

Body, Performance, and Control in Pedro Almodóvar's *Hable con ella*

Jessica Burke
Hamilton College

Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar's critically acclaimed film *Hable con ella* 'Talk to Her' (2002) explores the nature of communication on a physical and verbal level. As the film's characters struggle to communicate with each other, the relationship between body, performance, and control becomes an important leitmotif. The characters' quests for control over their own bodies and destinies ultimately serve to reveal the central role of chance and coincidence in their lives; the control that they seek through routine, discipline, and performative acts, in the end, is illusory, as fortuity is as powerful as any individual act of agency. The fabric of the characters' lives is woven through a combination of personal choice and outside influences beyond their control. The human body thus becomes a locus of struggle and tension, playing a crucial role not only in identity formation but also in the characters' sense of purpose.

The film opens with the two male protagonists watching a ballet performance. The camera cuts from the ballet to Marco and Benigno, sitting together, but who have not yet met. Tears stream down Marco's face while Benigno's displays a sort of fixed curiosity; he seems more intrigued by Marco's emotional response than by the performance itself. The next scene shows Benigno working as a nurse in the hospital, where he cares for Alicia, a ballet student who has spent the last four years in a coma after being struck by a car. As he gives the comatose woman a manicure, Benigno recounts the ballet from the previous night and expresses how impressed he was by Marco's reaction to it. Little does he know that he and Marco will cross paths again soon, when Marco's girlfriend Lydia, a bullfighter, is gored by a bull. The comatose Lydia is taken to the hospital and ends up on the same floor as Alicia. The relationship that develops between Benigno and Marco is accidental and touching, and through the use of flashback and the characters' own narrations, we gradually learn how the lives of all four characters—Marco, Benigno, Alicia, and Lydia—come to intersect.

While these complex characters cannot be reduced to types, they do fall into two categories—performers and caretakers. In a reversal of traditional gender stereotyping, Almodóvar's male characters are the caretakers in this film. Benigno is a male nurse, and Marco is a world traveler and author of travel guides who is drawn to "mujeres desesperadas," who he then tries to *fix*. Alicia and Lydia are both engaged in careers based

in performance and creative mastery of the physical body. The names of all four characters are symbolic. Benigno, whose name means “benign,” is talkative and friendly, with slightly effeminate mannerisms that cause other characters to question his sexual orientation. Lost in her own world—the mysterious world of the coma—Alicia (or “Alice”) inhabits a Wonderland to which the other characters have no access.¹ Down the hall, Lydia, whose name invokes the word *lidiar*, a synonym of *torear* or ‘bullfighting,’ is also comatose but without the same sense of vitality as Alicia. Lydia has been officially declared brain-dead, her menstruation has stopped, her skin has dried out, and her body lays motionless in bed, looking haggard and damaged. Alicia, on the other hand, stays soft and beautiful; her menstrual cycle continues (which later becomes a key element in the plot twist), and she seems to be merely sleeping. As Novoa points out, Alicia is the “sleeping beauty” whose body mediates the growing relationship between the two male protagonists (244). The film’s title comes from a conversation between Benigno and Marco in which Benigno insists that Marco speak to Lydia, despite the fact that she cannot respond. Marco, whose name evokes that of Marco Polo, another world traveler, does not see the point in speaking to the comatose Lydia, although through flashback we come to see that he was unable to communicate effectively with Lydia even before the accident. As Marvin D’Lugo comments, Marco’s relationship with Lydia “is marred by his self-absorption, which undercuts true communication” (111-12).

The accidents suffered by Alicia and Lydia strip them of control over their bodies. They transform from active subjects into passive objects. While Marco feels that he has lost Lydia,² Benigno finds that Alicia’s accident is what finally allows him to *possess* her. Through flashback, we see Benigno spying on Alicia from his apartment window, across the street from Alicia’s ballet studio. One day after class, Alicia drops her wallet on the street, and Benigno rushes to pick it up and return it to her. While Alicia is grateful to Benigno, she also seems uneasy with the intensity that he directs towards her. Unable to establish the connection with her that he desires, Benigno follows Alicia to her father’s psychiatry practice, makes an appointment in order to get closer to her, and on his way out, steals her hairclip in a fetishistic attempt to possess a part of her. Benigno’s obsession is inadvertently fed by Alicia’s tragic accident, after which her father approaches Benigno to ask him to care for his daughter in the hospital. Unaware that he has hired his daughter’s stalker, Alicia’s father convinces himself that Benigno is harmless—as his name suggests.³

Having been the sole caretaker of his mother for over fifteen years, Benigno has no other model of a functional relationship beyond that of caretaker. He spends his days bathing Alicia, styling her hair, and massaging her muscles. Having only had one real conversation with Alicia before her accident, Benigno latches on to the few pieces of

¹ For further analysis of the fairytale elements in the film, see Adriana Novoa’s article.

² As the plot develops, both Marco and the film’s audience realize that Marco had lost Lydia before her accident, as she had decided to end their relationship and return to a former lover, bullfighter “el niño de Valencia.”

³ Benigno’s name is just one example of Almodóvar’s ironic and parodic appropriation of the traditional fairy tale. Like Prince Charming, Benigno’s name is a symbolic referent to his character; yet Benigno’s behavior is far from benign, and instead of waking Alicia with true love’s kiss, he rapes her and she wakes after giving birth to the stillborn child that resulted from this act. For more on the appropriation and subversion of the fairy tale in *Talk to her*, see Novoa.

information that she had given him about her interests—ballet and silent films. Thus motivated by his desire to share Alicia's world, Benigno starts attending ballet performances and the silent film cinema. One evening, we see Benigno return from the cinema visibly altered by what he has seen, and he tells the comatose Alicia about the film's plot. The film, *El amante menguante* 'The Shrinking Lover' (Almodóvar's tribute to silent film), is about a man, Alfredo, who takes a potion prepared by his scientist girlfriend, Amparo, which is intended for weight loss, but results in the shrinkage of Alfredo's entire body. Alfredo slowly shrinks as his lover searches unsuccessfully for the antidote. In the final scene of the film, Amparo falls asleep, and after contemplating her naked body beneath the bed sheet, Alfredo begins to explore. Amazed by the female body and entranced by his lover's vagina, he slowly strips down and enters whole-bodied. The camera pans to Amparo's face, who obviously enjoys this unusual form of penetration, unaware that her lover has sacrificed his life in a quite literal return to the womb.

It is difficult to analyze *The Shrinking Lover* in any way other than psychoanalytically. Alfredo leaves Amparo to go live with his mother, a harsh woman who echoes the Freudian image of the castrating mother. Amparo finds him and rescues him from this oppressive home. Amparo's name is also symbolic, as *amparo* means "shelter" or "protection" in Spanish. As Alfredo continues to shrink throughout the film, Amparo's displays of affection toward him become less sexual and more maternal, as she blows him kisses and carries him around in her purse. She even expresses concern over sleeping in the same bed with him, afraid that she will crush him while they sleep. Thus Alfredo's decision to lose himself in Amparo's body is two-fold; he reclaims their sexual relationship, but he also seeks to end his life where it began, through a reversal of the birthing process. Amparo's womb becomes Alfredo's tomb. Thus interpreting male sexual desire as conflated with a longing for a lost connection with the female body, we can see how the shrunken lover's actions motivate Benigno to act on his own desire for a physical union with Alicia. The difference is that while sleeping, Amparo obviously enjoys this unusual form of penetration, while Alicia is unable to consent or resist and thus falls victim to rape.

Despite Benigno's actions, Almodóvar complicates our judgment of his character in several ways. First, he omits the rape scene from his film, using Benigno's retelling of *The Shrinking Lover* to cover up what is happening in the hospital room. This decision is strategic; he does not want his audience to see Benigno as a rapist. We do not fully realize what has happened until the other characters do, although there are visual cues that can be read as indicative of Benigno's transgression. When he returns from the cinema and recounts the film to Alicia, the lighting in the room is low; Benigno has made up Alicia's face so that it looks beautiful, soft, and radiant, and he gazes at her lovingly as he massages her muscles. He seems altered and nervous, and he concludes his summary of the film with a trembling voice, as he says "y Alfredo se queda dentro de ella... para siempre." The camera cuts to a close-up of the lava lamp with its thick red oils mixing with the amber liquid, as the music crescendos. As D'Lugo observes, "By staging Alicia's rape through this process of cinematic 'masking,' Almodóvar problematizes Benigno's identity by a sleight of hand that brings the spectator to occupy the point of view of the rapist, who is also the storyteller" (113).

Throughout *Talk to Her*, Almodóvar invites sympathy and even affection for Benigno, through both the character's words and actions. In her analysis of the film, Marsha Kinder

argues that “the nurturing interplay between physical gestures and words” has a transformative effect on both the film’s characters and its audience, to the point that for some, “this film manages to convince that every physical act (no matter how transgressive) can potentially be re-narrativized as an act of love” (22). While not all viewers would agree with Kinder’s interpretation, Benigno’s charm and diligent attentiveness to Alicia do complicate our judgment of his behavior. In an interview with Frédéric Strauss, Almodóvar reveals that as a director, he treats Benigno as a “friend,” adding, “I see him neither from the point of view of normality nor abnormality, only in terms of his near fanatical romanticism” (“*Talk to Her—Bad Education*” 219).

Despite Almodóvar’s gentle treatment of Benigno’s “moral ambiguity” (Almodóvar, “*Talk to Her—Bad Education*” 219), Marco serves as the voice of reason within the film. When Benigno tells Marco that he wants to marry Alicia, Marco reacts with alarm and warns Benigno not to repeat this statement to anyone else. He tells Benigno that he’s crazy, and that “Alicia no puede decir con ninguna parte de su cuerpo ‘sí quiero.’” Thus Marco reminds us that no matter how consensual Benigno might wish his relationship with Alicia to be, there is no real intimacy between the two, and Alicia is a passive and helpless recipient of her nurse’s devotion. Marco’s emphasis on Alicia’s lack of free will underscores the gravity of Benigno’s actions. When the hospital realizes what has happened, Benigno is sent to jail still unable to recognize the criminality of his behavior. Months later, Marco learns from Benigno’s lawyer that Alicia’s baby was stillborn, but that the experience of childbirth has woken Alicia from her coma. Thus Almodóvar further complicates Benigno’s actions. Having raped Alicia out of what he considered love and utter and complete devotion, Benigno inadvertently plants the seed of Alicia’s reawakening.

The lawyer also tells Marco that Benigno does not know that Alicia is conscious. The control of information in *Talk to Her* is key to plot development and also contributes to the theme of communication. As Despina Kakoudaki observes, “In contrast to the imperative of its title and its overt encouragement of communication, the film’s action actually pivots on nondisclosure, privacy, and secrecy, even when the beloved is not comatose” (211). The characters act on what they know, while the information not known to them would most likely change the course of their actions. Almodóvar also controls the amount of information he provides his audience. By releasing details at key points through flashback or after-the-fact realizations, the director shapes our opinions of his protagonists in a way that makes us sympathetic to their situations. Almodóvar portrays his characters as flawed yet very human beings, driven by the desire to truly connect with others, something with which his audience can empathize.

Benigno’s sense of identity and worth is precariously built upon his need to take care of others. We know from his conversation with the psychiatrist that there was nothing physically wrong with Benigno’s mother, but that she liked to be cared for.⁴ Benigno assumed this role as it was the only one that allowed him some degree of closeness with her. When his mother dies, Benigno transfers his dutiful attentiveness to Alicia and thus is able to maintain his sense of worth and identity. In the four years that Alicia spends in the hospital, she depends on Benigno for her survival, although she is not consciously aware of

⁴ Benigno explains: “Mi madre no es que estuviera impedida, ni loca, lo que pasa es que era un poco perezosilla.”

this dependency. Benigno, likewise, depends on her body for his own survival, as it is Alicia that gives his life meaning.

Benigno's job at the hospital involves constant physical contact with the one he loves, a very basic communication with the body; but his imprisonment means isolation and deprivation of physical contact and communication. Without Alicia, Benigno begins a downward spiral in which his livelihood fades away, accentuated by the melodramatic gray rain that falls outside the prison window. In the last conversation between Benigno and Marco, the two sit opposite a glass divider with tears streaming down their faces. Benigno, clutching the prison phone, tells Marco that he wishes he could hug him, saying softly, "He abrazado a muy pocas personas en mi vida." Yearning for intimacy in his life but unable to find it in a reciprocal relationship, Benigno craves the physical touch of others as a reassurance that he is not really alone in the world.

His suicide, I would argue, is not intended as such, since the note he leaves Marco begs him to come visit him in the hospital and "habl[e] con [él]." Benigno's plan seems to be not to take his own life but rather to slip into that mysterious world of the comatose state in order to reunite with Alicia. As he writes the note, the camera pans to the pile of pills and boxes of Valium spread out on the desk. Benigno's drug overdose can be interpreted as his last attempt to appropriate control over his own fate by paradoxically giving up control over his own body.

The leitmotif of control—over one's own body, and over one's own destiny—permeates the film. It also engages with the notion of gender as performance. Through flashback, Almodóvar shows us Lydia's performance as a bullfighter and Alicia's performance as a ballet dancer. While they are two very different physical activities, bullfighting and ballet share a disciplined performance of controlled movements, learned steps, and graceful, expressive manipulation of the body. The issue of control is central to both; control over the body, over its balance and fluid motions, and in the case of the bullfight, control over an external force as well—the bull.

A marked difference between Lydia's performance as a bullfighter and Alicia's performance as a ballet dancer is the aspect of gender. Lydia, dressed in the traditional garb of the Spanish bullfighter, her hair pulled back tightly, and with her sharp facial features and dark complexion, could easily be mistaken for a man in the bullring. In fact, Almodóvar transitions from Lydia's performance in the bullring to a photo of a famous male bullfighter lying injured in bed, foreshadowing Lydia's accident but also drawing a visual parallel between the two. Lydia's lean, athletic body is placed in sharp contrast with Alicia's soft curves, which evoke a femininity that she cannot shed or disguise. Lydia, on the other hand, alternates between her masculine persona in the bullring—complete with the deep guttural cries typical of the bullfighter—and her ultra-feminine and alluring presentation of self outside of the bullring. In a television interview, Lydia sits in a clingy black minidress, her long dark curly hair framing her carefully made-up face. The interviewer observes that many male bullfighters will not fight in the same ring as Lydia because of her gender, thus revealing a deeply rooted sexism in the profession. Paradoxically, as Almodóvar himself has pointed out, many elements of the bullfight feminize the torero: "When he puts on his shining costume, hard like armour, he resembles a gladiator. But the costume is also very tight-fitting, the way he moves in it isn't entirely masculine, he hops about like a ballerina" ("*Talk to Her—Bad Education*" 55). The bullfight

as performance blurs the lines between masculinity and femininity as traditionally defined in Spanish culture. The bullfighter is valiant and strong, but he must also be graceful and provocative, without losing his masculinity. Lydia's ability to shift between her male and female identities and simultaneously embody them both in the ring establishes her as a complex character that questions traditional binary definitions of gender.

Postmodernist theory tends to shun the familiar binaries of Western thought, recognizing them for what they are—"an unstable and provisional mechanism of discursive power" (Price and Shildrick 218). Ever since Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that women are not "born" but rather "made" (267)⁵ the field of gender studies has examined the role of the physical body in determining definitions of femininity and masculinity. Operating under the claim that the body offers no *natural* foundation for cultural beliefs regarding gender, scholars have sought to identify and question the meanings attributed to lived bodily experiences. Elizabeth Grosz writes, "the stability of the unified body image, even in the so-called normal subject, is always precarious. It cannot be simply taken for granted as an accomplished fact, for it must be continually renewed" (43-44). This view of the unfixed and *renewable* body image is one likewise addressed in Judith Butler's theory of gender as constructed through performative acts. Butler posits the body as an active site for manipulation and reconfiguration of traditional notions regarding gender, stipulating, "If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (402). The consensus among contemporary gender theorists is that "if the body itself is not a determinate given, then the political and social structures that take it as such are equally open to transformation" (Price and Shildrick 7-8).

With his complex character portrayal, Almodóvar engages in a subversive gender bending that questions our assumptions about traditionally feminine and masculine social realms. Benigno is a nurse, one of the few men in the profession, and Lydia is a bullfighter, one of the few women in the profession. Through her performative acts, Lydia is as convincing as a masculine bullfighter as she is when displaying her more feminine side outside of the ring. In his study of sex, love, and desire in Almodóvar's cinema, Hanno Ehrlicher points out that as the director's work evolves, so do his characters, "hacia el *gender-trouble* de una política corporal *performativa* y transvestida que pone en juego la 'naturaleza' del sexo para introducir en la sociedad perspectivas de identidad que, hasta entonces, eran marginales pero que, paulatinamente, iban apareciendo en escenarios cada vez más grandes gracias a la excesiva potencia imaginativa de los actores" (78). Lydia's transvestism is more than mere cross-dressing; she dons not only the traditional garb of the male bullfighter, but also his persona, thus appropriating for women a tradition that has been almost exclusively dominated by men. As a character, she pushes the boundaries of gender delineation through her performance. Likewise, Katarina describes to the comatose Alicia a ballet in which female ballerinas spring from the corpses of dead soldiers, concluding, "Sí, . . . es bonito. Porque de la muerte emerge la vida, de lo masculino emerge lo

⁵ Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex*, asserts that biological sex alone does not determine womanhood, but rather that "the facts of biology take on the values that the existent bestows upon them" (36).

femenino.” Katarina’s character finds beauty in the artistic fusing of opposites⁶ through performance, an aesthetic appreciation indubitably shared by the film’s director, whose films have incorporated cross-dressing, transsexuality, and transgenderism since the beginning of his career as a director.⁷

Like Lydia, Benigno also defies easy categorization as a character. While frequently viewed as homosexual, Benigno himself refutes the label as inaccurate, although he does identify himself twice as homosexual to Alicia’s father, and asks Marco if he would not mind passing as his boyfriend when he visits him in prison, since it would allow them more time together to talk. Marco, also far from the image of the macho, is not at all uncomfortable with the idea; in fact, both men seem completely comfortable with their sexuality and have no negative reaction when it is misinterpreted or questioned. Like Lydia, Benigno and Marco seem to accept that society has its expectations in terms of masculine and feminine (or effeminate) behavior, and while they might play along with some of these expectations, they do not allow social pressures to define them as individuals.

Almodóvar has remarked that he would have liked to name his film “The Man Who Cried,” in homage to his character Marco, who is moved to tears at various points in the film (“The Track of a Teardrop” 163). Benigno’s level of comfort with others’ misconceptions of his sexual identity, together with Marco’s level of comfort with expressing his emotions through tears, along with Lydia’s gender performances all question gender stereotyping and the association of any particular career or behavior with one particular sex. The only character who seems to stick with traditional gender traits associated with her sex is Alicia, who apart from being a ballerina and physically quite feminine-looking, is also objectified, fetishized, and ultimately victimized. However, her character is anything but weak. She survives being run over by a car, four years in a coma, rape, and giving birth to a stillborn child before beginning a grueling road to recovery through physical rehabilitation. Her storybook name and the fact that she *sleeps* in a hospital called “El Bosque” (“The Forest”) seem to imply a certain fairytale existence—can we assume that she will get a fairytale ending? The last scene of the film indicates a budding romance between Marco and Alicia. While back in the theater viewing another ballet, Marco has not come full circle but rather has evolved as a character to the point where he might have hope for a relationship that is not overshadowed by the painful memories of the past. Yet, there is a significant obstacle, symbolized by the empty chair between Marco and Alicia in the theater. The memory of Benigno occupies the symbolic space between the two. More than a *happy ending* we have a problematic and ambiguous beginning; but it is a new beginning nevertheless.

Performance is central to the characters’ lives and to the overall structure of the film. The ballet that opens the film is a theatrical performance of the Pina Bausch dance company’s production of *Café Müller* (D’Lugo 107). While two female dancers in nightgowns, eyes closed, wander erratically around the stage, a male dancer removes chairs from their path. The women seem unaware of the man’s presence, or of their own

⁶ *Opposites* in the sense of how concepts like life/death and masculine/feminine are culturally defined using binary terminology. Reality, as we know and as Almodóvar reminds us, is much more complicated.

⁷ For further discussion on the relationship between transvestism, performance, and identity in Almodóvar’s films, see Isolina Ballesteros’s article.

movements. The male dancer, in this scene, is the caretaker, whose actions parallel those of Benigno (with his mother and later Alicia) and Marco (with Angela and later Lydia). The ballet that concludes the film is also a Bausch production, entitled *Masurca Fogo*. The piece begins with deep sighs but ends in a playful dance of sexual union that communicates an air of hope and promise, in stark contrast to the ballet that opened the film. In both ballets, the dancers' bodies communicate profound messages without the use of words. These bodies in motion contrast sharply with the inert bodies of the comatose women in the hospital, which communicate no message themselves but rather serve as a stimulus for memory (in the case of Marco) or desire (in the case of Benigno.) The two Bausch performances, presented in the same theater, frame the plot of *Talk to Her*, and also set the tone for the story told in the film. In the Sony Classics official plot synopsis, Almodóvar discusses the parallels between the ballet performances and the plot of his film, concluding, "If I had asked for it specifically I could not have got anything better. Bausch had unknowingly created the best doors through which to enter and leave 'Talk to Her' " (*"Talk to Her"* 13).

In addition to theatrical performances, *Talk to Her* also contains a film within a film, scenes from bullfights, clips from television interviews, a special vocal performance by Brazilian singer Caetano Veloso, and personal as well as public photographs.⁸ Together, ballet, bullfighting, song, film, television, and photography form a collage of performative acts that invoke an implicit witness, viewer, or public. The strategic placing of a film within a film, and of various forms of performance within the greater performance of the film's actors, reminds us of our own place within the schema of performers and watchers. As Ballesteros observes, "Live performances in Almodóvar's films function, then, as self-reflexive sign-posts for the essentially performative condition of cinema—and of life—as well as reminders of the existence and, better yet, constitutive role of the audience" (78). Like Benigno, we watch from the other side of the curtain. With no control over the events developing before us, we are relegated to the role of observer, listener, and interpreter, as the various performances and flashbacks provide pieces of a larger story that comes together like a puzzle by the end of the film. When Benigno's sexual relationship with Alicia is revealed to the viewing public, this piece of information forever changes subsequent viewings of the film, as Kakoudaki signals, rendering them "increasingly painful" due to "the feeling of ambient guilt" resulting from this revelation (213). The audience's lack of control makes it an uneasy witness to Benigno's transgressive acts, from rape to drug overdose.

The physical body has a key role in facilitating and obstructing communication between the characters. The body in motion has strong communicative power, while the inert body becomes a blank slate for others' monologues, on which they inscribe their own meanings and desires. As D'Lugo observes, "The idea of the body as the authentic instrument of narration ultimately holds the distinct parts of the film together" (114). While the ballets convey powerful messages through bodily movement, the comatose bodies in the film are incommunicative and helpless against misinterpretation. Benigno claims that he and Alicia

⁸ The audience enjoying Caetano Veloso's performance consists of a blend of the film's characters and international actors who have played parts in other Almodóvar films. Kathleen M. Vernon explores the function of this scene within the film in her article "Queer Sound: Musical Otherness in Three Films by Pedro Almodóvar."

have a better relationship than most married couples, but Marco retorts that people talk to plants too, but they do not marry them. Marco comes to understand that reciprocity is needed for true intimacy, something he lacked in his relationship with Lydia. Yet even in a comatose state, the bodies of Alicia and Lydia are functional in that they create a space for communication between the two male protagonists, in which a friendship develops that otherwise would not have been possible.

The relationships between the men and the women in the film are static, while that of Marco and Benigno grows and develops, underscoring the importance of shared dialogue, of giving and receiving. In fact, the film's title, when literally translated, is actually "talk *with* her" not "to" her, emphasizing the importance of mutual communication and not just talking "at" someone, of which both male characters were guilty prior to meeting each other. Marco and Benigno achieve with each other something they could not with the women in their lives—intimacy. It is only by removing the female voice—which in so many Almodóvar films is the dominant discourse—that these two men actually begin to speak *with* someone and not just *to* someone.

In *Talk to Her*, the theme of communication and its barriers, as negotiated through language and through the body, goes hand in hand with the omnipresent theme of loneliness. The characters face physical and psychological obstacles that prevent them from achieving the relationships they seek. Their often dysfunctional quest to connect with other human beings drives them to acts of love, betrayal, desperation, and transgression, but these characters resist representation by traditional dichotomies of masculine/feminine, strong/weak, moral/immoral. Likewise, the body resists being deprived of its humanity even when in a comatose state. Thus Almodóvar continues to question our expectations as a society and as viewers, while simultaneously colliding personal choice with chance happenings in order to subtly unravel any illusory sense of complete control over one's destiny.

Works Cited

- Almodóvar, Pedro, dir. *Hable con ella*. El Deseo, 2002. DVD.
- . "Talk to Her—Bad Education." Interview by Frédéric Strauss. *Almodóvar on Almodóvar*. Ed. Frédéric Strauss. Trans. Yves Baignères and Sam Richard. Rev. ed. New York: Faber, 2006. 211-30. Print.
- . "The Track of a Teardrop, a Filmmaker's Path." Interview by A. O. Scott. *Pedro Almodóvar: Interviews*. Ed. Paula Willoquet-Maricondi. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2004. 162-67. Print.
- Ballesteros, Isolina. "Performing Identities in the Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar." *All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema*. Ed. Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. 71-100. Print.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Ed. and trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Knopf, 1953. Print.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." 1988. *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist*

- Theory*. Ed. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. 401-17. Print.
- D'Lugo, Marvin. *Pedro Almodóvar*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2006. Print.
- Ehrlicher, Hanno. "Últimamente estás más preocupado por mi corazón que por mi coño': Sexo, amor y las escenificaciones del deseo en el cine de Pedro Almodóvar." *"El amor, esa palabra...": El amor en la novela española contemporánea de fin de milenio*. Ed. Anna-Sophia Buck and Irene Gastón Sierra. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2005. 67-102. Print.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Kakoudaki, Despina. "Intimate Strangers: Melodrama and Coincidence in *Talk to Her*." *All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema*. Ed. Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. 193-238. Print.
- Kinder, Marsha. "Reinventing the Motherland: Almodóvar's Brain-Dead Trilogy." *Film Quarterly* 58.2 (2005): 9-25. Web. 10 Jan. 2010.
- Novoa, Adriana. "Whose Talk Is It? Almodóvar and the Fairy Tale in *Talk to Her*." *Marvels & Tales* 19.2 (2005): 224-48. Web. 10 Jan. 2010.
- Price, Janet, and Margrit Shildrick, eds. *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- "*Talk to Her*." *Sony Pictures Classics*. Sony Pictures Entertainment, n.d. 1-28. Web. 6 July 2012.
- Vernon, Kathleen M. "Queer Sound: Musical Otherness in Three Films by Pedro Almodóvar." *All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema*. Ed. Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. 51-70. Print.