

FÁBIO DOS SANTOS BERNARDO

***HOPE AND DESPAIR:
EXPLORING SAD ENDINGS IN
LGBT CINEMA***

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Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias

Escola de Comunicação, Arquitetura, Artes e Tecnologias da Informação

Lisboa

2021

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Dissertação defendida em provas públicas para obtenção do grau de mestre em Estudos Cinematográficos, conferido pela Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias no dia 13/04/2021, nomeado pelo Despacho de Nomeação de Júri n.º: 28/2021, com a seguinte composição:

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Acknowledgements

I would like first and foremost to thank all the following people for their contribution to my short film project: Maria Pires, for her persistence and will to contribute with her input regarding my decisions.

I'd like to mention other three people who have remained patient throughout the project, despite all delays and issues which arose due to production conflicts: Luís Morais, Pedro Vasconcelos and Tiago Castro, the actors of my short film. I would also like to thank Tobias Frühmorgen who has been my tutor pre-production. His perspective allowed me to see the project with other possible development and outcome.

Lastly, I would like to commend the rest of the people that even though left the project midway or simply helped in small ways, were essential to the development of the film such as: Catarina Matias, Ana Marques, Sergeja Perklič, Francisco Duarte, Patrick D'Orlando, Micaela, and to Luís Veríssimo, Cousin Courtney, António Infantes, Enrique Figuero, which were part of figuration.

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Personal Motivation

In the ambit of the unit 'Projecto de dissertação' I have decided to create a short film, which in my own way I wanted to portray a similar situation to a previous project, but in a more sophisticated way; to create a film that doesn't necessarily fall into the conventional pattern of LGBT filmmaking usually ending up being unashamedly sad.

In my view, with this film I would like to explore the fragmentations of a journey of the main character and what he seeks to find within himself. Personally, I intend to portray in this film feelings, which is nothing that people have not experienced before, such as, to let go of someone, to leave our roots and to go explore the unknown. Also, not to be consumed by despair, but feeding hope of what may or not be achievable, just so we can hang into something, while something manages to work in our favour.

However, for the written part analyses, I intend to explore the subject of why typically gay themed films throughout the history of cinema have had a tendency to have sad endings, by developing a simple typology of sad endings in recent films featuring gay protagonists

The people from the community have always had a history of feeling isolated, being an outcast, therefore, that contributes to the inevitable repercussions. Another reason that fortifies the existence of sad ending films is that stereotypes about gay, lesbian, transgender people, which are driven by a society that implies dogmas on those who disagree. Religious and institutional ideologies also contribute simply for representing an important part of the society.

Due to those factors, it's not surprising that their personal experiences may filter into their storytelling.

So, in conclusion, I want this to be the thriving search theme to explore throughout into thesis, because I don't see the sad endings as something as distressing as the public makes it to be. Even though my short film deals with themes such as depression, pain, regret, despair. It doesn't turn into a mournful statement when the

ending sheds light into the story, meaning it gives hope to the overall arc of some characters and that's how I feel about those 'so called sad films', because life as we so call it, doesn't end there.

Keywords: heteronormativity, relationships, depression and despair, hope and emancipation, solitude.

Note of Intent

Personally, I wanted to create a film that doesn't necessarily fall into the conventional pattern of LGBT filmmaking.

I've always enjoyed to debate issues about relationships, whether they are romantically driven or not, as it's something that I've longed throughout my growing as an individual. Creating characters that deal with their own dilemmas, yet they have to compromise, listen and understand. That's what allows us to get to know ourselves and mature.

When I initially started preparing this project, I thought the theme of the story would be important for me as it'd serve an allegory to where I was at the time. Feelings of abandonment and the need of validation and reassurance were ideas that were regular for me. However, I did feel a need to take more risks emotionally, so as to be able to grow the most by letting things go.

In a way, I think that's what the characters are all about. Each of them reflect on the main character Robin, however, they are all fragments of my individuality and with time I tend to lean on one or another.

Consecutively, I felt the need to tell this story, because very so often, fiction is better than reality, so usually my visual projections are all about my desires, or reflections of the past. Despite never having experienced a relationship before, I have seen other experiences and listened to other people's stories, which somehow makes me interested in eventually pursuing one and the need to understand its dynamics.

In my view, with this film I would like to explore the fragmentations of a journey of the main character and what he seeks to find within himself. Personally, I intend to portray in this film feelings, which is nothing that people have not experienced before, such as, to let go of someone, to leave our roots and to go explore the unknown. Also, not to be consumed by despair, but feeling hopeful of what may or not be achievable, just so we can hang onto something until things start working in our favour.

The Emotional Mist of Robin is a film that intends to represent a usual routine in a relationship. It shows themes that explore the desire to be loved and recognised, therefore giving the characters a sense of hope, especially in Robin's case, because he wants to go to his boyfriend's side, and for Henrik, who hopes that Robin stays with him.

Ideally, my short film focuses more on the journey of the characters to find their love, instead of just leading to a sad ending.

Visually speaking, I wanted to shoot the film in shades of blue, yellow and green, in order to make an analogy with the transition of the state of mind. Isolation, melancholy, passivity, insecurity, nature and integrity are the aspects that I wanted to transmit through the photography.

Filming Report

This film is about Robin who is in a relationship with Matheus that decided to move abroad due to a job. Robin supports him in this decision, making promises to eventually go to him once he adjusts his life.

While he's questioning himself if he should really move to another country, his roommate and friend, Henrik, doesn't want him to go because he has closeted feelings towards him. Henrik who has to deal with being conflicted, which diminishes his will to do things as he realises that he will be left alone.

These issues inevitable create a tension between the characters that seem to pull them away from a positive outcome. Each day is filled with a certain fragility that prevails until the moment of goodbye while Robyn and Henrik try to avoid disagreements with each other when it comes to everyone's wishes.

The opening scene of the film is Henrik roaming around a party with several men. He desires to be with someone and that person is Robin. He's desperately looking to fill that void, yet fails to find him. At the end of the scene, he seems to have caught a glimpse of him, however it was someone similar.

In the following scenes, we see Robin having a skype call with his partner Matheus (he serves as a support for Robin's persona). When Robin calls Henrik to catch up with his boyfriend, there is a clear tension and Henrik gives a barely polite reply when Matheus tries to have a conversation with him.

Afterwards, we see Henrik in the bathroom where he desperately looks for pills and finally takes them, but Robin, who is perplexed and doesn't say anything, catches him.

Later on, while Robin is packing some stuff in his bedroom, Henrik goes to him to talk about the what-ifs of going or staying, reminding him that he's got everything that he needs there. Robin quickly dismisses his roommate much to his disappointment. At night, Robin goes to Henrik's room because he wants to make peace with him but they end up getting sexually involved. After waking up, Robin puts on his clothes and simply leaves.

We see glimpses of the apartment in the daylight completely empty.

At the climax of the film, Robin is found lying on the sand at the beach. He opens his eyes and then falls into a dream.

Suddenly, he is in the water and Matheus is holding his hands, while smiling. Henrik is sitting by the sand wearing the same clothes at home and he looking at the couple with sadness. Robin notices his presence but when he looks his way, Henrik is no longer there so he gets relieved and smiles.

Moments later both Matheus and Robin are laying down on the sand facing up the sea. Robin gradually leans up a bit and smiles, but then he sees Henrik again, this time on the water and gets alarmed. Matheus remains sleeping. Both Robin and Henrik are looking at each other.

The script went through several changes until the start of the shooting and while I was in production as well, in order to accommodate specific settings and mood of the scenes.

The beginning of the shooting revealed that I was extremely unprepared, not being certain of the aesthetic matters, my frenetic, yet necessary communication towards the team and so on. At times I would be reassured I was doing a decent job, despite all the pressure on the set.

After the first tumultuous shooting day, I decided along with the team to postpone the shooting for a few days until the actors' situation was taken care of. Alongside Catarina, who was at the time working as a producer, we searched for several other potential actors and we were able to get Tiago Castro and Pedro Vasconcelos.

Eventually, we resumed the shooting, starting with the scenes at the apartment. Before the actual shooting, I met up for the first time with Luís and Pedro so we could have a full script reading and talk about other issues. Luís Morais would be playing the main character, Robin, Pedro Vasconcelos would represent Henrik and Tiago Castro would be the third character, less visually present in the story, Matheus.

During the initial shooting, the crew as a whole felt that this ensemble was more in harmony and respectful of the screenplay as they tried to understand its purpose and

meaning. The shots were filmed in the apartment, which included scenes of the living room, kitchen, and bathroom. However, for those two last scenes, I was not pleased so I scraped one of them completely and reshot the bathroom one later on.

Due to logistic issues, we were only able to film again months later. Some initial scenes were reshot, since we no longer were able to use the same apartment or some takes because the actors had changed. I had decided to also film the last indoor scene, which would happen in Henrik's bedroom. However, I was not satisfied with the result, so that scene had to be reshot weeks later with a different approach.

After that, I wanted to film the bar scene, however it had to be constantly postponed due to several issues, such as the bar establishment cancelling, schedule incompatibility and lack of crew members as people, mainly my colleagues from Lusófona, gradually started to drop out of the project to do their own.

We began shooting during March/April of 2020 but we only managed to film the bar scene in December and had to adapt it to using my own apartment since I realised there wasn't another alternative. That way, with Maria's assistance, who was basically the only person helping me from now on along with the sound department, we got several materials by ourselves and improvised the production design by setting the lights and adding colorful plastic and so on. For this particular scene I invited roughly around 6/7 extras, so it would offer the scene the environment it needed. Needless to say, we were all satisfied with the scene.

Throughout the months, we had made other tries to film the lake scene, the only one that implied exterior shooting, but due to logistic issues, availability of the actors, weather, it kept being postponed. We were planning to finally film the lake scene in the beginning of March, but at last minute the faculty closed down and we had one person of sound unavailable, therefore, we were unable to finish it by that time.

After several attempts, we had to postpone the last scene, due to the pandemic, which made things even more difficult, as there was a lack of resources and tight schedules. With that, after conversations with the actors, it was decided that the filming would be resumed at the end on July/August.

Prior to the day, Maria and I proofread the scene again and simplified lines to make it even more ambiguous. We practiced the shots at the place, imagining what would be the actors' positions. Later during the night, we elaborated a storyboard, so it would make things more accessible to the actors.

On the day, Maria and I met Luís around 5:20 in the morning and went to the beach, arriving at 6:00. Eventually Pedro and Tiago arrived. I had decided to film at Paço de Arcos beach knowing two of the actors live nearby, as I wanted to make things easier.

Initially, we filmed all of the individual takes of the character Robin, and stipulated throughout the morning that we should organise the filming by each actor whenever possible the scenes outside of the water would be filmed first, in order to prevent the actors from getting too cold.

Overall, the last shooting day was good, as we were able to finish the scene before the sunlight emerges or prior to the tourists arriving, since we had been shooting with the beach completely empty. Throughout the course of the short film, despite the several outcomes and restraints, which forced the project to be on hold, the commitment and understanding of the actors allowed things to happen fluidly which led to finally concluding this project.

When it comes to the editing phase, I wanted to edit the scenes seamlessly with a simple notion of continuity, although in the last scene that wasn't possible since the actors' physical appearance had changed but actors didn't want to change and we had to compromise.

While I didn't find many problematic issues throughout the editing of the film, I encountered some problems that I wasn't overall satisfied with, such as sound equalisation and the synchronism of the skype call, as the person in charge of sound at the time didn't carefully identify each take.

In terms of visual aspect, I tried even before the editing process to give another feel to each scene and act, by starting the film with more vivid tones such as blue and red, going into yellowish tones to symbolise security and ending the story with more green and neutral tones.

Personally, I've never had much interest in exploring sounds, although in my projects I always opt for direct sound. However, in this particular project I wanted to pay more attention precisely to it because it is something I want to transpose in a 'raw' way. I wanted to give special attention to the last scene that takes place in a natural spatial environment to capture the immersion that the character feels in the moment. However, overall I don't think the sound editing reached the standards I aimed as I constantly struggled on that part.

Another valuable aspect that I tried to maintain was the sense of fluidity between the scenes, by allowing the development of the conflict to be seen through the cuts.

Questions and motivations

My motivation regarding dealing with the subject of sorrowful endings in gay films relies on the empiric interest of exploring and typifying each one. It is known to the general public that LGBT themed films have a tendency to look down upon themselves, thus ending in a depressive and sorrowful note. I would like to mention that I've decided to focus solely on characters portrayed as gay and not the other spectrums of the LGBT community, simply because my film falls into the gay norm.

The people from the community have always had a history of feeling isolated, being outcasts, which contributes to inevitable repercussions. Another reason that fortifies the existence of sad ending films is that stereotypes about gay people are driven by a society that implies dogmas on those who disagree. Religious and institutional ideologies also contribute simply by representing an important part of the society.

Lastly, due to a succession of years of discrimination against LGBT people in society, it's not unusual for gay people to have suffered some form of discrimination or sadness throughout their life, so it's not surprising that their personal experiences may infiltrate their storytelling.

So, in conclusion, I want this to be the common search theme to explore throughout the thesis, because I don't see sad endings as something as distressing as the public makes it out to be. Even though my short film deals with themes such as depression, pain, regret, despair, it doesn't turn into a mournful statement when the ending sheds light into the story, meaning it gives hope to the overall arc of some characters and that's how I feel about those so called 'sad films', because life doesn't end there.

I seek to devise a typology of gay film endings, establishing a correlation between the films analysed and my own film production.

The main question that I plan to answer is whether it is possible to categorise sad endings in recent films featuring gay male protagonists, which I find to be a sound research question, conducive to the application of content analysis to the object of study

Alongside that, I will try to define what is queer cinema and why it is different from

other types, as well as explore the history of LGBT cinema such as how AIDS contributed to a fructuous development, the meaning of New Queer Cinema, its themes and characteristics, etc.

Defining Queer Cinema

In 2016, the 25th anniversary of the publication of the article “New Queer Cinema” in *Sight and Sound* magazine, written by the American film critic B. Ruby Rich, was celebrated. The article published in 1992, named “New Queer Cinema” (NQC), talked about a set of films that were produced in the late 80s and early 90s and which were successful at film festivals, especially at the Sundance Film Festival (1992). It refers mainly to gay independent cinema, made in the midst of the AIDS crisis, which defied cinematic convention. The term ‘queer’ was retaken by the LGBT community, losing the derogatory meaning from the homophobic society and having been replaced by a positive representation, strengthening the refusal of heteronormativity and the refusal of a fixed sexuality.¹

Closely associated to independent production and to the visibility given by the integration in film festivals, the films fell under the genre of “New Queer Cinema” defined a space for action and reaction to the representation of the AIDS crisis that was spread in the USA at the time, seeking to assume an alternative expression for the negatively propagated media.

The genre has increasingly matured to embrace a whole generation of LGBT artists, filmmakers, and activists.

Should the critics consider enclosing it as a confined genre, with its own formal and narrative characteristics, we would also immensely fail, as LGBT Cinema compounds/evokes melodrama, comedy, neo-noir, and even westerns. In that case, narrative wise as well, any film whose main storyline personifies with LGBT would fall into the queer cinema spectrum.

The 80s were an extremely politicised decade, since there was an evident attempt to project a “positive” outlook on individuals of that group to mainstream audiences, while searching for determined stories and characters for homosexual audiences to identify with. The majority of those portrayals would rely in urban, Caucasian and prosperous background, as a visible manoeuvre to reach a more mainstream audience.

¹ Rich, B. Ruby, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*. Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2013

However, they would still try to accommodate a heteronormative lifestyle, therefore, characters would be stripped down of sexual desires. Later on, the characterisation took an abrupt change to portray the gay character as “victim”, due to the AIDS epidemic; it contributed to its surrounding social and political system.²

Storywise, the fact that homosexuals were associated with such disease maintained itself through the 80s, a time where already several filmmakers were searching for other representations. The first feature of Gus Van Sant, “Mala Noche” (1986), already hinted a new route, for example. Soon after, LGBT Cinema would find its new shape in 1991, with projects like Van Sant’s “My Own Private Idaho” and Todd Haynes’ “Poison” which reinforced new film aesthetics and narrative styles, and proclaimed new subjectivities connected to sexual and gender identities, a new genre labelled as “New Queer Cinema”. Years later, this genre once again established the sexual charge and desire of its characters and their bodies in place, which revitalised the aesthetics of experimental cinema and gay pornography that could be previously found during the 60s and 70s.

As coordinator and co-founder of SQIFF, Helen Wright, for example says, "campiness in films makes them queer to me, or films which don't use a linear, white hetero-male dominated storyline."³

The personal narratives that convey LGBT issues also contributed for them to be considered queer, as that label can be attributed through several ways such as the subject theme of the film, or its characters. It is also open to the simultaneous exploration of other issues like gender, race, class, sexuality, or disability.

² Aaron, Michele, ed. *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*. Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2004

³ Allan, F. (2018, December 02). Just what makes a film 'queer'? Retrieved September 13, 2020, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-45992645>

History of LGBT Cinema

LGBT characters have always been displayed in film, but not in the same form as in today's time. The first film that suggests a form of homosexuality is the "Dickson Experimental Sound Film" from 1894, which portrays a dance between two men. In silent film, for instance, Charles Chaplin's "The Masquerader", 1933, it was quite common for the men to dress up as women for comic relief. Despite that, most gay characters were based on stereotypes such as effeminate men and their butch lesbian counterparts were used to shock a reduced audience. That notion lasted until the 40s.

Starting in 1940s, several major American studios were prevented from producing realistic LGBT films due to restrictions imposed by the Hayes Code. Therefore, several productions started to portray homosexuals as sadists and psychopaths, in order for the film to receive a green light. Notably, until the 60s, European films were considered to have a more adequate portrayal of LGBT issues, even if it suffered some type of censorship. Even though they were banned and censored, the most notable films dealing with such issues at the time was the French film "Un chant d'amour" by Jean Genet in the 50s and the German production "Anders als du und ich" by Veit Harlan in 1957.

In 1965, "Inside Daisy Clover" by Robert Mulligan was released and it's considered to be one of the first mainstream films in which the main character accepts his own sexuality.

"The Boys in the Band" by William Friedkin (1970) was the first attempt on Hollywood to market a film for a gay audience and present an honest look at what it meant to be a gay or bisexual man in America.

Artists in United States such as Andy Warhol and Kenneth Anger were trying to display homosexual relationships, however, in Europe, some directors were dealing with this issue more discreetly, one of which was Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini who started dealing with the subject in his neorealist works with generally hidden messages.

With the repercussions caused by the Stonewall riots⁴, society's views slowly changed; the film industry started considering the LGBT community as a potential target demographic. Projects such as "It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse But the Society in Which He Lives" by Rosa von Praunheim (1971) and "The Boys in the Band" by William Friedkin (1970), which were the most provocative works at the time and were both told from the point of view of LGBT people.

Even though some films still represented homosexuality as an aberration, Sunday "Bloody Sunday" by John Schlesinger (1971), "Dog Day Afternoon" by Sidney Lumet (1975), "La Cage aux Folles" by Édouard Molinaro (1978) and "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" by Jim Sharman (1975) were some of the films that allowed the theme to get into mainstream cinema in the 70s.

The progression took another blow in the 80s, when right-wing Christian groups opposing LGBT rights secured more influence throughout America. Along with the surge of the AIDS pandemic and the panic revolving around the idea that it was a disease limited to homosexual people, less positive films started being created.

Slowly, the industry began to gather around and deal with this question with a concisive point of view. At the time, one film that represented the gay lifestyle and the AIDS crisis prudently was "Parting Glances" by Bill Sherwood (1986), which is considered a milestone in the LGBT community. Later on, films like "Longtime Companion" by Norman René (1989) and "Philadelphia" by Jonathan Demme (1993) achieved a mainstream momentum. As for documentaries, "Paris Is Burning" by Jennie Livingston (1990) is often stapled as a gay cinema reference, because it helped portray the gay and transgender culture in a crude and sensitive way, allowing the mainstream audiences to have contact with these issues.

During the 90s, more and more openly homosexual people started to be involved in independent cinema and established what would be known as New Queer Cinema. While in the beginning only independent actors would participate, top-notch Americans actors would soon show interest in portraying gay characters. Films such

⁴ The Stonewall riots were a series of spontaneous demonstrations by members of the gay (LGBT) community in response to a police raid that began in the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in the Greenwich Village neighborhood.

as “My Own Private Idaho” by Gus Van Sant (1991), “Orlando” by Sally Potter (1996) and “Boogie Nights” by Paul Thomas Anderson (1997) represented sexuality as something fluid, whilst films like “La Vie en Rose” by Mike Leigh (1990) and “Transamerica” by Duncan Tucker (2005) dealt with transgender characters and their struggle to be accepted.

Nevertheless, even if LGBT had become more acceptable in cinema, it still remained a taboo topic to portray explicit displays of affection between two men for instance. In this case, “Brokeback Mountain” by Ang Lee (2005) broke barriers not only by featuring two gay characters in the main roles with an explicit physical relationship but also for being a major Hollywood production with world-renowned cast.

In the following years, films such as “Milk” by Gus Van Sant (2008), “The Kids Are All Right” by Lisa Cholodenko (2010), “Weekend” by Andrew Haigh (2011) and “A Single Man” by Tom Ford (2009) laid the foundations for more LGBT mainstream films, meaning that representation of gay and transgender people started to be more prominent, along with displays of emotion. Even if the characters somehow still found difficulties in conflicting cultures, they were still recognized in today’s modern society.

“Blue is the Warmest Colour” by Abdellatif Kechiche (2013), “Stranger by the Lake” by Alain Guiraudie (2013), which both feature lasting sex scenes between the protagonists are also fine examples of that, and “120 Beats per Minute” by Robin Campillo (2017) and “How to Survive a Plague” by David France (2012), which portrays the struggles of the French movement ACT UP.

Throughout the history of LGBT cinema, there have been great developments and the genre has come a long way since gay characters started to be portrayed. However, some films are still targets of criticism, due to the misrepresentation of gay and transgender people, the stereotypes often used, and lastly, the lack of inclusion of non-Caucasian characters/actors. There is still progress to be made in order to fight prejudices, such as racism, homophobia and transphobia.

New Queer Cinema: Names, Themes, and Characteristics

“Gay cinema while it is aware, defined and a delimited expression, is a relatively recent theoretical and social product. Before the 1970s, which in its first years was notable for the Stonewall riots, only a very small number of gay and lesbian filmmakers came out then, often channelling aspects of these identities into the subtext”⁵ of films meant for the general public, who was predominantly heterosexual. Although some characters were recognized as lesbians or gays for comic relief and tragic devices, the codification of identity in language was privileged, creating enough ambiguity for alternative readings by a gay and lesbian audience.

For more explicit representations, the public would have to explore the emergence of post-war European movement, Avant-Garde, which had a long tradition of filmmakers being openly gay and coming from a background marked by profound intellectual debate.

The outcome of this experimental and visually inventive cinema has highlighted several works such as: “Un Chant d'Amour” by Jean Genet (1950), in France, which would influence the work of Todd Haynes. Other films, which deserve attention, are “Death in Venice” by Luchino Visconti (1971), and “Teorema” by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1968).⁶

However, after the Stonewall protests, which happened in June 1969, the experimentalism moved likewise to the USA as the only open way of representing and reporting the social disruption. Several pieces of work produced since the 70s, documentary for instance, were influenced by the culturally dynamic atmosphere that persisted in the coastal cities of the USA, mainly in New York, which, besides being the main city to involve in this type of production, also reunited immigrant communities such as the Irish, Jewish, Puerto Rican, Italian, some of which were gays and lesbians.

According to B. Ruby Rich, some of the small projects accomplished in the last

⁵ Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, p. 4

⁶ Aaron, ed., *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, p. 4

years of the 80s establish a prehistory of New Queer Cinema, in the manner that “they sought to adapt styles to emerging and fracturing themes, transmitting good points of reference for the following decade. A good example of this transitory phase is the work of John Waters, namely the film *Hairspray*, which premiered at the Sundance festival in 1988, where he was awarded by the jury and acclaimed by the public, showing off traits that the NQC would later develop, including alternative sensibility with which Waters confronted the mainstream public, the criticism directed at the normativity which would persist in heterosexual and homosexual communities, the exuberance and the madness of the 70s during the optimistic years that followed Stonewall and preceded the outbreak of the AIDS crisis.”⁷

The direction towards the frequent practice of an innovative aesthetic, later enshrined by the NQC, also expanded in the 80s by a group of filmmakers who would continue to play a prominent role in the 90s: “*Born In Flames*” by Lizzie Borden (1983), “*Mala Noche*” by Gus Van Sant (1985), “*Parting Glances*” by Bill Sherwood (1986), “*She Must Be Seeing Things*” by Sheila McLaughlin (1987) and “*Buddies*” by Arthur Bresson (1985). All of these films display precise innovation, sexuality, the unconventional narrative form, its limited budget, the marginality of their authors and the eminently political and urban character that celebrated some of the best work in the most representative moments at the peak of the NQC.

It is, however, in the early years of the 90s, still overshadowed by the AIDS tragedy, that we see the concentration and proliferation of several films that start to claim a narrative centrality and a symbolic space for lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender people, continuing the affirmation of the expression homosexual experience which the 80s had some stigmas about with the intuition of normalizing different subjectivities, while rejecting the stigmatization and narcissism of the previous decade.

Much of the attention and energy created around these films stemmed from organizational efforts which culminated in the filmic diversity shown at three major festivals, taking on a discursive dimension and claiming an unprecedented inter-dialogue space in independent gay and lesbian cinema: Toronto Film Festival 1991,

⁷ Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, p. 5-6

Amsterdam Festival 1991 and Sundance Festival 1992.

The independent component present in the films shown was, in part, determined by the elimination of funding under the National Endowment for the Arts program, which, at the 1991 San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, made explicit both the government surveillance over cinema, or political opposition to what has come to be seen as a threat to family values and morals, which the government claimed to defend.

It is, therefore, under the constraints of rather low budgets that one creates projects of personal and emotional investment, using friends as actors and passers-by for scenes of demonstrations or borrowing apartments for the filming. The dissatisfaction with conventional representations of gay, lesbian and transgender identities erased by history motivates new filmmakers to renegotiate subjectivities.

It is, finally, at the 1992 Sundance Film Festival that awareness of the construction of an historic moment takes place in an explosion of parallel initiatives to the showcase of a large part of the film program being aimed at expanding the attitudes and energies represented in them, beyond the limits of cinema, like, for example, numerous conferences in which queer directors attended parties and interviews. The presence of several distributors who were selecting some of the films on display, mostly male gathered around the festival, was accompanied by some discomfort in the face of the appropriation of a mainstream space by works and names that once remained on the sidelines.

Many of the works presented at Sundance redirect crime and the (homo) eroticization of violence to a positive imagery or judgments about the characters' actions, which, ultimately and without forgetting the social, are symbolically also a refusal of the death sentence dictated by AIDS.

The NQC reached its peak between 1992 and 1997, having gained strength since 1985, and constituted a revival of films and videos at a time when the activist movements in the fight against AIDS, with special relevance for the decrease of energy of the generation involved with the ACT UP movement, lost much of the incendiary tone that broke out in conjunction with AIDS in the period of its most

terrible outbreaks. “However, the severity with which the gay community was uprooted from long-standing invisibility influenced the cinema that prospered under the NQC, devoting a large part of its energies to rewriting the past and the future, in some cases by the same names that were once part of that same activism. In this sense, the renewed commitment made it possible to create a lasting space for reflection and change.”

In this context, protagonism is attributed to subgroups and subcultures that encompass the homosexual experience in the black community, including sensitive topics such as interracial relationships (“Tongues Untied” by Marlon Riggs in 1989 and “Young Soul Rebels” by Isaac Julien in 1991), as well as prostitution (“My Own Private Idaho” by Gus Van Sant in 1991) and the drag and transsexual scene of the Hispanic and Latin youth (“Paris is Burning” by Jennie Livingston in 1990).⁸

NQC's films have a multiform character and are influenced by different arts and hybrid media, using new popularized media and attracting power over broader and younger sections of the population, namely entertainment channels, relating positively to new materials, subjects, spaces and modes of production.

As a consequence of this crossover, the NQC fully inhabits the history and its time, forming an increasingly conscious and diverse community. Although NQC directors sought to escape the logic of commercial cinema, in order to preserve the independence of their projects and the legitimacy of their characters' sexuality, aesthetics and queer experiences entered the mainstream audience's imagination, something especially notorious at the beginning of the 21st century, with an increase of successful series and films that debated LGBT issues.

“The NQC also crossed geographical boundaries, exploring subjectivities outside Western popular culture, where there are very distinctive sexual and social figures, with special emphasis on the countries of Latin America and Asia. Names like Julián Hernández or Apichatpong Weerasethakul were responsible for leading the NQC through myths, reinventing rural habits, reconfiguring the criteria for representing the city, human jungles, rainforests, far beyond the animalistic human and animals

⁸ Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, 4

betraying human interests excessively, extending the limits of productions made in studios and festivals.” Some of these films deal with kidnappings, raw desires, and transgressions in rural areas, street fights and social norms that plagued previous generations.⁹

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a set of social, political and aesthetic factors converged into what would lead to the claim of power and voice in lesbian cinema. There was also an urgent need to rescue female sexuality, because pop culture popularised a cinematographic trend that glamorised the lesbian figure to the point of making it a subject of lethal desire, the so-called lethal lesbians.¹⁰ This means that films used to represent lesbians as murderers whose targets were often men, the alliances they maintained among themselves inviolable, directing the destruction of which they were targeted for the male element and for murder. Death as the end of the film no longer reached the lesbian figure, it represented action in its two extremes: villain and simultaneously heroine, refusing only passivity and a too rigid moral grid, which had once made the lesbian figure an asexual creature with no confined history domestic space and seclusion. Two of the films that magnetized public attention were “Thelma and Louise” by Ridley Scott and Callie Khouri (1991), and “Basic Instinct” by Paul Verhoeven and Joe Eszterhas (1992). Such role reversal unsettled some critics and audiences for the repercussions it could have in power relations with society.

At the end of the 90s, some of the films that appeared, beyond the clinical and isolated look of a subgroup, fully inserted their lesbian characters into the social dynamic, exposing the complexity of identities that overlap and accumulate and move them in a game of global interests and issues, thus giving an inhabited and habitable humanity to figures who are, in addition to lesbians, artists, addicts, among others. “The utopian view that presents gay and lesbian relationships as having a more equitable distribution of power is replaced by a fidelity that maps betrayal, bisexuality, drug abuse, social ambition, opportunism, as depicted in “High Art” by Lisa Cholodenko (1998), or labour exploitation, physical abuse, the cruelty of class

⁹ Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, XXV

¹⁰ Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, 103

struggle and appropriation, which John Maybury's *Love Is the Devil* (1998) shapes.”

The final years of the NQC were marked by the threat of trivialization brought about by the growing commercialization that attracted filmmakers, mostly heterosexuals, devoid of commitment or community links, eager to build a career on the highly committed pioneer work of previous years. The gay community audience flocked to movie theatres indiscriminately, falling into a normativity reproduced on the screen, in a repetitive, anesthetizing and sterile style, serving the interests of a heterosexual male perspective.

“The survival and fertility of the NQC would have been in danger of succumbing to this stagnation, had its destiny not been firmly linked to important changes in the historical-political context that characterized the transition between the two centuries.” In fact, the discovery and availability of an AIDS drug in 1996 alleviated the panic and mortality that devastated the previous decades, achieving a longevity that, with a greater scope of action than that with which the brief death sentence limited the set of basic concerns of an individual, extended militancy to other themes. As a result, a sense of urgency has disappeared, making long-term planning and construction possible.

“The rhetoric of homosexual condemnation was softened by the departure of Reagan from the government, which was succeeded by the Clinton administration, which contributed to the point of not even 8 years of a government led by George W. Bush to reverse this liberalisation. However, activism and the challenge gained a relative acceptance that, paradoxically, accelerated its end, evidenced by the installed homonormativity.” The acquisition of certain legal rights, such as legislation protecting homosexual relationships, health insurance, multiple campaigns for same-sex marriage, changing the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell”¹¹ policy, as well as the development of an industry advertising exclusively aimed at LGBT consumers, created some accommodation.

In fact, the small market for more independent films has been considerably reduced, which has contributed to the closure of several cinemas and affected the NQC. This

¹¹ Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, 266

phenomenon was also a reflection of the development of new platforms and online marketing strategies.

“The queer blockbuster was born in the 20th century. Some NQC names were able to make the transition and ensure the same degree of success, as demonstrated by directors like: Todd Haynes, Gus Van Sant, Lisa Cholodenko, who addressed new problems and themes”, while other filmmakers resurrected an old school that, in “Brokeback Mountain” by Ang Lee or “Milk” by Gus Van Sant, pay tribute to the struggles that made these films possible. However, lesbian cinema did not obtain the same degree of funding or distribution, so the demand and awareness did not fade so evidently.¹²

¹² Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, XXVI

Exploring Sad Endings

“Brokeback Mountain” directed by Ang Lee (2005) is considered to be one of the first movies made in Hollywood to portray a relationship between the two main male characters in a film. It tells the story of a prohibited and secretive relationship between two cowboys, and their lives over the years.

The film alternates between the private lives of Jack Twist and Ennis Del Mar. The movie presents itself with the two men together, however they soon separate from each other, and the viewer alternates between Ennis and Jack, with more time being devoted to Ennis's convoluted relationship with his wife, Alma.

The film is essentially linear, except for one flashback scene during the climactic argument between the two main characters. This flashback reminds us of when the two cowboys were happier, which was almost twenty years for Jack and Ennis.

However, Jack comes to the conclusion that both him and Ennis will never be together, due to Ennis being scared of living openly. Later on, Ennis tries to reconnect, but finds out that Jack is dead. Lureen, Jack's wife, tells Ennis on the phone that Jack was changing a tire when it exploded and killed him.

As Lureen speaks, Ennis imagines Jack being beaten to death with a tire iron. This vision is a manifestation of Ennis's fears itself. Ennis is intensively afraid of being discovered as gay and being attacked. Also, the film predicts Jack's death in an earlier bar scene in which Jack hits on a man, and the cowboy leaves to talk to his friends in the corner.

In the end, the movie doesn't try to attempt to tell us that Ennis' fears are wrong, so his fear is likely true. Jack was probably the victim of a hate crime.

Determining the film's status as controversial depends upon on the discussion in order to clarify both how necessary and how indolent and unnecessary its doubly tragic ending is.

Ang Lee created a sad film, but one which is definitely all the sadder for its evoking pity rather than empathy, tears rather than anger. On some level, compassion is what a film about gay life can never obtain from a straight audience. But one can fault

Brokeback Mountain considering its tone remains melancholic, senseless that its tragic conclusion is not imminent.

Back in 1999, when “Boys Don’t Cry” was released, it was the first mainstream film to have as its focal point transgender issues. Twenty years later, it’s still difficult to center a story on such a theme. However, throughout the years, the film has sparked controversy amongst the trans community, due to its contradictory legacy.

Kimberly Peirce directed the film and it’s an interpretation of the real-life story of Brandon Teena, an American trans man. Brandon tries to rediscover himself and find love in Nebraska, but falls victim to a brutal hate crime committed by two male acquaintances.

Even though ten years ago the crime was considered a despicable story, female director Kimberly Pierce moulded it into a gender-specific morality fiction. The film is a piece on the tyranny of sexual identity, and a call for a courageous and insightful society in contrast to severe hate.

Into the gloomy environment of the city, appears Teena Brandon, a troubled young woman, who finds herself involved in problematic issues with the police for stealing cars, and it’s known by the viewer that the character has been ‘locked up’ in some kind of institution at her mother’s request. The main character doesn’t want to be female, and the film begins by showing her gay cousin cutting her hair short and that simply symbolises how Teena is exploring the embodiment of a young man.

Teena’s cousin tells her about the risks and makes a comment, which implies that one of the problems for her and her family has been her relationships with women.

They both quarrel in an argument and in displeasure he encourages her to either admit that she is a lesbian or have a sex change. However, Teena denies the idea that she is a lesbian, in contrast to her attraction to women, therefore, that is the starting point of the events that lead to her murder.

When John Lotter and Tom Nissen find out that Brandon Teena is actually Teena Brandon, they just are not able to think of him as anything but a living offence to their inflated masculinity. They are determined to humiliate Brandon; soon their hate

overflows its shallow vessels and they end up killing him.

In the end, this is a piece of work that speaks about gender identity issues, which are still predominantly misunderstood to this day. The resolution for the film evokes a statement of the prejudice that still surrounds the theme.

Another film to explore is “Philadelphia” by Jonathan Demme (1993), which is about Andrew Beckett, a hotshot Philadelphia lawyer who has been keeping his homosexuality and his AIDS hidden from his conservative bosses.

The main character Andrew Beckett, when is unexpectedly and without explanation fired, suspects AIDS is the reason, and he decides to fight this decision in court, even as he is losing his other battle against the disease. Beckett hires a lawyer to stand for him, but the lawyer must first conquer his own homophobia and fears.

Justice is done in legal terms, however everyone loses. Beckett dies shortly after the jury rules in his favour; the old law firm loses a good amount of money and most of its long-earned reputation; the Beckett family loses a bright son; and the future of Joe Miller and Beckett's Hispanic-American lover do not seem auspicious despite their prompt financial recompense.

The film is not about AIDS as a social and political issue. It uses the immense current matter over the infection as a way to a stop in approaching far larger, permanent matters.

This delicate film touches on a vast range of issues surrounding gay and straight men, family, and death, without ever being sentimental, which is to its massive recognition. An indisputable influence on societies growing acceptance of homosexuality, the film shows us how far we've come in that path, and how far we still need to go.

The film “Monster” by Patty Jenkins (2003) is based on the life of Aileen Wuornos or simply Lee, the Florida hooker who was among the few registered female serial killers in the United States. The director Patty Jenkins unexpectedly focused the film on a love story, instead of assuming the role of deeming or advocating against Wuornos' behaviour.

After a series of memories that revives the childhood of Lee, the film begins as Lee meets Selby, a young and juvenile lesbian in a bar. Lee answers back quite impolitely and apologetically to the awkward flirtation of Selby, as she doesn't consider herself as gay and her life as a hooker has turned her extremely unfriendly towards others. Nevertheless, Lee vents to Selby, as she realizes her as her last resort to find love.

The director raises Lee's desperation and despair before meeting Selby for the purpose of highlighting the significance of this same-sex relationship.

For Lee, Selby is the naive child that she has to defend and rescue, an analogy of the child she was one time. Gradually the relationship with Selby evolves and she goes into the role of giver and carer. Following her cruel experience, she is frightened of the streets and makes an attempt to look past that and move forward.

Despite this, in her effort to search for an appropriate job she faces social rejection and brutalisation. Under the pressure to provide money for her girlfriend, Lee goes back to prostitution. However, her final agonising experience with a rapist forces her into believing that all her clients might turn out to be abusive, which incites in her a thirst for revenge and murder. Incapable of stopping, she steals her victims to financially support her girlfriend and feels that she can determine which clients are deserving of death. Following the murder of an innocent man, Selby turns her into the police.

"Monster" is not about empiricism, but instead represents the intimate tragic narrative of a human being who became a serial killer as a result of a mixture of bad social and personal pathologies.

Another film that I selected is "Happy Together" by Kar-Wai Wong (1997), which is film that is distressing to view and tough to turn away from. "A story about reunion", reads the painfully mocking line on a billboard that displays two men in their underclothing wrestling on, what looks to be, a roof.

Those characters are Ho and Lai, partners from Hong Kong who have escaped to live in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Nevertheless, Ho is quite juvenile and reluctant to settle down, which leaves Lai feeling disheartened. When they separate, Lai gets a job as a doorman in a tango bar, so that he can spare money and go home. The agitated and

nervous Ho turns into a prostitute.

Ho attempts to revive the romance so they can rekindle their relationship, however Lai has no interest in accepting him back. He has a detrimental personality and is incapable of committing to a monogamous relationship. Ho appears to be driven by a need for attention as well as a need to merely cause pain to Lai.

Ho's cold-heartedness is demonstrated at one point where he picks up men at Lai's workplace. This pushes Lai to the edge of a nervous breakdown. It can be perceived that all that was caused due to jealousy but we soon come to the conclusion that it was in fact Ho's flirtation and the acts of infidelity that were indecent and shameful.

"Several instances display the restraining of sentiments that make the characters intricate, beyond a merely plot devices to liven up an exotic film set in Argentina'. Wong often manages to take intense and bright emotions yet keep the vibrancy that forces his films to persist without seeming sterile."

There's a scene that shows Lai sobbing while holding a cassette player his friend would bring from the south pole, a place that he said was the limit of the world where all the grieve would cease to exist. Lai grabs the recorder gently, his face radiates, as there is a twinkle near the corner of his sight; as he presses the button of the cassette recorder, tear falls down his cheek.

In conclusion, there is no joy, for any of the characters. Only hope, and hope which will never be accomplished because they have all gone through different paths and they can only be truly happy when together.

Sean Mathias directed "Bent" in 1997, an adaptation of Martin Sherman's acclaimed play regarding the oppression of homosexuals by Nazis during WWII. At the time, in Germany, their plan was to exterminate minorities; anyone viewed as enemies, therefore, the gang began having an aggressive purge of homosexuals to target.

The story begins with Max, who is a bisexual playboy; he is attending a sex party organized by a drag queen featuring several party members, which eventually led the place to be invaded by policemen. Max and his partner manage to escape but they are

later discovered and are condemned and sent to a concentration camp.

On the way to the concentration camp, Max betrays Rudy and sets up himself to be given a yellow star, identifying him as a Jew, instead of a homosexual, which would be signalled with a pink triangle. Jews were meant to be exterminated, while homosexual prisoners received even harder punishments by the guards before they were executed.

After Max is sent to the concentration camp and isolated, he meets Horst, another prisoner, but he's eager to wear the triangle with pride. Gradually, they get closer and end up falling in love with each other, which culminates in a moment when Max reflects about himself and accept his sexual identity.

"Stranger by the Lake" directed by Alain Guiraudie (2013) is about a cruising place for men, hidden on the coast of a lake. At the lake, Franck falls in love with Michel, who happens to be a good-looking, strong and lethally dangerous man. Franck recognizes this, but wants to live his passion regardless of the dangers.

The first device of the story is the informal meaning of the space in which the movie is set: the area of the beach where men get together to have sex.

Later on, violence strikes on this isolated lake. Michel murders Ramière, and nobody knows it, other than Franck, who keeps the secret to himself – leaving him vulnerable and at his own risk, and of the community – as the story progresses after Ramière's death and him getting sexually involved with Michel.

The assassination moment is captured in an extremely large shot from Franck's point of view – it happens during four minutes which capture the force that he exhibits the killing, the moment when Michel comes back to the beach, and when he leaves it, anxiously near to the hiding Franck. It reveals satisfaction and brutality, sex and death – as if the incidents in the lake were the organic outcome of the fiery force that lead it.

The lack of communication of Franck's desire is fatal. The secrecy that divides the gay men of the rural area from the rest of the world—the silent agreement that splits the lake into two sides—is a type of evidence that proves that silence equals death.

The director ties the nature, the feeling of being lost, loneliness, the deepest

subjectivity and death. The bliss of sex is essentially conflicting with control. The base act of society and the central civil responsibility—the revelation of the mystery, or, the omission to the police—would be the major buzzkiller.

“That dispute is substantially and extremely miserable. For the director, the plainness of the well-put together community may encourage love but not sex, beneficial and lasting relationships, but not the inscrutable of satisfaction and arousal.”

The film concludes with Michel murdering Henri out of resentment, envy and self-protection, as he is threatening to reveal Michel's crime. Overall, I consider the ending and premise of it coherent with the logic of the narrative: that the beach is for pleasure, not the judgment of character.

Another film is “Out in the Dark” directed by Michael Mayer (2012), which is about Nimer a Palestinian who moved to the West Bank to study and have a better life. In a night out in Tel Aviv, he meets Israeli lawyer Roy, and from there a great passion is born.

As their relationship becomes more serious both are confronted with the harsh realities of a Palestinian society, which refuses to accept Nimer because of his sexual orientation and an Israeli society, which rejects him for his nationality.

Roy's initial innocence, believing just going to the authorities can solve his partner's circumstance, demonstrates his privileged well-connected background, which it contrasts with his lover's. Later in the film, however, it is replaced by despair at the couple's evidently unsolvable dilemma, and then by perseverance to do whatever it takes to help Nimer – the director pulls off all of these beats. The film ends on a dark, yet ambiguous note, by portraying a ‘act of treason’ by the character Roy.

“Call Me By Your Name” directed by Luca Guadagnino (2017) happens in the Italian summer of 1983, when Elio, a 17-year-old boy who spends his days reading, transcribing, playing classical music, and flirting with his friend Marzia. His routine begins to change after the arrival of the charming Oliver who is there to work as an intern, helping Elio's father, a respected teacher specialized in Greek-Roman culture.

As the days go by, Elio and Oliver pretend indifference, but soon fascination and

desire intensify and the two surrender themselves to passion. However, as the end of summer approaches, farewells are inevitable and Oliver leaves.

The film ends with Elio crying by himself in front of a fireplace. They're apart in different continents, and in separate life stages, but Elio and Oliver are just the same in regards to their feelings.

Overall, these film examples I provided have established their remarkable position on queer cinema, by breaking norms, exposing issues that happened in the past, or issues that must be improved for future productions. Therefore, in the end, they all provide vital presence to history and fortified my research in exemplifying that the most recognised LGBT films such as *Brokeback Mountain* or *Boys Don't Cry* generally hold the stigma in regards to being depressive.

In my opinion, the history of cinema, as far as the LGBT community is involved, has focused on showing that at different times life imitates art, art imitates life; and many times, the two are also lost and puzzled and show us how long we still have to go on the road of representativeness, not only regarding representation of trans people interpreting trans people, homosexual people interpreting homosexuals, black people not being erased from stories, etc. LGBT-themed cinema is gloomy because, unfortunately, the reality of our community is still distressing.

Like I explained in the introduction, I had planned to categorize each film and its ending of a type of an emotional conclusion, were it a tragic one due to murder, love due to an unrequited match, depression by the fall down of a persona and others. The following list compiles all the films mentioned along with the type of ending they represent:

Films	Directors	Year	Theme
Brokeback Mountain	Ang Lee	2005	Death
Boys Don't Cry	Kimberly Pierce	1999	Death
Bent	Sean Mathias	1997	Death
Monster	Patty Jenkins	2003	Execution
Stranger by the Lake	Alain Guiraudie	2013	Murder
Happy Together	Kar Wai Wong	1997	Hope
Carol	Todd Haynes	2015	Hope
Moonlight	Barry Jenkins	2016	Hope
God's Own Country	Francis Lee	2017	Reconciliation
Weekend	Andrew Haigh	2011	Departure
Sauvage	Camille Vidal-Naquet	2018	Self-destruction
Blue is the warmest Colour	Abdellatif Kechiche	2013	Falling out
120 Beats Per Minute	Robin Campillo	2017	Death
Milk	Gus Van Sant	2008	Death
My Summer of Love	Pawel	2004	Bad

	Pawlikowski		circumstances
Love Is Strange	Ira Sachs	2014	Death
Mysterious Skin	Gregg Araki	2004	Rape
Bad Education	Pedro Almodovar	2004	Blackmail
Call me by your Name	Luca Guadagnino	2017	Bad circumstances
Love Simon	Greg Berlanti	2018	Hope
Out in the Dark	Michael Mayer	2012	Bad circumstances

Conclusion

Even though in the last years the tone of LGBT films has been shifting to a more hopeful light, it's still quite permanent that despite the different sexualities, ages, regions, in the end they all shared something in common: an overwhelmingly sad ending.

In some cases, it might have been death itself that obstructed a happy ending in a film, but homophobia can also contribute to that, or maybe the disintegration of a relationship, but the general consensus was that LGBT characters were being destroyed.

Over the years, it almost became a certainty that gay characters conclude their storyline by sinking into suffering, similar to the metaphor of the pure virgin outsmarting a hooded killer, or a straight couple who start as opponents, but end up getting romantically involved. It's actually perceived by some as the 'Bury Your Gays' trope meaning that the deaths of LGBT characters demonstrate that they are nominally regarded as more dispensable than their heteronormative peers.

For reference, James Rawson referred to it with an article in *The Guardian*, as the 'Sudden Gay Death Syndrome' when discussion over the ending of the film *A Single Man* by Tom Ford.¹³

The films that I referred such as "Brokeback Mountain", "Happy Together", and "Stranger by The Lake" might be some of the films that incorporate LGBT characters who are fortunate to end up alive, left alone in an unclear state of normality.

Despite that the fact that many in our community are still confronted with oppression and judgement, doesn't mean that LGBT cinema can't present idealistic outcomes, pushing forward for more crowd-pleasing resolutions.

In recent years, however, we have seen films such as "Moonlight" by Barry Jenkins (2016), "God's Own Country" by Francis Lee (2017), "Love Simon" by Greg

¹³ Rawson, J. (2013, June 11). Why are gay characters at the top of Hollywood's kill list? | James Rawson. Retrieved August 13, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/jun/11/gay-characters-hollywood-films>

Berlanti (2018) and “Carol” by Todd Haynes (2015), seeing that this last example remained faithful to Patricia Highsmith’s original text by implying that the two women might actually share a future together, as it ended on a sensible yet realistic moment of hope.

Those previous examples still persist to be exceptions, remarkably uncommon in a scene controlled by melancholic narratives. Examples would be “120 Beats per Minute” by Robin Campillo (2017), “Call Me By Your Name” by Luca Guadagnino (2017), “Sauvage” by Camille Vidal-Naquet (2018), “Milk” by Gus Van Sant (2008), and “Weekend” by Andrew Haigh (2011), which all ended on unhappy notes and were candidates for analyse in the course of my writing.

There is indeed an important significance in sharing difficult, sad, genuine stories and remember the negative impact that gay people have suffered. However, it’s crucial for the public to see a few characters from that spectrum to still thrive to live in reasonably realistic grim situations because it shows that telling stories of endurance, hope, new life and passion it’s equally substantial and vital.

By randomly selecting a group of LGBT films from the last 25 years, taking in consideration some of the highest grossing films and most acclaimed ones, I intended to justify my perspective that LGBT films tend to be depressing. Besides, out of 21 feature films, only 6 films make leave the ending on a hopeful, light-hearted note, which was when the interests of the filmmakers started to definitely shifting, considering as well that those in particular are features dated less than 10 years ago. Whereas, on the other hand, 14 of the feature films which represent 70% of the random selection, expose the fact that there is a predominant presence of the perspective that the community may only still face hardships.

In a retrospect of my previous works and the short film I shot as my final assignment, I reinforce that my projects have often recurring themes such as death, pain, unrequited love, desire, hope, which in my reasoning leans more towards a soothing and depressing ending.

I recognise that this relation also happens between the films selected, thus, it resonates with me personally. All of the films present several issues in common, such

as the desire to be loved, recognised, to live with hope. However, in the end, it all may crumble due to secondary conflicts that obstruct the character's narrative and goal.

In my film "The Emotional Mist of Robin", the main character seeks resolution by going to live with his partner abroad, but we as the spectators do not forget that there is another element worth defending – the character Henrik, who hopes that eventually Robin will remain by his side. Throughout the film there are disagreements between the two main characters, but ultimately, they get physically involved with each other, thus leaving Robin conflicted about his actions and feelings and resulting in him running away.

We then find all the characters, including Robin's partner, in a deep fantasy of Robin since what we see are just projections of his fantasies and fears. During the course of the scene, it seems as though he is sure of the idea that he wants to be with his current partner, however the thought of Henrik completely disappearing leaves him troubled, thus revealing that he is in fact divided into these two people, as his recent involvements stirred his feelings.

"The Emotional Mist of Robin" is a film that intends to represent a usual routine in a relationship, with themes that explore the desire to be loved and recognised, and it gives a sense of hope in the characters in Robin's case, because he wants to go to his boyfriend's side, and for Henrik who hopes that Robin stays with him. Also, by not giving a conclusive final act, I avoided defining the ending of the film as a negative one.

In conclusion, my short film focuses more on the journey of the characters to find their love, instead of on an eminent sad ending, which might not even occur.

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The Emotional Mist of Robin

By

Fábio Bernardo

1 INT. - BAR - NOITE 1

Um misto de luzes coloridas iluminam as pessoas. Henrik aparece no corredor e anda enquanto se cruza com outro rapaz. Entretanto, entra noutro espaço e verifica dois homens a beijar-se e sai de seguida, continuando a andar pelo espaço até que para e vê dois homens a falar um com o outro. Henrik fica um pouco decepcionado.

2 INT. - QUARTO ROBIN - DIA 2

Robin gradualmente acorda e observa o que o rodeia.

3 INT. - SALA/CONSULTÓRIO - DIA 3

Robin está na sala de estar e está a usar o pijama, enquanto bebe uma chavena de chá. Ele telefona o seu parceiro, Matheus, através de skype. Matheus está a usar um uniforme verde. Ambos se riem quando vêm um ao outro.

MATHEUS

Alo.

ROBIN

Oi.

MATHEUS

Então, e que carinha é essa?

ROBIN

Estão a acontecer umas coisas, mas não é nada de mais. Não te preocupes.

Robin bebe um pouco do seu chá. Do outro lado, cães ladram durante a conversa.

ROBIN

E esses bebés não te largam.

MATHEUS

Estes bebés? Também não consigo ficar longe deles.

ROBIN

Então e... não sei e de mim consegues?

MATHEUS

Oh, olha, olha lá.

(CONTINUED)

ROBIN
O que é? O que é que me vais
mostrar?

Ele reaparece mostrando um cão. Robin fica maravilhado.

ROBIN
É um bebé. Que fofinho.

Depois chama o seu colega de casa, Henrik.

ROBIN
Henrik! Henrik, vem cá!

MATHEUS
Olha e ele como é que... alguma
mudança?

ROBIN
Dá para ver que ele continua... não
está muito bem.

MATHEUS
Ok.

ROBIN
O mesmo de sempre. Mas é tão bebé.

Henrik, a usar roupa casual, chega à sala e olha para o
ecrã perto do Robin. À medida que ele vê o animal,
mostra-se contente.

HENRIK
Oh Oh, que querido. Oh oh que amor.

MATHEUS
Olá, tudo bem? Então e os teus
desenhos?

Quando Henrik ouve a voz de Matheus, o seu tom muda.

HENRIK
Não são desenhos. Banda desenhada.

Henrik abandona a sala.

Robin e Matheus subitamente ficam silenciosos.

ROBIN
Tudo na mesma.

MATHEUS

Pois é, como a lesma né? Tá certo.

ROBIN

É o Henrik.

Matheus expira.

4 INT. - CASA DE BANHO - DIA

4

Henrik está a mexer no armário e encontra uns comprimidos. Ele engole-os e olha para si. Ele lava a sua cara. De repente, Robin entra e Henrik fica perturbado.

ROBIN

Que comprimidos são esses?

Ambos se olham através do espelho.

5 INT. - APARTAMENTO - DIA

5

Uma bicicleta está encostada à parede.

6 INT. - QUARTO ROBIN - DIA

6

Robin está a arrumar algumas coisas e de repente sai do quarto. Henrik caminha em direção ao quarto, mas fica atrás da parede. Entretanto, Robin entra novamente.

HENRIK

Sempre vais embora?

Robin suspira exasperado.

HENRIK

Tens tudo aqui, porque é que tens de ir?

ROBIN

O que é que queres dizer?

HENRIK

Ele já se foi. Porque é que não ficas...

ROBIN

É assim, neste momento é onde sinto que devo estar.

Henrik lentamente começa a chorar.

HENRIK

Não vais estar aqui e eu... não sei
o é que vou fazer.

Robin arruma a mochila e Henrik abandona o espaço.

7 INT. - QUARTO HENRIK - NOITE

7

Robin entra no quarto de Henrik enquanto ele está deitado.
Robin senta-se na beira da cama.

Henrik está a comer cereais. Entretanto, Robin chega à
cozinha, abre o frigorífico e tira um iogurte que começa a
comer. Henrik prepara-se para abandonar a cozinha.

MATHEUS

Robin.

Henrik levanta-se. Robin ajeita-se na cama para ficar ao
lado dele.

ROBIN

Não... não comeces com isso.

Henrik tenta beijá-lo.

ROBIN

Pára.

Henrik tenta mais uma vez, mas Robin não hesita. Ambos tiram
a roupa e continuam-se a envolver.

Horas depois, Robin acorda e senta-se na beira da cama até
colocar uma camisola e sair. Henrik fica sozinho na cama a
dormir.

8 INT. - APARTAMENTO - DIA

8

As várias divisões do apartamento encontra-se vazias
enquanto se ouve o barulho dos pássaros.

9 EXT. - PRAIA - DIA

9

Robin encontra-se deitado na areia. Aos poucos acorda.

Um corpo nu aparece na água de costas e é o Robin. Ele está
a dar a mão ao Matheus que está a sorrir.

MATHEUS

É a tua vez.

Henrik está sentado na areia enquanto observa Robin. Henrik está a usar a mesma roupa de casa, mas tem o cabelo rosa.

Robin observa mas está confuso.

O areal agora está vazio.

Robin verifica que Henrik não está mais presente e fica descansado.

Deitados na areia, encontram-se Robin e Matheus. Robin acorda e olha pacificamente para o céu. Levanta-se um pouco e fica a observar.

Henrik encontra-se no mar.

Robin repara nele e fica alerta. Ambos se olham.