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A Companion to Pedro Almodóvar

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Re-envoicements and Reverberations in Almodóvar's Macro-Melodrama

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Mastering Sound: Re-envoicing the *Movida* and Macro-Melodrama

Anyone familiar with the films of Pedro Almodóvar is aware of the tremendous artistic growth he has undergone. Yet, the discussion of this dimension usually focuses on the increasing cultivation of lush visuals and the growing maturity and emotional depth of his engaging stories and characters. With the exception of Kathleen Vernon's perceptive writings on Almodóvar's use of music (2009), very little is said about his growing mastery over sound.

In Almodóvar's debut 16 mm feature, *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón / Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls Like Mom* (1980), his audio design was merely a medley of comic bits related to sound: a cacophony of comical voices including the fast-paced, high-pitched screeches of a horny bearded wife; punkish songs, like "I love you because you're dirty," performed on stage by the sadistic lesbian Bom; verbal puns like the "General Erections" competition; and a vengeful gang disguised as zarzuela singers strolling the streets of Madrid. But over the next thirty years he would develop a sophisticated approach to sound design that enabled him to end *Los abrazos rotos / Broken Embraces* (2009) with a blind filmmaker re-editing his movie solely by ear.

Part of this growth trajectory can be attributed to advancements in sound technology and our increasing cultural awareness of sound design. Though we continue to call our period the age of visual culture, one can make a strong case for it being the era of audio culture. As Bill Whittington writes in his groundbreaking book on *Sound Design and Science Fiction*:

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> In this age of visual culture, it is important to remember that "sound is half the picture." Since the 1960s, sound production, technology, and aesthetics have fundamentally changed contemporary Hollywood cinema and the film-going experience. In the field of audio technology, for instance, portable sound recorders have encouraged the collection of all types of "raw materials" used to produce innovative sound effects . . . digital audio workstations have allowed for the creation of multilayered montages of dialogue, music, and effects without any loss of quality or buildup of noise; and new exhibition formats from Dolby Stereo to Dolby Digital have expanded the dynamic range of the film soundtrack and allowed for multichannel (or surround sound) deployment in the majority of motion picture theaters today. More important though, a new attitude toward sound has arisen. In contrast to the classical period of Hollywood cinema, filmmakers and filmgoers today do not just hear movies in a new way; they *listen* to movies in a new way, and what they are listening *to* is sound design (Whittington 2007: 1).

The inferiority of sound technology in Spain is well known in film history, but ironically it led many Spanish filmmakers to experiment with a conceptual approach to sound design as a means of compensation. Frequently that resulted in their designing disjunctive relations between sound and image that violated the rules of Hollywood classical cinema. This was true not only of Almodóvar (who used such disjunctions as a source of shock and subversion) but also of earlier filmmakers like Buñuel (who, despite his deafness, credited himself with "sound design" in his most experimental films) and several auteurs in the art cinema of the opposition (including Juan Antonio Bardem, Carlos Saura, Víctor Erice, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, Jaime Armiñán, Pilar Miró, José Luis Guerin, and Bigas Luna) who frequently used a disjunctive soundtrack to get around the censors. But once the Francoist censorship rules were suspended and once Spain gained access to the kinds of technical advances Whittington describes, Spanish filmmakers were well positioned to leverage their legacy of conceptual sound design, as in more recent films like Julio Medem's *Lucía y el sexo / Sex and Lucia* (2001), Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others* (2001) and *Mar adentro / The Sea Inside* (2004), and Carlos Molinero and Lola Salvador's *La niebla en las palmeras / The Mist in the Palm Trees* (2006).

When Almodóvar made his first feature *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, he was aware his soundtrack was technically inferior, a situation he later mocks in *Los abrazos rotos*. To overcome this backwardness in audio technology, Almodóvar began relying on foreign sound professionals who had worked with other world-class auteurs—such as, German soundman Martin Muller in *Laberinto de pasiones / Labyrinth of Passions* (1982) and *Entre tinieblas / Dark Habits* (1983), known for his work with Werner Fassbinder and Wim Wenders; Jean-Paul Mugel on *Tacones lejanos / High Heels* (1991) and *Kika* (1993), known for working with Wim Wenders, Agnès Varda, and Michael Haneke; and Bernardo Menz on *La Flor de mi secreto / The Flower of My Secret* (1995) and *Carne trémula / Live Flesh* (1997), known for his work with Chilean Patricio Guzman on his documentary *The Battle of Chile* (1972–79). Almodóvar's move from one soundman to another suggests he was personally in charge of conceptualizing

the design, yet less confident about the technology. But once he started using Dolby for his sound mix—first in *¡Átame!/Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (1990), then Dolby Stereo in *Kika*, and Dolby Digital in *Carne trémula*—only five years after it was first introduced into American movie theaters—he was no longer defensive. Starting with *Todo sobre mi madre/All About My Mother* (1999), he began working with Spanish soundman Miguel Rejas, with whom he has been collaborating ever since.

As Vernon (2009) has demonstrated, music always played a key role in Almodóvar's approach to sound design. From the beginning, what he found particularly appealing was the way music increasingly became more personalized at the same time it was increasingly going global. These dynamics were accelerated by the introduction of the iPod (in October 2001), whose sales quickly went viral worldwide and which helped transform the way all mass media (not just music, but also television and movies) are now distributed and consumed (a transition still in progress). Especially important for a Spanish auteur with global appeal who resisted the crossover to Hollywood, the iPod enabled individuals (including Almodóvar and his fans) to create their own database of musical numbers that could function as a soundtrack for their own personal narratives—a private archive that could house remixed songs from anywhere in the world. With this internalized database, they could challenge the hegemony of any nation or culture by linking these select sounds to their own local images, actions, and feelings, creating a new plurality of meanings. It is this internal process of remix that grows increasingly strong in his work.

In this essay, I explore Almodovar's use of sound and its larger cultural and social reverberations, emphasizing key moments in five films that marked crucial transitions in his career. I am hoping this exploration reveals new insights not only about the work of Almodóvar but also more generally about sound–image relations in cinema and culture.

The fact that Almodóvar made his film debut within the *Movida*, the urban youth culture that emerged in post-Franco Spain during the late 1970s, rather than within the Spanish art cinema of the opposition, already predisposed him to rely on global pop music as a primary source of subversion. What immediately gave Almodóvar his distinctive edge was his ability to skillfully combine global voices—British punk, American pop, and other international underground movements—with local inflections and his own personal repertoire of inner voices he had acquired by consuming and remixing hundreds of movies, songs, and other popular narrative forms from all over the world. As he put it,

> *Pepi, Luci, Bom* . . . could have taken place in any big city but the details belong to Madrid, the beginnings of the golden age of Madrid pop, punk, comics and general frivolity . . . *Pepi*'s point of reference is late seventies New York trash culture, and *Labyrinth* has more to do with the frivolous London pop of the mid-sixties . . . In *Labyrinth of Passion* I continued immersed in the typically urban pop aesthetic, this time with a deliberately rosy tone (Almodóvar 1992: 125).

During this early period, Almodóvar was frequently called "the Spanish Andy Warhol," a pioneer of postmodernism who celebrated not only transvestites and movie queens like Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor, and Audrey Hepburn, but also soup cans and other forms of commercial art. Although Almodóvar followed suit by including parodic television commercials in his first two films, he was more vocal than Warhol, relying both on image and sound to make his outrageous pop interventions. Performing as a singer as well as a writer and filmmaker, he claimed he was also influenced "by underground movements such as Fluxus, one of whose members was Yoko Ono"—whose Japanese nationality and intimate alliance both with pop star John Lennon and the international avant-garde, made her all the more appealing as a foreign audio icon (Strauss 1996). During this phase, Almodóvar took great pleasure in mashing up parodies of all popular and underground genres, creating a form of live cinematic performance in which he functioned like a human karaoke machine, personally voicing all the parts.

> I attempted all genres in my films . . . The shoots always turned into a party . . . I'd make fake newsreels, fake adverts, then the main feature. Since all the films were silent—sound recording for Super 8 is difficult and the results always unsatisfactory—I'd stand next to the projector and add the voice of each character. I'd also provide a running commentary and sometimes criticize the actors' performances. And I'd also sing. I had a little tape recorder and would insert songs in the film. These were live shows and the audiences loved them (Strauss 1996: 2).

This passage reveals four strategies that were crucial to Almodóvar's early approach to sound–image relations in cinema and eventually became more subversive when combined: (i) acknowledging the technical limitations of his own sound technology and finding conceptual means of overcoming them; (ii) combining parodies of several popular movie genres with their contrasting vernaculars and tones; (iii) transforming cinema into live performance, which enabled him to underscore the disjunction between sound and image as he ventriloquized all the roles; and (iv) using local inflections and his own inner material to re-envoice foreign influences and re-inscribe them as his own.

According to Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, "re-envoicement" is the act of combining "voices of authority" with "one's own internally persuasive voice" (Bakhtin 1981). He considered re-envoicement an important ideological strategy within his theory of dialogism, for such combinations weaken any mythical notion of a singular hegemonic truth. Thus, the subversive potential of this dialogic effect is greatly strengthened whenever some of these authoritative voices are foreign and whenever a mixture of genres is involved, which was certainly the case in Almodóvar. Though Bakhtin was describing how re-envoicement functioned in satire and the novel rather than in cinema and music, he argued that in all intentional generic and stylistic hybrids the crucial activity is not so much the dialogizing of linguistic forms "as it is the collision between different points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms" and "the carving out of a living image of another language."

> This verbal-ideological decentering will occur only when a national culture loses its sealed-off and self-sufficient character, when it becomes conscious of itself as only one among *other* cultures and languages. It is this knowledge that will sap the roots of a mythological feeling for language, based as it is on an absolute fusion of ideological meaning with language (Bakhtin 1981: 369–70).

These arguments for the subversive nature of dialogism were particularly applicable to Spain where the Francoist government had historically used Castilian as a means of imposing a false unity on the nation and repressing other regional languages and cultures. Although Almodóvar had deliberately acted (especially early in his career) as if Franco had never existed, he boldly replaced those official voices with an outrageous cacophony of commentaries, speeches, and songs from his own subculture of the *Movida* and from other foreign underground movements, and eventually concocted a new subversive stereotype for post-Franco Spain that his movies popularized worldwide. In this way, he succeeded in "carving out a living image of another language" that relied both on sight and sound.

Another major factor in Almodóvar's emergence as an underground figure in Spain was his early commitment to macro-melodrama as his ultimate global genre. His global perspective enabled him to realize that not only could melodrama be found and understood in practically every culture in the world but it also could be hybridized with all other film genres—from comedy to tragedy, farce to *noir*, westerns to horror, musicals to porn. It was also a genre that could easily be combined with narrative forms outside of cinema—with opera and zarzuelas, radio and television, *churros* and soaps, telephones and games. And, as inscribed in its very name, there was always room for *melos* in melodrama, music that could be combined with extravagance of other kinds—in movement and gesture, in costuming and art design, in color and tone, in acting and plotting, in image and sound. It was a genre he would never outgrow and would never need to abandon, but one he could continually re-envoice in new ways. With this emphasis on the genre's capacity for protean transformation, he hybridized it with comedy—creating a nimble comic melodrama capable of increasing depth.

This flexibility and unlimited potential for hybridity led me to dub Almodóvar's use of this genre *macro-melodrama*, a term close in meaning to Peter Brook's usage of melodrama as an adjective ("an abiding mode in the modern imagination" that is characterized by excess and cuts across many periods, cultures, and art forms, both of the high and low variety), rather than as a noun, a specific genre which has a narrower fixed history associated with the French Revolution and Italian opera (Brooks 1976). Almodóvar's all-accommodating form of macro-melodrama led him to treat all of his films as part of the same super-text, as an unfolding narrative network of melodramatic tales in a wide range of tones whose boundaries frequently dissolve and re-congeal into new patterns. These new combinations feature characters whose dialogue can be dubbed and re-envoiced and whose *labyrinth of passions* always remain at least partially open ended. Given these roots in the *Movida* and macro-melodrama, Almodóvar's explorations of sound were intriguing from the start.

Musical Substitutions and Intertexts in *Laberinto de pasiones*

In *Laberinto de pasiones*, Almodóvar's first feature shot in 35 mm, his subversive re-envoicements of sound are primarily musical. Featuring a far-fetched love story—between Riza (Imanol Arias), a gay Iranian Royal hiding in Madrid, and Sexilia (Cecilia Roth), a Spanish nymphomaniac allergic to the sun—this comic melodrama leverages the sound of music to bring these unlikely lovers together. What results is a "sound design" that leads us to read even its most shocking events (on-screen incest, torture, and diarrhea) with humor and "a deliberately rosy tone."

The film's most important musical sequence presents a series of three live performances in a club that caters to the *Movida*. Although we hear only the tail end of the first performance by Sexilia and her female band, it is immediately followed by a number performed in drag by Almodóvar and his real-life singing partner Fabio McNamara. Though merely a comic interlude (like Bom's song in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, and the taped tunes Almodóvar used to insert into the live performance of his 8 mm films), this number ("Suck it to me") demonstrates that Pedro, as emcee and lyricist, is still controlling the sound design and tone. Their number warms up the audience—both in the club and in the cinema—for the crucial act that follows, which proves pivotal to the plot. For the third number ("Gran ganga") imbues the Iranian Riza with local pop-star status in Madrid, as he fills in for the injured lead singer of the band. As if to underscore the difference between these two performances, the "Suck it to me" duet is interrupted by cutaways to the dressing room where Riza is being outfitted for his new starring role.

On the level of parody, Riza's performance re-envoices the traditional situation in a back-stage musical—when the star can't go on and the understudy gets to take her place. But, more important, this replacement unleashes a series of more radical substitutions that shape the rest of the melodrama. Sexilia is replaced by Queti (a shop girl who works at the dry cleaners), so that the former can fly away to Panama with her Prince Charming and the latter can escape from her sexually abusive father (who has been using her to fill in for his runaway wife). Once Queti becomes Sexilia, her incestuous relationship with her biological father is replaced by a more acceptable incestuous coupling with her new dad, which proves pleasurable to both parties. Riza's musical performance also triggers key transformations in the main lovers. During his number, Sexilia falls madly in love with Riza, which cures her nymphomania and converts him to heterosexuality. Ironically, these conversions become the minor comic miracles demanded by a "rosy" heterosexual romance.

In another key sequence, the film uses musical intertextuality to imbue the homegrown Sexilia with the global glamour of "italianicity" (to use Barthes's term), making her a more suitable international match for the Iranian prince. For she must compete with other foreigners who are hotly pursuing him: both his deposed father's ex-wife (Helga Liné) who wants him to impregnate her; and the

handsome young Islamic terrorist (Antonio Banderas) who picks him up on the street. On the morning after his singing debut, when Sexilia goes to visit Riza for their first private encounter, she rides on the metro, wearing an extravagant Felliniesque outfit (a long red cape and large plastic hoop earrings) which attracts the attention of the working-class passengers who look at her with disdain. Accompanying these images, we hear the same music that Fellini used in *La dolce vita* (1959) to convey the excitement of the Via Veneto as a world-class tourist attraction that draws thousands of ordinary people to come gawk at the decadent rich and famous. The music helps transfer that glamour not only from Anouk Aimée to Cecilia Roth, and from Federico to Pedro, but also from Rome to Madrid, as (to use Marvin D'Lugo's phrase) "the city of desire" (D'Lugo 1991). The same music was also used by Luchino Visconti in *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960) to imbue Milan (rather than Rome) with a similar glamour, but this time as seen through the impoverished eyes of a provincial family coming to the big city for the first time—an experience with which Almodóvar could readily identify.

This musical intertextuality can fluidly bring to mind a specific sequence or an entire film from anywhere in the world, and even if the audience doesn't recognize the source, their emotional response may still be enriched by the link. Later, Almodóvar would use it to make connections between his films, particularly those that remix the same material from his own interior database. For example, in *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto!/What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984) and *La ley del deseo/Law of Desire* (1987), he uses the same music to heighten the emotional resonance of a climactic reunion (between mother and son in the former, and lovers in the latter), a reunion that either prevents or precedes a suicide. As I have detailed elsewhere (Kinder 2009), although these films have radically different tones, this repetition of music reveals the deep emotional connection between these two family melodramas about brothers.

In *Laberinto*'s metro scene, the musical intertextuality makes us think more about the setting—about the differences between Rome and Madrid. It brings to mind the film's opening sequence in El Rastro, Madrid's popular flea market where the contrast between Sexilia and the general public is not so striking. For, as the overhead shot of the huge crowd reveals, everyone (no matter how diverse or flamboyant) fits in. The close-ups of male crotches that follow (from both Sexilia's and Riza's converging points of view) are accompanied by music evoking the bullfight, which underscores the Spanish bravado of this sexy location and its blatant rites of cruising. While the focus is on members of the *Movida*, we see and *hear* dialogic clashes in language, sexuality, and lifestyle that came to define Almodóvar's re-envoicement of Madrid. But, only in retrospect do we realize—through the familiar Italian music from *La dolce vita* in the metro—that El Rastro has become Spain's Via Veneto.

To follow these erotic substitutions and recognize these musical intertexts, we need to keep track of the tone, which demands a good *ear*. Not a remarkable nose (like that of Banderas's Islamic terrorist which sniffs out Riza as his object of desire) or hyper-sensitive vision (like that of Sexilia who was blinded by the sun in an

earlier moment of passion). For it is our ear that enables us to understand the whole picture and how its toon-like characters should be read. Like Patty Diphusa, the transsexual porn star whose memoirs were written by Almodóvar but who is played in this film by his singing partner Fabio McNamara, *Laberinto*'s characters are presented as avatars, who can be embodied or performed by more than one player. But what happens to sound when the characters become three-dimensional and the stories gain emotional depth?

Dubbing as Re-envoicement in *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*

In *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios / Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988), the light comic melodrama that marked Almodóvar's crossover into mainstream global cinema, movies replace musical numbers as the database items being re-envoiced. The emphasis switches from singing to dubbing, a filmmaking process that reveals not only the separation of sound and image but also the constructedness of all cinema characters (jointly created by actors, dubbers, writers, editors, directors, sound mixers, cinematographers, costumers, and others). The unity of any performance is therefore acknowledged as an illusion that can easily be dismantled. Yet that also means these characters have a remarkable capacity for change. Perhaps this emphasis on dubbing and change is what made *Mujeres al borde* so adaptable—both by Almodóvar himself in *Los abrazos rotos*, and by others as a Broadway musical (2010),[1] which put him in the select company of modern European masters like Federico Fellini and Ingmar Bergman whose *8½* (1963) and *Smiles of a Summer Night* (1955), respectively, were also restaged as musicals.

From the very beginning of *Mujeres*, the audio track is blatantly separated from the visuals. In the opening titles we see bright blocks of primary colors exuding a cheerful modernity as we hear a woman's doleful voice singing the *ranchera* "Soy infeliz" (I am unhappy). In our first glimpse inside the narrative, we see the terrace of Pepa's apartment as we hear her disembodied voiceover describing the rural–urban hybridity she purposely cultivated in the décor.

Once we turn to the dubbing sequence that immediately follows, we cannot miss the privileging of the human voice within this disjunction. In fact, when Almodóvar started writing *Mujeres al borde*, he intended to make it an adaptation of Jean Cocteau's play, *The Human Voice* (which he had earlier adapted in a theatrical sequence in *La ley del deseo*, where Carmen Maura plays the Anna Magnani role and her little ward Ada lip-synchs Maysa Mataraso's version of "Ne me quitte pas"). But in *Mujeres al borde*, his desire for a mainstream audience moved him in another direction. In this instance the privileging of the human voice enabled him to challenge cinema's traditional subordination of sound within Hollywood classical cinema, particularly as theorized by Mary Ann Doane (1980).

In "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," Doane argues that synchronized sound is an ideological mechanism designed to smooth over the gaps between the three separate spaces that comprise cinema spectatorship: the two-dimensional screen (which is flat and silent); the diegetic world of the fiction (where three-dimensional space and sound are merely illusions); and the actual three-dimensional space of the theater (where spectators and audio track actually meet). By linking sounds to on-screen bodies, this synchronization uses embodied voices to draw us spectators into the fictional world of the story and to foster our emotional identification with the characters. In this way, we are more likely to ignore the gaps between the three spaces and between the sound and image tracks and to accept the illusion as reality (Doane 1980). Although the introduction of surround sound challenged this model by spatializing the way sound was heard within the theater and thereby creating stronger connections between the fictional and theatrical spaces, Doane's analysis enabled us to predict how such changes might enhance spectator identification and the fusion of sound and image.

In *Mujeres al borde*, which uses Ultra Stereo, a cinema surround-sound system developed in 1984 to rival the prevailing system of Dolby Stereo, Almodóvar strives for precisely the opposite effect. This dubbing sequence not only accentuates the separation between sound and image and between interior and exterior space, and thereby exposes the artificial construction of characters and plot, but it also shows us we are still emotionally moved nonetheless.

Significantly, the particular inset film being dubbed comes from Hollywood classical cinema (rather than the European art film or avant-garde). This choice demonstrates that even mainstream Hollywood classics are susceptible to ideological re-inscription through sound—a lesson Spaniards already learned during the Francoist era when censors used Castilian dubbing to alter dialogue they didn't approve of. By choosing Nicolas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954), an edgy western–melodrama hybrid, and by exploring the subversive potential of its voice, Almodóvar shows that cultural re-inscription can move in both directions and that melodrama is ideally suited for such reciprocal movements, since it glides so readily across national and generic borders. Like *Mujeres, Johnny Guitar* could have it both ways.

In the first dubbing sequence Pepa (Carmen Maura) lies in her bed, dreaming in black and white of the serial infidelities of her live-in lover Iván (Fernando Guillén) with an array of beautiful women who embody national stereotypes from all over the world. This vision evokes the harem dream from Fellini's *8½*, where the sexy voice of a Scandinavian stewardess helped eroticize the setting. But here it's the philandering man whose sexy voice controls the scene. We follow Iván into the studio where he dubs the voice of Sterling Hayden in *Johnny Guitar*, a film whose flamboyance was more appreciated by French new wave directors (especially Truffaut and Godard) than by American critics who preferred classical model-Ford westerns. In this scene, Johnny declares his love for the protagonist Vienna (Joan Crawford), the ballsy modern woman who owns the local saloon.

Figure 13.1 Iván gives voice to Johnny Guitar's love for Joan Crawford in *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1988; prod. El Deseo, S.A.). © El Deseo, S.A., S.L.U. © Macusa Cores.

Undoubtedly, she's the film's most powerful character, though her lovers (both Johnny Guitar from the past and the Dancin' Kid from the present) occasionally exert their masculine muscle and provide the musical accompaniment acknowledged in their names. Yet while Pepa oversleeps, Vienna remains voiceless and powerless. It is Iván's voice (rather than the mute images of the women) that dominates the scene.

This continuing disjunction between sound and image during the dubbing sequences is echoed in the distance maintained between Pepa and Iván, who fail to cross paths in the studio and fail to be connected by phone. Rather, Iván uses a message left on an answering machine to dump her and to make new outrageous demands. These divisions underscore the "constructedness" of the narrative whose characters and shots are composed of modular fragments, which can easily be remixed. Significantly, Pepa's dream and Iván's dubbing session are both introduced by an extreme close-up of Iván's mouth poised at the microphone. This image accentuates not only the seductiveness of his voice and the fetishizing of his gendered acoustical instrument (which is as powerful as Johnny's guitar) but also the enormous gaps between what he says and what he does.

Augmented by the amplified ticking of many alarm clocks, these narrative disjunctions open a temporal gap between the two sides of the conversation in *Johnny Guitar*—a space that is filled with narrative threads that set this fast-paced, hyperplotted film into motion. Before re-envoicing Joan Crawford, Pepa listens to Iván's

depressing message on the answering machine, sees a doctor who tells her she's pregnant, learns that Iván's going on a trip with his new mistress, trades insults with his ex-wife over the telephone, and dubs a wedding scene from another film. Yet, once Pepa puts on the head phones (her own receptive acoustical instrument), the stirring guitar music and her own inner feelings about Iván get her in the mood for her encounter with Johnny. What we see are not the images from *Johnny Guitar* but rather the pulsing, moody blue light from the projector moving across the room. This concrete image of projection helps us re-envoice the conversation to suit the current crisis between Pepa and Iván—wishing that Iván would revive his love for her, and wishing she could be the one who tells him it's over. At the end of the dubbing scene, when Pepa faints, this action defines the film's primary challenge: she must be transformed into a strong independent woman like Vienna who can reject her unfaithful ex-lover with similar conviction.

The sequence leads us to ask: what do you learn by unhooking the voice from the image? Whereas Roland Barthes led us to expect this separation would restore the unlimited plurality of meanings to the image (once the accompanying words no longer anchored it to a single message), in Almodóvar's movies the separation also grants us access to the full plurality of meanings in the dialogue (Barthes 1977a). The conversation from *Johnny Guitar* acquires greater depth when it draws on Pepa's inner feelings and is applied to her romance with Iván—a dynamic enhanced by the accompanying abstract image of the flickering blue light. The separation also tells us something about the interplay between sound and image, which are potentially equal in their powers of expressiveness but are both enhanced when collaboratively engaged like partners in a dance. Yet Almodóvar chooses to emphasize sound because it has been underdeveloped, both in critical discourse and in cinematic practice.

Although *Mujeres* presents a cacophony of voices, many of which are comic as in *Laberinto*, some like Pepa's become fully humanized and have real depth. *Mujeres al borde* makes us ask: how can the re-envoicement of a strong Hollywood star like Joan Crawford ("Mommy Dearest") help Pepa become a strong modern woman who can live without a man and thrive as a single mother? The closest model for Pepa from within Almodovar's own work is the title character Pepi from his debut feature—a connection underscored by the similarity of their names and by the casting of Maura in both roles. With hindsight, we realize these were the first and last of Maura's collaborations with Almodóvar for some time. (They did not work together again until eighteen years later in *Volver* [2006].) So we might well ask, how does this film prepare Maura to continue on her own, with neither Iván nor Pedro?

This question of change also applies to Almodóvar. After having been such a strong force in the *Movida* and having achieved such notoriety and success at international festivals with darker, daring works like *Matador* (1986) and *La ley del deseo*, why was he now making his move to mainstream cinema with a lighter comic melodrama? Though he retained his artistic freedom in Spain and insisted he would never make the crossover to Hollywood, the dubbing sequence enabled

him to dialogue with edgy Hollywood classics like *Johnny Guitar*, favorites he might have to renounce (or at least subversively re-envoice) if he was going to retain his own edge and go on to even greater heights (or depths). Like Pepa and Carmen, perhaps Pedro also needed to re-envoice Vienna's renunciation of Johnny Guitar.

Mujeres al borde was not the first film in which Pedro dramatized the intertextual interaction with on-screen excerpts from other movies. He had done it before in his two previous darker films, *Matador* and *La ley del deseo*, which both reveal that spectator identification is a form of re-envoicement that can destabilize our sexuality and seal our fate. While both sequences are *watched* in a movie theater, the inset excerpt from *La ley del deseo* is *set* within a studio where a porn film is being dubbed. In *Matador* he used another Hollywood western/melodrama hybrid, *Duel in the Sun* (Charles Vidor, 1946), whose notorious "lust in the dust" ending enabled Almodóvar's pair of serial killers to re-enact (rather than dub) their own erotic double suicide. In *La ley del deseo* the inset excerpt comes from a film contrived by Almodóvar rather than from a Hollywood classic like *Duel in the Sun* or *Johnny Guitar*, yet its position at the opening and its use of dubbing to create a radical separation between sound and image help trigger an equally extreme transformation in the spectator: a repressed right-wing heterosexual is instantly inflamed with homoerotic desire. Like *Mujeres, La ley del deseo* possesses strong reflexive elements, including characters involved in the film industry and a fetishized sonic instrument. The filmmaker's typewriter becomes a percussive instrument whose rhythmic tapping blends right into the bolero heard on the soundtrack, and, like Pepa's red phone, later becomes an object of displaced rage that is flung out the window. While *Mujeres* combined the re-envoicement strategies used in both of these earlier radical films, they lost some of their ideological edge when applied to the mainstream content of this comic melodrama. Almodóvar would try again later in *Los abrazos rotos*, where *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* itself becomes the inset film being redubbed, but this time reframed in *noir*.

The Maternal Voice in *La flor de mi secreto*

In *La flor de mi secreto*, a film that marked a shift to a more somber tone and darker form of melodrama, there is a key moment when the protagonist, the fashionably lean writer Leo (Marisa Paredes), is on the verge of suicide, but at the very last moment hears the internalized voice of her mother (Chus Lampreave) which literally saves her life. Occasioning a trip back to their family village in La Mancha (the mythical birthplace of Don Quixote and Almodóvar), depicted as Spain's nurturing Motherland, this maternal intervention enables Leo to escape not only her erotic obsession with her philandering husband Paco (Imanol Arias, who also played Riza in *Labyrinth*) but also her constrictive writing contract that limits her to romance. Once her mother reminds her that she was once called "la gordita" (fatty), Leo

develops a newly expanded persona, which enables her to become an independent woman (like Pepa and Vienna) and a flowering artist like Almodóvar, capable of mastering new forms. Meanwhile, she passes on her old nom-de-plume to Ángel (Juan Echanove), her nurturing editor at *El País*, another "gordito" and fellow lover of words. Though he formerly wrote under the female pseudonym, Paqui Derma (a female variation on Paco as well as on Patty Diphusa), this androgynous writer agrees to take over Leo's old contract and frees her to write whatever she wants.

Demonstrating the expansiveness of such freedom for a writer, *La flor* encourages us to re-read other films by Almodóvar in a new way (a dynamic I have called retro-seriality), for it encourages us to consider the intertextual resonance among these texts as another mode of re-envoicement (Kinder 1997, 2004, 2009). For example, *La flor* was neither the first nor the last Almodóvar film to feature a mother's voice as a source of grace in life-and-death situations. Yet, given he considers it a "neo-realist portrait of [his] own mother," *La flor* treats this dynamic reflexively as a major step in his distinctive mastery over maternal melodrama. This dynamic recurs later in *Volver*, a film seriously addressing domestic abuse, where the maternal voice reverberates across three generations of victimized mothers and daughters. Raimunda (Penélope Cruz) is empowered by her song, which enables her to forgive her mother (Carmen Maura) for murdering her philandering husband and ignoring his sexual molestation of their daughter, and to aid her own daughter in covering up the patricide that prevented another case of incest. We also find this dynamic earlier in *Tacones lejanos*, where the mother Becky (Marisa Paredes) is an egocentric pop star who sings her heart out to atone for having earlier neglected her daughter Rebeca (Victoria Abril). As I have noted elsewhere (Kinder 1992, 1993, 1995), both mother and daughter pursue oracular professions—as a singer and television newscaster, respectively—using the airwaves to confess crimes against the father and strengthen their mutual identification with each other. Becky's maternal voice performs miraculous interventions—when imitated by female impersonator Femme Lethal (Miguel Bosé) who impregnates Rebeca while still dressed as her mother, and when Becky falsely confesses to murder to save her daughter from prison.

As several critics have observed, this use of the mother's voice in Almodóvar's maternal melodramas is resonant with the feminist theorization of sound, particularly in the work of Kaja Silverman who emphasized its importance in subject formation. As Silverman observes in *The Acoustic Mirror*,

> The mother performs a crucial role during the subject's early history. She is traditionally the first language teacher, commentator, storyteller—the one who first organizes the world linguistically for the child and first presents it to the Other. The maternal voice also plays a crucial part during the mirror stage, defining and interpreting the reflected image, and "fitting" it to the child. Finally, it provides the acoustic mirror in which the child first hears "itself" . . . Indeed it would seem to be the maternal rather than the paternal voice that initially constituted the auditory sphere for most children, although it is clearly the latter which comes to predominate within the superego (Silverman 1988: 100).

These dynamics are brilliantly dramatized in *Tacones lejanos*, whose very title identifies the audio fetish that binds mother and daughter within the trans-subjective acoustic mirror. The percussive sound of high heels tapping on the pavement is introduced by Becky in stories of her childhood, which she tells to her daughter. As the child of impoverished janitors, Becky used to listen for the well-heeled feet of bourgeois passersby, which could be seen through the window of her humble basement flat. To Becky the images are as important as the sounds. But when Rebeca appropriates this story, she focuses only on the sound of the high heels tapping, transforming it into an audio fetish, which she uses when staying up late to wait for her mother's return. Through this re-envoicement, she privileges sound over image, a reversal that acquires erotic associations with mother love and patricide. By fetishizing the maternal voice and by amplifying it through media transmission and hardware usually controlled by men, these women succeed in replacing "the unspoken Name-of-the-Father and the hollow voice of God" (Kinder 1993: 257).

It was the subordination of sound to image both in film history and production and its analogic relation to women's subordinate position under patriarchy, that first drew feminists to theorize the gendering of sound–image relations. Some like Amy Lawrence (1991) emphasized the historical complaints about the inherent inadequacy of the female voice for media transmission—because of its alleged shrillness, stridency, and weakness (qualities Almodóvar uses as a source of humor in his earlier films). Others like Doane and Silverman focused on showing how sound–image relations were gendered within Hollywood classical cinema (Doane 1980; Silverman 1988). As in Laura Mulvey's influential essay on the structure of the gaze and the way it was cut to the measure of male desire (Mulvey 1975), these feminist texts on sound revealed new dimensions of film language that could be used not only by feminists and queer theorists but by all those interested in the expressive powers of the medium. Thus, issues of gender and sexuality were perceived as expanding rather than narrowing our understanding of cinema and the way it produced meaning in the social field. According to Vernon, *La flor* also marks a broader shift in the way Almodóvar uses not only the maternal voice but also music and sound design.

> Where the earliest films largely reflected the punk-pop idiom of the post-Francoist cultural phenomenon known as the Movida . . . the middle period, beginning with *Matador* (1986), featured a favored role of Latin American music and songs, the bolero in particular, and provided for the deepening emotional resonance of those films. Almodóvar's subsequent collaboration with composer Alberto Iglesias, starting with *The Flower of My Secret* (1995) and continuing through his most recent films, suggests a further development in his concepts of the role of music in film and arguably a new understanding of the relation between music and narrative and between songs and composed score" (Vernon 2009: 52–3).

In these later films, certain percussive sounds with symbolic resonance starkly stand out from the background ambience, just as individual songs stand out from the musical score, creating highly immersive sonic interludes. In *La flor* the most

memorable example occurs when, after having been sexually rejected by her husband, Leo shatters the glass frame that held the falsely romantic photograph of them as a married couple. The frame is suddenly dismantled into several translucent glass balls that noisily bounce onto the floor, rolling randomly in all directions. While the image functions as a witty visual pun for the devastating effects this break-up has on her sanity ("losing her marbles"), the percussive tapping of the glass balls evokes the tapping of Antonio's heels during one of his flamenco numbers (a sound that also accompanies the opening titles). Like her mother's intervening voice, this striking sound encourages Leo to accept the break-up with Paco and warns against entering a similar dead-end relationship with the ambitious young Antonio.

As I have written elsewhere (Kinder 2004), *La flor* also launched a brain-dead trilogy—three films that feature a comatose youth who is rendered brain dead in an accident. This brain-dead condition moves from being merely a symbolic image in *La flor* (from an inset instructional video on how to convince family members to donate vital organs), to a major pivot in the plot in *Todo sobre mi madre* (where the protagonist's son is run down in the street), to the central narrative situation in *Hable con ella / Talk to Her* (2002) (where two young women are rendered comatose by a car accident and bullfight). Yet, only *La flor* emphasizes the resulting transplants, which become a bodily form of re-envoicement. Both the mother's voice emerging from within Leo, and the transfer of her literary persona to Ángel, also become symbolic transplants that make the trope all the more resonant.

Like the recurring maternal voice, this brain-dead trope refigures Spain as a motherland, generating a fascinating interplay between human voices and bodily gestures. It generates a fluid trans-subjectivity that runs within and across these texts that comprise Almodóvar's macro-melodrama.

Macro-Melodrama in *Hable con ella* and *Todo sobre mi madre*

Hable con ella contains a fascinating musical sequence where singer Caetano Veloso performs "Curcurrucucú Paloma" on camera to an audience that includes not only important characters from this film but also Cecelia Roth and Marisa Paredes, actresses who played lead roles in *Todo sobre mi madre*. The choice of the Brazilian singer and Mexican song underscores Almodóvar's efforts to move across the national borders of Spanish-language cinema and across the boundaries between individual films—an erasure of boundaries that also works on the registers of gender and genre. Like the intertextual strategies we earlier traced between *La flor de mi secreto* and other works in Almodóvar's brain-dead trilogy and like the musical intertextuality between *Qué he hecho yo* and *La ley del deseo*, this musical fusion demonstrates that both of these Oscar-winning films belong to a single networked structure, an evolving macro-melodrama. According to Vernon:

> The Brazilian singer's lovingly careful articulation of the Spanish lyrics, the slow tempo and unusual instrumentation—more characteristic of the modern Western art song than Cucurrucucú's original identity as a mariachi-inflected *huapango*—works to strip away ethnic markers, transforming the song from folkloric kitsch into an anthem of globalized utopia for spectators and listeners both within and beyond the diegesis. . . . The sequence challenges the temporal and spatial coherence of the film's fictional world, expanding its boundaries to embrace the broader Almodovarian universe (Vernon 2009: 57).

Vernon observes that this is not the first time Almodóvar used the voice of Veloso; we also heard him singing "Tonada de luna llena" ("Song of the Full Moon") over the credits in *La flor*, the film that launched the brain-dead trilogy as well as other intertextual connections and retro-serial readings within his own canon. One reason Almodóvar is so drawn to Veloso is that his adult falsetto evokes the kind of gender ambiguity that we heard in the transsexual Tina in *La ley del deseo*, who had been molested by his priest, and in the young boy in *La mala educación / Bad Education* (2004) whose rendition of "Moon River" (the song from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Blake Edwards, 1961) triggered a similar sexual violation. Both of these characters evoke Almodóvar himself, who tells Veloso in a fascinating exchange quoted by Vernon, "I had a voice that was sweet like yours." But it is Veloso's reply that is most amazing, for it echoes Silverman's theorization of the role played by the internalized maternal voice in subject formation: "My feminine identification is my voice. I sing like my mother; I learned to sing with her and when I sing—I have a song that says, 'My mother is my voice'—I feel that she is with me (Vernon 2009: 59).

Almodóvar is one of the few filmmakers who takes full advantage of the theoretical insights on the gendering of sound–image relations. He had always paid close attention to how the "grain of the voice" (Barthes's term) was gendered (Barthes 1977b). This is apparent even in his early memoirs of Patty Diphusa, where he adopts a literary voice that toggles between being a woman and a transsexual (Almodóvar 1992). Among transvestites and transsexuals, it is well known that the voice is frequently the giveaway—the trace of male identity that remains resistant to hormones and surgery—but Almodóvar values this trace as a sign of hybridity. We can see this dimension in *Todo sobre mi madre*, where the father (the original Esteban) is visually female and acoustically male—a sensory fusion that deliberately prevents us from identifying him as simply one or the other. Like Jesus (who was both human and divine) and the "holy ghost" (both animal and spirit), Esteban's dual identity makes his impregnation of the virginal Sister Rosa (Penélope Cruz) almost miraculous and their child—the third Esteban in the trinity—a miracle baby capable of conquering AIDS. In the secular realm, Almodóvar casts Marisa Paredes as his Spanish Joan Crawford, who (despite being middle-aged) has an androgynous body—slender and boyish—and, just as important, a deep sexy voice. This combination equips her to star as the pop diva in *Tacones lejanos* who is emulated by transvestites and desired by her own daughter, as the literary figure Leo in *La flor* who gives her voice to an androgynous male writer, and as the

lesbian thespian in *Todo sobre mi madre* who thrives in plays by world-class gay playwrights—from Tennessee Williams to Federico García Lorca.

In *Todo sobre mi madre* and *Hable con ella*, the interweaving of plots reaches a new level of complexity, one that is illuminated by musical metaphors and narratology. Instead of remaining comical as in *Laberinto de pasiones*, here Almodóvar's hyper-plotting generates a series of harmonic lines, like different instruments orchestrated within a musical score. This is the way Lévi-Strauss used Wagner, once he realized the blending of lines across the vertical and horizontal planes, applied both to music and narrative (Lévi-Strauss 1969). And the way Barthes theorized narrative orchestration in *S/Z*—as the interweaving of five codes within the sequential and agglomerative spaces of the text (Barthes 1974). And it helps explain how a film like *Hable con ella* can be so harmonious, even when the criminal act of love at its center (the rape of a young brain-dead woman) is so disturbing.

The interweaving of stories occurs both within and between the two films. In *Hable con ella*, the love story of Benigno and Alicia alternates with the analogous tale of Marco and Lydia as theme and variation, as this film echoes the earlier two works in the brain-dead trilogy.

This is one reason why we see Marisa Paredes and Cecilia Roth in *Hable con ella*, as part of the audience listening to "Curcurrucucú Paloma," whose lyrics apply to all three movies. And why we don't have to see the accident that renders the dancing Alicia brain-dead because we already saw Esteban's similar accident in *Todo sobre mi madre*, which also occurred in the rain. The two parallel stories told by Benigno and Marco are interwoven seamlessly together like a classical pas de deux; they move fluidly both backwards and forwards in time, occasionally making arabesques to revisit earlier scenes where new details are artfully inserted within ellipses. Despite Benigno's strong desire for narrative closure, which helps drive him to suicide, the film creates the sense that the whole story can never be told. That's one of the reasons why it ends with the beginning of a new story, formalized in the title "Marco and Alicia." This new story is launched by two dance numbers in the theater where Marco and Alicia happen to meet. In the first, several men pass the body of a woman between them (an image that evokes both the opening from Pina Bausch's *Cafe Müller* (1978) and also the bullfighting scene in which Lydia's broken body was carried out of the *corrida*). The second expresses hope with the openness of its ending: a series of couples slow-dancing to a bolero. All of the actions in the film—whether massaging an inert body or facing a bull in the *corrida*—become choreographed movements in a dance.

Both films use other narrative forms to amplify and re-envoice these interwoven tales: dance and silent cinema in *Hable con ella*, and television and theater in *Todo sobre mi madre*. Mediating between cinema and radio, television is a domestic medium that inspires a distracted form of spectatorship, which frequently is more attentive to sound than to image. With its diverse programming and serial repetitions, television enables us to appreciate Almodóvar's mimicry and mastery of tone, a form of ventriloquism that demands a good ear. Like music on the soundtrack, television can insert any intertext into the story, though perhaps not

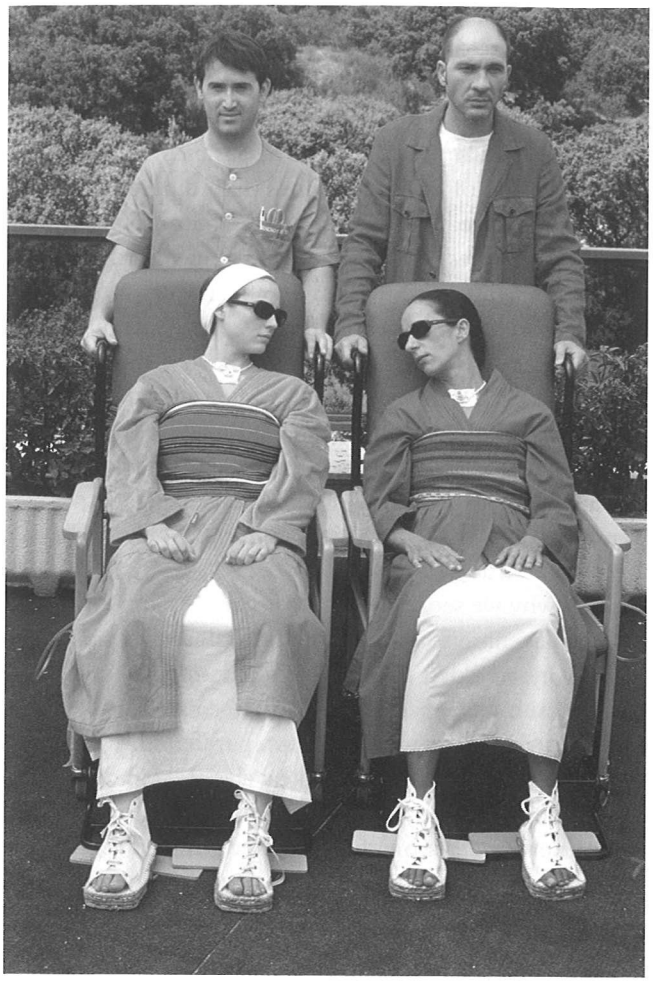

Figure 13.2 Theme and variation: Benigno and Alicia and Marco and Lydia in *Hable con ella* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2002; prod. El Deseo, S.A.). © El Deseo, S.A., S.L.U. © Miguel Bracho.

so fluidly as music. It introduces *All About Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950) into *Todo sobre mi madre*, preparing us for the introduction of Huma (Marisa Paredes), who named herself after Bette Davis. Yet, Huma is primarily identified with the theater, another medium, like television, that privileges the human voice and serial repetition. Theater enables understudies to read multiple parts, the way Almodóvar voices all the roles for his actors before they begin to shoot the film. By listening to a performance night after night, the understudy learns how to take over a part—the way Manuela (Cecilia Roth) takes over the role of Stella, which is a slight deviation from cinema, where Pepa (Carmen Maura) relies on dubbing to take over Crawford's role of Vienna in Johnny Guitar.

In *Hable con ella*, the intertexts focus on the body rather than the voice—whether they are the mute dances performed by Pina Bausch and her troupe on-stage, which strengthen Benigno's emotional bonds both with Marco and Alicia—or the silent science-fiction film (a parodic version of *The Incredible Shrinking Man* [Jack Arnold, 1957]), which leads Benigno to rape the brain-dead Alicia as an act of love. Yet these mute body genres alternate with long monologues. By listening to Benigno talk to the comatose dancer Alicia day after day, his friend Marco feels more comfortable replacing him as the nurturing love interest in her life, just as Manuela takes over the role of nurturing mother for Sister Rosa. In the process of weaving these two films together, Almodóvar amplifies his own interior database of characters and voices, through these personalized networks of vocalizations and re-envoicements.

Retro-seriality in *Los abrazos rotos*: Reverberations in the Age of Audio Culture

In the final sequence of *Los abrazos rotos*, Almodóvar's first film devoted to a reflexive celebration of cinema, a blind filmmaker named Mateo Blanco (Lluís Homar) sits in front of a screen *listening* to footage he had shot when he still had his sight. Relying solely on his ear and aural memory to re-edit the film, he restores the version of his comedy, *Chicas y maletas/Girls and Suitcases*, that he had originally intended and discredits the sabotaged version that failed in the theaters. The "pirated" version had been produced by his villainous rival Ernesto Martel (José Luis Gómez), who owned the rights to the film and deliberately chose the worst takes. In this remix, Mateo reverses the usual meanings of the terms *authorized* and *pirated*, which normally rely on money and legal rights instead of the author's intentions. Thus, not only does this sequence demonstrate the crucial role of sound (particularly in comedy and *noir*), but it also validates the filmmaker's internalized voice as the privileged source of the authorized text.

These dynamics take on new meaning when we consider that the inset film, *Chicas y maletas*, is an adaptation of Almodóvar's own *Mujeres al borde*, the comic melodrama that used dubbing and sound design as a mode of artistic growth as he made his successful crossover into global mainstream cinema. As a world-class auteur with his own production company, Almodóvar never has to suffer the oedipal blinding and castration that are imposed on Mateo. Yet *Los abrazos rotos* reveals Almodóvar's nagging desire (so typical of writers in the digital age) to keep revisiting and improving what he has already done—a desire that explains his increasing fascination with "retro-seriality" and "macro-melodrama" (Kinder 2010).

Instead of blending the comedy and melodrama together as in *Mujeres*, *Los abarzos rotos* places an inset comedy within a *film noir* frame, risking a clash of tones that even worries Mateo. With its intricate flashback structure, the frame evokes

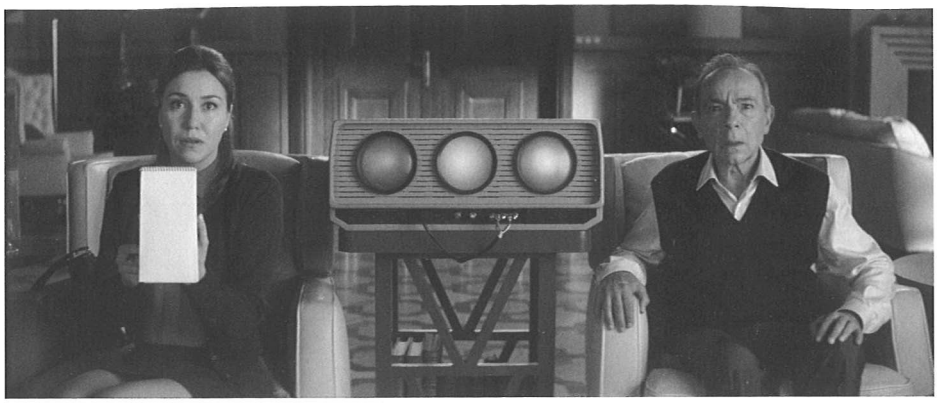

Figure 13.3 The disjunction between sound and image: Martel hires a lip-reader to provide the dialogue for Lena's affair with Mateo Blanco in *Los abrazos rotos* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2009; prod. El Deseo, S.A.). © El Deseo, S.A., S.L.U. © Paola Ardizzioni y Emilio Pereda.

Almodóvar's previous *film noir*, *La mala educación*, where Lluís Homar played a murderous pedophile instead of the protagonist. And the femme fatale performing multiple roles was played by a transgendered Gael García Bernal impersonating Sara Montiel instead of Penélope Cruz doing Audrey Hepburn. These connections encourage us to re-read these two earlier films by Almodóvar (*Mujeres al borde* and *La mala educación*) in light of *Los abrazos rotos* and to see all three as comprising another trilogy within his expanding macro-melodrama. As Barthes observed: "The one text is not an (inductive) access to a Model, but entrance into a network with a thousand entrances" (Barthes 1974).

Like *Mujeres*, *Los abrazos rotos* contains an important dubbing sequence, but here the reverberations are more compressed. Suspicious that his young mistress Lena (Penélope Cruz) is having an affair with her director Mateo, Martel forces his closeted gay son Ernesto Junior (Rubén Ochandiano) to document their movements on video. But given the inferior technical quality of Ernesto's sound equipment (which is as abysmal as Almodóvar's was on his first 16 mm feature, *Pepi, Luci, Bom*), Martel hires a deaf interpreter to lip-read the lines, for he cannot tolerate the disjunction between sound and image. During the dubbing, Lena bursts into the studio and breaks up with Martel in direct address, a confrontation that underscores the liberating effects of a disjunctive soundtrack.

While the movie relies on Ernesto Junior's pixilated digital images to document the car accident in which Mateo loses his eyesight and Lena her life, Almodóvar adds symbolic sounds that emerge out of the ambience, as if to compensate for the inadequacy of Ernesto's sonic equipment. The place where the fatal crash happens is marked by a giant mobile sculpture, whose spinning globes and wheels, and reflective surfaces and eerie sounds, seem to model the intricate structure of the narrative or of Almodóvar's macro-melodrama. Like the breaking-glass frame

in *La flor*, this striking sound is accompanied by strong images; together they have powerful reverberations that go beyond the narrative connections with the lovers' break-up. Challenging the assumption that sound is subordinate to image and temporarily breaking the disjunction between the audio and visual tracks, this fleeting combination reveals the dialectic power of sound–image fusion: where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Almodóvar's recasting of the roles in Mateo's remake of *Mujeres* is more complex than it at first appears. Not only is Carmen Maura's Pepa replaced by Penélope Cruz's Pina, but their Hollywood models shift from Joan Crawford to Audrey Hepburn. To demonstrate the inherent versatility of the original material, Almodóvar insists these are not merely replacements but a more complex narrative reshuffling, as if they were remixed items from his own internal database of pop culture.

> In this new version . . . Pina isn't an adaptation of [Pepa] the role played by Carmen Maura, but rather of the role of her model friend Candela. The character also has echoes of Holly Golightly from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the most modern ingénue of cinema and American literature, although the hairstyle is that of another character played by Audrey Hepburn, Sabrina (Almodóvar 2009).

Although Cruz's evocations of earlier stars are primarily visual, *Los abarzos rotos* also reveals the sensual power of aural memories, which Mateo relies on both in making films and making love. At one point he longs to hear Jeanne Moreau's sexy voice in Louis Malle's *Elevator to the Gallows* (1958), suggesting he is turned on by sound. This revelation should come as no surprise since his sexual performance with the sexy young blond in the opening sequence is driven by her verbal description of herself, which he has authorized.

Many of the intertextual re-envoicements in *Los abrazos rotos* echo the sonic strategies already described from earlier stages of Almodóvar's career: the cacophony of comical voices, musical intertexts, disjunction of sound and image, inset performances, dramatic shifts in tone, orchestrated plots, internalized voices, and audio fetishes, all of which generate change. Almodóvar is quite explicit about these connections. When describing the hilarious monologue delivered by Carmen Machi, about her sexual adventures with a drug dealer, he claims he was trying to "recover that free, playful, very politically incorrect, irrepressible, crude tone of *Patty Diphusa* from the early 80s" (Almodóvar 2009).

By drawing on his entire canon to celebrate cinema's resilience, Almodóvar shows his films still can appeal to multiple generations—even to those who prefer television, digital video, the internet, and the iPod. And especially to the generation of Mateo's son Diego and his friends who work as DJs in a popular club and wear vintage "Suck it to me" tee-shirts, alluding to the punkish song Almodóvar and Fabio McNamara performed in *Laberinto de pasiones*.

In this age of audio culture, by demonstrating how a growing mastery of sound can intensify sensory pleasures, and how the disjunction between sound and image

can increase the plurality of meanings, and how an internalized soundtrack can echo subject formation and destabilize gender and genre identity, Almodóvar's films help explain the viral popularity of iPods, headphones, and other internalized acoustical instruments. For these acoustical instruments (especially cellphones and iPods) can function as audio fetishes that fill in for the missing companion, making it easier to be alone in public places. This dynamic is particularly useful for someone like Mateo who recently lost the love of his life, and for an auteur like Almodóvar who is totally dedicated to his career. These devices create an inner sonic world that contains not only inner speech and imagined dialogues (like those Benigno has with the comatose Alicia) but also a creative space for remixing memories, daydreams, and other narrative modules both from without and within—precisely the process that Mateo performs with such mastery at the end of *Los abrazos rotos*.

Note

1 For a study of the transplant of Almodóvar's 1988 film to Broadway, see Isolina Ballesteros, chapter 17, this volume.

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