly, it is rendered almost comic in its artificiality and stylized contrivance. While Mrs. Bates's body fails to imbue the viewer with sympathy, (this due perhaps to the shock value of the sequence, horror and sympathy, in this case, failing to coexist), the viewer's relationship with the decapitated corpse of Inês de Castro is considerably more complex. Hitchcock's corpse is housed in the realm of the uncanny, not the carnivalesque, for it is perhaps an outward manifestation of Norman's interior reality. Although Leitão de Barros' cadaver is somewhat comical and improvised, it is nonetheless such an integral part of a national tradition that it transcends the awkwardness of its presentation. Its popular appeal is indeed carnivalesque. We must recall Dom Pedro's popular allure -- Stanley Payne has stressed that he was a merry monarch who loved to sing and dance with his subjects and became, perhaps the favorite of all Medieval Portuguese kings (127). It is specifically this intersection of the popular, the carnivalesque, and the grotesque that position Inês de Castro differently from other corpses and permit what Silverman denotes "ex-corporative" identification.

There are clearly instances in which the presence of a decomposing corpse inspires a range of emotions more complex than simple horror or disgust, as in the case of Mrs. Bates. One need only recall the ambiguities of Simone de Beauvoir's *La cérémonie des adieux* (*Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*) which offers extensive descriptions of the disintegration of Sartre's body. Beauvoir desires to lie next to her lover's corpse, but cannot do so due to the extensive gangrene. She separates herself from him with a sheet, and lies down to sleep. Alice Jardine intersects Beauvoir's description of Sartre's body with the author's account of her mother's death in *Une mort très douce* (*A Very Easy Death*) (1964) and stresses how Sartre became conflated for Beauvoir with the phallic mother. The description of the dead or dying bodies evokes a myriad of psychoanalytic and existential issues. Beauvoir is forced to confront her mother's corporeality and femininity as she gazes at her exposed genitals. "No body existed less for me -- nor existed more..." (Beauvoir, 1964: 27). Beauvoir neither repudiates nor identifies with her mother's body. Her position remains ambivalent, at least temporarily unresolved. Yet one must recall, particularly in light of the extended description of Beauvoir's mother's death, that the dying body at which she gazes is nonetheless a subject, a subject whose role in the author's life must still be assessed.

We must recall that the body of Inês de Castro, like those of Mmes. Bates and Beauvoir, is explicitly a *maternal* body. Its distinction from that of *Psycho* is especially marked inasmuch as it fails to imply the realm of the uncanny as does Norman Bates' work of taxidermy. On the other hand, it retains some of the complexities of Beauvoir's mother-daughter relationship. Although unfamiliar -- few viewers are likely to experience personally the veneration of a seated, decayed corpse -- it is also hyper-familiar. One need not reiterate that the image of Inês de Castro on the throne is thoroughly entrenched in both high and low Portuguese culture. The requisite closing sequence establishes a complicity between the viewer and Dom Pedro's desire to redeem his mistress's honor. We are reminded that it was the Portuguese *people* who cried for the king to find a queen; the coronation of Inês thus



responded to a popular demand. Albeit unable to return the look cast upon it, Inês's headless body nonetheless implies a *post-mortem* triumph against and tyranny and social mores.

### **Actively Abject**

Although the body of Inês de Castro has clearly become a fetishized object for Dom Pedro I, on the level of the spectator, Leitão de Barros' notion of fetishism is somewhat distinct from conventional Freudian models. The spectator, already cognizant of the historical context of the coronation, is hyperaware of the over-inscription of value onto the corpse. In an examination of the particular form of disavowal at play in the horror spectacle, Rhona Berenstein has argued that viewers of horror practice reverse fetishism: "in lieu of devising elaborate means to disguise the creature's monstrosity -- they encounter narrative and visual tropes intended to unmask monsters" (247). Berenstein's remarks foreshadow Laura Mulvey's 1996 examination of fetishism and curiosity. The horror spectacle invites unmasking in a way not unlike Mulvey's attempts to interrogate the fetish. In the specific case of *Inês de Castro*, however, the stylized, artificialized corpse has been unmasked and interrogated *a priori*. The Portuguese viewer understands the significance of the fetish within the country's popular tradition; there is no need for anything more disconcerting or explicit than the stylized, comical grotesque presented here since the spectator demands no authenticity.

In any case, the fetishized corpse of Inês de Castro, not only oscillates between absence and presence within the diegesis, but perhaps more importantly, it finds itself at a problematic locus between the uncanny and the carnivalesque. The uncanny erupts through the generic constraints of the costume drama inasmuch as the fetishized corpse embodies Dom Pedro's personal disavowal of his loss. Yet the carnivalesque is omnipresent by virtue of the film's debt to popular culture, socio-political transformation, and the feminine discourse of the *cantar de amiga*. The decayed, mutilated body of the dead queen is a far cry from an essentialized feminine ideal. And it is this very defiance of essentialism that allows it to counter the downplaying of female voice and subjectivity in the rest of Leitão de Barros' film. Inasmuch as the murdered body is maternal, we identify with the abject. The abject mother is reclaimed through an equation with the carnivalesque and the popular. One might add, moreover that the hyper-contrivance of the depiction of the corpse is Brechtian in its frustration of the internalizing mode of identification. Such a notion is well in line with Silverman's concept of active love. For Silverman (1996), distanciation "figures necessarily and centrally at that point at which the gift of love shifts from a passive to an active modality" (104). She maintains that a political cinema for today must seize upon identification as "a vehicle for taking the spectator somewhere he or she has never been before, and which discourages the return journey" (102). The spectator of *Inês de Castro* eschews self-sameness and identifies instead with the *différance* implied by the mutilated corpse as part of an iconography of national struggle. This difference, at once familiar and strange, uncanny and carnivalesque, abject and affirming, facilitates a unique form of active love in which the spectator engages with history. The decomposing corpse of Inês de Castro recoups its subjectivity and becomes agent of social transformation.

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