

Viva la Muerte

("Long Live Death")

France / Tunisia : 1970 : dir. Fernando Arrabal :

: ? min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

[Mahdi Chaouch](#)

Anouk Ferjac; Nuria Espert; Ivan Henriques; Jazia Klibi; Mohamed Bellasoued; Victor Garcia

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Kbytes	Ω	□	≠	Z	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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French kissing – father and son style?

Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

London Film Festival 1971 programme review:

"VIVA LA MUERTE" is a paroxysm of anguish, a scream for liberty and probably one of the most ferocious, violent films ever made. Reminiscent of Buñuel and Kozinsky, it mingles, in hallucinatory images, the realities and nightmares of a 12-year old boy growing into manhood at the moment of Franco's victory - the film's locale, though never identified, is clearly Spain, while its intent is

anti-totalitarian in an international, contemporary sense.

Every few minutes it veers from uncertain realism into the boy's imagination, beset by monstrous tortures, violence, death, and a primitive sadism that engulfs the spectator precisely because it does not impose upon, but merely activates, his own atavistic, subconscious fears - and desires.

The unspeakable mystery of adulthood, the secret temptation of the sin of sex, the inexplicable terror of government, the monstrous suspicion of the mother's denunciation of the father to the authorities; are fully revealed in the boy's anguished hallucinations; a document of a Catholic adolescence at a time of civil war (but what is adolescence, if not civil war on a personal scale?) replete with blasphemous, scatological, and incestuous incursions. The nightmare sequences involve re-photographed television images and manipulated colour negatives, creating an unearthly, expressionist ambiguity...

- Amos Vogel, *The Village Voice*

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's TV Movies and Video Guide", "Halliwell's Film Guide",

"Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

[based on his own book "Baal Babylon"]

This is one of those films which will never be seen on TV or released on video, and will only crop up very rarely even at festivals. I saw it at a regional film theatre around the time of release, but it's scarcely surprising not to find the title in the majority of film sources. I recall only disconnected images and fragments from "**VIVA LA MUERTE**", and an impression of being offended by its arbitrary brutality.

There is one fantasy sequence where the boy's mother visits her imprisoned husband, stooping to speak to him through a grille in the ground. They quarrel, and she hoists up her skirts and defecates over his upturned face. Later, in an abattoir, she writhes in orgasmic ecstasy bathing in the steaming blood gushing from the throat of a dying bull. In a classroom scene, a boy intently slices a cockroach on his desk, spreads the segments on a sandwich and eats it.

Startling, vivid images to be sure, but at the time I felt they were also gratuitously offensive. The film is not without an irreverent humour, though: at sunset the boy climbs to the top of the local mosque and urinates in a splendid arc onto the streets below; or a prisoner is being executed by firing squad, and the presiding officer delivers the coup de grace up the arse instead of through the head, whereby a troupe of singing choirboys march solemnly into the courtyard and bear the fallen pæderast away on their shoulders. Such sequences abound, but are not tied together by any narrative structure coherent to me at the time. I'd like to see it again twenty years on and review my impressions, but like "UN CHIEN ANDALOU" or "LE SANG DES BÊTES" I rather suspect shocking the audience was its primary goal.

See subject index under AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TITLES, THE CHILD AS POLITICAL SYMBOL, SEX & SEXUALITY.

