

THE RECYCLING OF FILTH:
TRANSCULTURAL DISCOURSES IN THE FILMS
OF PEDRO ALMODÓVAR AND JOHN WATERS

by

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ABSTRACT

Analyzing the influence of American filmmaker John Waters on the Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar and revealing the impact that Almodóvar had on Waters' career reveal a transcultural discourse that exists between these two auteurs. Postmodernism and queer theory provide the most salient theoretical frameworks which explain the vast array of interdependent allusions both directors create when borrowing materials from one another and from a shared pool of filmic works. The application of these two theorems to their films supports the hypothesis that Almodóvar's and Waters' movies mirror one another because of both directors' tendency to allude to similar themes, characters, and other works of cinema to include productions created by one another. Findings from the careful scrutiny of the sources of their shared allusions prove that the parallels that connect their cinema are not coincidental. Instead, this study explicates the deliberate borrowing and reutilization of works that take place between both directors. The most logical conclusion based on the compelling evidence manifested in their works is that Almodóvar and Waters establish a mutual, postmodern, and queer dialog that transcends the cultural differences inherent in their productions.

While other critical studies have come to the same conclusion that the works of Almodóvar and Waters share a strikingly similar trajectory, no other investigation thoroughly explains this phenomenon on a case-by-case basis to include the plethora of allusions upon which both directors draw when they reference canonical works both within and outside the sphere of classical Hollywood's influence. In addition to providing the necessary background information required to comprehend the myriad of references that result from Almodóvar and

Waters relying upon the implicit meanings of the other directors' works, this analysis specifically traces each allusion Almodóvar makes to Waters and vice versa. The results of the analyses of this study make it clear that despite the cultural differences manifested by filmic artifacts that hail from other cultures, Almodóvar and Waters deliberately plant a carefully constructed system of allusions that inextricably join their own works together.

The overriding objective of this dissertation is to extrapolate each allusion and to explain fully its source, meaning, and how it connects movies by both directors. This investigation's detailed analytical approach applied to their extant full-feature length productions clearly establishes a postmodern, queer, and transcultural discourse that unites their works.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all who took part in helping me craft this investigational cross-cultural study of my favorite film directors. First I must remember that without the tireless efforts of my family and friends, including my brother William Drummond, my sister Wendy Carroll, and my special friends Tom Cowen and Adrian Sosa, this project would not have been successful. I dedicate this study to them, because as much as I have taught them about Pedro Almodóvar and John Waters, they have in turn granted me new insights into my academic career in ways that I had not previously anticipated. Because of all their hard work, I am positioned not only to learn even more about these two directors, but also about upon whom I can rely when I am faced by any challenge.

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Taking the opportunity to thank my family, friends, and the members of my committee is certainly a rewarding undertaking. I am especially grateful to my committee chair Dr. Ignacio F. Rodeño for his support not only with the writing processes involved in the creation of this dissertation, but also for mentoring me as an emerging scholar. Dr. Rodeño singlehandedly and wholeheartedly reached out to me at the points when I needed the most motivation and encouragement. His dedication to excellence in writing and research has served as the paradigm that has guided me throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Jeremy Butler for providing his guidance in all matters related to the art of cinema and cinematic critical approaches. With Dr. Butler's assistance, my dissertation takes into account the concrete and necessary cinematographic considerations that result as a natural outgrowth of studying two filmmakers. Dr. Constance Janiga-Perkins also greatly aided me in studying the liturgical meanings of Catholic symbology found in movies by Almodóvar and Waters. Dr. Alicia Cipria aided me in keeping my focus on the specific evidence offered by their movies. Dr. Álvaro Baquero-Pecino additionally provided guidance regarding film theory and especially advice on how to include cultural phenomenon known as *la movida madrileña* in my studies. Without the support of my committee members, this dissertation would not have come to fruition. Lastly, I wish to offer my gratitude once more to my family and friends whose efforts enabled me to succeed.

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LISTING OF WORKS STUDIED BY DIRECTOR

Pedro Almodóvar

¡Átame! Perf. Victoria Abril, Antonio Banderas, and Loles León. El Deseo S.A., 1990. Film.

Carne trémula Perf. Francesca Neri, Liberto Rabal, Javier Bardem, and Penélope Cruz. El Deseo SA, 1997. Film.

Entre tinieblas. Perf. Christina Sánchez Pascual, Julieta Serrano, and Marisa Paredes. Tesouro S.A., 1983. Film.

Hable con ella. Perf. Javier Cámara, Darío Grandinetti, and Leonor Watling. El Deseo, 2002. Film.

Kika. Perf. Verónica Forqué, Peter Coyote, Victoria Abril, and Rossy de Palma. El Deseo, 1993. Film.

Laberinto de pasiones. Perf. Cecilia Roth, Imanol Arias, and Marta Fernández Muro. Alphaville, 1982. Film.

La ley del deseo. Perf. Eusebio Poncela, Carmen Maura, and Antonio Banderas. El Deseo, 1987. Film.

La mala educación. Perf. Gael García Bernal, Fele Martínez, Daniel Giménez Cacho, and Lluís Homar. El Deseo, 2004. Film.

Matador. Perf. Antonio Banderas, Assumpta Serna, Nacho Martínez, and Julieta Serrano. Compañía Iberoamericana de TV, 1986. Film.

Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón. Perf. Carmen Maura, Olvido Gara “Alaska,” and Eva Siva. Cinevista, 1980. Film.

¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto? Perf. Carmen Maura, Verónica Forqué, Ángel de Andrés López, and Luis Hualde. Kaktus Producciones Cinematográficas, 1984. Film.

Tacones lejanos. Perf. Victoria Abril, Marisa Paredes, and Miguel Bosé. El Deseo S.A., 1991. Film.

Todo sobre mi madre. Dir. Pedro Almodóvar. Perf. Cecilia Roth, Marisa Paredes, and Eloy Azorín. El Deseo, 1999. Film.

John Waters

Cecil B. Demented. Perf. Melanie Griffith, Stephen Dorff, Alicia Witt, and Patricia Hearst. Artisan Entertainment, 2000. Film.

Desperate Living. Perf. Liz Renay, Mink Stole, and Edith Massey. Charm City Productions, 1977. Film.

A Dirty Shame. Perf. Tracey Ullman, Chris Issak, Selma Blair, and Johnny Knoxville. That is That Productions, 2004. Film.

Female Trouble. Perf. Divine, David Lochary, and Edith Massey. Dreamland, 1974. Film.

Hairspray. Perf. Ricki Lake, Divine, Debbie Harry, and Sonny Bono. New Line Cinema, 1988. Film.

Multiple Maniacs. Perf. Divine, David Lochary, Mink Stole, and Mary Vivian Pierce. Dreamland, 1970. Film.

Pink Flamingos. Perf. Divine, Mink Stole, David Lochary, and Edith Massey. New Line Cinema, 1972. Film.

Polyester. Perf. Divine, Tab Hunter, Mink Stole, and Edith Massey. New Line Cinema, 1981. Film.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

From the shocking, sensationalist, and irreverent to the blasphemous, the films of Spain's Pedro Almodóvar and the US's John Waters have nauseated, insulted, intrigued, and delighted audiences for decades. In Waters' *Pink Flamingos* (1972), the infamous buxom drag queen Divine scoops up dog feces, chews it, then spits it out while gagging and smiling for the camera in what would become a scene imitated in the infamous "golden shower" scene presented by Almodóvar in *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980). Indeed this process of reutilizing characters, themes, style, and other cinematic elements for his own purposes is what unites the oeuvre of Almodóvar and Waters. This process of revamping materials from another movie in order to enunciate a new meaning is known as recycling and is a unique usage of this term that only this dissertation provides. This is not to be confused with Alejandro Yarza's use of the term recycling by which Almodóvar reconfigures traditional Spanish religious and historical iconography in order to deconstruct their association with the Franco regime (*Un caníbal* 61). While there is little doubt that Almodóvar does engage in this type of recycling, the use of this word for this study is concerned with the ways in which Almodóvar and Waters take inspiration from other filmic works.¹ Recycling differs from pastiche in that the director who borrows materials from outside sources does so in order to imbue the allusion with a new meaning, often ironic in tone. The so-called "trash aesthetic," which glorifies members of the middle or working class, focuses on scatological humor for its shock value, and redefines "acceptable" boundaries of hegemonic definitions of artistic value, became the overriding artistic approach

¹ Recycling, in the sense it is used in this dissertation, is a process by which one director creates an intertextuality by borrowing and reconfiguring materials from another movie.

utilized by both directors; another aspect of the commonalities of their works largely overlooked by critical theorists. While true that others have observed some of the similarities in their films, only this investigation extensively uncovers the complex communicative relationship between these two directors that has been taking place without being noticed by the experts. Marcia Pally discusses how they use camp to make political statements (81). Román Gubern likens Pedro Almodóvar's style to that of the John Waters of *Pink Flamingos* (1972) (63). Tim Clark mentions that Almodóvar is often compared to Waters (58). Víctor Fuentes also mentions the influence of John Waters on Almodóvar's works ("Almodóvar's Postmodern Cinema" 157). Mark Allinson comments that Almodóvar's outrageous style and treatment of taboo subjects makes him the target of frequent comparisons to the cinema of John Waters (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 126). Patrick Paul Garlinger mentions that "Waters and Almodóvar [...] share a curious parallel in their approaches to film, as both began as underground directors whose fascination with melodrama and narrative have allowed each to achieve commercial success" (109). Thus aside from a brief mention of comparability, film scholarship to date has yet to explain in detail how the works of John Waters impacted those of Pedro Almodóvar and has entirely overlooked how Almodóvar's movies influenced Waters'. This investigation closes this critical gap in the comprehension of their works by analyzing the specific ways in which Almodóvar and Waters weave an intricate network of interdependent allusions by recycling materials from other creative artists and from each other.

Also important to the study of their movies is the insight available exclusively from a combination of the postmodern and queer theoretical critical approaches. The endeavor to define both analytical constructs will require comprehensive explanations of their characteristic resistance to succinct terms and a thorough background in the academic controversies

surrounding them. Chapter two will be the first of its kind in filmic critical theory to apply concise definitions of the postmodern and the queer to works by Almodóvar and Waters while simultaneously putting to rest the scholarly debates surrounding both approaches. A preliminary step toward comprehending how postmodernism grants insight into works by Almodóvar and Waters is to present its definitive characteristics and to explain how films by both directors exemplify postmodern traits. Proceeding in this manner naturally raises the vastly differing hypotheses about what postmodernism is. Unlike the vast majority of critical analyses of Almodóvar's oeuvre that utilizes a postmodern perspective, this study provides a summary definition of postmodernism based on the most insightful and applicable findings of postmodernism's leading philosophers. Additionally, any application of postmodern theory to movies by Waters is groundbreaking because of film critics' reluctance to interpret his works from this perspective. Chapter two discusses postmodernism based on the hypotheses of its leading proponents: namely Frederic Jameson, Linda Hutcheon, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard. There is a dissention among these scholars as to whether or not postmodernism as a literary and philosophical movement represents a breaking away from modernism or if it is a continuation of the modern aesthetic. Due to the fact that Almodóvar and Waters definitely rebel against the modernism of their respective cultures with their films, this study will aim to conclude that postmodernism is distinct from modernism and not a mere extension of it. However, as Jameson explains, any attempt at defining postmodern characteristics must necessarily take into account the modern paradigms against which the postmodern rebels ("Postmodernism" 112). Therefore, chapter two briefly discusses modernism in Spain and in the US to establish a basis of comparison. This in turn elucidates how works by Almodóvar and Waters are examples of postmodern art. Factoring the modern aesthetic into the postmodern

paradigm is a step largely overlooked by critics of Almodóvar and Waters. Without this insight, only a superficial interpretation of their movies is possible. Chapter two must also build the foundation for the impact of the camp and kitsch aesthetic on films by Almodóvar and Waters. Both directors draw heavily upon the camp aesthetic in their works and include elements of kitsch in many of their films as well. Chapter two establishes how camp and kitsch contribute to the messages conveyed by their works by defining each term and providing examples of both qualities. Chapter two defines camp based on Susan Sontag's 1966 foundational essay "Notes on Camp" as well as on Ester Newton's study of the relationship between camp and drag since both directors rely upon camp when representing drag and *travestismo*. Chapter two analyzes kitsch's definitive characteristics as presented by Matei Calinescu for purposes of clarifying the relationship between camp and kitsch and how this interplay manifests in films by Almodóvar and Waters. Other critics including Ernest Acevedo-Muñoz analyze the kitsch content of some of Almodóvar's films. Nevertheless, none of the other scholars examines how Almodóvar utilizes kitsch to comply with postmodernism's tendency to break down the barriers between "high culture and so-called mass or popular culture" (Jameson "Postmodernism" 112). Moreover, this dissertation is the only academic study that applies the notion of kitsch to movies by Waters. Both directors draw upon kitsch as a countercultural aesthetic that undermines hegemonic definitions of acceptable cinematic art. With this foundation in the essentials of camp and kitsch, further analyses of these aesthetic paradigms and how they impact the works of Almodóvar and Waters in subsequent chapters will be more easily comprehended. In addition to postmodernism, camp, and kitsch, chapter two provides the most inclusive yet concise definition of what constitutes queer based on the findings of Annamaria Jagose and Eve Kosofsky

Sedgwick. With that foundation in queer as a theoretical framework, chapter two analyzes how films by Almodóvar and Waters manifest queerness.

Chapter three is the first of its kind because it analyzes the shared filmic history that manifests via allusions Almodóvar and Waters make to classical Hollywood movies and works created outside the Hollywood industry. This chapter defines what classical Hollywood films are as well as traces the references Almodóvar and Waters make to such works as Douglas Sirk's melodramas and Michael Curtiz's 1945 version of *Mildred Pierce*. Crucial in the comprehension of how movies by Almodóvar and Waters are related is a careful comparison of their tendency to recycle themes found in works by Tennessee Williams. Toward that objective, chapter three presents a detailed accounting of the three major themes of Williams' oeuvre that Almodóvar and Waters emulate including: illusion vs. fantasy, loneliness, and the old replacing the new. This in turn will tie together *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *The Night of the Iguana* (1964), and *Baby Doll* (1956) with *Female Trouble* (1974) and *Entre tinieblas* (1983). Chapter three also defines B films and explains how Almodóvar and Waters allude to them when creating their own works. Key in the comprehension of the deadly divas that recur throughout movies by Almodóvar and Waters is the figure of the sultry femme fatale that both directors recycle from Russ Meyer's exploitation film *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* (1966). Chapter three conducts an extensive comparative analysis of the violent pussycat Varla with her recycled counterparts Divine and María Cardenal from *Matador* (1986). The film *Viridiana* (1961) by Luis Buñuel also held sway over Almodóvar and Waters as manifested by the anticlerical sentiment presented in Almodóvar's films *Entre tinieblas* and *La mala educación* (2004) while Waters chooses to denounce Catholicism most poignantly in *Multiple Maniacs* (1970).

Chapter four of this study scrutinizes the most common types of queer characters Almodóvar and Waters employ for the express purpose of encouraging their viewers to reject heteronormative assumptions. The rebellious “bad girl” defiantly refuses to be victimized by the patriarchy because of her gender and sexual orientation but instead turns the tables on her would be oppressors. Drag queens cast in leading roles afford Almodóvar and Waters the opportunity to undermine hegemonic definitions of masculinity and femininity. Almodóvar, however, takes Waters’ use of drag a step further by problematizing the sexual orientation of men who cross-dress for entertainment purposes. The third queer character utilized commonly by Almodóvar and Waters is the transsexual. Chapter four clarifies how transsexuals fall into the category of transgendered people and also establishes a specific definition of transsexual based on the theories of Judith Butler, Nikki Sullivan, and Félix Rodríguez-González. The portrayal of transsexual characters allows Almodóvar and Waters to destabilize hegemonic definitions of male, female, and the traditional belief that all transsexuals were born in the wrong bodies. Whereas Waters depicts transsexuals for their shock value and to normalize them by juxtaposing them with “perverted” heterosexual males, chapter four aims to prove that Almodóvar’s treatment of transsexuals is far more transgressive. Lastly, “perverted” straight male characters proffer both directors the opportunity to normalize homosexuality by making heterosexuality seem deviant in compliance with Stein’s and Plummer’s hypothesis.

Filling the gap in the critical interpretation of how Waters influenced Almodóvar, chapter five scrutinizes Almodóvar’s works for evidence of recycling from Waters. Almodóvar himself, when interviewed about the impact of Waters on his oeuvre, consistently acknowledges that he recycles elements of Waters’ movies. In a 1992 interview with Julian Schnabel, Almodóvar states that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is “in the style of an early John Waters film” (95). When

asked by Frédéric Strauss about the mixing of the comic strip aesthetic with the cinematic code as found in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, Almodóvar once more confirms his previous assertion about Waters, “I was also more naturally influenced by the American underground, Paul Morrissey’s first films, and most of all John Waters’ *Pink Flamingos*” (13). Considering the recycling processes in which both directors pastiche works by other creative artists such as Tennessee Williams, Douglas Sirk, and Luis Buñuel, the next logical step is to analyze allusions to Waters’ films found in Almodóvar’s. Essential to note is that presently Almodóvar has not depicted any actual footage from a Waters film within any of his own works as he did with the excerpt of Nicholas Ray’s *Johnny Guitar* (1954) featured in *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988). Instead of making direct allusions to Waters in this manner, Almodóvar chooses a much more subtle approach in which he pastiches the “trash” aesthetic associated with Waters’ themes, characters, and narratives. As is the case with the shared filmic influences of both directors and the queer characters they utilize, a thorough investigation of each reference Almodóvar makes specifically to the work of Waters is required to comprehend the implicit meaning conveyed. To facilitate this process, the analyses in chapter five trace Almodóvar’s allusions to Waters’ movies in chronological order by release date starting with *Pepi, Luci, Bom* and ending with *Carne trémula* (1997). After concluding this chapter, the allusions to Waters Almodóvar makes in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984), *Matador* (1986), and *Carne trémula* will be clear.

From the evidence garnered from interviews with Pedro Almodóvar and by analyzing the stylistic, aesthetic, and narrative commonalities as detailed in chapter five, it is obvious that Almodóvar recycled some of Waters’ films. However, as we shall see in chapter six, recycling between these directors is a two-way process. Undoubtedly, Almodóvar found inspiration for

Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón (1980), *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984), *Matador*, and *Carne trémula* in the oeuvre of Waters. Careful analysis of Waters' more recent movies *Cecil B Demented* (2000) and *A Dirty Shame* (2004) reveals that he recycles some of Almodóvar's movies. Just as is the case with Almodóvar's approach to alluding to Waters, references Waters makes to works by Almodóvar are either very subtle or direct in nature. Subsequently, the most efficacious manner in which to proceed is to uncover all of the allusions Waters makes to Almodóvar in *Cecil B Demented* and then continue to do the same with *A Dirty Shame*. Owing to the fact that the theory of auteurism is central to gaining insight into the title character of *Cecil B Demented*, a preliminary step is to elucidate the definitive characteristics of an auteur and then explain how Almodóvar's status as an international auteur impacted Waters' film. To illustrate the fact that Waters recycles the auteur figure from Almodovar's works, we will compare the characterization of the fictional director Pablo Quintero from *La ley del deseo* (1986) to Cecil B. Demented. Once Demented's auteurism and its relationship to Almodóvar and his imagined auteurs have been established, it is essential to scrutinize how Almodóvar's Andrea Caracortada from *Kika* (1993) swayed the "ultimate reality" visionary drive of Cecil B. Demented. By far the most unambiguous allusion to Almodóvar is incarnated in the hairstylist Rodney. For this reason, it is vital to investigate this character. Especially pertinent is a detailed explanation of how Rodney's sexual orientation is an indirect allusion to Almodóvar's practice of queering heterosexuality. After analyzing these implied and explicit references to Almodóvar and his works in *Cecil B Demented*, further evidence of how Waters recycles Almodóvar can be revealed by studying and comparing the key characters of *A Dirty Shame* to their counterparts in films by Almodóvar. Those protagonists are Caprice Stickles, whose stage name is Ursula Udders, and the sex maniac Ray Ray. An in-depth

comparison of Ursula to Sexilia from *Laberinto de pasiones* shows that Ursula is a revamped Sexilia. Waters viewed *Laberinto de pasiones* and was inspired by its contemptuous parody of psychological theories concerning sexuality; especially the concept of nymphomania. Consequently, Waters chose to queer psychoanalytic explanations of “oversexed” females in a manner similar to that of Almodóvar. In order to elucidate the connections between Sexilia and Ursula, a succinct explication of historical psychoanalytic hypotheses about nymphomaniacs lays the foundation for comprehending precisely what Almodóvar and Waters mock with these characters. One of the recurrent characters portrayed by both directors is the deviant heterosexual male as analyzed in chapter four. In chapter six, we will take a much closer look at the correlating characteristics shared by Paul Bazzo (Pablo) from *Kika* and Ray Ray from *A Dirty Shame* because Ray Ray is in fact a recycled Paul Bazzo. Waters expounds upon Almodóvar’s unflinching depiction of Bazzo’s hypersexual nature by parodying the notion of sexual addiction. A necessary preliminary step in grasping how Waters borrows from Almodóvar to ridicule sexual addiction is to define it.² The most logical approach to analyzing the influence of Almodóvar on Waters’ *Cecil B Demented* and *A Dirty Shame* is to proceed in chronological order by release date. Therefore, we will investigate how Waters recycles Almodóvar starting with *Cecil B Demented* and then continue with *A Dirty Shame*. The hypothesis that Waters recycles from Almodóvar’s work sets this study apart from the rest of Waters’ critical reception. No other film critic has noticed that Waters pastiches Almodóvar’s movies much less provided a detailed analysis.

² Toward that objective, we will examine pertinent information from the main compendium utilized by mental health professionals to diagnose psychological disorders: the 1987 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R)*. Despite the fact that this edition of the *DSM-III-R* is currently outmoded, the contemporary plethora of self-help books, twelve-step support groups, recovery web sites, and therapeutic interventions base their approaches on the polemical belief that addiction to sex can still be considered to be a treatable mental disorder. With this foundation in how psychology classified hypersexuality as a form of addiction, it will be easier to comprehend how Ray Ray is a recycling of Paul Bazzo and the manners by which Waters emulates Almodóvar’s queering of heterosexuality.

Providing the answers to the questions neglected to be asked by film criticism of Almodóvar's and Waters' works, the chapters that follow scrutinize the web of intertextualities that result from the recycling processes. Instead of making cursory, generalizing statements that haphazardly note the similarities between their films, this dissertation will finally proffer the necessary details required to comprehend why their films have so much in common. Instead of being the result of mere happenstance or coincidence, this dissertation will prove that the parallels that tie Almodóvar's and Waters' works together are deliberate strategies employed by both directors. After concluding this investigational analysis, it will be clear that Almodóvar and Waters engage in a transcultural discourse by recycling a shared filmic pool of movies including the cinema of one another.

CHAPTER TWO

POSTMODERNISM AND QUEER THEORY

Perhaps the most discernible trait of postmodernism is that it is multifaceted. As Linda Hutcheon explains, “Any attempt to define the word will necessarily and simultaneously have both positive and negative dimensions [...] postmodernism is a phenomenon whose mode is resolutely contradictory as well as unavoidably political” (1). The multidimensional nature of this cultural movement as described by Hutcheon stems from its inextricable relationship to modernism. As Frederic Jameson states, describing it “as a coherent thing [...] is given not in itself but in the very modernism it seeks to displace” (“Postmodernism” 112). Thus reviewing the definitive characteristics of the former is necessary in order to be able to understand the latter.

Modernism is a term that has many connotations which vary not only transculturally but also within the contexts of a specific culture. Even within the Western frame of reference, confusion regarding modernity and modernism abounds. Though often used interchangeably, these two terms are in fact not synonymous at all. Modernity, within the academic sphere, “describes the rise of capitalism, of social study and state regulation, of a belief of progress and productivity leading to mass systems of industry, industrialization, administration and surveillance” (Childs 16). According to Matei Calinescu, two modernities occurred due to the:

irreversible split [that] occurred between modernity as a stage of Western civilization—a product of scientific and technological progress, of the industrial revolution, of the

sweeping economic and social changes brought about by capitalism- and modernity as an aesthetic concept (41).

This scholar further explains that modernity (as an aesthetic concept) was viewed differently by the middle class and the aristocracy. The bourgeois perception of modernity was based on the “doctrine of progress, the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology, the concern with time, [...] the cult of reason, and the ideal of freedom defined within the framework of an abstract humanism” (Calinescu 41). The upper class looked upon the middle class values with disdain and “expressed its disgust through the most diverse means, ranging from rebellion, anarchy, and apocalypticism to aristocratic self-exile” (Calinescu 42). These pessimistic, aristocratic values are the very ones (among others) against which John Waters and Pedro Almodóvar rebel with their films. Modernism, on the other hand, is a Western philosophical and literary movement which began as “an aesthetic reaction to late modernity and modernization” (Childs 17). Calinescu attributes the coinage of the term modernism to Rubén Darío who described *modernismo* in 1888 as a movement whose purpose was to assert Latin America’s cultural independence from Spain (69). Nil Santiáñez confirms Calinescu’s position that Rubén Darío “was the first to speak of *modernismo*” (479). This is not to say, however, that modernism is the same in every country of the Western hemisphere nor that Darío should be thought of as its universal founder. On the contrary, it emerged at different times and with a unique aesthetic throughout the West; especially in France, Germany, and Italy (Calinescu 78). In English-speaking nations, modernism became known as a literary movement within the first two decades of the twentieth century (Calinescu 81). According to Peter Childs, examples of modern authors include “James, Conrad, Proust, Mann, Gide, Kafka, Svevo, Joyce, Musil, Faulkner [...] Strindberg, Pirandello, Wedekind, Brecht, Mallarmé, Yeats, Eliot, Pound, Rilke, Apollinaire, [and] Stevens” whose works do share certain traits (2). These commonalities “are aesthetically

radical, contain striking technical innovation, emphasize spatial or ‘fugal’ as opposed to chronological form, tend towards ironic modes, and involve a certain ‘dehumanization of art’”

(2). In Spain, though similar in many ways to that of the rest of Western culture, it is nevertheless distinct. Spanish modernism emerged in the late nineteenth and first ten years of the twentieth centuries as a reaction to Spanish realism (Santiáñez 481). According to Santiáñez, it lasted until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 (481). The characteristics of Spanish modernism include, “aestheticism and syncretism, [...] symbolist decadent, and/or Parnassian techniques, and themes; its renewal and attention to literary form; its search for new modes of expression; [...and] its subversive and oppositional attitude toward the establishment” (Santiáñez 479). Examples of Spanish modernist writers include Gabriel Miró, Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón Gómez de la Serna, José Martínez Ruiz, Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, Benjamín Jarnés, Enrique Jardiel Poncela, and Rosa Chacel (Santiáñez 481). Furthermore, all modernisms, in their artistic sense, convey “innovation and novelty” and their characteristics include “radical aesthetics, technical experimentation, spatial or rhythmic rather than chronological form, self-conscious reflexiveness, skepticism toward the idea of a centered human subject, and a sustained inquiry into the uncertainty of reality” (Childs 18). Now that the differences between modernity and modernism are clearer, understanding how postmodernism represents a rejection of modernism will be easier.

Before proceeding, addressing the debate concerning whether or not postmodernism is a continuation of modernism is vital. Examining both sides of this dispute is no easy task due to the ever-changing, amorphous nature of the meaning of postmodernism. Hutcheon raises another aspect of the confusion inherent to the study of postmodern theory. According to her, postmodernity and postmodern are not synonymous terms just like modernism and modernity are

not equivalents (25). Part of the problem lies in the fact the very word postmodernism has a tendency to take on a new meaning depending on the opinion of the person who attempts to define it. For example, a review of the works by postmodernism's founders and most influential philosophers, Jean-François Lyotard, Frederic Jameson, and Jean Baudrillard reveals two major conflicting viewpoints (Connor 23). Steven Connor summarizes these two trends in postmodern theory as consisting of the belief that postmodernism emerged from modernism versus the opposing position that postmodernity arose from modernity (23). In other words, one of the most polemical points of contention in postmodern theory is whether postmodernism represents a distinct theoretical framework in and of itself, or if it is instead merely a continuation of modernism. Hutcheon agrees with Connor in that there is a "basic underlying opposition between those who believe postmodernism represents a break from modernism, and those who see it in a relation of continuity" (27). Lyotard states that postmodernism is "undoubtedly a part of the modern," whereas Jameson admonishes Lyotard for being "unwilling to posit a postmodern stage radically different from the period of high modernism and involving a fundamental historical and cultural break with this last" (Lyotard 79; Jameson *Postmodern Condition* xvi). Jameson furthermore insists that postmodernism distinguishes itself by rebelling against the "established forms of high modernism [...] that conquered the university, the museum, the art gallery network and the foundations" ("Postmodernism" 111). These forms of artistic expression include:

Abstract Expressionism; the great Modernist poetry of Pound, Eliot or Wallace Stevens; the International Style [...] –felt to be scandalous or shocking by our grandparents are, for the generation which arrives at the gate in the 1960's, felt to be the establishment and the enemy-dead, stifling, canonical [...] This means that there will be as many different forms of postmodernism as there were high modernisms in place, since the former are at least initially specific and local reactions against those models ("Postmodernism" 112).

The debate concerning whether or not postmodernism is a continuation of modernism or represents a break with modernism's tenets is summarized by Jameson as consisting of four schools of thought. He identifies these varying hypotheses as being anti-modernist, pro-modernist, pro-postmodernist, and anti-postmodernist (*Postmodernism* 61). Baudrillard's model of the dominating contemporary representational movement echoes that of Jameson in that Baudrillard too describes the current phase (or simulation as he labels it) as being distinct from that of the industrial era (Baudrillard 83). Despite the controversy surrounding the origins of and existence of postmodernism, an analysis of the films of Almodóvar and Waters reveals an underlying aesthetic (the so-called, "trash" aesthetic) that definitely represents a rupture with that of modernism. Therefore, one characteristic of postmodernism, as it applies to works by Almodóvar and Waters, is scorn for the elitist belief of modernism that "true" artistic expression belongs only to the upper classes.

Equally important to note in any study of postmodernism when applied to the works of Almodóvar and Waters is the varying distinctions of postmodernism between the United States and Spain. Just like modernism in Spain is different than in the rest of Europe and the United States, postmodernism in Spain varies in both timing and aesthetic. Whereas the high modernism described by Jameson became the model against which postmodernists in the US rebelled, early Spanish postmodernism was chiefly concerned with Spain's remembrance of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. According to Spanish literary scholar Enric Bou, propagandist civil war literature written by both Republican and rebel authors from 1936 to 1939 dominated the Spanish mindset and effectively replaced the Spanish modernist aesthetic (567). During the years of the Franco regime (1939-1975), Spanish creative artists who were not in exile sought to circumvent the stranglehold of censorship that lasted until the death of Franco in 1975 and the

“ratification of the Constitution of 1978” (Ugarte 613). As José F. Colmeiro explains, the Spanish postmodern aesthetic during the years following the end of the Franco regime until the turn of the century manifests three distinct phases including the “time of silence and legislated forgetting of Francoism [...] the time of transition from Francoism to democracy [and] the time of the quantitative inflation and qualitative devaluation of memory” (19). The voluntary collective amnesia described by Colmeiro, also known as *el pacto del olvido* (the pact of forgetting), is characterized by the desire to repress the painful memories of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime (20). Colmeiro also clarifies that after the end of the Franco dictatorship, postmodernity truly began in Spain and can be characterized by “the end of the great narratives and hierarchal oppositions, fragmented narration, the dissolution of traditional time-space and logical-causality parameters, and the hybridization of genre” (148). Although this latter description of postmodernism specifically describes it in Spain, it could nevertheless serve as a generalized description of how it is manifested in movies by John Waters as well due to the similarities in U.S. and Spanish postmodernism. Since the overriding objective of this dissertation is to analyze how Almodóvar and Waters influence each other, the discussion that follows focuses on the most salient aspects of postmodernism as it pertains to their works.

Now that the dissention among the postmodern scholars and the unique nature of postmodernism in Spain have been examined, presenting the tenets of postmodernism most applicable to the works of Almodóvar and Waters is essential. The working definition of postmodernism that will guide the rest of this study is that postmodernism is a philosophical and artistic movement that began in the latter half of the twentieth century as a rebellion against modernism and as such, rejects the modern aesthetic. Postmodern characteristics of films by Almodóvar and Waters include the: effacement of traditional boundaries between, “high” and so-

called mass culture; possession of a self-ironizing nature; conveyance of a political message; reliance upon intertextualities to transmit their messages to the audience; and utilization of pastiche. For the purpose of concision, the discussion of how postmodernism applies to works by these two directors will be limited to the film best exemplifying the given postmodern trait.

The first aspect of postmodernism stems from Jameson's assertion that it breaks down the barriers between "high culture and so-called mass or popular culture" ("Postmodernism" 112).³ This phenomenon dominates the works of Almodóvar and Waters. According to Mark Allinson, Almodóvar's films dissolve the "orthodox frontiers between mass and high culture" by "the free mixing of popular elements of mass culture such as Hollywood movies, advertising and television with the more artistic 'high culture' of auteurist, poetic cinema" (209). Robert Pele explains that John Waters focuses his attention on the lower-middle class and creates a world in which "[c]onservative white, heterosexual suburbanites are evil and boring, and the denizens of the counterculture are heroic and fascinating" (112). Of the films by Almodóvar and Waters demonstrating this characteristic of postmodernism, Almodóvar's first commercially successful work *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980), and Waters' *Pink Flamingos* (1972), most clearly portray the erosion of traditional distinctions between pop and high culture.

Pepi, Luci, Bom is an example of Jameson's assertion that postmodern art destroys the boundaries between "high" culture and popular culture. With this film, Almodóvar creates a

³ Popular, pop, and mass culture are synonymous terms. According to David Novitz, so-called "high" art forms refer to artistic products judged by the hegemony to be loftier in nature than then mass-produced objects of popular culture which were created for more economical reasons (15). As Novitz clarifies, the distinction between "high" art forms and popular art began in the nineteenth century when technological advances such as cameras, cinema, and printing presses made art forms more readily accessible to the burgeoning middle class (12). Novitz posits, "At first, the high arts were those that somehow rose above the widespread obsession with economic value and utility, and refused absolutely to 'pander' to what people wanted and were prepared to buy. [...] The popular arts, by contrast, knew no such scruples, and brazenly furnished people with what they wanted. These were the 'corrupt' arts that catered for 'vulgar tastes' and were motivated more by the lure of gold than by a delight in art" (15).

world in which the syncretic values of modernism have been replaced by pop art, punk, and the aesthetic of bad taste. For example, Marvin D'Lugo describes the narrative style of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* as being a “pop form of storytelling, exemplified by the integration of the *fotonovela* format” (22). This comic book style of relating the story to the viewer, which represents the film as a series of vignettes, documents the hybridized nature of art during *la movida* and also suggests the artistic expression of popular culture has usurped the lofty position once held by the now outmoded art forms of the hegemony.⁴ The *fotonovela* format described by D'Lugo consists of a series of drawings with titles that begin with the opening credits and narrate key turning points of the film such as, “*Pepi estaba sedienta de venganza*/Pepi was thirsty for revenge,” “*A la mañana siguiente Pepi recibe su primera lección*/The following morning Pepi receives her first lesson,” and, “*También el policía supo lo que era estar sediento de venganza*/The policeman also found out what it was to be thirsting for revenge.” By combining the comic book art form with filmic code, Almodóvar puts them on equal footing thereby venerating both as serious forms of art that deserve the same treatment as that of the cultural elite. Almodóvar therefore encourages the viewer to challenge the norms governing what is and what is not considered to be art. In this manner *Pepi, Luci, Bom* complies with Jameson's description of postmodernism by proffering a new vision of artistic expression that breaks down the barriers between “high” and “low” art.

Almodóvar's hybridized narrative technique is not the only element of how *Pepi, Luci, Bom* embodies Jameson's hypothesis that postmodern art blurs the lines between popular culture and “high” culture. The sadomasochistic relationship between Bom and Luci is a metaphor of this new social order in Spain as envisioned by Almodóvar. With this comically mismatched

⁴ The fragmented style of narration and hybridized form of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* are illustrative of Colmeiro's description of a Spanish postmodern work (148). *La movida* is explained in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

couple, Almodóvar portrays a reversal of traditional hierarchal power structures by representing a lower-class character who takes control of a love interest away from a member of the patriarchal authority (i.e. a police officer). Bom, a teenage singer in a punk band, initiates her homosexual relationship with Luci, a middle class housewife, by urinating on her. Instead of reacting in disgust or horror, Luci enjoys this experience thus affirming her position as the passive partner of her new relationship with the active Bom. In other words, Bom, as the embodiment of the punk aesthetic, wins the heart of Luci, who represents the middle class, with this act of urination. This is just one of the scenes in which this movie “draws on the equally canonic genre of ‘situation comedy,’ which relies on the disturbance of social hierarchy plausibly represented to the viewer” (Smith “*Pepi, Luci, Bom*” 27). It is not accidental that Bom is able to steal Luci away from her husband, who as a policeman represents a, “caricature Fascist, complete with dark glasses, who complains over breakfast that he doesn’t know what the country is coming to ‘with so much democracy’ (Smith “*Pepi, Luci, Bom*” 27). Thus through Bom’s sadomasochistic dominance over Luci, the cultural aesthetic of *la movida* trumps the traditional Spanish cultural norms. Essential to note is that Luci, although definitely the passive partner in both her marriage as well as in her relationship with Bom, is far from being the meek, helpless victim. Instead, Luci quickly and greedily hands control of herself over to Bom in hopes that she will be battered as she believes she deserves. Moreover, during her time with Bom, Luci repeatedly disrespects Bom’s domineering attitude in hopes that Bom will punish her severely. It is only after Luci successfully manipulates her husband into giving her the beating she so desperately desired all along that Luci decides to abandon Bom. Therefore Almodóvar depicts Luci’s husband as being the truly passive partner in their relationship since it is Luci who

ultimately wields power over his behavior. Luci thus usurps her husband's patriarchal control by molding him into the violent sadist she wants him to be.

Similarly, the movies of John Waters also subvert the modern distinction between, "high" culture and popular art. Perhaps no other film by Waters does so as successfully as *Pink Flamingos* (1972). Scott MacDonald describes Waters' early works, including *Pink Flamingos* as, "films that rebel against the bourgeois canon of filmic 'good taste' [...and that] rebel by borrowing Hollywood-type plots and presenting them so that they undercut exactly those viewer expectations these plots have created" (222). Pela adds that, "The trailer-trash families in [...] Waters films are excessively calamitous people, but they're always the good guys. His villains are always wealthy or upper-middle class suburbanites with nothing interesting to say" (112). *Pink Flamingos* presents such a reality in that the protagonist Babs Johnson and her family are from the lower class, yet are portrayed as larger than life heroes whose criminality only makes them more fascinating people. Connie and Raymond Marble, on the other hand, are from the upper middle class. They are depicted as being despicable people and ultimately are defeated by Babs and her entourage. The very premise of the plot, which is narrated to the audience via an off-screen voice at the start of the movie, epitomizes Jameson's model of postmodernism's treatment of "high" and popular culture. Viewers are informed that Divine, who has gone into hiding because she is a wanted criminal, has changed her name to Babs Johnson. Babs is seeking notoriety for being the, "filthiest person alive," a title that is highly coveted by the Marbles. This contest between Babs and the Marbles is in and of itself an inversion of the traditional values of, "high" culture because the ultimate goal is to be the person with the worst reputation.

Crucial to the comprehension of how Almodóvar and Waters manifest the postmodern tenet of breaking down the barriers between pop culture and “high” culture is an explanation of the terms kitsch and camp. An etymology of the term kitsch gives insight into its meaning. Kitsch originates from the German *verkitschen* which means to falsify (Polimeni 15). Over time, kitsch became synonymous with a, “*repetición deformada de una obra, su versión bastarda que llegaba a ser más importante que la ‘pura’*” [deformed repetition of a work, its bastardized version that became more important than the “pure”] (Polimeni 27). Calinescu’s astute study of kitsch provides a comprehensive analysis of its origins and meaning since its inception. According to him, kitsch: (1) refers to a cheaply made imitation of another work of art designed for mass consumption (2) “emerged as an expression of the taste of the middle class and of its peculiar spare-time hedonism,” (3) came about due to the advent in technological advances during the nineteenth century such as photography, cinematography, and mass production; thereby making what the aristocracy considered to be beautiful art more accessible for the middle and lower classes, (4) made it possible for the bourgeois to emulate the “old aristocracy and its patterns of consumption, including the consumption of beauty,” (5) “clearly centers around such questions as imitation, forgery, counterfeit, and what we may call the aesthetics of deception and self-deception,” (6) enabled beauty itself to be bought and sold just as with any other commodity, and (7) became associated with bad taste and aesthetic inadequacy (227-247). Nevertheless, placing such value judgments on kitsch lies at the very heart of the distinction between “high” and popular culture and simultaneously calls into question the notions of originality and the economic value of art (Novitz 17). To state that a work of kitsch is inferior to its “original” assumes that the higher worth ascribed to it by the hegemony is incontrovertibly true and that it is impossible to reproduce that “original” without somehow yielding an end

product of lesser economic and aesthetic value.⁵ An example of kitsch would be a mass-produced poster of a famous painting such as Diego Velázquez's *Las meninas* (1656). While undoubtedly true that such a print is a reproduction of a work of art which can be cheaply manufactured and distributed, the fact that it is more accessible and affordable does not in any way damage the aesthetic value of the work by Velázquez. On the contrary, posters of *Las meninas* enhance the "original" by appealing to a broader audience which in turn augments its mystique because it becomes increasingly unique and attractive the more it is reproduced. When taking into account the recycling processes in which Almodóvar and Waters engage when making their movies, kitsch becomes one of the most notable driving aesthetic of their works. By borrowing material from other films and by featuring objects of kitsch within their cinema, Almodóvar and Waters deliberately create their movies with a foundation in kitsch as we will see in chapters three, five, and six.

Kitsch is not the only underpinning aesthetic which pervades works by Almodóvar and Waters. Both directors frequently rely upon a camp perspective when conveying their statements to their viewers. Kitsch and camp are terms so interrelated that they are often confused. For example, according to Calinescu, "Externally, however, camp is often hard, indeed impossible, to distinguish from kitsch" (230). For purposes of this study, kitsch refers to an imitation of an "original" while camp as an aesthetic is more associated with incongruity, theatricality, and humor (Newton 106). Newton also posits that, "Incongruity is the subject matter of camp, theatricality is its style, and humor its strategy" (106). Susan Sontag's essay, "Notes on Camp" includes many descriptions of what constitutes camp including, "the essence of camp is its love

⁵ The notion that originality is polemical is demonstrated by Jean Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum. This chapter presents further discussion of the nature of an "original" in contrast to a "reproduction" when analyzing the cultural relationship between the queer subcultures of Spain and the United States.

of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration” (275). Sontag also states, “The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious. More precisely, Camp involves a new, more complex relation to ‘the serious.’ One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious” (288). Sontag’s next observation about camp definitely describes the aesthetic taste of John Waters and Pedro Almodóvar, “the lover of Camp, appreciates vulgarity [...] the connoisseur of Camp sniffs the stink and prides himself on his strong nerves” (289). Sontag also points out that camp has its origins within the homosexual subculture, “But homosexuals, by and large, constitute the vanguard –and the most articulate audience- of Camp” (290). Camp, much like drag, manifests “a relish for the exaggeration of sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms” (Sontag 279). Alejandro Yarza adds that camp is above all a state of consciousness that is situational and that comes from the interrelation between different elements of a concrete historic situation (*Un caníbal* 20). Therefore camp is a ludic exaggeration of a given trait while kitsch is its imitation. Kitsch is like camp in that the use of imitation too ascribes a profound and newfound enunciation to the artistic message being conveyed which is often treated with irony.

Returning now to *Pink Flamingos* with this understanding of kitsch and camp, the mise-en-scène of Babs’ trailer evokes a world in which kitsch has replaced the artistic aesthetic of high modernism. Replete with the plaque on the wall bearing the inscription, “God Bless Our Mobile Home,” the trailer in which Babs lives is a carefully crafted altar to “trash” art. During the opening credits, Waters presents a shot from the outside of the rickety-looking trailer. The camera slowly, and with a jerky motion, zooms in on the pink flamingos (from which the title comes) along with other tacky yard decorations that include statues of chickens, a rooster, and a white, stucco-covered traffic cone that has a mirror-like sphere affixed at the top. Babs’ mother, Edie (played by Edith Massey) sits in a playpen while clutching a large, stuffed heart-shaped

pillow. Next, the audience is presented with a close up of a pair of silver, metallic shoes with huge, gaudy, pink roses and gossamer, feather-like fringe glued to the tops. These shoes are placed on a zebra-striped rug with a leopard print tapestry hastily draped at the top of the shot's frame. The next scene pans to Cotton (Bab's daughter) in bed. She is sleeping under a zebra-striped blanket and is surrounded by posters of half-naked men and a trumpet on the wall. In the next sequence, the furniture in Edie's room looks as if it were rescued from a city dump and the figurines on the shelf above her playpen also are objects of kitsch. It is also interesting to note the lack of glass in the windows which are instead lined with clear plastic. In a later scene, the viewer is confronted with the pink cabinetry and leopard print wallpaper of the kitchen area. Clearly, the décor of Bab's trailer exemplifies Waters' so-called "trash" aesthetic in which he replaces the lofty notions of artistic value of the hegemony with objects of kitsch from a camp perspective. In the world evoked by Waters, "trash" as an aesthetic is embraced while upper class artistic values are portrayed as boring and snobbish. The terms "trash" and "filth" are pinnacles of artistic achievement; not derogatory words used to pass judgment on others or on their taste. Although David Chute is correct in his assertion that Waters' films are imitative in nature, his description of the "trash" aesthetic is clearly biased from an elitist perspective. According to Chute, the artistic principle of Waters' oeuvre focuses on "weirdos, misfits, and rejects of every stripe [...] the very scum of humanity" and elevates "by imitation, the most despicable examples: gore movies, skin flicks, soap operas, the society pages of *Violent World*, the *National Enquirer*, and *Sleazoid Express*" (94). The labels, "weirdos," "misfits," "rejects," "scum" and "despicable" reflect Chute's moralistic rejection of the "trash" aesthetic of Waters' works (which can also be found recycled in movies by Almodóvar as we shall see in chapter four). Doubtlessly, Babs' trailer is an integral part of her characterization as a larger than life

heroine precisely because she is from the lower class.

Furthermore, Divine's makeup and costume in *Pink Flamingos* challenge the status quo of modern artistic expression and beauty and encourage the viewer to believe that the camp and kitsch aesthetic are superior. The very fact that Babs Johnson is a drag queen in real life immediately suggests connotations of kitsch and camp. This is due to the fact that, as Valis explains, the simulation of identity carried out by a *travestí* (cross-dresser; not equivalent to drag queen) is a type of kitsch that "oscillates alarmingly between kitsch and utopia and probably falls somewhere in between" (290). Doubtlessly, putting on the clothing of the opposite gender is a type of falsification and for this reason is associated with kitsch. Nevertheless, cross-dressers and drag queens are also representative of camp and there is no question that Divine's appearance in *Pink Flamingos* leaves a lasting impression in the minds of the viewers.⁶ Even though drag by its very nature is an exaggeration of the differences between the bodies of men and women, Divine's makeup artist and costume designer, Walter Avant Smith Jr., succeeded in creating an extremely hyperbolic look that is a tribute to drag queens and camp (Cruz-Malavé 155). Before his death in 2006, Smith related his vision of Divine's appearance to Margalit Fox of the *New York Times* as consisting of, "acres of eye shadow topped by McDonald's-arch eyebrows; lashes so long they preceded the wearer; and a huge scarlet mouth." (Fox A16). According to John Waters himself, Smith even shaved Divine's hairline, "back to his crown" and removed Divine's natural eyebrows to leave more room for eye makeup (11). Throughout the film, Divine's wardrobe consists of dresses that are outrageously flamboyant, skin tight, and overtly sensual. According to Macdonald, "No contemporary actress has more style than Divine at the end of *Pink Flamingos* and in many scenes in *Female Trouble*" (224). Nevertheless, in

⁶ In Spain and in the U.S., a drag queen is typically a gay man who cross-dresses for a performance. However, a *travestí* or cross-dresser does not necessarily identify as being homosexual (Pérez-Sánchez 95). Nonetheless, the two terms do denote a man who puts on women's clothing which is the type of kitsch described by Valis.

one key scene in the film, Waters manipulates the horizon of expectations of the audience and subverts the traditional norms about beauty. Waters accomplishes this by juxtaposing the song, “The Girl Can’t Help It” by Little Richard with shots (taken from a moving car) of Divine parading down the streets of real-life Baltimore in full drag. It is important to note that the shocked expressions on the faces of the passersby who witness this spectacle are genuine. Divine is the only actress in this sequence. The other people are not extras. By superimposing the song, “The Girl Can’t Help It,” in which Little Richard sings about a girl whose gorgeousness is irresistible to everyone, Waters implies that the denizens of Baltimore who gape at Divine are taken aback not by the fact that she is a drag queen, but by her larger than life attractiveness. Thus, Waters succeeds in transforming the norms about what constitutes prettiness just as MacDonald affirms, “Waters is committed to a definition of physical beauty that centers on imagination and distinctiveness rather than on adherence to an Industry-promoted standard” (224). Therefore, the viewer of *Pink Flamigos* is encouraged to adopt new, postmodern definitions of artistic representation including the fundamental social beliefs that govern what is beautiful and what is ugly.

Like Babs’ trailer, the mise-en-scène of Bom’s apartment also evokes the kitsch aesthetic. During the scene in which Bom practices boxing, the camera begins in a medium close up of a collage of images on the wall including pinups of nude women taken from magazines. When the camera tracks right and slowly zooms out, the audience sees a colorful painting of what is obviously a Spanish woman in flamenco costume followed by a medium close up of Bom at her punching bag. As the scene progresses, the camera reveals another painting of a Spanish woman who is holding a traditional Spanish fan and who also sports flamenco garb. Almodóvar then shows the artists who are at work creating the portraits. The

interplay of images taken from magazines along with the vibrant and enormous paintings of customary Spanish women evokes kitsch on multiple levels. First, Almodóvar presents a reconfiguration of the photographs of nude women because they are utilized as part of the décor of Bom's apartment. In this manner, Almodóvar takes these examples of pop art and reuses them both to reinforce the idea that Bom is a lesbian and to add to the overall kitsch aesthetic of this scene. Next, as Smith observes, the paintings themselves are objects of kitsch because they are of "classical Spanish ladies complete with mantillas [that] suggest both the postmodern cult of the ready-made and the underground crossover of painting, music, and film" ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 29). "Ready-made" art of this type constitutes kitsch due to the implication that it is being created specifically to satisfy the aesthetic and economic taste of the bourgeois. Additionally, Almodóvar insinuates that these paintings of iconic Spanish women are easily produced; thus satisfying the mass-production aspect of works of kitsch. On an external level, Almodóvar engages in kitsch by utilizing these artifacts of popular art in order to imbue *Pepi, Luci, Bom* itself with the bricolage aesthetic. The overall effect of this utilization of the kitsch aesthetic on Almodóvar's part is to edify it as a serious art form; thus blurring the lines between "high" and pop culture.

Now that it is clear that *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, and *Pink Flamingos*, comply with Jameson's theory that postmodernism erodes the barriers between "high" culture and popular culture, it is useful to examine the next characteristic of postmodernism according to Hutcheon. A postmodern work is self-ironizing. Self-ironizing means that the postmodern work of art possesses a self-awareness that critiques the work itself and the processes used to create it. Hutcheon describes this tendency of postmodernism as a statement that is:

self-conscious, self-contradictory, [and] self-undermining [...] It is rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said. The effect is to highlight, or 'highlight' and to subvert, or 'subvert' and the mode is therefore a 'knowing' and an ironic – or even 'ironic' - one ” (1).

It could be argued that this quality of a postmodern film pervades all of the movies by

Almodóvar and Waters. Allinson notes this quality in Almodóvar's works:

Throughout his work, Almodóvar makes particular use of certain cinematic techniques which are so self-consciously filmic as to border on parody [...] We are constantly reminded that 'film is film,' through distancing devices. These can be through the appearance on screen of Almodóvar himself [...] Or they can take the form of film-within-film techniques, where the cinematic profession is shown exposed, stripped of its illusion (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 214).

Waters too uses distancing devices that include on-camera performances in front of a live audience and narration aimed directly at the viewer both of which encourage the audience to question the difference between reality and film by his use of shock value aesthetic. Of Almodóvar's movies, *Los abrazos rotos* (2009) demonstrates the self-ironizing nature of postmodernism the most. Water's film *Cecil B. Demented* (2000) evinces Hutcheon's theory more than his other works.⁷ Therefore, an analysis of each film by Almodóvar and Waters will clarify how they are representative of this aspect of postmodernism.

Of all of Almodóvar's works that include films within films, one of his more recent releases, *Los abrazos rotos*, is the most centered around the self-ironizing nature of postmodernism as explained by Hutcheon. Indeed, the protagonist of this film is a writer and director who was in the process of making his greatest film (*Chicas y maletas*) when a car

⁷ Unquestionably, Almodóvar includes metacinema in nearly all of his works; especially in films such as *Hable con ella* (2002), *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999), *¡Átame!* (1990), and *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982). However, *Los abrazos rotos* is Almodóvar's film (to date) that deals the most directly with filmmaking as its foundational theme. Since this movie grants the viewer the most privileged information about the realities of making a film more so than Almodóvar's other works, it is essential to analyze the self-ironizing aspect of it.

accident left him blinded and killed the woman he loved. The rest of the plot focuses on movies and filmmaking. Before the accident, the main character goes by his, “real” name Mateo Blanco. However, after the loss of his sight and his beloved Lena, he begins to refer to himself as Harry Caine, a pseudonym that he had used in the past. Thus Lluís Homar, the actor, plays two different roles although they are the same person. Through a series of flashbacks, Almodóvar narrates the story of how Mateo’s and Lena’s love affair began and ended. The movie Mateo was making, which starred Lena, is not the only film within a film in this movie.⁸ Instead, Almodóvar created Ray X, a character who secretly follows the others around and videotapes them (Ray even mounts a camera in his car so that he can drive while filming). There are several scenes in which the audience views Ray’s footage including when Lena discovers that she is being followed by him and she directly addresses the man she believes instigated this invasion of privacy, her lover on whom she is cheating, Ernesto Martel. In one key scene, Lena walks in on Ernesto, who is watching the recordings made by Ray X, and she lip synchs the same exact words she spoke when she confronted Ray X on camera. Thus an actress, Penélope Cruz, plays the role of an actress, Lena, who in turn interprets a role as herself against the backdrop of her own image on the screen. The audience is reminded through this distancing device of the processes involved in making films. Therefore *Los abrazos rotos* is a movie that is an example of a postmodern work that meets Hutcheon’s criteria of being, “self-conscious, self-contradictory, [and] self-undermining” (1).

Of all the films by John Waters to date, none questions the art of filmmaking as much as and as directly as *Cecil B. Demented*. The premise of this movie consists of a group of

⁸ It is important to note that in order to sabotage Mateo’s career, his agent and later assistant Judit García and the editor conspire to release a version of *Chicas y maletas* that uses the worst footage captured. By releasing this film in such a form, Almodóvar points out to the viewer that editing is just as powerful as acting in the filmmaking process and that it can make even the best movie a complete failure.

underground filmmakers who kidnap a famous actress (Honey Whitlock, played by Melanie Griffith) and force her to act in their first film, *Raving Beauty*. Led by their director, Cecil B. Demented, the “Sprocket Holes” see themselves as a terrorist group that is dedicated to fighting the banality of Hollywood movies by creating their own filmic masterpiece. Throughout this film, Waters constantly confronts the viewer with the technical details and difficulties of making a movie and mocks the Hollywood films he despises (such as *Patch Adams* and *Forrest Gump*). In fact, the very plot of the film within the film is for Honey’s character, her love interest, and her daughter to “start a revolution to destroy mainstream cinema.” Nevertheless, one specific scene embodies the postmodern trait of self-reflexivity the most. After Honey’s awful interpretation of her role during a walkthrough rehearsal of one of the scenes, she is reprimanded by the Sprocket Holes and by Cecil for her lack of skill. However, when Cecil films the, “actual” scene, Honey gives an impressive performance. After receiving applause for her skills, Honey questions Cecil about his lack of filmmaking techniques and resources, “Wait a minute, no coverage?” Cecil replies, “The first take is the only real truth.” Honey chastises him saying, “But you can’t cut a film with just a master.” Demented then explains:

There are no rules in outlaw cinema, Ms. Whitlock, only edges. We believe technique to be nothing more than failed style. You see, I’ve had a vision. And that vision is called ultimate reality. The rest of our film is shot in real life, with real people, and yes, with real terror.

During the rest of the film, the Sprocket Holes make their movie by holding a crowd of, “real” people hostage and by filming Honey as she leads her revolt against Hollywood (including stopping the shooting of *Gump Again*, a fictional sequel to *Forrest Gump*). Thus, *Cecil B. Demented* exhibits Hutcheon’s model of postmodernism by holding up the elements of filmmaking for the audience to scrutinize.

Now that it is clear that the films of Almodóvar and Waters comply with Jameson's theory that postmodernism breaks the cultural barriers between, "high" class and popular culture and that their movies also possess the self-reflexive nature as described by Hutcheon, it is important to examine the next characteristic of postmodernism according to her. Another aspect of a postmodern work is that it is, "unavoidably political" (1). There is no doubt that both Pedro Almodóvar and John Waters include political agendas within their films. An analysis of their movies that feature the most prominent political commentary best meets the objective of this chapter. Proceeding in this manner, the work by Almodóvar that stands out the most is *Carne trémula* (1997). The most political film by Waters is *Hairspray* (1988). Before continuing, it is important to note that one trait that Almodóvar and Waters share in common is the misperception that their movies are devoid of any sociopolitical commentary. For example, Smith notes that critics from outside Spain tend to label Almodóvar's movies as being, "apolitical or ahistorical" (*Desire* 2). Concerning the work of John Waters, Waters himself states that his films are not political in *Shock Value* despite his audience's insistence that they are (220). Waters is also cited as saying, "I pride myself on the fact that my work has no socially redeeming value" (Pela 93). Despite this stance from Waters concerning his films, the analyses that follow prove otherwise.

In *Carne trémula*, Almodóvar directly critiques the Francoist political values. In fact, the viewer is confronted with the harsh realities of Francoism from the very start of the movie. Almodóvar begins this feature abruptly by presenting words on the screen. These words were the very same ones used by Manuel Fraga Iribarne, who was then the head of the Ministry of Information and Tourism under the Franco regime and thus responsible for censorship laws, to announce the, "state of exception" (declared in January of 1970) during which Spaniards lost the right to assemble freely and other civil liberties (Allinson *A Spanish Labyrinth* 38). As Allinson

explains, the effect of this opening sequence is shocking for, “audiences who had come to associate Almodóvar with the very freedoms which created the conditions for his cinema” (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 38).⁹ Similarly, the next sequence in which Isabel gives birth to Víctor on a city bus features shots of Madrid that are noticeably absent of people. Due to the curfew imposed on the Spanish when the, “state of exception” was declared and the fact that the action takes place very late at night, Madrid seems totally abandoned. Twenty years later (as the text on the screen informs us), we see Madrid again at about the same time of night but this time there are people lining the streets and also other passengers on the bus with Víctor. Toward the end of the film, Almodóvar presents a scene that, “recalls Víctor’s birth” (D’Lugo *Pedro Almodóvar* 96). The audience sees Madrid again very late at night around Christmas time. Víctor and his wife are being driven to the hospital (in a van) because she is in labor. The shots of Madrid show the streets crowded with traffic and people. At one point, Víctor says to his unborn child:

I was in the same situation 26 years ago, about to be born. But you are luckier than I was. You don’t know how much things have changed. Look at the sidewalk, full of people. When I was born, there was nobody on the street. People were confined to their homes, scared shitless. Luckily for you, my child, it has been a long time since we lost our fear in Spain.

With *Carne trémula*, Almodóvar clearly denounces Franco era politics thereby making this film compliant with Hutcheon’s assertion that postmodern works are “unavoidably political.”

Of all of Waters’ films, *Hairspray* presents the most blatant political commentary. Set in Baltimore during 1962, *Hairspray* presents the audience with the political turmoil surrounding the racial integration of U.S. society and satirizes the segregationists. Viewers are made aware of the racism that was common at that time early in the film. When Edna Turnblad (Divine)

⁹ D’Lugo also notes that *Carne trémula* presents the most direct representation of politics of all of his works (*Pedro Almodóvar* 95).

explains to her client Mrs. Malinski that her teen daughter Tracy is obsessed with watching a TV show that features youngsters who dance to popular music, Malinski replies, “Delinquents if you ask me. It ain’t right to be dancin’ on TV to that colored music.” Thus within the first four minutes of the film, Waters portrays the discriminatory attitude held by the segregationists. Not long after this scene (within the first fifteen minutes of the movie), Waters depicts a black couple being denied access to a dance event because, as the security guard informs them, “This is a white establishment.” Tracy and her friend Penny Pingleton soon join the integration movement and participate in a demonstration outside the television studio during which they shout, “Two, four, six, eight, TV’s got to integrate” with the rest of the protestors. As the story develops, Waters depicts those in favor of integration as being rebellious heroes who fight against the bigoted authorities despite the threat of being persecuted by the police and/or by their parents. Waters himself makes an on-screen appearance as Dr. Frederickson, the psychiatrist the Pingletons have hired to, “cure” Penny of the love that she has for her black boyfriend. Waters says, “Negros,” and, “black boys” and then gives Penny multiple electrical shocks with a giant prop that looks like a cattle prod so that Penny will associate her boyfriend with negative stimuli. Treating Penny as though her affection for her boyfriend is a type of mental disorder (according to the authority figures of her parents and the psychiatrist) ridicules the segregationist political stance. Consequently, *Hairspray* manifests the political nature of postmodern works of art.

Now that it is clearer that Almodóvar and Waters created films that are examples of postmodernism because they break down the barriers between “high” and popular culture, possess an ironic self-awareness, and convey a political message, it is time to examine the next tenet of postmodernism; the reliance upon intertextuality. Just like the scholarly controversy about what constitutes postmodernism, many critics disagree about the meaning of

intertextuality. For example, Graham Allen asserts that, “Intertextuality [...] cannot be evoked in an uncomplicated manner. Such a term is in danger of meaning nothing more than whatever each particular critic wishes it to mean” (2). Allen also explains that any attempt to define intertextuality in basic terms would be, “doomed to failure” (2). Originally coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960’s, intertextuality, “is defined in *La Révolution du langage poétique* as the transposition of one or more *systems* of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position” (Roudiez 15). Leon S. Roudiez is careful to point out that intertextuality, “has been generally misunderstood. It has nothing to do with matters of influence by one writer upon another, or with sources of a literary work; it does, on the other hand, involve the components of a textual system such as the novel, for instance” (15). Allen adds that intertextuality has not been limited to interpretations of literary works alone, but has been utilized to analyze, “cinema, painting, music, architecture, photography, and in virtually all cultural and artistic productions” (174). For purposes of this study of the works of Almodóvar and Waters, the definition of intertextuality provided by Roudiez is the most pertinent. In fact, intertextualities play such a dominating role in works by Almodóvar and Waters that many parts of the remaining chapters of this study are dedicated to the analysis of those intertexts. When Almodóvar and Waters create their own films, they often allude to other movies by borrowing and recasting themes, characters, music, *mise en scène*, costume, makeup, narrative, and many other elements of filmmaking. The process by which Almodóvar and Waters enact these allusions is known as recycling and this concept is based on the notion of intertextuality according to Roudiez. Although Almodóvar and Waters definitely engage in the *reciclaje* process of the re-appropriation of religious, historical, and political symbols as described by Alejandro Yarza, both directors go far beyond these three aspects unapologetically when

utilizing intertextualities in their works (*El reciclaje* 50). For example, when asked by Frédéric Strauss about how he alludes to other cinema, Almodóvar responds, “When I insert an extract from a film, it isn’t a homage, but outright theft” (45). Similarly, Waters encourages new filmmakers to “imitate past Hollywood hits when you’re trying to get studio backing” (*Crackpot* 142). Therefore, intertextuality, as it pertains to the works of Almodóvar and Waters, involves the recycling of cinematic codes whose function is to evoke the embedded context of the movies to which they refer. This practice enables both directors to engage in a complex discourse with their audiences based on the moviegoer’s prior knowledge of the works to which they allude. By drawing upon the familiar in this manner, Almodóvar and Waters communicate a vast array of associations without having to script the same material. This is not to say, however, that a viewer must be thoroughly versed in all of the referenced cinematic features in order to be able to grasp the overriding meaning of their movies. Doing so is analogous to comprehending the message of a parodic work such as *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1974) without knowing anything about the legend of King Arthur and the Holy Grail. Such a spectator can laugh at the antics of the comedic performances of the actors and comprehend some of the jokes but never fully understand the humor stemming from a farcical representation of the King Arthur myth. The ticketholder who has the necessary background knowledge is in a far better position to negotiate the meaning of the allusion. Such is the case with the audience of an Almodóvar or Waters film. As we shall see in the remaining chapters of this analysis, an active viewer who interprets the interplay of intertextualities found in Almodóvar’s and Waters’ films can uncover their full significance.

The last trait of postmodernism exemplified by the films of Almodóvar and Waters is the utilization of pastiche. Pastiche too is a word whose meaning is controversial because it is

often confused with the term parody. As Jameson explains, pastiche is one of the most definitive characteristics of postmodernism (“Postmodernism” 113). He clarifies the similarities and differences between parody and pastiche by stating that, “Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor” and that, “Here, once again, pastiche: in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate [is] dead styles” (“Postmodernism”115). Hutcheon somewhat disagrees with Jameson’s assertions that pastiche is different from parody stating that Jameson’s stance assumes that the unique styles emulated by parody no longer exist contemporarily (*Politics* 90). Offering Salman Rushdie and Angela Carter as authors who illustrate parodic voices which are nonetheless distinctive, Hutcheon argues that Jameson’s “stand seems hard to defend” (*Politics* 90). Hutcheon is correct in that parody as a genre still exists due to the fact that stylistic vicissitudes of works of art continue to and always will lend themselves to imitative mockery, however, she misses the point that pastiche differs from parody in that the former seeks to flatter an outmoded art form while the latter ridicules it. Take for example the relationship between *Scream* (1996), *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997), and the parody *Scary Movie* (2000). If Jameson’s hypothesis that stylistic innovation is no longer possible were true, *Scary Movie* would never have been made; which supports Hutcheon’s argument. *Scary Movie*, however, systematically and unflinchingly derides every aspect of *Scream* and *I Know* including these films’ formulaic narratives, thirty-year old actors playing the parts of teenagers, and even the utilization of violence to attract audiences. This makes *Scary Movie* a parody and not pastiche because it scorns the other two films. Allen correctly defines pastiche as, “a literary work composed of elements borrowed either from various other writers or from a particular earlier author. [...] Pastiche differs from parody in using imitation as a form of flattery rather than mockery, and from plagiarism in its

lack of deceptive intent” (216). Jameson’s concept of a, “nostalgia film,” (“Postmodernism” 116) which is a film that is based on pastiche, best describes the manifestation of such in movies by Almodóvar and Waters. There is no doubt that both directors utilize parodic scenes (especially of religious topics) in many of their films. Nevertheless, neither has produced a movie that could be categorized wholly as a parody. A nostalgia film, according to Jameson, is a movie, “about the past and about specific generational moments of that past” but like, “*Star Wars* [...] is not a historical film about our own intergalactic past, a nostalgia film does not necessary depict the era it historicizes in a direct way” (“Postmodernism” 116).¹⁰ Such is the case with the movies of Almodóvar and Waters. Despite the fact that Almodóvar and Waters certainly establish their own signature styles, many of their films are pastiches of “now dead forms, [that satisfy] a deep longing to experience them again” (Jameson “Postmodernism” 116). Some of those currently defunct genres include the Hollywood B horror film and the melodramatic works of Douglas Sirk. Instead of parodying the earlier works that Almodóvar and Waters borrow from other sources, both directors pay homage to the creators of those works in agreement with Allen’s definitions of pastiche. This naturally raises the question of the interrelationship between pastiche and intertextuality. Since pastiche is the reuse of one or more elements of a prior textual system intended to laud that work, it matches the description of intertextuality provided by Roudiez. Each allusion Almodóvar and Waters make to past movies therefore becomes a pastiche, intertextual in nature by default, which brings along with it the viewer’s associations of the “original.”

Having reviewed the insight into the work of Almodóvar and Waters as provided by a postmodern perspective, it would be helpful to apply the theoretical approach of queer theory to

¹⁰ Jameson is referring to the *Star Wars* of 1977.

clarify further how Almodóvar and Waters emulate each other as well as other directors. Queer theory, very much akin to postmodernism, openly resists being classified into a single category and therefore is difficult to pin down to a uniform, restrictive definition. Additionally, queer is anti-normative in nature whereas any type of theory seeks to normalize the phenomenon it describes. Nevertheless, it is possible to examine the chief characteristics of queer theory without inadvertently producing an in-depth simulacrum of the many publications that are dedicated to the endeavor of defining it. Towards that objective, the definition of queer according to Annamarie Jagose best summarizes queer theory's main tenets:

queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire. [...] queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. Institutionally, queer has been associated most prominently with lesbian and gay subjects, but its analytic framework also includes topics such as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Demonstrating the impossibility of any 'natural' sexuality, it calls into question even such apparently unproblematic terms as 'man' and 'woman' (3).

This description of queer is inclusive yet specific enough to capture the pith of the queer aesthetic of the worlds evoked by the films of Almodóvar and Waters. Also, Jagose introduces the sociological aspect by mentioning how queer questions the mechanisms by which cultures assign gender. This is a crucial part of comprehending the inversions of traditional masculine and feminine roles that Almodóvar and Waters portray in their films. For that reason, this analysis will adopt Jagose's explanation of queer as a basis of what is meant by the term queer.

Returning to the idea of the controversial nature of postmodernism, equally debatable is the very concept of queer even having a definition. As Jackie Stacey and Sarah Streets posit, the meaning of queer has varied both within the academic and public settings (1). In fact, as an academic term, queer has always been associated with the, "theoretical and the political" (1). The "reversal" of queer as a term of hatred to an academic term that, "implies a misleading sense of

agency, intention and desired outcome, for the point of embracing queerness has never been to give it a positive force [...] Rather the queer move has typically defined itself in opposition to the desire for ‘acceptance’ [...] Inclusion, understanding, tolerance – these have not been the goals of queer interventions” (2). Stacey and Street also discuss the debate of the term queer as a perceived, “anti-feminist re-masculinization of sexual theory and politics” (2). Despite the difficulties and controversies, Stacey and Street conclude that queer theory has enjoyed and will continue to experience an unexpected acceptance within the academic field (2). Moreover, Jagose’s definition of queer is broad enough to include the homosexual and gender categories of homosexuality as identified by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s models of “gay/straight definitions in terms of overlapping sexuality and gender” (88). This inclusiveness of the very meaning of the terms “gay” and “lesbian” is vital because it does not overlook the ambiguity of these labels and the epistemological controversy of affixing them as described by Sedgwick (88). What Jagose fails to include in her description of queer is the integrative, universalizing term “bisexual” explained by Sedgwick (88). This is not to say, however, that Jagose is unaware of bisexuality since she describes its meaning and provides an historical account of the theoretical models which explain it in *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (40-94). For purposes of this analysis, a bisexual is a person who is sexually attracted to both men and women.

Before examining the queer nature of movies by Almodóvar and Waters, it is vital to expound upon the sociological nature of queer introduced by Jagose. In their essay, “I Can’t Even Think Straight” Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer critique both sociology’s lack of incorporation of queer theory into the sociological camp as well as the converse of that statement. For example, they state that, “sociology can benefit from the challenges of queer theory. In turn, it can contribute to forming a conception of lesbian/gay life, and all of its

interconnections with social life more generally, that is deeper and more grounded than the approach of ‘queer theory’” (137). Their observations about postmodernism and queer theory are critical because they tie the two philosophical constructs together. Stein and Plummer state:

Certainly an affinity between queer culture and postmodernism [...] is clear. Some observers have suggested that the typical postmodernist artifact is playful, self-ironizing, and even schizoid. In much the same way lesbian/gay culture has often made use of camp, drag, and other cultural strategies to celebrate alienation, distance and incongruity (136).

This quotation, especially, “playful [or ludic], self-ironizing, and even schizoid ” could serve well as a description of every movie made by John Waters and Pedro Almodóvar as we have already seen. Jameson explains the schizoid nature of postmodernism as, “the breakdown of the relationship between signifiers” (“Postmodernism” 119). He states that the schizophrenic is, “condemned to live a perpetual present [...] an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence” (“Postmodernism” 119). Movies by Almodóvar and Waters often tend to reject a linear progression of time but instead portray the present through a series of flashbacks. Viewers are challenged to construct time on their own and are often not given the visual cues to be able to do so until the very end of the movie. In the discussion that follows, it will be clear that Almodóvar and Waters consecrate queerness by the use of not only drag but also by other means. The “other strategies” they use as distancing devices include kitsch, camp, transsexualism, hyperbole, visceral and shocking sensationalism, violence, and explicit depictions of eroticism that blur the boundaries between pornography and on-screen sexuality.

Another sociological study by Scott Bravmann provides unique insight into the nature of queer theory and in turn provides background information necessary to understand better the films of Almodóvar and Waters. Bravmann’s, “Postmodernism and Queer Identities” seeks to

clarify the construction of queer identity in current historiography. According to Bravmann, the very concept of a distinctive homosexual identity as a political consciousness did not emerge until the nineteenth century (335).¹¹ This critic posits that the growth of capitalism, urbanization, individualism, and the changes in family structure made reproduction no longer a vital economic factor as it had been during modernism (336).¹² Over the course of time, sexuality, “began to be conceived of as a way to achieve intimacy, happiness and pleasure rather than substantially and perhaps most importantly as a (re) productive act” (336). Considering that most historians cite the riots at the Stonewall Inn in 1969 as the event that sparked the gay rights movement in the Western world, there can be little doubt that Waters and Almodóvar (who was influenced by US culture as we shall see) inherited the cultural mantle of modernism’s “imperative to procreate” (Bravmann 336).¹³ Therefore the postmodern artists such as Almodóvar and Waters were more than willing, as Stein and Plummer explain, to normalize, “homosexuality by making heterosexuality deviant” (135). It comes as no surprise then that Waters and in turn Almodóvar both often portray heterosexuality as being depraved and immoral as a way of breaking away from the modernist tradition.

An additional aspect of Bravmann’s research, which also helps to clarify the queer nature of works by Almodóvar and Waters, involves his discovery that the United States has the

¹¹ The fact that the notion of a gay identity did not exist before the nineteenth century implies that such a nomenclature was extant during modernism. This fact is pertinent to the topic at hand because according to Jameson’s model of postmodernism, it is necessary to comprehend the modernism against which the postmodernist rebels (“Postmodernism” 112). Sedgwick also ascribes the inception of a homosexual identity to the nineteenth century and explains that “the period stretching roughly between Wilde and Proust was prodigally productive of attempts to name, explain, and define this new type of creature, the homosexual person” (83).

¹² Bravmann uses the term modernism in its sense as an historical period of socioeconomic change, not as a literary movement.

¹³ The Stonewall Inn was a gay bar in Greenwich Village in New York. The riots began when the, “gay men, transvestites, and lesbians fought the police during a routine raid” (Carter 2).

most influential queer culture in Western society. Bravmann's findings merit attention because they help to substantiate that the cinematic productions of a U.S. homosexual filmmaker could have prompted a gay Spanish auteur to follow suit. In his investigation of histories written about queer topics, Bravmann notes that most such works are, "decidedly and purposefully US-centered" (335). This sociologist also explains that of all other nations, the history of the United States, "most clearly confirms the argument of Weeks and Foucault concerning the emergence of a distinctive gay identity" (Bravmann 335). Therefore, the investigation conducted by Bravmann establishes that the U.S. gay counterculture dominated the gay aesthetic of queer culture worldwide.

Spain's queer subculture of the post Franco era was certainly not immune to the globalization of U.S. queer culture. As is the case with many other nations, Spain's homosexual underground looked to the gay political liberation movement started in the 1970's in the United States as a model when constructing a unique Spanish queer identity (Romero Bachiller 150). For example, Félix Rodríguez-González's explication of the source of many of the terms used in Spanish queer culture affirms Bravmann's position. In his introduction to the *Diccionario gay-lésbico: vocabulario general y argot de la homosexualidad*, Rodríguez-González states that an overwhelming majority of slang terms within the Castilian Spanish homosexual argot come directly from American English (xi). Examples include the Spanish usage of the English words gay, cruising, drag queen, drag king, butch, dyke, and leatherman. This is because, according to Rodríguez-González, the strong queer presence of U.S. queer culture greatly influenced Spain's (xi). Susana López Penedo supports Rodríguez-González's hypothesis that US queer culture swayed Spanish queer ideologies and states that the works of Judith Butler (such as *Gender Trouble* 1990, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" 1991, and *Bodies That Matter* 1993)

especially impacted the Spanish homosexual subculture (21). Considering these facts, there is no doubt that Spain's gay subculture too fell sway to that of the United States during its formative period of the mid 1970's.

Now that the connection between the queer cultures of the United States and Spain is clearer, it would be beneficial to analyze how this phenomenon is portrayed in the filmic works of Pedro Almodóvar and John Waters. The early films of Almodóvar and Waters, as we shall see in detail in chapters four and five of this dissertation, document this transatlantic assimilation on the part of Spain's queer community. A filmography of what could be considered to be an "early" John Waters movie, for purposes of this study, would include those produced prior to 1980.¹⁴ This list consists of *Mondo Trasho* (1969), *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), *Pink Flamingos*, *Female Trouble*, and *Desperate Living* (1977). Almodóvar's "early" works include: *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), *Entre tinieblas* (1983), *¿Qué he hecho para merecer esto?* (1984), *Matador* (1986), and *La ley del deseo* (1987).¹⁵ The basis for selecting these as being representative of a first queer movement of Almodóvar's movies includes the date of release being prior to that of *Mujeres* in 1988 (in agreement with D'Lugo's observation as noted below), the preponderance of queer protagonists in each film, and the reliance upon U.S. models of queer

¹⁴ Clearly the label of "early film" is an extremely subjective term. Nevertheless, logically it best serves the purpose of this investigation to study only the films by Waters that impacted Almodóvar's first commercially successful movie, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* in 1980 (D'Lugo *Pedro Almodóvar* 16). It is doubtful that Waters' non feature-length films such as *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket* (1964) and *Roman Candles* (1966) would have even been available to Almodóvar prior to 1980 due to the fact that they were not widely distributed by Waters during the twentieth century. In his book *Shock Value*, Waters explains that his attempts at marketing *Hag* were a total failure and that the film, "remains in my closet, where it belongs" (41). Similarly, *Roman Candles* premiered at a local church in Baltimore and despite being noticed by the *Baltimore Sun*, was never screened outside of Baltimore prior to 1980 (Waters *Shock Value* 50).

¹⁵ Vernon and Morris characterize Almodóvar's early films as being those that reflect the cultural changes that resulted from *la movida* of the late 1970's and early 1980's (8). However, they do not give a specific filmography (8). D'Lugo affixes the first phase of Almodóvar's career to his period of "geocultural positioning" (*Pedro Almodóvar* 2). This indicates the time period before Almodóvar became famous worldwide with *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* in 1988 (2).

identity. Although the temptation to examine each allusion to the U.S. gay aesthetic in all films by Almodóvar and Waters is great, such an investigation would likely result in a vast compendium of interdependent references. Similarly, revealing and elucidating in full detail all of the queer content of the eleven films identified above would be to embark upon an endeavor that would require far more than one chapter. This is true because each film contains many (if not all) of Jagose's definitive characteristics of queer including: the subversion of the traditionally patriarchal definitions of man and woman, "mismatches between sex, gender and desire," a focus on homosexual protagonists, and the portrayal of, "cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery" (3). Thus, despite the impossibility of selecting a singular movie as being, "queerer" than any other (recall that the definition of queer is polemical), it is best to limit this explanation of queerness as applicable to their works specifically to one film per director. With that objective in mind, the pages that follow discuss the queer sensibility illustrated by *Pink Flamingos*, and *Pepi, Luci, Bom* because these films are the foundational works of each director that present the most transgressive content.

Before commencing the analysis of queer content exemplified in *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, it is necessary to take into account another difficulty presented by attempting to study how one culture has influenced another. When considering the ways by which the U.S. queer subculture influenced the Spanish gay aesthetic, the assumptions that the U.S. represents an original of sorts and that Spanish gay culture in turn emulated the U.S. naturally raises the academic debate concerning the concepts of originality vs. reproduction. This scholarly controversy, so prodigiously explored by Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, questions the very

notions of “originality” and “reproduction.”¹⁶ Despite any academic contention that this project may stir because of the placement of the U.S. gay subculture as being an, “original” coupled with the studied observation that Spain’s queer culture imitated that of the United States (thus making it a “copy” of sorts), it is still possible to examine the movies listed above using queer theory as a theoretical approach. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will focus now on the queer ideologies as exemplified by *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom*.¹⁷

The first characteristic of what constitutes queer as demonstrated in the film *Pink Flamingos* is the deconstruction of the audience’s expectations concerning gender roles. In order to challenge the viewer’s beliefs about gender and behavior, Waters purposefully portrays lower-middle class women as attractive, powerful, and larger-than-life heroines while depicting well-to-do heterosexual men as inept, perverted, and cowardly sycophants. Raymond Marble, the lead male antagonist, is the embodiment of this type of depiction of men. As Robt Pela observes, Raymond is a bourgeois, “milquetoast” who, “clearly defers to his powerful wife, Connie” (126). For example, when Cookie calls demanding payment in return for locating the whereabouts of Divine, Raymond proves himself to be incapable of completing the transaction. Thus Connie repeatedly takes the phone away from him to complete the conversation and consummate the transaction. It is also telling that Channing, the Marbles’ butler, chauffeur (and somewhat willing sperm donor), puts on Connie’s clothing when he decides to “play.” For Channing, dressing himself as Connie is an act of emulating the true source of power within their household. Therefore he naturally wants to imitate the most formidable partner of the Marble

¹⁶ Perhaps one of Baudrillard’s best examples of simulacra involves the case of the Lascaux caves in which a reproduction of a cave system was built to preserve the originals. Baudrillard argues that it is, “possible that the very memory of the original caves will fade in the mind of future generations, but from now on there is no longer any difference: the duplication is sufficient to render both artificial” (18).

¹⁷ Chapters five and six will examine the relationships between the gay subcultures of the U.S. and Spain as they apply to recycling processes that take place between both directors.

couple; i.e. Connie. It comes as no surprise then that when the Marbles are confronted by Channing pretending to be each one of them, it is Connie who resorts to physical violence, striking him several times then ordering him to go to his room while Raymond merely stands by and berates him.

Not only is it true that Raymond is definitely subservient to his wife, but he is also depicted as being a deranged sexual deviant. In fact, the first scene in which Raymond makes an appearance portrays him committing an act of lascivious behavior by flashing his penis (complete with a large sausage dangling from it) to two women who are having lunch in a public park. It is interesting to note that Waters utilizes two nondiegetic sources for sound during this scene in order to heighten the overall impact on the spectator. First, Waters superimposes the song, “Ooh! Look-A There, Ain’t She Pretty” performed by Bill Haley and the Comets onto footage of Raymond fondling himself while spying on his soon-to-be victims through a pair of binoculars. Waters thus juxtaposes the, “wholesomeness” of the song, “Ooh!” vs. Raymond’s wanton actions (replete with lewd grimaces). This has the effect of ramping up the tension as the audience witnesses Raymond’s stealthy approach toward the young ladies. The instant that his prey sees Raymond’s penis, the sound abruptly changes to a scream followed by the tune “Chicken Grabber” (performed by Nite Hawks). “Chicken Grabber’s” outlandish musical cacophony of sounds adds to the shocked expressions of the women and drives home the point that Raymond’s comportment is outrageously aberrant.

Another aspect of Raymond Marble’s queer persona is that he is portrayed as the transgressive antithesis of the empowered heterosexual male. Raymond’s wealth, which he accumulates at the behest of his wife for the sole purpose of vying with Divine for the title of “the filthiest person alive,” stems from his and his wife’s nefarious business schemes that

definitely defy traditional norms. The Marbles have concocted an elaborate baby-selling scheme in which they forcibly abduct young women (while riding around in their chauffeur-driven limousine), keep them as their prisoners in a pit in their basement, make their employee Channing impregnate the young ladies through artificial insemination, then sell the infants for a high profit only to lesbian couples. Raymond also mentions the Marbles' other outlandish business ventures that include fronting money to heroin dealers who work in the "inner-city elementary schools." Although some may argue that the hyperbole of these nefarious businesses is intended merely to make the audience laugh, there can be no doubt that Waters paints Raymond as being atypical since he concedes to his wife's wishes by participating in these schemes. Moreover, Waters portrays Raymond as the more passive partner of the Marbles despite the fact that he is also clearly depicted as being heterosexual; thereby calling into question the hegemonic belief that the male is innately the more aggressive of a heterosexual couple. Ultimately, Waters makes it clear that Raymond is a villain in *Pink Flamingos* because all of his actions center around sexual depravity and due to his direct competition with the film's heroine (Divine); all in order to achieve the most notoriety.

Perhaps the facet of Raymond Marble that most directly confronts the audience's views of heterosexuality and gender involves an overtly queer depiction of marriage and straight sex. When representing a sexual act between Raymond and Connie, Waters chooses to do so in a humorous manner. Waters' intention with this particular scene is to undermine the social more that sexual acts committed between a married couple are by default normal and sacred. As Pela observes, the sequence during which Connie and Raymond suck each other's toes during sex is one example of many such scenes in Waters' films that emphasize the conviction of

heterosexuality and procreation being, “silly” (118).¹⁸ What Pela does not seem to notice in this scene that is particularly significant is the fact that after the nude toe sucking is interrupted by Cookie’s telephone call, Connie and Raymond swap their undergarments. Connie puts on a pair of men’s white briefs while Raymond dons a pair of blue panties. Crucial to note is that, after finishing the conversation with Cookie and completing this exchange of underwear, Connie and Raymond engage once again in this atypical sexual activity. The impact of this very intimate act of wearing the undergarment of the other sex partner is analogous to Judith Butler’s findings concerning cross-dressing. According to Butler:

The notion of an original or primary gender identification is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities [...] If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance (*Gender* 187).¹⁹

Depicting a heterosexual couple engaging in such an unusual sexual activity while cross-dressed therefore conforms to Butler’s conclusion that cross-dressing is often used to parody the very concepts of sex and gender. Connie, who is definitely the butch partner of the duo (replete with

¹⁸ Failing to comment about what is perhaps the most provocative sexual act in *Pink Flamingos* would be remiss. Like the segment featuring Connie and Raymond described above, this scene also deconstructs the concept of heterosexuality being the standard for normal behavior. While making love to Cookie (who is really a spy working for the Marbles), Crackers grasps a live chicken, actually kills it, and rubs it and its blood all over Cookie’s nude body. Waters, who has received a lot of criticism regarding the morality of killing a chicken for the sake of making a social statement within his film, at first denies that this constitutes an act of cruelty to an animal in *Shock Value* (7). Nevertheless, Waters later recants stating he would never repeat such an action in any film ever again during his performance as documented by Garlin. Regardless of whether or not this segment of the film represents an atrocity committed against an animal, undoubtedly Waters’ intention is to depict heterosexuality as being grotesque. Therefore, the “chicken-fuck scene” of *Pink Flamingos* demonstrates the same deconstructive agenda as the scene involving sex between the Marbles.

¹⁹ Distinguishing between the terms drag queen, transvestite, and transsexual is important because these words are often used interchangeably when their meanings are not synonymous. Drag, “in its professional form, is an art of performance for an audience” (Ross 162). Transsexualism has to do with persons who feel, “a radical discontinuity between sexual pleasure and bodily parts” and for that reason think of themselves as members of the opposite gender (Butler *Gender* 96). Transvestism is a more private sexual practice in which a person feels sexual pleasure by dressing himself or herself in clothing associated with the opposite gender (Ross 162).

a mannish hairdo) reinforces the absurdity of the situation by declaring, “I love you Raymond! I love you more than anything in this whole world. I love you even more than my own filthiness; more than my hair color! Oh God, I love you more than the sound of bones breaking, the sound of a death rattle! Even, even more than my own shit do I love you Raymond!” Raymond’s response to her is equally outrageous and paints heterosexual sex and marriage as perversions:

And I, Connie, also love you more than anything that I could ever imagine. More than my hair color, more than the sound of babies crying, of dogs dying. Even more than the thought of original sin itself. Oh, I am yours Connie, eternally united to you through an invisible cord of finely woven filth that even God Himself could never, ever break!

By using a cross-dressed couple who engage in fetishism, Waters successfully switches the gender of Connie and Raymond by making Connie “male” and Raymond “female.” In this manner, Connie and Raymond’s relationship exemplifies queerness in that it is a mismatch between “chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire” and because it is an example of a mix up of “sex, gender, and desire” (Jagose 3). With this queer depiction of Raymond as the “female” and Connie as the “male,” Waters definitely points out the “impossibility of any ‘natural’ sexuality” and questions norms governing what constitutes being a man and a woman in agreement with Jagose’s definition (3). Moreover, in accord with Butler’s viewpoint, Waters also emphasizes the schism between sexuality and performance. Also important to note is that Waters routinely casts “heterosexual people as homosexuals and homosexuals as heterosexuals to further confuse people, because I think confusion is humorous” (MacDonald 236). Therefore it is no surprise then that David Lochary, who was a homosexual, plays Raymond because this mismatch of sexual orientations heightens the overall queer impact of the film. The parody of heterosexuality and the “sacred” bonds of matrimony in turn implies that heterosexuality itself and the institution of marriage are questionable (Butler *Gender* 187). By means of this inversion

of traditional gender roles of Connie and Raymond Marble, Waters successfully deconstructs the audience's horizon of expectation concerning marriage and dominance being an attribute belonging only to the husband.

While Waters clearly characterizes Raymond Marble as being a wimpy, sexual miscreant whose marriage is the institutionalized apex of his perverted fetishes, Waters further illustrates the arbitrary nature of gender and sexuality with his portrayal of Divine/Babs Johnson. From the very beginning and throughout *Pink Flamingos*, Waters carefully crafts Divine's feminine beauty and stardom to be based on her infamy.²⁰ For example, the preliminary shots of the film combine footage of a mobile home and a close up of what at first appears to be a wanted flyer in order to convey the idea that Divine is a criminal at large. The off-screen narrator, Mr. Jag from Dreamland Studios, informs the viewers that the trailer "is the current hideout of the notorious beauty Divine, the filthiest person alive." As Jag narrates, Waters cuts to a medium close up of the cover of "one of your sleazier national tabloids." The front page of the magazine features a black and white photograph of Divine with the caption that reads, "Exclusive Photos of Divine the Filthiest Person Alive!" Jag informs the "moviegoers" that Divine "has been forced to go underground, disguising her appearance and adopting the alias of Babs Johnson." From the very onset of the film, Waters pointedly sets Divine's gender as female, creates her celebrity status, and simultaneously casts her as a marginalized member of society despite the fact that in reality Divine is a lower middle class drag queen.

Moreover, the discussion concerning how Divine's outrageous look created by Waters and Van Smith exemplifies postmodernism as analyzed earlier in this chapter bears revisiting because this hyperbolic representation also deconstructs norms about female gender identity and "feminine" beauty. As previously mentioned, Waters and Van Smith carefully construct

²⁰ Waters gave Glenn Milstead's drag queen alter ego the name "Divine" (*Shock Value* 41).

Divine's/Babs' physical appearance to exaggerate femininity much more so than any "ordinary" drag queen. In agreement with Butler's description of "dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance," this outrageous look of Divine/Babs invalidates the belief that being a woman automatically implies submissiveness and being born with female anatomy (*Gender* 187). Even though, as previously noted, drag by definition involves an exaggeration of the differences between the bodies of men and women, Divine's makeup artist and costume designer, Walter Avant Smith Jr., succeeded in creating an extremely impactful feminine look. Pela observes that Waters "instructed Van Smith to design newly garish make-up that was equal parts [Jayne] Mansfield and Clarabell the Clown. 'We were looking for the '50's glamour girl look, gone low-brow,' Smith says" (77). Waters definitely portrays Babs as an unusually beautiful woman (like in the scene that features the song "The Girl Can't Help It") yet definitely does not portray her as being subservient. Instead, Waters invokes a world in which, as Pela notes, "female characters rule their lives and the lives of their men" (126). In addition to Divine's dominance over the men in her life, Waters also depicts her as a dangerous, homicidal criminal. For example, during the interview with the various tabloid reporters, Divine informs them they will indeed witness the "live homicide," i.e. the trial and execution of the Marbles. When asked if she is a lesbian, Divine responds, "Yes, I've done everything." When the journalist, Mr. Vader, asks Divine if blood turns her on, Divine replies, "It does more than turn me on, Mr. Vader. It makes me come. And more than the sight of it, I love the taste of it. The taste of hot, freshly killed blood." When asked by a different reporter about her political beliefs, Divine ostentatiously retorts, "Kill everyone now. Condone first degree murder. Advocate cannibalism. Eat shit. Filth is my politics, filth is my life." Given this dialogue during the question and answer segment and the fact Divine and her guests did

actually cannibalize the policemen who came to raid her birthday party, undoubtedly Divine's feminine identity is hardly that of a meek, servile person. Therefore Waters provokes the audience to question their values concerning gender identity and the standards of feminine beauty.

Another scene that likewise serves as an example of the tenets of queer theory involves the depiction of Raymond's failed attempt to victimize a pre-op transsexual. During this sequence, viewers once again hear from Mr. Jag (the off-screen narrator) who warns them that the footage they are about to see will involve another example of "indecent exposure [that] adds to this social horror by making his wife wait in the car. Is there no shame?" Thus Waters prepares the moviegoer for yet another shocking scene in which Raymond will surreptitiously approach and flash yet another hapless female victim. This time, Raymond's quarry is checking her appearance in a mirror and brushing her hair while Raymond gawks at her through his binoculars. Nondiegetic sound is once again the "Chicken Grabber" song to enhance the tension of Raymond's approach. This time, however, it is Raymond who is taken aback by what he sees when the pre-op transsexual throws the mirror aside, flashes her breast back at him, then sticks out her tongue, lifts her skirt, and reveals that she too has a penis and testicles. Raymond thus becomes her victim as his expression indicates disgust and horror. He quickly flees the scene of the incident; his attempt to shock yet another victim in ruins. By portraying a pre-op transsexual who turns the tables on Raymond in this manner, Waters effectively denaturalizes society's views on gender identity and anatomy. It is not accidental that a transsexual (male-to-female) heroine triumphs over a heterosexual pervert in this scene. Waters' message is clear: heterosexuality can be just as depraved as any other sexual orientation because a person's

sexuality and gender have very little to do with their outward appearance. In other words, there is no causative correlation between genitalia and gender identity.

At this point it is clear that, much like queer theory, *Pink Flamingos* disputes the majority's views of sexuality, gender identity, and attractiveness. Waters succeeds admirably in shocking his audience into examining their beliefs concerning these three norms with this film. Nevertheless, Waters is certainly not the only director who subverts the standards of his cultural heritage. Pedro Almodóvar also defies the traditional Spanish values that control gender identity and sexuality. As mentioned previously, all of Almodóvar's feature-length films prior to *Mujeres* definitely represent queer themes and characters. However for purposes of succinctness, the remaining analysis examines the queer attributes in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*.

First, Almodóvar's queer view of Spanish culture can be uncovered in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*'s satirical political discourse. Although it is challenging to uncover the political messages that pervade *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, a careful review of this film reveals their existence. Acevedo-Muñoz notes that the first political theme of the film can be found within the first five minutes of the movie in the scene during which Pepi is raped by the policeman (10). For Acevedo-Muñoz, an act of rape carried out by a masculine authority figure is, "an allegory of Franco's repressive regime and state apparatus" (10). Paul Julian Smith also cites the representation of the policeman as being a reference to politics due to the fact that the policeman is portrayed as, "a caricature Fascist, complete with dark glasses who complains over breakfast that he doesn't know what the country is coming to 'with so much democracy'" (*Pepi, Luci, Bom* 27). Both critics are correct in their assessment of this scene in that it is symbolic of the repression of women during the Franco regime. However, this sexual assault also reveals the underpinning queer message that Almodóvar conveys to the audience. The very reason the policeman

approaches Pepi in the first place is because he saw the marijuana plants in the windows of her apartment and took that as an opportunity to extort sex from her. Instead of resisting his lewd advances, Pepi offers herself to him but states that “it will not be for free.” The police officer agrees that in exchange for sex he will not report her for possession of marijuana. Pepi then informs him that he must penetrate her anally since she is still a virgin and wishes to remain that way. This agreement turns into rape only when the policeman ignores her request and penetrates her vaginally despite Pepi’s protestations. With this depiction of sexual favors in exchange for the policeman’s silence about Pepi’s marijuana, Almodóvar paints the police officer as being a sexual deviant who does not seek not mere sexual gratification, but instead wants to satiate his latent sadistic desire to exercise power over a victim. As the movie progresses, the audience learns that this very same policeman, Luci’s husband, indeed becomes a fully-fledged sadist who utilizes pain to keep control over his wife. Consequently, the violation of Pepi by a perverted policeman portrays heterosexual desire as aberrant.

Moreover, neither Acevedo-Muñoz nor Smith explains in any detail the severity of the oppression that women experienced during Francoism. This historical background is necessary to better comprehend films by Almodóvar.²¹ Throughout the almost forty years of the dictatorship (1939-1975), the Franco administration systematically put into place a series of laws to make sure that women were subordinate to men in all facets of life. For example, the educational system was constructed to instill the value that a woman’s place was in the home and that she was second to her husband. As Aurora Morcillo-Gómez clarifies:

The official arbiters of female duties, the Catholic Church and the women’s section of the Falange (the *Sección Femenina*) dictated that women were to serve the *patria* with abnegation through dedication of the self to the common good.

²¹ When interviewed by Phillip Rouyer and Claudine Vié in 1988, Almodóvar stated “In my films, not only are Spain’s past and the civil war absent, but they are consciously rejected” (71). Despite this stance from Almodóvar, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* definitely manifests examples of Francoism through parody as explained in this chapter.

[...] In general terms, the educational system became the instrument by which the state perpetuated its patriarchal policies; the university, in particular, was a male realm, a site of state power, where the political elites were educated, where few women attended, and where scholarship stood inimical to femininity (53).

According to Susan L. Miller and Rosemary Barberet, Franco's regime also reenacted laws that made it legal for, "a father or husband to kill his unmarried daughter or wife for staining his honor if he caught her in *flagrante delicto* or in adultery" (930). Other laws made divorce and contraception illegal, provided for separation of a couple only by annulment, and instigated the legal concept of, "*permiso marital* (marital permission)" (Miller and Barbaret 930). *Permiso marital* meant that a, "wife could not open a bank account, work outside the home, initiate legal proceedings, even undertake a journey without her husband's consent" (Miller and Barbaret 930). Therefore the "truly Spanish woman" during Franco's rule was inculcated and governed to be a submissive housewife whose education was geared to make her into the ideal spouse to her husband and the doting mother of her children.

This insight into the subjugation of the Spanish woman explains another aspect of *Pepi, Luci, Bom*'s political message that comes in the form of the masochistic proclivities of Luci. Pepi and Bom remind the viewer frequently that Luci is a forty-year old housewife. This means that Luci and her husband were brought up during the Franco regime since the movie is set around the time of the first general elections of 1977 and the film's release date of 1980 (D'Lugo *Pedro Almodóvar* 23). Therefore, Luci, like all other Spanish women of that time period, was raised to believe and to obey the values described by Morcillo-Gómez, Miller, and Barberet. Luci subsequently is a caricature of the ideal Spanish woman of the Franco era. Luci expresses to Pepi (during their knitting lesson) that she has always desired to be abused and therefore married a policeman because he would, "treat me like a bitch. But no way! He respects me as though I were his mother!" This explains why Luci abandons her husband for Bom

because she portends to be a sadist. It is only when Luci's husband beats her nearly to the point of death that she leaves Bom and returns to him. Moreover, Luci infuriates her husband right before he beats her by insulting him. She calls him a coward and a bastard and cuckold (*cabrón*), states that he is not masculine enough to kidnap her, and then intensifies the beating by calling him a communist (the insult that enrages him more than any other). Labeling the policeman as a husband who has lost complete control over his wife's sexuality also represents Almodóvar's satirical inversion of the viewers' horizon of expectations concerning patriarchal Francoist authority, the dictatorship's views of the husband-wife dynamic, and augments the notoriety of the relationship between Bom and Luci. Luci has clearly become the "master" of her household because it is she who controls her husband; exerting *permiso marital* over him in a reversal of Francoist power structures. Almodóvar encourages the audience to realize that it is Luci who successfully strips her husband of his own free will since he can bring himself to hurt her physically only when she harangues him relentlessly in this manner. By characterizing Luci as an enthusiastic masochist and her husband as a fascist who can hold on to his wife only through means of violence, Almodóvar is satirizing the political norms of the Franco era. In this manner, Almodóvar subtly subverts the inculcated beliefs that women should be their very nature submissive and men dominant and aggressive in agreement with Jagose's observations that queer deconstructs such norms.

A more obvious queer aspect of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* involves the outward appearance and behavior of the title character Bom. Doubtlessly, Bom's costume during the entire movie is centered around the punk aesthetic of the 1970's (D'Lugo *Pedro Almodóvar* 17).²² This partially explains the leather-studded accessories, loud leopard print hosiery, and mismatched colors. Nevertheless, what Smith and D'Lugo do not take into account is that Bom is in fact

²² Smith upholds D'Lugo's description of Bom labeling her as a "teenage punkette" (*Pepi, Luci, Bom* 25).

Almodovar's representation of a butch lesbian. According to Rodríguez-González, "butch" refers to lesbian women who exhibit masculine behaviors, have a mannish appearance, and assume the "male" role in their relationships with other women (63). Bom's characterization fits the bill for each of these criteria. First, Bom's wardrobe and makeup lean toward making her appear more masculine. For example, throughout the movie, Bom commonly sports a man's black leather biker jacket, a black leather studded bracelet, and pale makeup contrasted with black lipstick to defeminize her face. The scene which begins with Bom practicing her boxing skills also adds to her masculine appearance. Bom is wearing a pair of men's boxing trunks and gloves while also having on her leather bracelet. Despite the fact that Bom also wears women's pants, dresses, blouses, shoes and other accessories, the utilization of clothing typically associated with men definitely characterizes her as butch.

Moreover, Bom's role as the master of the sadomasochistic relationship with Luci also contributes to Almodóvar's queer portrayal of both Bom and Luci. As Luci's master, Bom orders Luci to engage in actions that typically would not be associated with sex. Examples, such as ordering Luci to eat her phlegm, perform oral sex on a man she does not know, and soaking her in urine abound within this film. As Smith observes, Bom also drags Luci around on a leash and dog collar during the daytime in public places of Madrid ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 29).²³ As the sadist in this duo, Bom at first clearly enjoys ordering Luci around yet eventually grows tired of Luci's machinations to provoke Bom's ire. During one key sequence in which Luci has gone missing (she was hospitalized by her husband unbeknownst to Pepi and Bom), Bom tells Pepi that handling a masochist is not as appealing as she thought it would be since Luci deliberately does things to infuriate Bom. She also remarks that her taste in sexual partners is changing and

²³ According to Smith, the sadomasochistic relationship between Bom and Luci does not involve "a mere reproduction (repetition) of heterosexual power structures" but is instead, "a liberating adoption of erotic roles that are at once constrictive and mobile" ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 30).

that she no longer feels attracted to older women as she did previously. Notwithstanding this change of heart, Almodóvar clearly portrays Bom as the butch partner of this lesbian sadomasochistic relationship.

Perhaps more revealing than the characterization of Bom as the master of the Bom/Luci couple is the portrayal of Luci's masochistic tendencies. Important to note is that it does not take very much to convince Luci to abandon her husband thereby leaving behind her heterosexuality. The act of urination described previously was sufficient provocation for Luci to choose Bom as her new romantic partner. By depicting Luci's sexual orientation as being arbitrary in this manner, Almodóvar undermines hegemonic beliefs about gender identification and sexuality. As a masochist, physical abuse is what Luci truly craves and is the only driving force in her decisions to join with Bom and then subsequently to return back to her husband. Almodóvar implies that it is Luci who truly wields the power in both her marriage and her brief fling with Bom since Luci instigates the violence by insulting her husband. With Bom, Luci's provocations grow to be a burden for Bom who expresses to Pepi that she never knows what to expect from Luci. During the scene in which Pepi and Bom visit Luci in the hospital, Almodóvar makes it obvious that physical pain is what Luci really desires when she explains to Pepi and Bom that they did not really know her at all:

Bom, I am much more of a bitch than you realized. And you are not as bad as you think you are. You did not know how to give me what I deserved. Lately, you treated me as if I were your maid. It is not that I am complaining, but I think I deserve something much worse. However, look at him. He almost killed me. [...] I made my choice [to stay with her husband] when I married him. [...] He hates me with all of his heart. He cannot forgive me for everything I have done to him these last few months. It would be stupid not to take advantage of an opportunity like this.²⁴

²⁴ This is my translation of Luci's speech to Bom.

Additionally, Almodóvar enhances the sense that Luci has wrested away control from her police officer husband during this scene. Despite his protestations that he wishes to abuse Luci as violently as possible, the policeman still requires careful coaching from Luci. For example, it is only when Luci purposefully challenges his newfound sense of macho control that he aggravates the injuries to her fractured fingers, a sensation Luci quite obviously enjoys zealously. It is clearly the pleasure derived from physical pain that motivates Luci, and not any subconscious desire to be subjugated based on her identity as a wife or as Bom's passive lover. The message conveyed for the viewer is clear: Luci is the one who has triumphed in this clash between Francoist patriarchal authority and personal sexual freedom. Undoubtedly, Almodóvar characterizes Luci as a twisted masochist thereby denouncing traditional beliefs about fixed gender identities and sexual orientations.

Another example of how *Pepi, Luci, Bom* exemplifies a queer film involves the on-screen appearances of the drag queen Fanny McNamara. Fanny, whose real name is Fabio de Miguel, was one of the principle leaders of *la movida madrileña* (D'Lugo Pedro Almodóvar 18). As such, Fanny's mere presence in the film queers its overall impact on the viewer because he was a renowned Spanish drag queen (D'Lugo Pedro Almodóvar 20). In this manner, the audience members who are familiar with McNamara know to expect queer representations in *Pepi, Luci, Bom* including drag and homosexuality without even seeing this movie because Fanny is in it. Therefore by casting McNamara in this movie, Almodóvar takes advantage of McNamara's fame and simultaneously implies that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* will deliver queer content.

While Divine's look, as described previously in this chapter, is based on extreme exaggeration of feminine traits, Almodóvar's vision of drag with McNamara is based more on incongruity than semblance. For example, Fanny's outfit during the Bomitoni concert does not

attempt to disguise his masculine body but instead accentuates it. Fanny strides onto stage wearing an extremely low-cut sequined unitard that reveals his full chest (except for his nipples) and a portion of his upper-abdomen; all of which obviously belong to the body of a man. McNamara also sports a long, disheveled wig, sunglasses, and enormous earrings. This caricature of a drag queen is vastly different from the greatly exaggerated version of drag that we saw with Divine in *Pink Flamingos*. This naturally leads the audience to question why Almodóvar would choose to portray such a masculinized version of drag in this way. Part of the answer has to do with the fact that McNamara's performance is depicted as being on stage. As Acevedo-Muñoz notes, "For Almodóvar, the theatrical space is almost sacred, a place where paradoxically 'real' emotions can be glimpsed and where characters often front real feelings, despite the false expectations suggested by the stage" (17). The message that Almodóvar conveys, similarly to Waters, is that in truth McNamara is female despite his obviously masculine chest. Much akin to the portrayal of the transsexual in *Pink Flamingos*, Almodóvar's representation of a drag queen who exposes his lack of breasts proves that gender identity has very little to do with anatomy; a fact that McNamara later backs up in the film by referring to herself in the feminine in Spanish. Moreover, when the viewers see Fanny again in a subsequent scene of the film (during the scene with the postal employee), McNamara this time is wearing less revealing women's clothing and a blond wig. She announces that she is a, "frivolous woman with panache." She also is carrying a bag of the "best cosmetics" and illegal drugs. When the postman comes through the door to deliver a letter and to request a signature confirmation, McNamara proclaims that she loves a man in uniform and comically attempts to seduce him while screaming, "Don't leave, don't leave! I need you." It is important to note that in both scenes with Fanny as described previously, she alters her voice to make it sound more

effeminate. Thus Fanny is obviously characterized as a female despite the fact that her chest suggests otherwise.

The final scene from *Pepi, Luci, Bom* to be examined that similarly exemplifies queer characteristics involves the bearded lady and her peeping Tom husband. Cross-cut against the footage of the *Erecciones generales* scene, Almodóvar presents what D'Lugo calls a parody of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Pedro Almodóvar 25). During this sequence, a woman with a beard berates her husband or lover (whose full face we never see) because it has been forty days and forty nights since they last had sex. This timespan evokes religious overtones of Catholicism under Franco due to the multiple associations with Christ during his forty-day and forty-night fast in the wilderness, the forty days and nights of rain when God flooded the planet and Moses' presence on the mountain for the same amount of time (among others). As she continues, this hirsute woman explains that her partner told her from the start of their relationship that the fact that she has a beard does not bother him. This sideshow style, shocking, and carnivalesque image of a bearded lady who complains about her sexual needs not being met immediately confronts the viewers with a queer pitch on gender identity because a beard is normally not associated with femininity. As this story within a story progresses, we learn that the true source of her dismay at the lack of sexual gratification lies with his sexuality instead of hers. Almodóvar makes it clear that the bearded lady's significant other is only able to achieve an erection while spying on the nude bodies of the men from the *Erecciones generales* contest. This explains why he continues to watch the naked men during sexual intercourse with his girlfriend/wife. With this couple, therefore, Almodóvar presents a double binary sexual identity. The woman with a decidedly masculine anatomical feature is attractive to her lover who in turn is a repressed homosexual and voyeur. Thus the act of shaving the beard from her

face ironically makes the bearded woman less attractive to her paramour. The resulting impact on the audience implies that the traditional beliefs about gender and sexuality are false because this on-screen example proves that sexual attraction cannot be assumed to be only heterosexual in nature. Therefore, Almodóvar, like Waters, subverts the traditional beliefs of his culture that govern expectations about sex, sexuality, and beauty.

CHAPTER THREE

SHARED FILMIC INFLUENCES

Having now reviewed how the comprehension of postmodernism and queer theory contributes to the understanding of movies by Waters and Almodóvar in chapter two, a thorough analysis of their shared filmic influences further elucidates their works. Before commencing this endeavor, justifying what qualifies a work or creative artist to be considered influential on Waters and Almodóvar is vital. The list of movies, authors, and directors analyzed in this chapter was established by means of a five-step process. First was an assessment of interviews with Waters and Almodóvar and books written by Waters in order to glean a listing of works and/or authors that each director cites as being influential on his own films. Second was to augment this inventory by supplementing it with critical investigations of intertextual influences on Waters and Almodóvar. Predicated on the fact that the overriding objective of this dissertation is to analyze how Waters and Almodóvar inspire one another, the third phase of this procedure was to narrow the results of the first two stages to obtain a specific list of works that impacted the cinematic productions of both directors. Results of the first three stages reveal that the following directors, authors, or types of cinema inspired both Waters and Almodóvar: Tennessee Williams, Douglas Sirk, Luis Buñuel, Andy Warhol, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Kenneth Anger, Russ Meyer, Ingmar Bergman, Jean Genet, Federico Fellini, David Lynch, *Mildred Pierce* (1945), classical Hollywood works in general, and so-called B movies. Of primary importance in this chapter are the earlier works of Waters and Almodóvar because these

films present the most transgressive queer content. Hence, the fourth step of the five-stage process excluded motion pictures made by other directors that were released after *Pink Flamingos* in 1972 or *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* in 1980. The final task was to narrow the list to include only the most influential types of films and filmmakers thereby excluding Fassbinder, Anger, Genet, Fellini, Lynch, and Warhol.²⁵ The remainder of chapter three therefore focuses precisely on how Sirk, movies based on plays by Williams, Meyer, Buñuel, and the above listed categories of films impacted the early works of Waters and Almodóvar. A vitally important step toward reaching this objective is to analyze the influence of melodrama, camp, kitsch, and monster movies on Waters' and Almodóvar's oeuvre. To attain this goal, chapter three defines melodrama and illustrates how both directors recycle melodramatic codes within the films that it affected the most: *Female Trouble* (1974) and *Tacones lejanos* (1991). Building on the definitions of camp and kitsch given previously, this chapter investigates further the nature of these aesthetic principles and offers *Female Trouble* and *Tacones lejanos* as works that exemplify these paradigms. As we shall see, Meyer's depiction of the ferocious female protagonists of *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* (1966) gave Waters and Almodóvar a model from which they constructed their own dangerous divas including Divine from *Pink Flamingos*, Dawn Davenport from *Female Trouble*, Bom from *Pepi, Luci, Bom* and María Cardenal from *Matador* (1986). Next is an investigation of the influence that works by Tennessee Williams have on films by Waters and Almodóvar: namely *Female Trouble* and *Entre tinieblas* (1983). Buñuel's *Viridiana* (1961) exemplifies the theme of anticlericalism that inspired Waters and Almodóvar to indict Catholicism in *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), *Entre*

²⁵ Fassbinder, Anger, Genet, Fellini, Lynch and Warhol influenced Waters and Almodóvar to a lesser extent and will be examined in greater detail in future studies. They were eliminated from this study because the preponderance of the evidence available in interviews and in Waters' books favors Williams, Sirk, Meyer, and Buñuel as having a greater impact on their careers.

tinieblas, and *La mala educación* (2004). B horror cinema also swayed Waters and Almodóvar significantly. Therefore, the following analyses elucidate the B horror subgenre and reveal its manifestations in *Entre tinieblas*, *¡Átame!* (1990), *Female Trouble*, and *Multiple Maniacs*. After concluding this chapter, it will be clear that many of the intertextualities that connect the works of Waters and Almodóvar result from the fact that both directors share a similar filmic background.

Clarifying the terms classical Hollywood picture, B movie, and exploitation film is necessary before analyzing how other works, directors, authors, and other phenomena affected Waters' and Almodóvar's movies. To define what constitutes a group of classical Hollywood movies is polemical (Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 3).

Despite the controversy, Bordwell et al. posits it is possible to group the more than fifteen thousand examples of films made between 1915 and 1960 if one utilizes an approach based on devices, systems, and relations of systems (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 10). Devices consist of "technical elements" that "are characteristic of classical Hollywood cinema: three-point lighting, continuity editing, 'movie music,' centered framings, etc. Such devices are often what we think of as the 'Hollywood style' itself" (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 6).

Bordwell's second definitive characteristic of Hollywood cinema consists of:

a system of narrative logic, which depends upon story elements and causal relations and parallelisms among them; a system of cinematic time; and a system of cinematic space. A given device may work within any or all of these systems, depending on the functions that the system assigns to the device (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 6).

Concerning the third approach for identifying Hollywood films, Bordwell, et al. state that in the Hollywood style "the systems do not play equal roles: space and time are almost invariably made vehicles for narrative causality" (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 6). To put their observations

in more concise terms, a classical Hollywood film is an American movie produced between 1917 and 1960 that manifests a “distinct and homogeneous” style (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 3).²⁶ Both Waters and Almodóvar are avid fans of the classical Hollywood aesthetic which in turn is clearly evident in their films. Now that we have defined the term classical Hollywood, comprehending B films and exploitation cinema will be easier.

Another aspect of classical Hollywood cinema has to do with the B movie. According to Bordwell et al., B films have their origin within the classical Hollywood system (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 325). During this cinematic period, movie theaters would seek to attract audiences by offering double features. Typically the first movie screened was the more polished higher-budget “A” movie while the second or “B” film consisted of a lower-budget product (Bordwell et al. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 144). Since B pictures were associated with reduced production costs, supervision of these movies was less stringent than that of the A product (Bordwell et al. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 325). Moreover, studio executives tended to view B films as “the training ground for younger staff” (Bordwell et al. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 325). Bordwell et al. also comment that over time, some studios began to specialize in the production of nothing else but B-grade products (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 331). The world evoked by the B classical Hollywood product left an indelible impression on the early works of John Waters and Pedro Almodóvar as seen later in this chapter.

²⁶ Bordwell, et al. assert that 1917 was the date of the inception of the Hollywood style due to the similarity in “narrative, temporal, and spatial systems” of American films (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 10). They defend 1960 as the end date due to technical reasons such as color, formatting and sound (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 10). Additionally, they conclude that in 1960 a movement against the classical Hollywood style began that was “spearheaded by Ingmar Bergman, Akira Kurosawa, certain Italian directors, and the French New Wave” (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema* 10). This is not to say, however, that the classical Hollywood style ceased to exist after 1960. To this date, directors often rely upon classical Hollywood approaches to filmmaking.

Exploitation films, on the other hand, were low-budget films that existed outside of the Hollywood sphere. An exploitation movie is an American film produced and promoted free from the confines of the classical Hollywood industrial standard, focused on illicit topics because of their shock value, and designed to appeal to or to “exploit” a particular viewing audience. According to film scholar Eric Schaefer, local promoters known as “states-righters” marketed exploitation cinema to very specific groups of viewers (3). These niche audiences were thus “exploited” based on their desire to view content that typically focused on any taboo subject including “miscegenation, abortion, unwed motherhood, [and] venereal disease” (Schaefer 3).²⁷ Another expert in exploitation cinema, Randall Clark, points out that the forbidden topics covered in these films were precisely what appealed to the typically “young and unsophisticated theater patron” (4). Moreover, Clark likens exploitation movies to art cinema due to the fact that in both cases promoters targeted an “exclusive audience who might avoid mainstream Hollywood product” (4). Nevertheless, the major difference between art and exploitation movies is that exploitation films concentrate on sex and violence as a means to target or to “exploit” the audience’s attraction to such illicit topics (Clark 4). Although exploitation pictures exemplified one characteristic of B films in that they were also cheap to produce, they nonetheless did not enjoy the economic benefits of being paired with A products. Instead, exploitation films counted on shocking footage to enthrall their audience by means of “explicit scenes of sex, violence, drug use, and so forth” (Clark 5). Clark further theorizes that exploitation as a form of cinematic art truly began after 1954 because that was the year that such pictures began to be widely distributed (10). Notwithstanding Schaefer’s assertion that exploitation movies trace back to

²⁷ Schaefer identifies the so-called sexploitation films as a type of exploitation movie that focused almost exclusively on sexually explicit scenes (9). He also explains that during the 1960’s and 1970’s the word exploitation “was modified to indicate the subject that was being exploited, such as for ‘sexploitation’ and ‘blaxploitation’ movies” (4).

1919, both critics agree that by the 1980's, the production of this type of cinema ceased (Clark 5; Schaefer 11). . When evaluating the early films of Waters and Almodóvar, the influence of one particular exploitation film, Russ Meyer's *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* (1966) is obvious. Later in this chapter, an in-depth analysis of how *Faster Pussycat!* impacted movies by Waters and Almodóvar will illustrate the nature of the intertextualities between the works of all three directors.

Important to note before proceeding is that Almodóvar and Waters profess to borrowing material from classical Hollywood cinema. For example, in *Crackpot*, John Waters suggests to potential future directors, "It's safe and even advisable to imitate past Hollywood hits when you're trying to get studio backing, but never try and copy an independent if you're going that route" (142). When interviewed, Pedro Almodóvar also acknowledges revamping classical Hollywood movies when creating his films:

In Women on the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown, we have the scene of the dubbing of *Johnny Guitar*. I directly steal the dialogue of *Johnny Guitar* and make it the dialogue of my film. And when in *Matador* the two characters enter a theater and see *Duel in the Sun*, I use its image as a premonition for my protagonists (Cielo 100).

A filmography of classical Hollywood films that Almodóvar cites as being significant consists of: *All About Eve* (1950), *The Desperate Hours* (1955), *Duel in the Sun* (1946), *Easy Living* (1937), *Funny Face* (1957), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *Johnny Guitar* (1954), *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), *The Lost Weekend* (1945), *Mildred Pierce* (1945), *Touch of Evil* (1958), and films by Alfred Hitchcock (Willoquet-Maricondi 44-147; Strauss 22-222).²⁸ Obviously, the classical Hollywood style appealed to Waters and Almodóvar both and is evident within their movies as seen in this chapter.

²⁸ The relationship between Almodóvar's works and these movies merits further investigation in future studies.

Perhaps the classical Hollywood genre with the greatest impact on movies by Waters and Almodóvar is melodrama. Both directors venerate and emulate the works of Douglas Sirk as well as the maternal melodrama *Mildred Pierce* (1945). For example, in *Crackpot*, Waters states “Anybody who idolizes Douglas Sirk is A-OK in my book” (128). In *Shock Value*, Waters discusses meeting and revering Sirk, “Douglas Sirk, a true gentleman who made such great melodramas as *Written on the Wind* [1956] and *Magnificent Obsession* [1954] that I wanted to fall to my knees when introduced” (215). When interviewed about the melodramatic content of his films, Almodóvar similarly praises the works of Sirk, “On the other hand, I love melodramas, especially the outrageous ones. The Mexican Buñuel, for example, or those by Douglas Sirk, a marvelous director” (Alberich 28). During another interview with Frédéric Strauss, Almodóvar again mentions Sirk when queried about the Hollywood qualities of *Tacones lejanos* (1991):

Out of all the ways of treating a melodrama I chose the most luxurious. I could either have made an arid, pared-down melodrama like Cassavetes or one like Douglas Sirk in which the luxury and artifice are as expressive as the characters. And the latter was precisely the kind of Hollywood aesthetic I chose (116).

Though Waters does not mention the film *Mildred Pierce* as being an influence in *Role Models*, *Shock Value*, *Crackpot* or during interviews, it is clear that this movie definitely affected Waters’ *Female Trouble* (1974) as we will analyze later.²⁹ During a 1992 interview, Julian Schnabel asked Almodóvar about the connection between *Mildred Pierce* and *Tacones lejanos*. Almodóvar responded, “That’s a good reference, because *High Heels* is a big melodrama with a parallel film noir story” (93).³⁰ Obviously, the great melodramas of Sirk and the movie *Mildred*

²⁹ *Female Trouble* is not the only John Waters film that exemplifies the recycling of melodrama. *Desperate Living* (1977) and *Polyester* (1981) also clearly reflect melodrama’s influence. However, for purposes of this chapter, the discussion focuses on *Female Trouble* because it most closely conforms to melodramatic conventions.

³⁰ Indeed the scene during which Manuel is murdered by Rebeca is highly reminiscent of the opening sequence of *Mildred Pierce* in which Monty is killed by Veda. In both *Tacones lejanos* and *Mildred Pierce*, the audience is not

Pierce had a great influence on both Waters and Almodóvar and therefore require a more detailed explanation.

Melodramatic narratives, according to film critic Marcia Landy, “are driven by the experience of one crisis after another, crises involving severed familial ties, separation and loss, misrecognition of one’s place, person, and propriety” (14). The victims of melodrama are typically female, suffer from sexual and other identity crises, are the targets of abuse from those charged with their care, but nevertheless can be rescued by a, “gentle, understanding lover” (Landy 14). Ben Singer hypothesizes that melodrama is a, “highly variable but not utterly amorphous genre [that] features pathos, emotionalism, moral polarization, nonclassical narrative form, and graphic sensationalism” (58). Singer also states that melodrama focuses on, “heightened emotionalism and sentimentality” (37). A maternal melodrama is a melodramatic film that centers on a mother and the relationship with her children, “woman’s work and woman’s place” (Heung 21). More specifically, according to film scholar Lea Jacobs, a maternal melodrama:

derives from several late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century theatrical prototypes. Although there are many narrative variants, the basic plot concerns a mother who is suspected of adultery and expelled from her home, thereby becoming separated from her children (123).

Consequently, a viewer of a maternal melodrama can expect to see a mother figure who suffers from a conflictive relationship with her children who ultimately abandon her. Such is the case with *Mildred Pierce*, a film that features Mildred’s loss of both of her daughters; Kaye who dies prematurely from pneumonia, and Veda who cannot tolerate her mother’s middle-class standing

yet privy to footage of the murderess killing her prey. Instead, the moviegoer views an outside shot of a house obscured by the shadows of the early morning and then hears an off-screen pistol firing. Considering that Almodóvar mentions film noir and is contemporarily engaged in films that adhere to the film noir style, future studies of how this genre impacted his development are in order.

and for this reason forsakes Mildred. In Waters' world, both the Sirkian and the maternal melodrama become the object of pastiche in the film *Female Trouble*.³¹ As far as Almodóvar's films are concerned, Sirkian melodrama and the impact of *Mildred Pierce* are most prominent in his feature *Tacones lejanos*.

First, Waters' *Female Trouble* is a pastiche of both *Mildred Pierce* as well as Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959) because of Waters' focus on female protagonists. Like *Imitation* and *Mildred Pierce*, *Female Trouble*'s action centers on the life and tribulations of a female protagonist: Dawn Davenport. One vehicle Waters utilizes to maintain the female-centric perspective of this film is the title screens that inform the audience which stage of Dawn's life they are currently witnessing.³² According to these title screens, the divisions of Dawn's progression toward her ultimate execution include her youth in 1960, working years as a "career girl" from 1961 to 1967, "early criminal" period in 1968, "married life" in 1969, and 1974, five years after her marriage to Gator. As the title screens imply, the vast majority of the scenes in *Female Trouble* document Dawn during her transformation from being a rebellious teen to becoming a ruthless murderess. Therefore, these title screens function to keep the audience on

³¹ Important to note is that pastiche, as discussed in chapter two, is the imitation of "dead styles" (Jameson "Postmodernism" 115). *Female Trouble* fits Jameson's definition of a nostalgia film since both emulate "now dead forms, [that satisfy] a deep longing to experience them again" ("Postmodernism" 116). Graham Allen's definition of pastiche, as seen in chapter two, is also applicable to *Female Trouble* and *Tacones lejanos* (Allen 216).

³² The term "female-centric" denotes an overriding feminist stance manifested by portraying women as being heroines while simultaneously denigrating men. Female-centric also connotes that both directors feature more female characters than male characters in a positive manner. As Robt Pela observes, Waters tends to depict women as "supreme beings" while downplaying males as "spineless wimps" (127). Similarly, Almodóvar, when questioned about the preponderance of female protagonists in his works and the lack of well-developed male characters, replies "I write better for women than for men, who are dramatically boring to me. Additionally, I am better able to incorporate my talent for wackiness in female characters" (Francia 6). This matriarchal approach to the treatment of gender-based power differentials dominates the oeuvre of Waters and Almodóvar. Chapter four analyzes one such feminist character embodied in the figure of the "bad" girl. Future studies of the female-centric world evoked by both directors are important to elucidate the intertextualities between their works and to refute the hypotheses of critics who claim their movies are sexist.

track with Waters' female-centric perspective because they remind the viewer that *Female Trouble* is about Dawn's life. Moreover, the only sequences in which Dawn does not appear are still nonetheless designed to explain her activities. For example, Gator's conversation with his Aunt Ida (Edith Massey) concerning his heterosexuality functions as an ironic foreshadowing of his impending marriage to Dawn. In a parody of heteronormative beliefs about sexuality, Aunt Ida implores Gator to become a homosexual because, "I'd worry that you'd work in an office, have children, celebrate wedding anniversaries. The world of a heterosexual is a sick and boring life!" Aunt Ida's worst nightmare soon comes true when Gator does indeed marry Dawn and becomes a stepfather to Taffy. By persistently reminding the viewer that *Female Trouble* is actually about the lifetime and crimes of Dawn Davenport, Waters meets the melodramatic convention of concentrating on a female protagonist.

Waters is not the only director who recycles melodrama for the purposes of conveying a queer statement to the viewer. Pedro Almodóvar's *Tacones lejanos* embodies all of the definitive characteristics of a melodrama. Like *Female Trouble*, *Tacones lejanos* definitely focuses on female protagonists. As Acevedo-Muñoz correctly summarizes, *Tacones lejanos* is essentially "an amalgam of Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life*, [...] Ingmar Bergman's *Autumn Sonata* (1978), and Michael Curtiz's *Mildred Pierce* (1945) (135). The protagonist is Rebeca Giner (Victoria Abril), the daughter of the famous singer and actress Becky del Páramo (Marisa Paredes). Marsha Kinder also notes the predominance of female characters in *Tacones lejanos* and states that the focus of the film is primarily on "the maternal realm of melodrama" ("High Heels" 42). Furthermore, an analysis of the scenes of *Tacones lejanos* reveals that the overwhelming majority of footage presents images of Becky, Rebeca, or both of them together. In fact, the only time that the viewer does not see the mother or daughter directly on screen is

when Rebeca is transported to prison. This shot consists of footage of the paddy wagon taking Rebeca to jail. Although the spectator does not see Rebeca during this sequence, Almodóvar makes it clear that she is inside the armored car. Subsequently, even when not directly depicted, Rebeca and Becky are the driving force of *Tacones lejanos*. Almodóvar accordingly complies with one aspect of the melodramatic code by featuring female protagonists.

Moreover, *Female Trouble* also fits the bill for being a pastiche of the maternal melodramas *Mildred Pierce* and *Imitation* because Waters presents many scenes of excessive emotionalism that stem from mother-daughter conflict. Instead of mocking the hyperbolic sentiment and the mother-daughter strife motif manifested in these films, Waters pays them homage by satisfying his desire to venerate melodramatic conventions via pastiche as explained in Jameson's definition of a nostalgia film ("Postmodernism" 116). The chief source of contention between mother and daughter in all three films ensues because each single mother places her career goals over her childrearing obligations thereby violating the concept of women belonging exclusively to the domestic, private sphere of social interaction.³³ The notion of women belonging to a separate sphere of existence, according to Heidi M. Berggren, can be traced back to nineteenth century norms in which "men were supposed to work for pay outside the home, whereas women belonged in the home tending to children and keeping house" (313). Keeping women out of the workplace environment left an indelible impression on Western society that can still be noted contemporarily in lower wages, lesser status positions, and "jobs that were essentially consistent with 'women's work' of the past" (Berggren 313-320). As Berggren postulates, the "deeply conflicted view of gender roles [...] persisted for significantly

³³ Mildred Pierce is forced to work to satisfy her selfish daughter's incessant need to have the appearance of belonging to the upper class. Nevertheless, Veda is deeply ashamed that her mother works for a living and attempts to marry wealthy men (as well as to defraud one) in order to escape her humble origins. Although her reasons are not as self-centered as Lora Meredith's and Dawn Davenport's, the fact that Mildred works is the main source of contention between her and her daughter.

longer than commonly realized, influencing the family-leave debates leading up to the passage of the FMLA [Family Medical Leave Act] in 1993” (316). Subsequently, it should come as no surprise that a movie featuring a working mother would portray the conflict that arises when she transgresses the public sphere/private sphere norms. For example, Sirk’s Lora Meredith is punished with “the loss of her daughter’s love and respect” because of the “hollowness of her ambitions [and] for choosing success and renown over a happy home” (Heung 22).³⁴ Although Lora never suffers physical separation from her daughter to the degree described by Jacobs, in the end Lora is emotionally ostracized from Susie because of her relentless ambition to become a famous actress (Heung 22). Mildred Pierce too is doomed to fail as a mother because “worldly success for women usually necessitates failure as wives and mothers” (Heung 22). It is no surprise then that Veda is a selfish, elitist, and spoiled brat. This is true because Mildred places more emphasis on her restaurant business ventures (which serve to fund Veda’s limitless and costly appetite for feigning the lifestyle of the upper class) than on teaching her daughter to conform to patriarchal norms (Corber 15).³⁵ Taffy Davenport, like Susie and Veda, suffers from neglect because her mother’s vocation comes first in Dawn’s life. For example, Taffy complains throughout *Female Trouble* that Dawn fails to provide her with food, clothing, and the other fundamental needs of a child. The key difference between the mother-daughter conflict in *Imitation*, *Mildred Pierce*, and *Female Trouble* is that Waters chooses to embellish the emotionalism of melodrama by using hyperbolic parody in order to provoke his audience into questioning the validity of traditional feminine gender identity; hence Dawn’s overtly hostile

³⁴ Sirk’s characterization of Lora also meets Heung’s and Landy’s definitive characteristics of a melodramatic mother because she survives multiple crises during her rise to stardom including being a widow, poverty, unwanted advances of an unscrupulous agent, and the multiple rejections she had to endure as an aspiring actress (Heung 22; Landy 14).

³⁵ Lora’s motivation for success as an actress are entirely selfish whereas Mildred sacrifices her own happiness for Veda’s sake.

attitude toward Taffy which deconstructs the image of women being by default nurturing mothers. This also explains why Taffy is so outrageously recalcitrant and disrespectful towards her mother while Dawn is equally emotionally and physically abusive to Taffy. For example, Taffy persists in jumping rope while chanting over Dawn's protestations that such rhymes give her a headache. Taffy purposefully provokes her mother's ire, "Maybe I'll stop it and maybe I won't. Why can't I go to school? Why can't I have friends?" Dawn hatefully explains why she chooses to deny Taffy the basic rights to an education and social interaction with her peers:

You can't go to school because I said so. I won't have you nagging me for lunch money and whining for help on your homework. There is no need to know about the presidents, wars, numbers, or science. Just listen to me and you'll learn. And no little friends over here repeating rhymes and asking flippant questions and talking in those nagging baby voices. Can't you just sit there and look out into the air? Isn't that enough? Do you always have to badger me for attention?

Clearly, Waters is criticizing the normalizing role of formal education in a child's life in this scene. Consequently, Taffy is marginalized even more so than her mother because she is denied access to the only means available to her to be able to conform to hegemonic and homogenous standards of acceptable behavior at a very young age. Taffy then insists upon continuing with her jump-rope songs so Dawn chases Taffy to beat her with the "car aerial" while Taffy deliberately smashes various objects in the house. This behavior prompts Dawn to scream, "Now I'm gonna kill you!" at Taffy. The fact that Waters paints this scene humorously does not preclude his reliance on melodramatic conventions. Instead of satirizing maternal melodramas due to scorn for this genre, Waters pays them homage by recycling mother-daughter conflict with his version of an excessively emotional and pathological relationship between his protagonist and her daughter. The overall impact on the audience, however, differs in that Waters demonstrates that gender itself is a performative act since Dawn is played by a man. In reality, as Judith Butler describes, the audience is aware that Dawn is played by Divine "whose

impersonation of women implicitly suggests that gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real. Her/his performance destabilizes the very distinction between the natural and the artificial, depth and surface, inner and outer through which discourse about genders almost always operates” (*Gender Trouble* xxxi). Therefore, Waters successfully deconstructs the traditional definitions of gender by recycling a melodramatic plot and by casting a man in the leading lady’s role. This practice of casting a male to play a female’s part also represents the recycling of Elizabethan-era plays from which the very term drag (dressed as girl) originates. This in turn means that Elizabethan productions can be interpreted to be the foreground of demonstrating the performative nature of gender.

Similar to Waters, Almodóvar creates a melodrama with multiple scenes of hyperbolic emotionalism in *Tacones lejanos*. One example of such a scene takes place when Becky and Rebeca are on their way home from the Barajas airport in Madrid. Almodóvar makes it clear that Becky does not even know what Rebeca looks like since she did not recognize her daughter at the airport. This is due to the fact that Becky left Rebeca behind in Spain while she traveled to Mexico to advance her career. Even though they are mother and daughter and traveling together in the same car, they hardly know one another because Becky has not seen Rebeca for seventeen years. In fact, Rebeca even goes as far as to wear the earrings her mother bought for her when she was a child; a detail of which Becky is totally oblivious. When Rebeca reminds her of the earrings, Becky admonishes Rebeca for thinking that her mother would notice them. Along the route to Rebeca’s house, Becky asks her limousine driver to stop by the building in which she was born and spent her formative years. Becky then asks Rebeca if she still loves her mother. Becky expresses her fear that Rebeca hates her for abandoning her and breaking the promise she made to the ten-year old child that the two would be together forever once this next film was

completed in 1974. After Rebeca responds that she loved her mother even when she hated her, the two embrace and cry profusely. Another scene that features exaggerated sentimentality involves footage of Rebeca driving while returning from an errand to retrieve some photographs. Awash in sentiment due to the unresolved mother-daughter conflict and the fact that she killed her husband Manuel earlier that morning, Rebeca sobs while sad nondiegetic music intensifies the catharsis for the viewer. Another key moment that illustrates the heightened emotionality expected of a melodramatic film occurs when Rebeca confronts her mother about her forlorn upbringing. As a favor, Judge Domínguez permits Rebeca to visit with Becky in an empty courtroom.³⁶ During this pivotal sequence, Rebeca tells Becky that she has spent her entire life imitating her mother and that their relationship is similar to that of the mother and daughter portrayed in the film *Autumn Sonata* by Ingmar Bergman. Tensions run extremely high between the two because Rebeca blames Becky for the slaying of Manuel although Rebeca actually perpetrated this crime. Rebeca compares herself to the “mediocre daughter” from *Autumn Sonata* who is incapable of being as skilled as her mother in playing the piano and is painfully reminded of that fact by her mother’s “helpful” criticism of her performance.³⁷ Perhaps the scene that best exemplifies the exaggerated emotionalism of melodrama is when Becky sings Agustín Lara’s “Piensa en mí” (“Think of Me”) to her recently incarcerated daughter. Although physically separated because Becky sings the song live on stage and Rebeca listens to it via radio from her prison cell, Becky’s heart-wrenching performance distresses Rebeca to the point that

³⁶ Acevedo-Muñoz points out that the empty courtroom is “a variation of the performance motif” since it is a type of stage (145). Allinson calls this scene, “perfect melodrama, the iconography of the courtroom for exposing the truth, and the reference to *Autumn Sonata*, combining to produce one of Almodóvar’s most melodramatic scenes” (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 143). Important to note is that Judge Domínguez is secretly *Femme Letal*, Hugo the informant, and Eduardo the policeman. The very name *Femme Letal* (Lethal Woman) is a play on the term “femme fatale” and evinces the excesses of melodrama. Hugo alludes to the romanticism of Victor Hugo.

³⁷ Acevedo-Muñoz notes that as of 2007, this scene presents a “violent argument [that] is possibly Almodóvar’s most dramatically complex moment to date” (146).

she asks one of her cellmates to turn off the radio. Acevedo-Muñoz comments that during this scene, “They are both clearly heartbroken and in spite of their physical separation, there is a clear emotional connection between the two that thus far we have not witnessed. Becky breaks down on stage momentarily, and Rebeca equally breaks down in the communal jail cell, the two brought together by the song on the radio” (143). Kinder also notes the “romantic excesses of *melo-drama*” evoked by Becky’s song (“High Heels”⁴²). By emphasizing “melo,” Kinder highlights the etymology of the word melodrama which is a combination of “melos” (music) and drama (Mercer 7). This utilization of a highly charged emotional song accompanied by the heart-wrenching outpouring of affect by Becky and Rebeca is a quintessential paradigm of melodramatic conventions. Although Almodóvar uses melancholic music in many other scenes, “Piensa en mí” is by far the most cathartic and exemplifies how the combination of music and on-screen emoting by actors sparks an emotive reaction from the audience. Later in the movie, Femme Letal once more imitates Becky and performs this same song for Rebeca in order to win her over to his side. Letal knows that Becky (who confesses she goes to Letal’s shows when she misses her mother) cannot resist the number’s powerful allure.

In addition to a focus on female protagonists and excessive emotions, *Tacones lejanos* also epitomizes melodrama like *Mildred Pierce* and *Imitation of Life* due to the mother-daughter conflict motif.³⁸ Indeed the overriding narrative of this film revolves around the resolution of the strife caused by Becky’s negligent treatment of Rebeca and Rebeca’s desire to win the competition against her mother while the parallel story recounts the murder of Manuel. Like Lora Meredith, Mildred Pierce, and Dawn Davenport, Becky del Páramo places too much

³⁸ Almodóvar’s appropriation of the melodramatic conventions as described previously became such a trademark of his works that Cuban critic Cabrera Infante invented the term, “Almodrama” to describe female-focused melodramas (Smith *Desire* 190).

emphasis on her career and in doing so damages her daughter psychologically. Allinson agrees that the development of the plot of *Tacones lejanos* is concerned with “the reuniting of a long-absent mother with her daughter and their competition over men (one man in particular) and over professional success” (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 142). Critic Marvin D’Lugo concurs with Acevedo-Muñoz and Allinson concerning the melodramatic nature of *Tacones lejanos* and its similarities to *Mildred Pierce*, *Imitation of Life*, and *Autumn Sonata* (Pedro Almodóvar 77). Lucy Fischer states that *Tacones lejanos* is a virtual remake of *Imitation of Life* and that it also imitates *Mildred Pierce* because of the mother-daughter conflict motif (“Modernity” 202). Without the necessary maternal emotional support caused by Becky’s long absence from the life of her daughter, Rebeca (like Susie and Veda) becomes obsessed with her mother to the point that she emulates Becky both in fashion and career choice, finds solace in Femme Letal’s imitations of Becky’s past performances, and becomes romantically entangled with Becky’s former boyfriend, Manuel. As Rebeca explains to her mother, she attends Femme Letal’s shows to help ease the pain of missing Becky. Therefore, Femme Letal becomes a type of surrogate mother to Rebeca. This notion of an imitation sufficing when the “original” is not available invokes Baudrillard’s concept of simulacra. Like the replica of the Lascaux caves, Almodóvar’s depiction of a copy (Letal) substituting for an “original” (Becky) questions the very nature of authenticity (Baudrillard 18). Similar to the future generations of tourists who will never see the Lascaux cave system, the simulacrum supersedes the need for the “original” since Rebeca can connect with her mother via Letal’s performances (Baudrillard 18). By having Rebeca marry Manuel, Almodóvar introduces an oedipal conflict similar in style to that of *Mildred Pierce*, *Imitation of Life*, and *Female Trouble*. However, one key difference between Veda, Taffy, and Rebeca is that Rebeca murders two father figures: Alberto and Manuel.³⁹ As Acevedo-Muñoz astutely

³⁹ *Imitation*’s Susie differs from Veda, Taffy, and Rebeca in that she does not murder her mother’s love interest

observes, Rebeca's reluctant sexual encounter with Letal constitutes a "projected sexual relationship with her 'mother'" thereby consummating the oedipal narrative (140). In other words, on a symbolic level, Rebeca is like Oedipus because she kills a male parental figure and also has a sexual encounter with a person who is portraying her mother.⁴⁰ Kinder adds that Rebeca's marriage to Manuel allows her "to finally best her mother in their traditional female rivalry but also to replay the murderous oedipal drama that is represented in the film's prologue" ("High Heels"40). Toward the end of the film, Rebeca even openly declares to Becky that she was always the loser in this mother-daughter competition except for her one triumph: the fact that she married Manuel and Becky did not. Moreover, Almodóvar suggests that Rebeca's motive for murdering Manuel is because he made advances on Becky, thereby rendering the triumph over her mother null. As Fischer notes, Becky, much like Mildred Pierce, resolves the feud with her daughter by taking the blame for Manuel's death ("Modernity" 202).⁴¹ Despite this redeeming act on Becky's behalf, Almodóvar definitely depicts the relationship between Rebeca and Becky as conflicted due to incestuous sexual rivalry. Nevertheless, it is important to note that even when confessing to a murder that she did not commit purportedly to protect her daughter, Becky still manifests her characteristic selfishness. Unlike other melodramatic mothers like Mildred Pierce, Becky knows that she does not have long to live and will therefore escape any negative consequences of her false confession via death. Rebeca was therefore

(Steve).

⁴⁰ Acevedo-Muñoz observes "Rebeca's oedipal complex is straightforward in the movie, with the sole variation that she is a daughter (instead of a son) in love with her mother (140).

⁴¹ Kinder also compares Mildred Pierce to Becky del Páramo stating that both women assume the responsibility for their daughters' crimes ("High Heels"39).

correct when she told her mother that their rivalry yielded only one victory for her: namely her marriage to Manuel.

Another example of how the mother-daughter melodramatic convention comes into play in *Female Trouble* involves Dawn's emotional remarks about her purportedly good parenting skills. When Chiclet and Concetta come to visit, Taffy bites Chiclet. Dawn subsequently removes Taffy from the living room and binds Taffy to her bed. After returning from engaging in this sadistic form of punishment, Dawn bemoans the lack of obedience on Taffy's part:

That child's becoming a monster. You can't imagine. Whining and demanding attention and shrieking those same stupid jump-rope chants day and night. [...] I've done everything a mother can do. I've locked her in her room, I've beat her with the car aerial, nothing changes her! It's hard to be a loving mother! I give her free food, a bed, clean underpants. What does she expect? I can't beat her little baby butt all the time!

Obviously, confessing to subjecting Taffy to such blatant examples of child abuse and neglect in such a matter-of-fact manner ironically paints Dawn as an exaggeratedly monstrous mother instead of the "loving mother" she purports to be. The difference between what the audience knows to be the root of Taffy's bad behavior juxtaposed against Dawn's claims of being a nurturing mother functions to disarm any resistance to Waters' feminist agenda. By making the viewer laugh at the absurdity of Dawn expecting Taffy to behave well when the source of Taffy's insubordination is Dawn's obvious neglect and mistreatment of the child, Waters expertly deconstructs the idealized concept that all mothers are nurturing because it is a part of being a woman. Additionally, Waters successfully invokes both the real life and fictional tumultuous relationships between mother and child on the part of *Imitation's* Lana Turner and

Mildred Pierce's Joan Crawford and their fictional counterparts.⁴² Like Lora Meredith and Mildred Pierce, Dawn's lack of concern for her daughter's wellbeing can be attributed to Dawn's obsession with becoming successful. Dawn even goes so far as to murder her daughter, whom she later thanks for dying to further her career. Essential to note is that part of Waters' intention with this depiction of Dawn and Taffy's relationship is to debunk the post-World War II norms that women should abandon their jobs lest they damage their children psychologically; thereby introducing a feminist discourse into *Female Trouble* (Corber 15). Accordingly, Waters revamps these melodramatic devices in order to deconstruct the underpinning patriarchal attitudes about working women. From Waters' perspective, the very notion of a woman's job automatically precluding her ability to be a good mother is just as ludicrous as Dawn's expectation that abusing Taffy will force her to comport herself in a more acceptable manner. In this manner, Waters invokes the mother-daughter conflict motif of maternal melodramas in order to ridicule sexist norms about women in the workplace.

Though not as outrageous as *Female Trouble*'s treatment of abuse by a maternal figure on her daughter, very telling is the fact that Almodóvar makes it clear that Becky del Páramo neglected her daughter Becky for many years. In fact, it is obvious to the audience that Becky does not even recognize her own daughter at the airport. For example, when Rebeca walks up to Becky at the luggage carousel, Becky sees her, does not know who she is, and says, "Excuse

⁴² Film scholar Lucy Fischer explains that Sirk utilized the death of Turner's lover at the hands of her daughter, Cheryl Crane, to heighten the tension of the on-screen mother-daughter relationship (203). Although Joan Crawford did not become synonymous with being an abusive parent until after the publication of *Mommie Dearest* in 1978 and the subsequent film starring Faye Dunaway in 1981, biographer Jane Ellen Wayne recounts that she was widely known for being a strict disciplinarian with her two adopted children ("Three-Way Mirror" 23). For example, when a reporter informed Joan that her son Christopher had run away from home because he was not permitted to have chocolate syrup on his ice cream, Crawford responded, "Chocolate syrup indeed! You're lucky to have ice cream! I am going to tan his hide. He won't be able to sit down for a week. Chocolate syrup indeed!" (Wayne 203).

me.” It is only when Rebeca says, “Mom, it is I, Rebeca” that Becky realizes who Rebeca is. As mentioned previously, Becky is totally oblivious to the fact that Rebeca is wearing the same shell earrings that her mother purchased for her when she was a little girl. This failure to recognize her daughter after being in Mexico for seventeen years implies that Becky failed to keep in touch with Rebeca. Despite the distance and timespan, Becky at the very least could have exchanged photographs via mail to know what her offspring looked like. Instead, she treats Rebeca as if she were a complete stranger into whom she accidentally bumped. This implies that Becky is so self-centered that she never bothered to maintain any meaningful contact with her only child; hardly the nurturing disposition of a loving mother. As the film progresses, viewers learn of the repercussions of Becky’s negligence that manifest as multiple forms of mother-daughter conflict as we shall see.

Another commonality shared by *Imitation*, *Mildred Pierce*, and *Female Trouble* has to do with an oedipal love triangle that evolves from the mother and daughter’s shared love interest.⁴³ Like Susie’s attraction to her mother’s boyfriend Steve from *Imitation* and Veda’s obsession with her mother’s husband Monty from *Mildred Pierce*, Waters presents the theme of

⁴³ I describe this complex as oedipal instead of Electra because Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz and Marsha Kinder refer to it as oedipal in their studies of *Tacones lejanos* (Acevedo Muñoz 136; Kinder “High Heels” 39). As Kinder explains, “Apparently, René Girard’s thesis (which foregrounds the homoerotic backstory of the Oedipus myth) also applies to the oedipal heroine – namely, that it is the homoerotic desire to love/imitate/become the parent of the same sex (in this case, the mother) rather than the heterosexual desire for the other (in this case, the father) that really drives the oedipal narrative” (“High Heels” 40). Additionally, the Electra from classical Greek literature conspired against her mother and stepfather to avenge the murder of her father. Unlike Oedipus who killed his father and sired children with his mother, Electra did not develop any romantic interest in either parent. In its psychological sense, Jung’s much-disputed concept of the Electra complex is when a young girl becomes attracted to her father and sees her mother as a sexual rival because of penis envy (Scott 8). Butler clarifies that according to Freudian psychological theory, a daughter’s “renunciation for her desire for her father culminates in an identification with her mother and a turn to the child as a fetish or penis substitute” (*Undoing Gender* 152). Therefore, the oedipal complex is the more appropriate term to apply in the case of *Tacones lejanos* and *Female Trouble*.

offspring as a sexual rival in *Female Trouble*.⁴⁴ In *Female Trouble*, however, it is not the daughter who approaches the mother's paramour, but vice versa. In an inversion of the maternal melodramatic convention of the daughter seducing the mother's lover, Gator makes a pass at Taffy. "Hey Taffy baby, come suck your daddy's dick," he coos at her. Taffy refuses his request saying, "I wouldn't suck your lousy dick if I was suffocating and there was oxygen in your balls!" It is telling here that instead of reprimanding Gator for making such an obscene suggestion to her daughter, Dawn instead reproaches Taffy, "You pay some respect to your mother, Miss Taffy. And if I catch you spying and nosing around here one more time, I'm going to put you in the mental hospital." Dawn clearly views Taffy's refusal to comply with the incestuous desires of Gator to be a challenge to Dawn's maternal authority. Gator defends Taffy's noncompliance by stating that she cannot help herself because she is "retarded," which Taffy vehemently denies. Dawn, again siding with Gator, states, "Oh yes you are Taffy. I had you tested when you were a little girl. A staff of doctors examined you, and maybe the reason you don't remember is that they told me you are most definitely retarded." When Taffy refutes that such testing ever took place, Dawn is relentless:

I'm afraid it's the truth. I don't like it any better than you. To think that my genes were polluted by your birth is not a pleasant thought [...] Oh it's true. Look in the mirror Taffy. For fourteen, you don't look so good. It's because you've been such a brat all your life that now all that brattishness is showing on your face, the face of a retarded brat.

Subsequently, Taffy is the victim of neglect, verbal abuse, and eventually murder; all orchestrated by her rival who is also her mother. Very important to note is that Gator is not the

⁴⁴ Heung posits "As in *Mildred Pierce*, Susie's indictment of her mother takes the form of sexual rivalry [...] so Susie falls in love with Steve. The perversity of her choice of a love object implies that Lora's emotional abandonment of her has created this monstrous inversion roles and affections" (23). Corber further clarifies that in *Mildred Pierce*, "Monty realizes that Veda has been using him to make her mother jealous, and he partially redeems himself by uttering Mildred's name as he dies: he continues to love Mildred and regrets having betrayed her. In this way, the movie emphasizes Veda's sexually treacherous nature" (18).

only paternal figure who attempts to entice Taffy into having sex. Indeed, Taffy's biological father Earl, when beseeched by Taffy for emotional and financial support, asks, "Can you fuck as good as your mother?" then exposes his penis at her while stating, "Daddy Earl's got a little present for you." Taffy hence consummates the oedipal narrative by assassinating her father instead of giving in to his profane suggestions. Clearly in *Female Trouble* Waters recycles the melodramatic convention of the mother-daughter love triangle. His intention in doing so, however, is to nullify the social norm that heterosexuality is normal; not to mock melodrama (a genre Waters greatly admires as noted previously) itself. What Waters critiques via recycled melodramatic discourse include the traditional beliefs about the "sacred" family unit, gender identity, and sexuality. Although Waters elects not to have Taffy transgress the incest taboo aspect of the oedipal scenario, she is clearly portrayed as being the sexual rival of her mother much in the same manner as *Imitation's* Susie. Important to note is that like Taffy, Susie never has sex with Steve (Lora's love interest) even though she is in love with him and plans to wed him. Taffy's complete rejection of the sexual advances of her stepfather and father stem from Waters' humorous inversion of Susie's desire for her mother's paramour. Instead of punishing Dawn for violating the public and private sphere norms by being a working mother whose daughter falls in love with her mother's lover, Waters reverses the roles of the daughter as sexually aggressive and father figures as sexually passive. Consequently, Waters depicts heterosexual men as being sexually deviant since it is they who wish to engage in incest and not the daughter figure as is the case with Susie from *Imitation* and Veda from *Mildred Pierce*. Waters' message to the audience with this inversion of oedipal desire characterizes heteronormative definitions of sexuality as being abnormal while simultaneously liberating the

working mother from the melodramatic consequences of transgressing society's separate spheres of acceptable female comportment as described by Berggren.

Oedipal enmity, however, is not the only source of the mother-daughter discord between Becky and Rebeca. Professional jealousy sparks competition between Rebeca and Becky as well. Rebeca also is a career-minded woman whose chosen livelihood is similar to Becky's. Although Rebeca is a television news anchorwoman and Becky a singer and actress, both women perform for public audiences in order to make a living. Kinder observes the similarities in Rebeca's and Becky's vocations:

The power of the audio fetish is also strengthened by giving both daughter and mother oracular professions that rely on their voice [...] Both use the airwaves, ordinarily controlled by the patriarchy, to address their passion to a privileged female listener ("High Heels" 41).

By stating that public media is "ordinarily controlled by the patriarchy" Kinder refers to the traditional divisions of a woman's life into being relegated to the private sphere of existence as described by Berggren's hypothesis that women in the workplace suffered from sexual discrimination well beyond the nineteenth century (316). Furthermore, considering the legacy of the Franco regime's systematic relegation of women to domestic endeavors via the *Sección Femenina*, Kinder's theory that Becky and Rebeca transgress patriarchal norms by having careers dedicated to broadcasted public performances is correct (Morcillo-Gómez 61). Moreover, in their 2008 investigation of sexism as it impacts advertising in Spain, María Teresa García Nieto and Carlos Lema Devesa conclude that the overwhelming representation of women in Spanish commercials places them in the roles of housewives, secretaries, nurses, teachers, and other traditionally "feminine" vocations (27-31). When also taking into account the fact that women represent only 10% of upper management positions in the advertising industry in Spain, there

can be little doubt that access to the “airwaves” described by Kinder largely remains in the hands of the patriarchy (Kinder “High Heels” 41; García Nieto 19). Furthermore, Almodóvar makes the occupational competition between mother and daughter obvious by showing the moviegoer two scenes in which Becky watches Rebeca deliver the news. During the first sequence, Becky’s reaction to Rebeca’s on-camera performance is very revealing. With her hair pulled back by a headband and cold cream on her face, Becky looks eerily like Faye Dunaway’s depiction of Joan Crawford from the infamous “no wire hangers” scene of the biographical film *Mommie Dearest* (1981).⁴⁵ In this scene of *Mommie Dearest*, the young Christina Crawford suffers from devastating mental and physical abuse perpetrated by Joan who is infuriated that her daughter hangs expensive garments on clothes hangers made of metallic wire. Almodóvar provokes the audience to associate Becky with a real-life notoriously bad mother, Joan Crawford by portraying Becky in this way. When interviewed about the omnipresence of the archetypal bad mother in his films including *Tacones lejanos*, Almodóvar responds, “Yes, she does recur in my work. The character was born out of my observation of a certain type of Spanish mother. She is often frustrated and embittered because her husband has either disappointed her or left her and so she becomes cruel to her child [...] The mother in *High Heels* is selfish, a pleasure-seeker and a bad mother, but she has other traits too and, in the end, even expresses love” (Strauss 26). Rebeca, as she later reveals to Becky, loses her composure and cannot prevent herself from laughing inappropriately during the broadcast because she senses that her mother is watching

⁴⁵ Kinder notes the “parallels to Hollywood’s celebrity versions of that genre [the maternal melodrama] like *Mommie Dearest* and *Postcards from the Edge*, and many implicit allusions to classical mother/daughter weepies like *Mildred Pierce* and *Stella Dallas* and to Hitchcock’s latent lesbian thrillers *Marnie* and *Rebecca* (particularly through the doubling of the name for the mother and daughter)” (“High Heels” 43). Fischer likens Marisa Paredes (Becky) to Joan Crawford which in turn evokes the movie *Mommie Dearest* (“Modernity” 204). Almodóvar, when interviewed about the Hollywood content of *Tacones lejanos*, mentions that his movie “alludes both to the films made by Lana Turner and Joan Crawford and to their lives, to the relationship between Lana Turner, whose lover was killed by her daughter, and to the tumultuous relationship between Joan Crawford and her daughter Christina” (Strauss 117).

her. Instead of sympathizing for her daughter (who cannot see or hear her mother), Becky instead “tsks” her disdain for such an awful enactment and tells her personal assistant that it would have been better to have never seen it. Although Becky later denies watching the news in order to avoid hurting Rebeca’s feelings, the spectator knows the truth: the monstrous Becky clearly outmatches her daughter. In the next scene during which Becky watches Rebeca on the news, Becky is hardly approving of her daughter’s skills as an interlocutor. Instead, she asks her secretary how Rebeca could possibly return to work so soon after the traumatic events surrounding the discovery of Manuel’s body and being interrogated by Judge Domínguez. When Rebeca announces that she knows who committed the crime of murdering Manuel, Almodóvar cuts to a medium close up of Becky’s horrified facial expression. The audience then hears Becky’s off-screen scream immediately after Rebeca states that it was she who killed Manuel. Presumably, Becky did not know it was her daughter who slayed Manuel. However, the look of horror on Becky’s face just moments before Rebeca’s confession implies that Becky suspected the truth all along. As in many other Almodóvar films in which the stage becomes sacred space for the characters to express their true and innermost guarded emotions, Becky as the spectator of her daughter’s on-camera confession reacts precisely how Rebeca wants (Acevedo-Muñoz 17). Since Rebeca later denies that she assassinated Manuel, claims that making a false confession was her only way to gain revenge against her mother, and blames Becky for the crime, it becomes clear that Rebeca purports to be guilty only because she wants to upstage her mother. During the previously described empty courtroom scene, Rebeca reveals to Becky that she feels inferior to her mother, like the second-rate daughter from *Autumn Sonata* whose prowess with the piano can never be on par with her mother’s:

Have you seen *Autumn Sonata*? It is the story of a famous pianist who has a mediocre daughter. A story like ours. One day the mother visits the daughter

who is now married and also plays the piano. After eating, the mother asks the daughter to play the piano for her. The daughter at first refuses but at the mother's insistence she nervously agrees to play a prelude by Chopin. When the daughter has finished playing, the mother tells the daughter that she played well to be polite. But she still cannot resist sitting at the piano with her daughter to give her pointers on improving her performance. And there is nothing more humiliating for the daughter than to listen to those pointers because the mother is saying you are worthless! How dare you put your ordinary fingers over such a sublime melody! How can you believe that my sensibility can stand it? How dare you imitate just one of my gestures at the piano? If you rehearsed for millions of years you could never be a faint shadow of what I am. Your homage for me is an insult! (Acevedo-Muñoz 146).

When Becky replies that she does not understand what Rebeca means by comparing herself to the pianist's daughter, Rebeca responds, "I've spent my life imitating you. Ever since we separated I've tried to imitate you in everything without any success. But I did win only once, with Manuel." Kinder states, "Although the genres hybridized in *Tacones lejanos* are limited primarily to the maternal realm of melodrama, the film's intertextuality is pointedly international" ("High Heels" 42). When Becky remarks that they both have lost Manuel now, Rebeca exclaims, "Yes, but it was I who married Manuel and not you! But you had to prove that you could still take him from me if you wanted to. I already knew that you could, but you had to demonstrate it to me!" In this highly cathartic scene, Rebeca makes it obvious that the multifaceted conflict between Becky and her has resulted in Rebeca's utter defeat as both performer and wife; a fact made clear by Manuel's prior perverse suggestions that he and Becky have another fling since, in his opinion, they still have a pending unresolved love affair. Moreover, this dialogue between mother and daughter reinforces the concept that Becky's "crippling narcissism" is the foundation of Rebeca's professional and amorous jealousy of her mother (Acevedo-Muñoz 136). This observation of Acevedo-Muñoz about Becky's egocentric nature is correct. Almodóvar makes this clear to viewers in several different scenes including

when Becky does not recognize Rebeca at the airport, Becky's rapt attention at Femme Letal's imitation of her during the "Un año de amor" routine, and Becky's disdainful attitude toward her daughter's performance on the news. Very important to notice is that Becky slaps her daughter after Rebeca confesses to killing Alberto by swapping his medications. Rebeca's fights back by attacking her mother psychologically, "You promised me that we'd be together, that we'd never separate again, but you didn't fulfill your promise. And this is something that I think I will never forgive you for." Subsequently, Rebeca leaves her mother alone in the courtroom to contemplate the fact that Becky's negligence and selfish need to be more talented than her daughter have warped the young child who so desperately wanted to emulate her mother into an incestuous murderess.

Now that we have analyzed how Waters and Almodóvar recycle melodramatic conventions, it is essential to investigate how they rely upon camp and kitsch to convey a queer statement to their audiences.⁴⁶ When considering that the lead role of *Female Trouble* is played by a drag queen, there is doubtlessly a strong connection between the movies' overall meaning and camp.⁴⁷ Additionally, Waters draws upon the camp aesthetic by utilizing a humorous tone and exaggeration of emotionalism. His overriding objective is to undermine traditional norms by representing inversions. Waters assumes a ludic attitude toward his subject matter: namely patriarchal traditions concerning gender identity, sexuality, and women's role in the domestic sphere and in the workplace. When interviewed by Scott MacDonald in 1981 about his thoughts regarding the reactions of moviegoers to his films, Waters responds, "I always try to confuse the audience by making them laugh at things they feel unsafe laughing at" (231). After MacDonald

⁴⁶ Chapter two discusses the meaning of camp and kitsch, how they differ, and what they share in common.

⁴⁷ Refer to chapter two for a discussion of how camp and drag are related.

comments about how unforgettable Waters' films are, Waters' reply further proves that he utilizes a camp aesthetic about serious subjects, "I make films to make people laugh. I hope with my sense of humor that I can get other people to respond to them [his films]" (235). Upon pressing Waters further about his agenda for creating *Female Trouble*, Waters admits the film does have a message, but that its statement is greatly exaggerated; subsequently aligning that message that much more with camp (236). Waters also remarks that "All of my films are based on reversals- good is bad; ugly is beautiful. I always try to cast heterosexual people as homosexuals and homosexuals as heterosexuals to further confuse people, because I think confusion is funny" (MacDonald 236). *Female Trouble* definitely represents a reversal as Waters describes not only in its treatment of norms governing beauty but also in how it subverts established norms governing gender identity (as described in chapter two). By dethroning the serious, exaggerating the film's statement, casting a drag queen as the lead character of a maternal melodrama, and by utilizing humor to disarm the audience's potential rejection of his message, Waters masterfully employs camp in order to communicate a distinctly queer perspective to the viewer.

Although *Tacones lejanos* is overall a much less comedic film than *Female Trouble*, Almodóvar also utilizes the camp sensibility to queer his melodramatic work. This is not to say, however, that the use of camp automatically makes a film exclusively ludic in nature. On the contrary, as Alberto Mira hypothesizes about Almodóvar's melodramatic oeuvre, "Camp did not have simply to be frivolous. Resistance and pleasure continue therein and now have gained depth" (191). Such is the case with *Tacones lejanos* in that this movie draws upon the camp aesthetic without trivializing the overall dramatic tone. Critical to comprehending the camp aesthetic evoked by Almodóvar in this movie is an analysis of the multifaceted roles of the cross-

dressing protagonist Eduardo. Crucial to note is that Almodóvar constructs Eduardo's identity as a heterosexual undercover policeman who invents three distinct personas in order to solve crimes: namely Femme Letal, Judge Domínguez, and the informant Hugo. Eduardo assumes the queerest of these identities, Femme Letal, in order to solve the homicide of a *travestí*. Despite the temptation to translate *travestí* as "transvestite" since it appears to be a cognate, the Spanish gay subculture utilizes this term in a different context than that of the United States. As indicated in chapter two, the U.S. definition of a transvestite is a person who cross-dresses for private sexual gratification (Ross 162). While *travestí* in Spain can refer to a transvestite in its U.S. sense, this word can also denote a female impersonator who performs in a variety show (Rodríguez González 455). According to Spanish sociologist Oscar Guasch, a *travestí* can also refer to a man who cross-dresses, typically self-identifies as heterosexual, and bases his sexual attractiveness on the ambiguity of whether or not he has had sexual reassignment surgery (103).⁴⁸ Although the performativity aspect of a *travestí* may seem to make this term synonymous with the English phrase "drag queen," queer theorist Gema Pérez-Sánchez points out that "the Spanish import of the English drag queen into *draga* did not exist until the 1990's [...] In other words, not all *travestidos* identified as gay"(95).⁴⁹ Pérez-Sánchez further explains that *travestí* "refers mostly to a man who cross-dresses as a woman, keeps his birth genitalia, and may or may not be taking hormones" (96). Before the terms *travestí* and drag queen became widely recognized in Spanish culture, the word *transformista* was used to describe:

an artist who changes outfits and adopts mannerisms of the opposite sex in a variety show. In this manner, he or she 'transforms' into another person, a

⁴⁸ Guasch states that a *travestí* is not a transsexual (103).

⁴⁹ Pérez-Sánchez's study of queer terminology in the Spanish language centers on usage in Madrid and Barcelona.

character that he or she imitates, or into a personage of his or her own creation. Unlike a drag queen, a *transformista* is not necessarily homosexual (Rodríguez González 449).

Almodóvar, who certainly knew the subtle nuances of all of these terms, does not have his characters refer to cross-dressed performers as *travestís* haphazardly. Instead, his purpose in portraying a heterosexual *travestí* is to debunk the stereotype that men who dress as women are homosexual by default. The sexual orientation of the murder victim is purposefully impossible to deduce from the application of the label *travestí*. In the case of *Femme Letal*, Almodóvar makes it clear that Letal is heterosexual despite the fact that he enacts two performances while cross-dressed.⁵⁰ As Allinson affirms, “The only truly developed transvestite in Almodóvar’s films – Letal in *High Heels* – is heterosexual, making the point that transvestism is not directly connected to homosexuality” (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 90). Though Allinson does not distinguish between *travestí* and transvestite, his observation about Eduardo’s sexual orientation is nonetheless accurate.⁵¹ Eduardo makes his heterosexuality blatantly clear by making love to Rebeca and by referring to himself using the masculine when he first meets Manuel. Unlike Fanny McNamara in *Pepi, Luci, Bom* who describes herself using feminine adjectives, Letal elects not to put on the feminine gender identity and chooses the masculine *encantado* instead of the feminine *encantada* when introduced to Manuel.⁵² After Manuel stares at Letal’s crotch and Letal notices Manuel’s pistol, Manuel demands to know if the name Letal is a masculine or feminine name; in this manner trying to determine if Letal is homosexual (a drag queen) or

⁵⁰ In this chapter, *Femme Letal* is referred to in the masculine because he identifies himself as such during the movie.

⁵¹ Kinder too labels Letal’s identity as being a female impersonator (and not a drag queen) who impersonates Becky and impregnates Rebeca (“High Heels” 41).

⁵² Spanish drag queens almost invariably refer to themselves using feminine adjectives (Rodríguez González 128).

heterosexual (a *travestí*). Letal's icy demeanor toward Manuel and his response to Manuel's question about the gender of his name imply that Letal views himself as Manuel's sexual rival, "It depends. For you, I am a man." Clearly Eduardo/Letal is jealous of the fact that Manuel is Rebeca's husband; a role that he covets and later in the film expresses interest in occupying in Rebeca's life after learning that she is pregnant with his child. As Letal, Eduardo introduces an androgynous aspect to his characterization as a police officer which, as Kinder explains, depicts the police as "tenderhearted souls who identify those marginalized under patriarchy. In this way, Almodóvar subverts dominant ideology by realigning the center with the marginal" ("High Heels" 41). In Almodóvar's world, any prejudices about gender identity and sexual orientation (such as Manuel expresses vehemently) are likely to be false since the two phenomena are not mutually exclusive. Almodóvar in this manner portrays a cross-dressing policeman who performs what could be confused with drag shows in order to destabilize homophobic stereotypes about men who dress in women's clothing. Kinder posits that *Tacones lejanos* "provides a new erotic fantasy for empowering a strategic alliance among straight women, lesbians, gay men, transvestites, transsexuals, and all other forms of non-patriarchal androgynes" (44). Almodóvar therefore encourages the audience to side with Letal and the other cross-dressed performers and to reject Manuel and Becky's presumption that the world of *travestís* is "sordid." Instead, Almodóvar portrays *travestismo* as an endearingly amusing art form that requires great technical skill.

Moreover, the Judge Domínguez persona that Eduardo invents also contributes to the destabilization of heteronormative values while evoking the camp aesthetic. As yet another mask worn by Eduardo, Judge Domínguez incarnates Almodóvar's message that identity itself is a construction of the individual and not a role assigned by hegemonic sociological definitions.

Like the alter ego Letal, Judge Domínguez functions “to embody the fluidity of social relations and, more importantly, of gender just as the film appears to flow from melodrama to thriller to Almodóvarian comedy” (D’Lugo *Pedro Almodóvar* 79). Taking D’Lugo’s observation a step further reveals that Almodóvar portrays Eduardo’s other identities as being disguises that can be put on when necessary and discarded when not applicable. Film scholar Deborah Shaw observes that the persona of Judge Domínguez:

is represented to be as much an impersonation as Letal. This is seen most clearly in the way the audience is shown him carefully putting on a false beard and moustache. As Letal was able to apply the trappings of femininity through make-up and false breasts, Judge Domínguez puts on his costume to enact his masculinity, a suit and a (fake-looking) beard (60).

The net impact of such an obviously false beard fooling other characters into believing that Eduardo is another person demonstrates the artificiality and exaggeration associated with camp as per Sontag’s definitive characteristics (275). With the characterization of this identity of Eduardo, Almodóvar also assumes a ludic stance toward his subject matter; thus allowing him to be “frivolous about the serious” (Sontag 288). The seriousness of Manuel’s murder at the hands of Rebeca is juxtaposed against this humorous depiction of a falsified legal authority figure whom the viewer knows to be *Femme Letal*. This camp approach to the construction of Judge Domínguez’s persona encourages the audience to side with him and Rebeca. Presumably, the identity of Judge Domínguez is Eduardo’s “true” alter ego since he is disguised this way when interacting with his mother. On the other hand, Eduardo makes it clear at the end of the film that Judge Domínguez is but a role he plays in order to solve crimes. Furthermore, Domínguez’s role in the narrative is to manipulate the legal system in Rebeca’s favor so that she is not punished for murdering Alberto and Manuel. Although Kinder describes the Judge as being in a maternal role

since he is very nurturing and protective of Rebeca “even when he discovers that she deliberately murdered her husband and father,” this stance erroneously assumes that such a disposition is innate to all mothers and absent from fathers (“High Heels” 41). Nevertheless, to state that Eduardo takes on a parental role regarding Rebeca is correct due to the fact that his identity as Letal serves a substitute for Becky. Rather than symbolizing the patriarchy, Judge Domínguez, “represents Almodóvar’s law, that is, the law belonging to the moral system of the film and not that of the state” (Shaw 60). The moral system of *Tacones lejanos* is not based on traditional definitions of governmental procedures for applying sanctions against those who transgress codified norms. Instead, Almodóvar arranges the narrative so that each character’s fate is what he feels is just and moral. In an interview with Frédéric Strauss, Almodóvar reflects on this very concept of how he depicts legal authority in his films, “There are so many links between transgression and the law that I try to negate the existence of the law. I’m constantly struggling to exclude the law from my films” (18). Instead of omitting the law from this film, Almodóvar rewrites it as poetic justice in action; meting out what he believes to be the most fitting fate for each of his protagonists. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Judge Domínguez wields his considerable state-sanctioned authority not to punish Rebeca for murder, but instead to ensure that her suffering end. Indeed Judge Domínguez facilitates not only Rebeca’s release from prison (because she is pregnant with his child), but also makes possible the resolution of the discord between Rebeca and Becky by placing them together in the empty courtroom (Shaw 61). Furthermore, by choosing to believe Becky’s false deathbed confession of culpability for Manuel’s death (although Domínguez has evidence that points to Rebeca), Domínguez seals the breach between mother and daughter; thereby ending the decades of turmoil for Rebeca.

Eduardo's third undercover identity, Hugo the informant, plays a role in *Tacones lejanos* that is significant to the film's overall queer pitch that stems from the reliance upon camp. As Hugo, Eduardo becomes romantically involved with Paula, a social worker who assists in the rehabilitation of female prisoners. As with the women's clothing that Eduardo wears to become Letal and the fake beard and moustache of Judge Domínguez, Hugo too has a symbolic uniform which this time takes the form of a red leather jacket. To introduce this new mask Eduardo puts on and takes off to conceal this identity from Rebeca and the other characters, Almodóvar has the employee at the photo shop mix up Rebeca's and Paula's pictures; thereby allowing Rebeca (and the audience) the opportunity to see Eduardo/Letal/Judge Domínguez in yet another one of his disguises. The shots of Hugo's images in the photographs show that he is wearing a shiny red leather coat. Very revealing is that Rebeca tells Paula she recognizes Hugo's face; as well she should since she has had ample opportunity to study Letal's and Judge Domínguez's countenance. When Paula reveals that the pictures are of Hugo, her ex-boyfriend who abandoned her several months ago, Rebeca denies knowing Hugo and his whereabouts. For the spectator, Hugo is Eduardo's most penetrable disguise since the photograph is obviously of Miguel Bosé. As is the case with Letal and Judge Domínguez, Hugo too evokes the artificiality associated with camp. Moreover, since the audience now knows that Letal and Hugo are one in the same, Almodóvar employs the humor of the dramatic irony that stems from Rebeca's inability to recognize him. This ludic approach allows Almodóvar to play the audience's knowledge against Rebeca's to enhance the tension. Additionally, Almodóvar ascribes drag-like characteristics to the red leather jacket; thereby drawing once more upon the camp aesthetic. In a later scene, right after the musical number in the prison yard, Paula confronts an unidentified female prisoner who is sporting Hugo's accouterment. Paula learns

from her that Hugo, now alleged to be dead, was a police informant who apprehended many drug dealers. Paula refuses to believe that Hugo could have been a snitch and tells Rebeca that Hugo was a heroin addict whom she told to leave one day because she could no longer “tolerate his lies.” During this sequence, Almodóvar utilizes Hugo’s coat as a symbol of his masculinity. This explains why the female inmate who dons the highly fetishized garment assumes a very tough demeanor. From the mannish way she lights and holds her cigarette to her aggressive posturing with Paula, this nameless incarcerated drug dealer definitely evinces virility and recalls Butler’s observation that gender, “is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (*Gender Trouble* 191). In other words, being masculine is possible for a woman because masculinity is a construct and not an inherit trait. Moreover, Almodóvar hints that the fight between the lady in the red jacket and the leader of the prisoners (played by the famous transsexual Bibi Andersen) takes place because of jealous rage over a girlfriend, thereby characterizing both women as homosexual. However butch she may be, the woman who wears Hugo’s jacket is clearly no match for the character played by Andersen, who wins the fight by pushing her and another prisoner to the ground. For the viewer familiar with Andersen, the message Almodóvar conveys with the usage of the red leather coat and the subsequent triumph of a transsexual over a character who dons a masculinized image is clear. In Almodóvar’s matriarchal world, femininity trumps masculinity in the form of a transsexual winning a physical altercation against a butch lesbian.

Returning to the definitive characteristics of camp presented in chapter two, Almodóvar’s portrayal of a character who disguises himself as a *travestí*, judge, police inspector, and informant definitely employs incongruity, theatricality, humor, a love of the unnatural, artifice, and exaggeration. First is the camp aesthetic evoked by *Femme Letal*. Although

Eduardo explains to Rebeca that he becomes a *travestí* only to solve a murder, Letal's imitations of Becky del Páramo are flawlessly executed and whimsical because of his exaggerated wardrobe, gesticulations, and the presence of his fellow performers. An example of the hyperbolism of Letal's characterization is apparent in his first number. During this performance, Letal sports a huge blond wig, enormous earrings, scarlet gloves, blouse, and sequined miniskirt as well as precariously high platform shoes. Letal's makeup, though not nearly as ostentatious as Divine's, is definitely over the top because of the caked-on foundation, huge false eyelashes, globs of shiny eye shadow, black eyebrows, and ruby lips.⁵³ His gestures, which are executed perfectly, are endearingly amusing and are depicted as being duplications of Becky's performance of "*Un año de amor*." While doubtlessly this embellishment of feminine traits is related to drag, it is also representative of camp's "relish for the exaggeration of sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms" (Sontag 279). The entire show is a tribute to Becky which definitely sustains her egocentrism (Acevedo-Muñoz 139). Becky, Rebeca, and the off-stage drag queens (who embolden Letal by lip-synching the lyrics and pantomiming the gesticulations) are clearly enraptured by Letal's overwrought act. D'Lugo asserts that these drag performers idolize Letal and imitate his gestures to flatter him (*Pedro Almodóvar* 79). Nevertheless, since Becky is present in the Villarosa club and is famous for the song "*Un año*," the film suggests that they in fact are emulating Becky herself since Letal's act reproduces Becky's. As Fischer notes:

Beyond remaking a man as a woman, *High Heels*' postmodernist remake casts Letal as counterfeiting the theatrical persona of Becky. It is *her* appearance he conjures at the cabaret, and *her* signature musical number that he performs. [...] Specifically, it [the plot] invokes the gay camp mimicry of such figures as Judy Garland, Barbara Streisand, Cher, Mae West, Joan Crawford, and Lana Turner"

⁵³ During *Femme Letal*'s second performance, he once more dons a blond wig that is much larger than the first, big earrings, similar makeup, a black sweater, gold gloves, and matching sequined miniskirt.

(“Modernity” 206).

Letal’s physical appearance and his performance consequently conform to the definitive characteristics of camp because of the obvious hyperbolism, artificiality, theatricality, humor, and the dissonance between Letal’s self-identified masculine gender despite his effeminate appearance.

Almodóvar likewise invokes the camp aesthetic by means of the other cross-dressed performers who are present in the Villarosa club. Their physical appearance and demeanor manifest the camp characteristics discussed above but they also especially emphasize a penchant for the unnatural. This is true because instead of masking their male secondary sex characteristics as is normally the case with drag, these drag queens’ costumes purposefully draw attention to those traits. Allinson clarifies that the other cross-dressed performers are part of a drag parody group known as *Diabéticas aceleradas* that serves as a fan club of Femme Letal (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 16). Accordingly the audience familiar with this drag comedy troupe associates them with the very essence of camp. To help explain their masculinized portrayal of drag, a brief review of parodic drag is useful. Esther Newton’s studies about the different types of drag performances in the United States are applicable to the members of *Diabéticas aceleradas* despite the differences between the gay subcultures of Spain and the United States. Drag parody (also known as comedy drag), conforms to a totally different standard of beauty than glamour drag (Newton 52). The comedy drag aesthetic is divided into two categories: slapstick and standup (Newton 52). To make audiences laugh, slapstick drag artists purposefully make themselves “look as ridiculous as possible. The standard props are the old ‘ratty’ dress, the false nose, and the ‘fright wig.’ The fright wig is the ugly wig as opposed to the beautiful wig” (Newton 52). In the case with the members of *Diabéticas aceleradas*, Newton’s description of

slapstick comedic drag is the more relevant. For example, one of the *Diabéticas aceleradas* wears a black patch over her left eye while another (the one with the blond wig) sports a scanty halter-top that makes the lack of false breasts comically evident. Moreover, the drag queen from this group of performers who enters the dressing room after Rebeca and Letal have finished having sex exemplifies Newton's findings about comedy drag. First, she makes it clear that she is a drag queen and not necessarily a *travestí* by stating that she is a, "working girl [in English]." Next, the viewer cannot help but notice that this drag artist wears a fright wig, extremely unflattering pale foundation, and a blouse that draws attention to her plentiful chest hair. The juxtaposition of the disheveled wig, unbecoming makeup, and women's clothing that accentuates the hairiness of the man's chest demonstrates a proclivity for the unnatural and humor associated with camp. Almodóvar's focus on a comedic drag queen in this manner draws attention to the performative nature of gender identity. The mask-like nature of gender-specific clothes on what is so obviously the body of a man undermines heteronormative beliefs about gender identity, cross-dressing, and sexuality. The underlying message is that not all men who cross-dress are homosexual; and even of those who are, some prefer comedic to glamor drag. By choosing to cast a member of *Diabéticas aceleradas* in this role, Almodóvar evokes the camp aesthetic in order to convey a queer message to the audience.

Similarly, Eduardo's other identities manifest camp characteristics also because they are based on mismatches, performativity, humor, and artifice. The personas of Judge Domínguez and Hugo the informant are clearly portrayed as being disguises which Eduardo performs much in the same way as an actor plays a role. When in character, each alternate identity takes on a life of its own which is illustrated by the fact that he appears as Judge Domínguez in front of his mother. Notwithstanding his unerring ability to fool Rebeca, the

audience can tell that Letal and Domínguez are the same. In fact, as Strauss observes and Almodóvar confirms, Domínguez's identity as Femme Letal is obvious to the viewer from the very start of the movie since Miguel Bosé's name is "superimposed on a picture of Femme Letal" (103). Equally recognizable for the attentive spectator early in the film is the fact that Judge Domínguez, Femme Letal, and Hugo the informant are all played by the same actor.⁵⁴ In the photo shop scene previously discussed, Rebeca even prompts the audience to make the connection between Letal, Domínguez, and Hugo by stating that she recognizes Hugo's face. In this way, Almodóvar depicts each of Eduardo's alter egos as being similar to the artificiality of cross-dressing itself because each identity has its own set of costumes and mannerisms that ultimately are based on imitation. The Letal alter ego copies women, specifically Becky del Páramo, while the Judge Domínguez persona emulates legal authority, and the identity as Hugo (symbolized by his red jacket) replicates the behaviors of the drug dealers whom he ultimately arrests. The overall impact of these multiple personas on the moviegoer is humorous since Rebeca so naively recognizes that all three are the same person only after witnessing Eduardo become Judge Domínguez by putting on his fake beard and moustache. As a result, when Eduardo asks Rebeca to be his wife, she retorts that she would not know which of his three personas she would be marrying: Hugo, Letal, or Judge Domínguez. Eduardo's response drives home the ironic and comical impact of his many identities, "With all three." Although there is no denying the humor of Eduardo's answer, it also challenges the spectator to consider that Eduardo is in fact correct since each persona was his invention. Eduardo's imagination created each identity, and his skill at living as these characters is great enough even to fool his own

⁵⁴ Kinder notes that Eduardo's "perpetual slippage of identity is heightened by the casting of Miguel Bosé, a well-known Spanish pop Singer and sexual icon" ("High Heels" 41). Almodóvar definitely plays on Bosé's famously androgynous image as part of the marketing for this film. Additionally, the audience knows to expect gender-bending content based on Bosé being cast in the movie.

mother. For example, after taking Rebeca to his hideout, Rebeca asks him if he lives as these characters in his mother's presence. Eduardo replies that he does since his poor mother is insane and has not left her room for ten years. Rebeca's ironic reply, "What a family!" adds to the hilarity of the film since she clearly comes from a nontraditional family herself. Eduardo's guises definitely evoke the camp aesthetic due to the incongruity, theatricality, humor, and artificiality of his identities as an undercover police operative, son to his mother, father of Rebeca's unborn child, *travestí*, judge, and junkie.

In addition to the sway that the camp aesthetic holds over *Female Trouble* and *Tacones lejanos*, an analysis of the kitsch content of these works further elucidates the queer agenda of both directors.⁵⁵ In *Female Trouble*, kitsch has three primary sources: the B horror cinema of William Castle, the gory films of Herschell Gordon Lewis, and Russ Meyer's exploitation movie *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* In *Crackpot*, Waters makes it clear that William Castle influenced his works. For example, in the chapter devoted to Castle (entitled "Whatever Happened to Showmanship?"), Waters states, "Without a doubt, the greatest showman of our time was William Castle, King of the Gimmicks, William Castle was my idol. His films made me want to make films. I'm even jealous of his work. In fact, I wish I *were* William Castle" (14). Waters then lists Castle's movies that shaped his own the most including *Macabre* (1958), *House on Haunted Hill* (1959), and *The Tingler* (1959) (*Crackpot* 16). On the other hand, Waters is careful to explain that it was not necessarily the films themselves that shaped him as a director, but rather the innovative ways that Castle created hype about his movies to attract larger audiences. For example, Waters explains that Castle had buzzers rigged under the seats of movie theaters throughout the U.S. that would startle moviegoers "at the exact moment the audience

⁵⁵ See chapter two for an explanation of kitsch and its relationship to camp.

was in a frenzy” (*Crackpot* 16). This very notion of achieving a gut-wrenching response from the audience is what Waters terms “shock value” and states “This reaction has always been the reason I make movies” (*Shock Value* 2). Waters’ use of the term “showman” as opposed to director when describing Castle is especially significant. When creating his own works, Waters definitely emulated Castle’s showmanship by imbuing his movies with hyperbolic shock value designed to make the viewing experience a memorable one. Like Castle’s films, the quality of the cinematography is secondary to the gimmicks used to leave an indelible impression on the audience. With *Polyester* (1981), Waters followed Castle’s lead by handing out “odorama” cards to each moviegoer. These scratch-and-sniff cards created pleasant and unpleasant odors when moviegoers scratched them after being prompted by a flashing number on the screen. As Waters explains when interviewed about the purpose of the “odorama” card in *Polyester*, “I’m always trying to think of ways to get people to come to see my movies. I don’t care whether they like them or not, but I want them to come” (MacDonald 242). This response on Waters’ part cannot be taken at face value. At this point in his career, he did indeed want to attract more moviegoers, but he nevertheless exploited his target audience by making *Polyester* a film based on the “trash” aesthetic. This in turn explains Waters’ motivation for portraying outlandishly shocking footage because, like Castle, he wanted to satiate the desires of his niche audience with his showmanship. In addition to admiring and emulating William Castle, Waters also expresses the impact of the work of Herschell Gordon Lewis (the “King of Gore”) on his own films in *Shock Value* (202). Labeling Lewis a master, Waters discusses how Lewis targeted audiences who wanted to see violence on film:

Realizing the nudie film was a dead-end street, Mr. Lewis decided to appeal to the lowest common denominator in the least discriminating audience’s taste – blood lust. Instead of nudity, his following paid to see tongues being ripped out, eyeballs being squashed, and various other forms of creative mutilation”

(*Shock Value* 202).

By including violent scenes in his own movies, Waters emulates the gore films of Lewis thereby appealing to a larger audience. Waters also acknowledges recycling Lewis' works, "I even ripped him off by calling one of my films *Multiple Maniacs* [1970] in homage to *Two Thousand Maniacs*, [1964] and years later exhibitors playing *Pink Flamingos* copied his idea of giving ticket buyers vomit bags when they entered the theater" (*Shock Value* 202). Waters' kitsch aesthetic also stems from Russ Meyer's *Faster Pussycat*, an exploitation film that inspired Waters greatly as we shall see. When asked about how he got started making movies, Waters mentions that he liked exploitation movies the best, "They were real low budget so they had to do something that nobody else could do in order to get people to come see the film. I wound up making exploitation films for art theaters" (MacDonald 226). Doubtlessly Castle, Lewis, and Meyer swayed Waters' development as an auteur. In the film *Female Trouble*, evidence of their influence takes the form of two principal kitschy gimmicks that Waters includes for their shock value. The first such vehicle consists of capturing outlandish footage that is intended to make the audience uncomfortable. Second is the technique of associating Dawn Davenport with real-life notorious crimes. In both cases, Waters, like Castle, Lewis, and Meyer, unapologetically manipulates viewers' expectations in order to garner attention for his own works.

Incontrovertibly, *Female Trouble* pastiches maternal melodramas while including elements of Castle's showmanship and Lewis' gore film appeal for the purpose of making the viewing experience unforgettable. One such sequence takes place early in the movie when Earl is making love to Dawn. As MacDonald observes, Earl's underwear is depicted as being, "badly shit-stained. We cringe and laugh, even though we know that the underpants are just a prop, because we cannot believe a filmmaker would refer to such a personal detail" (224). When

MacDonald states that the audience “cannot believe” that Waters would focus on feces-stained underpants, he misses the point that this type of imagery is precisely what Waters features in order to shock his audience into laughter. Moreover, viewers of Waters’ films eagerly expect this level of “personal detail” after having witnessed Divine eat dog feces in *Pink Flamingos*. This act of focusing on a sordid image in order to leave an indelible impact on the viewer is Waters’ kitschy reappropriation of a William Castle-style strategy to attract a specific type of moviegoers. Rather than relying on innovative marketing tactics such as Castle’s use of buzzers when screening *The Tingler*, Waters reconfigures such ploys by making the film itself the attention grabber. Hence it is no surprise in *Female Trouble* that Waters concentrates on taboo topics, much like exploitation cinema, and prominently depicts grotesque footage in order to edify the filth aesthetic launched with *Pink Flamingos*.⁵⁶ Waters’ recycling of melodramatic conventions such as excessive emotionalism and the mother-daughter conflict motif yields warped objects of kitsch narrated from an overall camp perspective. In this manner, heightened emotions caused by mother-daughter strife are greatly exaggerated and reconfigured to become commodities that Waters sells to his ticketholders.

Another example of such visceral kitsch that appeals to gore aficionados takes place when Dawn gives birth to Taffy. To make this scene as realistic looking as possible, Waters waited to shoot until Susan Lowe gave birth to her son so that he would have an actual live newborn baby to use (*Shock Value* 101). During this sequence, the spectator witnesses Dawn groan in agony and then remove the bloody baby from between her legs. She then places it on

⁵⁶ This tendency to adhere to a “trashy” aesthetic on Waters’ part has led to his status as a cult filmmaker. A cult movie is defined as a countercultural film that rebels against mainstream cinema, features “bad” taste or freakery as its aesthetic, and appeals to a specific group of devoted fans (Church 9; Jancovich 318). Jancovich explains “The films of John Waters and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* were amongst the most prominent examples of the cult movie within the 1970’s” (317). Chapter four analyzes in detail the so-called “trash” aesthetic of “bad” taste as it applies to works by Waters and Almodóvar.

her chest. Dawn, who is completely by herself, has no way to cut the umbilical cord from her newborn daughter so she bites through this tissue and spits it out. The prop used to simulate the birth cord (“prophylactics filled with liver”) is surprisingly realistic looking, thus making this act seem all the more compelling for the spectator (*Shock Value* 101). As a result, the utilization of a real infant that is covered in blood combined with the mastication of the umbilical cord provides the gore enthusiast precisely the type of visceral imagery desired due to Waters’ unflinching depiction. Unlike mainstream romanticized portrayals of the childbirth process, Taffy’s delivery is desperate and excruciatingly painful; thereby foreshadowing the familial conflict between Dawn and Taffy. With this scene, Waters revamps the work of Herschell Gordon Lewis into kitsch with melodramatic undertones. Dawn’s exaggerated shrieks of labor pain followed by the loving appraisal of her daughter rise to the same degree of emotional excess associated with melodrama. Although Waters’ overall treatment of this scene is campy in nature due to the artificiality, incongruity, and humor of a drag queen giving birth, the focus on the gory detail of chewing through the umbilical cord constitutes kitsch for entertainment purposes because it is a gimmick borrowed from Lewis that is designed to appeal to a niche audience (Calinescu 236).

An additional kitschy stratagem that Waters uses to attract an audience to see *Female Trouble* and to shock moviegoers involves the bizarre themes depicted in the film. In *Shock Value*, Waters clarifies that he “wanted the ideals rather than the action of *Female Trouble* to be horrifying” since he knew that it would be difficult to surpass the scene from *Pink Flamingos* in which Divine eats dog feces (94). With this motive in mind, Waters equates the utilization of cosmetics with illegal drug use. Urged by the Dashers that mainlining liquid eyeliner will enhance her gorgeousness, Dawn allows Donald to inject it into her arm. In this segment,

Waters utilizes a medium close up of a needle puncturing Dawn's vein. The syringe is filled with a black liquid substance that Donald claims to have "cooked down" earlier that morning. After receiving this ultimate "beauty treatment," Dawn begins to model wildly on the stage; blood trickling down her arm from the puncture wound. The spectator cannot help but connect this unusual "medicine" (as Donald Dasher calls it), to heroin abuse and the Dashers' outlandish belief that criminality and attractiveness are the same. As Donna later explains to Dawn, "Eyeliner taken internally heightens one's beauty awareness." Waters also emphasizes that, as is the case with heroin, injecting oneself with this "drug" produces a state of euphoria. For that reason Dawn replies, "Believe me, I realize that now. I had never felt complete until I had experienced an eyeliner rush." Donald adds to the outrageousness of the notion of injecting eyeliner into the bloodstream to achieve a higher level of aesthetic consciousness by stating, "We've been on the stuff for months. Doctors and other simpletons may frown on it, but we beauty czars know what is good for the blood." This characterization of Dawn as a "beauty junkie" recalls Calinescu's findings that kitsch makes beauty into a commercial product that can be bought, sold, and fabricated easily (229). As the quintessential symbol of beauty, liquid eyeliner quite literally becomes an object of kitsch as Calinescu describes. Furthermore, injecting oneself with makeup also constitutes what Calinescu defines as kitsch produced "for propaganda (including political kitsch, religious kitsch, etc.) and (2) kitsch produced mainly for entertainment" (236). In the world evoked by Waters in *Female Trouble*, anybody from the lower and middle classes can achieve beauty by ingesting cosmetic products; a theme explored previously in Waters' short film *Eat Your Makeup* (1968) (Pela 154).⁵⁷ The dominant,

⁵⁷ This ingestion of liquid eyeliner also represents Waters' re-appropriation of US culture into a new aesthetic of beautiful that parallels Oswaldo de Andrade's hypothesis that Brazil triumphed over colonialism by "cannibalizing" European cultures and by reformulating them into a unique Brazilian cultural identity (Hulme 27). As Andrade postulates in his *Manifesto Antropofágico*, "Cannibalism. Absorption of the sacred enemy. To transform him into

heteronormative definitions of attractiveness are consumed and then retooled into new ones in Waters' world. Consequently, the representation of mainlining liquid eyeliner constitutes kitsch for political and entertainment purposes as clarified by Calinescu. Waters' political kitsch with this sequence stems from his objective to deconstruct hegemonic definitions of physical feminine attractiveness. As mentioned previously, Waters bases his notion of beauty on inversions of traditional definitions (MacDonald 236). Dawn therefore can become beautiful according to Waters' standard by the consumption of beauty products made available to the masses in much the same way as famous paintings judged to be masterpieces by the cultural elite are accessible to the bourgeois and lower class via mass-produced prints. Portraying a woman played by a drag queen whose comeliness achieves perfection by means of injecting an everyday cosmetic conveys Waters' subversive political message that hegemonic standards of beauty are inherently erroneous. In agreement with Susan Sontag's definitive characteristics, the exaggeration and artifice conveyed by the act of mainlining liquid eyeliner also edifies Waters' deconstruction of traditional notions of attractiveness from a camp perspective (275). By assuming a ludic stance based on hyperbole (i.e. the absurdity of injecting oneself with cosmetics), Waters complies with Sontag's finding that camp allows one to be "frivolous about the serious" (288). By employing both kitsch and camp in this manner, Waters effectively redefines physical beauty as a commodity available to the masses. Concerning the entertainment aspect of kitsch, Waters draws upon the shock value of likening this "beauty treatment" to heroin abuse for two specific purposes. First, Waters satiates his audience's desire to view outlandish footage. Secondly, he makes viewing *Female Trouble* an unforgettable experience.

a totem. [...] We are acting against this plague of the supposedly cultured and Christianized peoples" the consumption and reconfiguration of a dominant culture by a subjugated one is a rebellious action intended to break free from hegemonic power (43). Such is the case with Waters' kitsch portrayal of the ingestion of cosmetic products in that he seeks to undermine traditional standards of beauty and replace them with his own.

Perhaps the most compelling kitschy footage of *Female Trouble* is the scene in which Dawn models in various locations on the streets of Baltimore. Much like the “Girl Can’t Help It” segment of *Pink Flamingos*, *Female Trouble* also has images of Divine parading in front of passersby who are not actors and do not know they are being filmed. Much to Waters’ chagrin, however, this time the denizens of Baltimore do not react as conspicuously as was the case with *Pink Flamingos* (*Shock Value* 102). Still, Waters did succeed in capturing the surprised looks of several bystanders who gape at Divine as she struts down the sidewalk. In *Shock Value*, Waters explains that the lack of consternation on the part of the citizens of Baltimore is because they “were just being polite and didn’t want to gawk at someone who was so obviously disfigured” (102). Whatever their reasoning for not being taken aback quite like the crowd from *Pink Flamingos*, those who do notice Dawn are at the very least puzzled by what they see. In order to increase the humor of this situation, Waters superimposes the song “Dig” (performed by Nervous Norvus) in which the singer encourages the listener to “look [...] stare [...] see [...] glare” and “use your eyes.” The message conveyed by Waters is clear. Moviegoers should recognize that what they witness is a drag queen performing in front of people who are not extras in the film. By presenting a drag queen who acts in front of onlookers who are unaware that they are part of the performance, Waters once more combines kitsch and camp in order to give his audience the shocking scenes they desire to view. Since Divine plays the lead role, she represents the two types of kitsch (propaganda and entertainment) described by Calinescu (236). Additionally, Divine’s performance manifests “a relish for the exaggeration of sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms” associated with camp (Sontag 279). Combining kitsch and camp in this manner functions to challenge the audience’s expectations about homosexuality, heterosexuality, masculinity, and femininity. As Butler observes:

Female Trouble is also the title of the John Waters film that features Divine, the hero/heroine of *Hairspray* as well, whose impersonation of women implicitly suggests that gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real. [...] Divine notwithstanding, gender practices within gay and lesbian cultures often thematize “the natural” in parodic contexts that bring into relief the performative construction of an original and true sex (*Gender Trouble* xxxi).

Waters constructs Dawn’s gender identity as female and her sexual orientation as heterosexual in a parodic manner in accord with Butler’s conclusion. The transgressive implication for the audience is that gender identity and sexuality are not intrinsically based on anatomical features as the hegemony assumes but instead are choices that each individual has the right to decide. In this way, Waters depicts Dawn as not only an entertaining form of kitsch, but also a political type.

Like Waters does with *Female Trouble*, Almodóvar infuses *Tacones lejanos* with kitsch appropriations of melodramatic conventions in order to convey a queer message to the audience. In doing so, Almodóvar also draws heavily upon the postmodern aesthetic. The imitation of a famous musician is at the very heart of the on-screen, metafictional performances of Miguel Bosé and Marisa Paredes. Their interpretations of the fictional character Becky del Páramo question the concept of originality in much the same way as Baudrillard’s notion of simulacra. According to Baudrillard, originality itself is impossible to distinguish from a copy (or a simulacrum). As an example, Baudrillard states, “This is what Andy Warhol demonstrates also: the multiple replicas of Marilyn’s face are there to show at the same time the death of the original and the end of representation” (136). Therefore, Almodóvar creates a melodramatic character, Becky del Páramo, in much the same way as Warhol painted the multiple images of Marilyn Monroe. Using two actors to create the same character in this manner demonstrates the futility of uncovering an original in agreement with Baudrillard. As Fischer points out, “In *High Heels*, the ironic and melodramatic modes are nearly indistinguishable” (“Modernity” 202).

Nevertheless, *Tacones lejanos* presents five pivotal scenes that involve questioning the authenticity of originality. The first takes place when Becky spots a poster of Femme Letal that bears the words, “Femme Letal, *la verdadera* (the real) Becky del Páramo.” Becky cannot resist stating that Letal does not look like her (the “original”). She does, however, remark that his pose and the usage of feathers are a precise duplication of a picture she posed for years ago. After explaining this to Rebeca and her secretary, Becky ironically asks, “Am I not the real Becky?” This poster of Letal, like the facsimile of the Lascaux caves as described by Baudrillard, is an imitation that has replaced the need for the original (18). Indeed in this case, the viewer never sees the “original” photograph to which Becky refers. To drive home the point that duplication has preempted originality, Almodóvar has Rebeca explain to her mother (while they are talking about the poster) that Rebeca goes to see Letal perform whenever she misses Becky (Fischer “Modernity” 207). Even for Rebeca, replica suffices when the prototype is unattainable. The second scene that constitutes a simulacrum involves Letal’s rendition of “*Un año de amor*” in the Villarosa. After this show, Femme Letal (an imitation played by an actor) ironically explains to Becky (the “original” played by an actress) the characteristics that made Becky unique during her early pop phase of the 1970’s including “wigs, miniskirts, [and] platform shoes.” Crucial to note is Becky’s careful inspection of Femme Letal and her critical review of the *travestí*’s act. After holding Letal’s chin so that she can see his face better, Becky says, “Let me look at you. You don’t look a lot like me, but those gestures are mine.” Letal replies, “I tried to copy your spirit, your style. That’s what makes you unique.” This concept of an original criticizing an imitation coupled with the fact that the parodic drag performers know every one of Letal’s and Becky’s moves is ironic on multiple levels. For the attentive audience, Letal’s concept that wigs, miniskirts, platform shoes, and gesticulations make Becky innovative is highly questionable

since such “unique” attributes can be so expertly reproduced by Letal and the members of *Diabéticas aceleradas* some twenty years later. Additionally, Almodóvar does not disguise the fact that Marisa Paredes herself does not actually sing “*Piensa en mí*” nor “*Un año de amor*.” According to Almodóvar, once he selected these songs as being representative of Becky del Páramo, he had to “find a voice for Marisa. I had her trying on different voices as I did her various costumes; to see which would hang best on her body. Luz Casal’s fitted very well” (Strauss 112). Paredes’ performance of “*Piensa en mí*” in reality is not all that different from Miguel Bosé’s since both lip-synch the words and make the same gestures that their fictional counterpart, Becky del Páramo would make. Undoubtedly, the audience knows that Bosé’s enactment of this number is intentionally portrayed to be a simulacrum via cross-dressing whereas Paredes is supposed to be the “real” Becky. Nevertheless, it is during Paredes’ drag-like performance of “*Piensa en mí*” that the third example of simulation passing for originality occurs. During this scene, Becky kisses the stage leaving behind a lipstick stain. As she sings to her daughter, Becky sobs and one of the teardrops falls directly on the same spot that she kissed. Aside from its melodramatic impact, this improbable occurrence coupled with the fact that the lip-synching at times is slightly off cue with the music functions as a distancing device reminding the viewer that what he or she sees is in fact a reproduction of another singer’s (Casal’s) performance. Like Warhol’s multiple images of Marilyn used by Baudrillard to illustrate how simulacra replace the need for originality, the fact that this composite Becky is a simulation drives home the point that there was never a need for an “original” to exist (136). Almodóvar in this manner favors imitation (Paredes’ enactment of the song) over originality since the spectator never sees Casal.⁵⁸ The fourth crucial scene that exemplifies Baudrillard’s

⁵⁸ Casal’s performance itself is also a remake since it was composed by Agustín Lara and sung by Lola Beltrán originally (Strauss 112).

notion of the postmodern simulacra takes place when Letal copies Becky's enactment of "*Piensa en mí*" at the Villarosa. At this point, an astute viewer is aware that Becky's performance of this song is an amalgam of Marisa Paredes's body and the voice of somebody else (many may even recognize it to be Luz Casal). When Femme Letal strides into the Villarosa dressed as Becky again (his wig is styled to look just like her hairdo of the present this time) he is now an imitation of a duplication. Miguel Bosé as Letal (the "real" Becky del Páramo) is just as authentic at portraying Becky as Marisa Paredes is despite the fact that his character is mimicking another. This explains why Rebeca, who earlier claimed to go see Letal's shows whenever she missed her mother, cannot resist going to see Letal once more although she told him after their tryst following his first show that she would never return. Eduardo's reasoning, that Rebeca goes back to see Letal because she knows that he is the father of her baby, is not more important than her pathological need to be with her mother. The final major segment of *Tacones lejanos* that presents Baudrillard's notion of simulacra involves Eduardo putting on his fake beard and moustache to become Judge Domínguez yet again right after taking Rebeca to his hideout. Now that all of the subterfuge of Eduardo's multiple identities has been made apparent to Rebeca, there is no doubt for the viewer that Domínguez is a simulacrum just like Letal and Hugo. On the other hand, this alter ego has credibility with the authorities to the point that he can alter the course of Rebeca's fate by choosing to believe Becky's false confession. Almodóvar therefore depicts a character who acts out the role of Domínguez in the same fashion as Miguel Bosé plays all four parts. Consequently, Almodóvar's portrayal of the complex identities of Becky and Eduardo exemplifies Baudrillard's concept of originality becoming obsolete due to the accessibility of facsimile.

The idea of imitation not only evokes Baudrillard's notion of simulacra, but also calls attention to the kitschy aspects of *Tacones lejanos*. Unlike Waters, Almodóvar does not employ kitsch as a gimmick to draw a larger audience. Instead, Almodóvar represents kitsch in order to make the viewer question the validity of what he or she sees on the screen in much the same way as German playwright Bertolt Brecht utilized so-called estrangement effects in his works to eliminate the audience's empathy with a character (Jameson *Brecht* 39). As Meyer Howard Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham explain, Brecht's objective was "to evoke a critical distance and attitude in the spectators, in order to arouse them to take action against, rather than simply to accept, the state of society and behavior represented on the stage" (6). Almodóvar deliberately underscores the artificiality of kitsch in this way by the use of cross-dressing, Eduardo's multiple identities, and the musical number that takes place in the prison yard. As we shall see, these scenes manifest kitsch for both political and entertainment purposes as described by Calinescu (236).

First, Almodóvar creates kitsch by focusing on the cross-dressing Eduardo/Letal. As discussed in chapter one, Noël Valis posits that kitsch and *travestismo* are related because the *travestí* enacts a simulation of an identity (290). In addition to the association between *travestismo* and kitsch, Valis states, "The simulation of identity incarnated in the postmodern *travestí* can be read as culture-positive and/or -negative. On the one hand, it privileges the creative invention of self. (Think of any number of Almodóvar characters in his films)" (290). Such is the case with *Femme Letal*. As a falsification of a woman, specifically Becky del Páramo, *Femme Letal* is indeed the embodiment of kitsch as Valis describes. Obvious to the viewer is that Eduardo has much more experience performing as Becky than his undercover identity as a *travestí* would require; thereby causing the audience to question his true motives for

cross-dressing. As the members of *Diabéticas aceleradas* demonstrate by imitating Becky's gestures in time to the music, Eduardo also clearly has rehearsed "Un año de amor" to the point that his execution of Becky's moves is flawless; subsequently making the spectator aware that Eduardo may have other motives for cross-dressing. Considering the fact that the members of *Diabéticas aceleradas* imitate Becky's gestures synchronously to flatter their idol Letal, Eduardo's prowess at cross-dressing belies the cover story he tells Rebeca. Fischer adds that Eduardo's explanation for cross-dressing is not convincing and that his "real reasons are 'under cover' too. Perhaps he is not (what Chris Straayer would term) a 'temporary transvestite,' but one with a more permanent commitment" ("Modernity" 205).⁵⁹ This naturally raises the question of why a heterosexual man chooses to perform while cross-dressed so frequently as to become an expert who has what D'Lugo describes as "groupies" i.e. *Diabéticas aceleradas* (Pedro Almodóvar 79). The answer lies at the heart of Almodóvar's queer statement. In his world, putting on the clothing and perceived mannerisms of the opposite gender does not mean the cross-dressing person is homosexual by default. Additionally, the heterosexual male who puts on a show while cross-dressed does so because such a performance is pleasing to him. The performer's reasons for cross-dressing defy the heteronormative explanation that such an act is exclusively for purposes of private sexual gratification. Just like Almodóvar states that psychology cannot logically explain nymphomania in *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), the hegemony's definitions of sexual orientation and cross-dressing are deconstructed in *Tacones lejanos* (Strauss 25). Moreover, the supposedly unique wigs, miniskirts, and platform shoes that Letal dons to become Becky are nostalgic objects of kitsch that symbolize the bourgeois fashion

⁵⁹ Almodóvar confirms Strauss' observation that he did not attempt to disguise Miguel Bosé's identity as Femme Letal from the audience (103). Instead, Almodóvar superimposed Bosé's name over a photograph of Letal in the opening credits so that the "attentive audience can easily guess the double role" from the start of the film (Strauss 103). By making Bosé's binary identity known in this way, Almodóvar establishes the kitschy nature of *Tacones lejanos* from the beginning of the movie.

taste of the 1970's. In this way, Almodóvar presents multiple levels of kitsch since the attire Becky herself wore during the 70's is nothing more than remanufactured copies of signature styles of that era; themselves replicas of designer clothing that was made accessible to all via mass production. Almodóvar presents this idea that anybody who dresses like Becky and imitates her gestures essentially becomes Becky so that the audience will critique Letal's assertion that wigs, miniskirts, and platform shoes made Becky distinctive. While true that Letal is Becky's adoring fan who aspires to be like his idol like any other aficionado, Becky's ensemble (and Letal's by association) is kitsch because it is mass produced, ready-made fashion accessible to the bourgeois. The utilization of kitsch as a distancing device also explains the poster of Letal that Becky criticizes. Not only is the image of the *travestí* featured on the poster kitsch because it is a man imitating a woman, but it is also kitschy because (as Becky informs Rebeca and her secretary) the photograph duplicates the same pose and costume as one that Becky had taken several years earlier. The words, "The True Becky del Páramo" emphasize the falsified nature of this advertisement. For the spectator, however, this poster and Becky's question, "Am I not the real Becky?" function as a reminder that neither Bosé nor Paredes is the true Becky because she is in fact a fictional character.

Letal is not the only alter ego of Eduardo that exemplifies kitsch being used as an estrangement effect on the spectator. Hugo and Judge Domínguez, as previously discussed, are also falsified personas that Eduardo adopts. As Hugo the informant, Eduardo makes no effort whatsoever to disguise his appearance. The aforementioned scene in the photo store in which Rebeca recognizes Eduardo's face from Paula's pictures evokes kitsch since Hugo is a character contrived by Eduardo. Almodóvar explicitly unmasks Hugo as being the same person as Letal since the audience can readily identify Miguel Bosé. Instead of being fooled by Eduardo's

disguises like Rebeca, the moviegoer is now privileged to the fact that Hugo and Letal are one in the same. As Almodóvar explains to Strauss, the suspense of *Tacones lejanos* centers around Rebeca's (not the audience's) inability to recognize Hugo and Judge Domínguez as Letal; hence the emphasis on representation throughout the film (103). The tension therefore stems from the dissonant perspectives of Rebeca and the viewer which are finally united when Rebeca recognizes the mole on Hugo's penis captured in Paula's pictures. Nevertheless, unlike the spectator, Rebeca still fails to make the connection between all three personas until nearly the end of the film. This means Eduardo's alter ego as Judge Domínguez is also kitsch because of the misrepresentation required to dupe Rebeca and the other characters. The fake beard and moustache of Domínguez are kitsch because Eduardo utilizes them whenever he assumes his identity as the Judge. The net impact of these easily discernible disguises on the viewer complies with Jameson's findings concerning the estrangement effect. In this way, Almodóvar empowers the moviegoer to deduce what Rebeca cannot until Eduardo finally reveals his true identity as an undercover policeman.

Perhaps the scene of *Tacones lejanos* that most directly portrays kitsch as an estrangement strategy takes place in the prison yards. Just moments before the scene in which Bibi Andersen's character assaults the inmate who wears Hugo's red leather jacket, Almodóvar has the prisoners break out into a dance routine described by Acevedo-Muñoz as a "well-choreographed salsa number performed directly and self-reflexively for the camera and movie audience. It is the type of 'showstopper' number so common in the American musical" (145). Moreover, when questioned about the prison scenes of *Tacones lejanos* by Strauss, Almodóvar's response strengthens Acevedo-Muñoz's position:

And the dance number with its frenetic music also creates the kind of distancing

effect I use in all my films. The prison scenes are very realistic. At the same time they're the most kitsch part of the film. There are allusions to famous musicals shot in fake prisons like *Jailhouse Rock* with Elvis Presley and recently John Waters' *Cry Baby* (117).

In this way, Almodóvar reminds the moviegoer that what he or she sees is fictional due to the improbability of a random group of inmates knowing precisely the same dance steps and executing them perfectly in a choreographed show. This in turn augments the tension caused by Rebeca's inability to recognize that Letal is Hugo and Judge Domínguez since the viewer knows the truth. This musical number is the climax of the film's discursive intrigue since shortly afterwards Rebeca finally realizes that Hugo and Letal are the same man upon seeing Paula's photograph of his penis. At that point, the spectator and Rebeca share the knowledge of Femme Letal's identity as Hugo. By including a recycled version of musicals set in prisons in a remake of a maternal melodrama, Almodóvar successfully utilizes kitsch for its estrangement effect on the audience.

Now that it is evident that Almodóvar and Waters invoke camp and kitsch in their films, an analysis of how Russ Meyer's *Faster, Pussycat!* influenced them elucidates the lead female roles of *Pink Flamingos*, *Female Trouble*, *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, and *Matador*. Meyer's leading ladies greatly impacted the characterization of Divine according to Waters. For example, in *Shock Value*, Waters states, "Russ's nasty 'pussycats' became a role model for all of the characters in my productions – especially Divine" (193). Furthermore, Waters describes *Faster, Pussycat!* as "a violent gothic melodrama built around three bisexual psychotic go-go girls: Varla, Billie, and Rosie" (*Shock Value* 193). Almodóvar also acknowledges Meyer's influence on *Laberinto de pasiones*, "I wanted to make a comedy that was very pop, along the lines of Richard Lester in the 70's, but less caustic than *Pepi, Luci, Bom*...that referenced more Russ

Meyer, John Waters, or Andy Warhol” (Rouyer 72).⁶⁰ Despite the fact that Almodóvar has not to date explained the connection between Meyer’s pussycats, Bom, and María, the investigation that follows proves that they are incarnations of Varla.

A comparison of the pussycats to Divine reveals the influence of Meyer on Waters. Varla (Tura Satana), who is the ringleader and deadliest of the trio, bears a striking resemblance to Divine in *Pink Flamingos* and *Female Trouble* both in outward appearance and in demeanor. In fact, Varla’s makeup is so heavy, and her eyebrows and eyelashes so colossal, that she looks more like a drag caricature of a woman than a nubile exotic dancer. Concerning Varla’s overall antagonistic attitude, Satana explains during an interview with cult film scholar Louis Paul that she based the character’s fury on her own pent-up rage, “I took a lot of the anger that had been stored inside of me for many years and let it loose. I helped create the persona of Varla, and it helped to make her someone that many women would love to be like” (203). Moreover, Meyer characterizes Varla as being an extremely dangerous murderess that kills one young man for the pleasure of it, murders Billie (Lori Williams) because she defies Varla, forces Rosie to run over the old man in the wheelchair, and attempts to kill Kirk with well-delivered karate chops. Waters used Varla as the prototype to construct the identity Dawn Davenport from *Female Trouble*. Both female characters (Dawn and Varla) wear outfits that draw attention to their large breasts, have similar makeup, adopt aggressive attitudes, work at some point as go-go dancers, and massacre without remorse. Varla is prominent in the development of Dawn Davenport as a character more than just externally. Varla and Dawn share similar goals and will do anything to attain their objectives. For example, Varla’s memorable response to Kirk’s question about what she wants (“Everything, or as much as I can get”) morphs into how Dawn introduces herself to

⁶⁰ Chapter five presents an in-depth analysis of *Laberinto de pasiones*.

the Dashers, “Davenport, Dawn Davenport. I’m a thief and a shit-kicker, and uh, I’d like to be famous.” Like Meyer’s treatment of Varla, Waters depicts Dawn as a wanton and violent criminal who stops at nothing to achieve fortune and fame. By imitating *Faster, Pussycat!* in this manner, Waters indulges in kitsch both for political as well as entertainment purposes. Featuring an indomitable female in the leading role underscores the feminist agenda of *Female Trouble*. For Waters and Meyer, being a woman does not by default signify passivity as is the traditional hegemonic assumption. Instead, women are portrayed as being the more dominant of the sexes. Returning to Berggren’s findings about the assumption that women belong to the private sphere and are expected to maintain the home and raise the children, Dawn’s transgressions as a femme fatal who neglects her child’s needs (and even murders her) in order to advance her career definitely paints her as a countercultural figure (313). As the off-screen narrators warns the viewer in *Faster, Pussycat!*:

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to violence. [...] While violence cloaks itself in a plethora of disguises, its favorite mantle still remains sex. [...] Let’s examine closely then this dangerously evil creation, this new breed encased and contained within the supple skin of woman. The softness is there, the unmistakable smell of female. The surface shiny and silken, the body yielding yet wanton. But a word of caution, handle with care and don’t drop your guard. This rapacious new breed prowls both alone and in packs, operating at any level, anytime, anywhere and with anybody.

Like Varla, Dawn is a member of “this new breed” of woman who represents a threat to patriarchal control of society. Although some may state that this depiction of domineering females is demeaning to women because of the association with criminality, Meyer and Waters utilize their characters’ criminal proclivities as hyperbolic inversions of the sexist belief that femininity denotes docility. Therefore, Dawn Davenport is a remake of Varla and functions as a critique of patriarchy.

Divine and Dawn are not the only female protagonists inspired by Meyer's pussycats. Almodóvar portrays Bom and María as dangerous women who embody the opposite of "feminine" passivity much in the same manner as Varla. First, Bom and María, sport makeup that is exaggerated like Varla's. Bom's makeup consists of very heavy pale foundation and black lipstick and eye makeup that gives her a masculinized punk look. María also wears thick pale foundation, dark eye shadow, and ruby lips that contrast to give her an androgynous appearance which is accompanied by a hairdo that is remarkably similar to Elsa Lanchester's from *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). María's makeup and coiffure combine to give her a very menacing appearance that is equal parts *Bride of Frankenstein* and *Faster, Pussycat!* In addition to the similarities in makeup, Varla, Bom, and María are examples of what Meyers calls a "new breed" of women given their propensities for carrying out acts of violence on men. At Pepi's behest, Bom heads up an attack of the policeman's twin brother (whom they believe to be the police officer who raped Pepi) in the streets of Madrid. During this sequence, Bom lures the hapless twin into believing that he is witnessing a performance of a *zarzuela* thereby encouraging him to lower his defenses (Smith "*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 26).⁶¹ Along with the rest of her band, Bom strikes and kicks him repeatedly despite the fact that he makes no effort to fight back to defend himself. This violent behavior on Bom's part is reminiscent of Varla's attacks on Tommy, Kirk, and Kirk's father. In both Varla's and Bom's cases, assaulting men is a criminal act for which neither shows any remorse. In fact, Varla and Bom quite obviously enjoy doling out physical pain to men. Furthermore, Almodóvar portrays María as being just as deadly and ruthless as Varla. María preys on men by seducing them then by using a gigantic hairpin to slay them matador style. Since she is a serial killer who preys only on men, María is the recycled incarnation of "[t]his rapacious new breed" of female as described by *Faster, Pussycat's*

⁶¹ Chapter four discusses this scene as it relates to the "bad girl" image of Bom.

narrator. Doubtlessly, Varla, Bom, and María represent a threat to the traditional belief that women are the lesser aggressive of the sexes. Important to note is that Meyer and Almodóvar do not depict these female protagonists in a negative manner in order to prompt the viewer to side against them. Instead, both directors encourage the audience to identify with all three since they are far more intriguing characters than the men they victimize. Like Meyer's female dominated universe, Almodóvar's woman-centric approach definitely deconstructs sexist norms by refuting the notion that women are by nature passive and weak. This in turn makes Varla, Bom, and María fascinating characters because they so stridently defy their male-dominated societies. When Almodóvar envisioned domineering and deadly female protagonists, he looked to the example set forth in Meyer's pussycats. This explains the multiple similarities between Divine, Dawn, Bom, and María since, like Waters, Almodóvar was inspired by Meyer's portrayal of femininity.

Secondary only to melodrama, another major type of classical Hollywood cinema that greatly influenced the oeuvre of Waters and Almodóvar consists of movies based on the works of Tennessee Williams. Important to note is that both directors acknowledge Williams impacted their own cinematic productions. For example, Waters' first sentence of the chapter dedicated to Williams in *Role Models* states "Tennessee Williams saved my life" (35). Waters continues by presenting a biographical portrait of Williams and how his taboo-breaking works greatly impacted a twelve-year-old John Waters (*Waters Role Models* 35-41). Almodóvar too stresses the importance of Williams' works saying:

especially the films made from Tennessee Williams were my second education – which was stronger and more powerful than the priests' You know, at that moment, watching those films, I *felt* like a sinner. I was twelve or thirteen, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* absolutely corrupted me [...] So the movies were a kind of intimate and private education for me (Russo 64).

Vital to this analysis of how Williams affected Waters and Almodóvar is a succinct thematic description of Williams films including, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *Baby Doll* (1956), and *Night of the Iguana* (1964).⁶² According to David H. Goff, who conducted an investigative summary of critical interpretations of films adapted from Williams's works:

Essentially, Williams' themes involve the conflict between illusion or fantasy and reality, especially in *Streetcar* and *Suddenly Last Summer*; and loneliness developed in *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Night of the Iguana* [...] But perhaps the most common Williams theme pits the old against the new, running strongly in *Baby Doll* (243).

Logically, Waters and Almodóvar would choose to represent these same themes in their own works since Williams inspired their personal lives to such an extent. This is definitely true in *Female Trouble* (1974) and *Entre tinieblas* (1984), both of which clearly portray the conflict between reality and fantasy, loneliness, and the old against the new as described by Goff.

First, Dawn Davenport, like Blanche Dubois from *Streetcar*, bases her entire existence on delusions of grandeur. Both women deceive themselves into believing that they currently belong to a high social echelon when in reality they are from the lower class. Blanche DuBois loses her sanity due to the cognitive dissonance between her belief that she is a young, good looking, refined, chaste, and aristocratic southern belle and the actuality that she is a plain, middle-aged, and destitute English teacher who was fired for having an illicit affair with a seventeen-year old student and who then subsequently resorted to prostitution to support herself financially. In a similar manner, Dawn Davenport goes insane under the pretense that she is the

⁶² Waters describes the importance of *Baby Doll* in his development as a director in *Role Models*, "Of course, I knew who Tennessee Williams was. He was a bad man because the nuns in Catholic Sunday school had told us we'd go to hell if we saw that movie he wrote, *Baby Doll* [...] Hoping to one day own a dirty movie theater, I planned to show *Baby Doll* for the rest of my life, attracting the wrath of the Pope and causing a scandal in my parents' neighborhood" (36). Almodóvar too mentions *Baby Doll*, admonishing "that flaming queen Cardinal Spellman" who banned the film "without even having seen it" (Russo 65).

most beautiful and famous model in the nation; a belief that meets with laughter when Dawn informs the jury, “I still am the top model in the country.” Dawn then informs them that she was tried only because she is “so photogenic.” The jurors’ reaction to this statement directly reflects the hyperbole of Dawn’s outrageous appearance during her trial. Perhaps even more so than in *Pink Flamingos*, Divine’s makeup and hair during the nightclub act and trial scenes set a new standard for the exaggeration typically associated with a drag performance. Van Smith drew Divine’s eyebrows so long that they span past her ears. For the floorshow scene, Van Smith applied layers of multicolored eye shadow that reach beyond the tips of Divine’s ears. In the courtroom segment, Van Smith elected for a more subdued look. In both sequences, Divine’s wig has been chopped on the sides and coiffed into an enormously tall Mohawk, her face is covered with masses of fake-looking scar tissue, her eyelashes are so huge that the viewer cannot help but conclude they are false, and her lips and cheeks stained red. With this depiction of Dawn, Waters redefines beauty from denoting what society would traditionally deem to be attractive to mean a physical appearance that has the most shock value. When asked by MacDonald about his definition of the word beautiful in *Female Trouble*, Waters responds, “To me beauty is when I’m walking down the street and I see somebody and I think, ‘Oh my God, look at that person!’ *That’s* beauty to me, because I notice it” (236). With this depiction of Dawn’s fantasy that she is the loveliest woman in the United States, Waters recycles Tennessee Williams’ Blanche DuBois in order to deconstruct the hegemonic norms that define beauty.

Important to note is that like *Streetcar*’s Stella Kowalski, other characters in *Female Trouble* enable Dawn’s illusions of attractiveness and high social standing. Encouraged by the Dashers, Dawn engages in outlandish criminal behavior including child abuse, theft, battery, and ultimately murder all for the sake of creating beautiful art. After Aunt Ida disfigures her face,

Waters cuts to a scene in which Dawn occupies a hospital room and has bandages wrapped around her entire head. During this scene, Waters strengthens Dawn's belief that she is a gorgeous performance artist. In fact, Dawn is portrayed as being more fetching than ever before because her face is scarred. For example, during this sequence, the reactions of the supporting characters, especially the Dashers, reinforce Dawn's grandiose fantasy. When informed by Dawn's doctor that Dawn should consult a plastic surgeon to eliminate the scar tissue on her face, Donald's haughty response clearly plants the seed that Dawn's attractiveness is now perfected by the wounds, "The medical profession has always shown its extreme ignorance in the beauty field. What you don't realize doctor, and really how could you, is that Ms. Davenport will now be more beautiful than if she had had a million dollar face lift." While a nurse unwraps Dawn's head, Dawn at first expresses her misgivings that she may not be as attractive as she was before through a series of whimpers and moans. Waters encourages the audience to agree with the nurse's diagnosis that what Dawn possesses now is "one hell of a rotten face." However, the other characters nullify the nurse's perception before Dawn has the chance to see herself by chanting "Oh beautiful! It's beautiful! Gorgeous! Gorgeous! Gorgeous!" Donna Dasher even smugly announces that Dawn's face "makes the *Mona Lisa* look like a number painting." After Dawn grasps a mirror and peers at her face, at first she is taken aback with shock at the horror of it but simultaneously encourages herself to adopt the definition of beautiful according to the Dashers and the rest of the crowd. Dawn sheepishly asks, "pretty, pretty?" about her facial disfigurements. The throng surrounding her hospital bed exclaims "yes," cheers her on, and gives her a round of applause. Hence Dawn's friends, especially the Dashers, fossilize her fantasy that she is the most attractive supermodel in the country now that her face is injured.

Moreover, after her friends have set this notion of beauty into place, not even the reality of courtroom proceedings has the power to change Dawn's delusional mindset. Recanting their previous statements about Dawn being lovely, the Dashers (who were granted total immunity in return for their testimony) now tell a different tale. Donna testifies that Dawn's "modeling abilities were rather limited" and that "she even scarred her own face in order to attract attention." Donald follows his wife's lead and tells the court that on the night of Dawn's performance at the nightclub, she "was ranting and raving about her beauty when, in reality, she looked quite hideous." Crucial to note within this scene is the function of the judge and jury. The justice and jurors symbolize "normal" members of society. As such, they reject Dawn's view of beauty and instead view her facial deformities as hideous and her criminal behavior as dangerous since they sentence her to die in the electric chair. Recalling Goff's observation concerning the theme of illusion versus reality, it comes as no surprise that Dawn, much like Blanche from *Streetcar*, becomes so enmeshed in her fantasy that she can no longer distinguish between the real and the imagined. In fact, Dawn's final lines include calling the prison guards ugly, then giving what she calls her acceptance speech:

I'd like to thank all the wonderful people that made this great moment in my life come true. My daughter Taffy, who died in order to further my career. [...] All the fans who died so fashionably and gallantly at my nightclub act. And especially, all those wonderful people who were kind enough to read about me in the newspapers and watch me on the television news shows. Without all of you, my career could never have gotten this far. It is you that I burn for and it is you that I will die for. Please remember, I love every fucking one of you!

Consequently even Dawn's dying words (her execution is carried out immediately after her acceptance speech) demonstrate she is incapable of realizing the truth about her complete lack of celebrity status as a beautiful model. This in turn directly reflects the theme of fantasy vs. reality present in works by Williams as observed by Goff.

Dawn Davenport and Blanche DuBois are certainly not the only characters who manifest this tendency to live in an imagined world. The Mother Superior (Julieta Serrano) from *Entre tinieblas* is also a willing victim in her own game of self-delusion similarly to Blanche and Dawn. Instead of adopting the pretense that she is an attractive member of the upper class, Sister Julia's fantasy is based on the erroneous presumption that divine providence has granted her a lover. As Mark Allinson notes, the Mother Superior definitely "abuses her position of authority to feed her sexual and drug habits, resorting first to blackmail, then eventually to drug trafficking" (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 47). However, Sister Julia's true objective is not to gain financially from her criminal enterprises, but to seduce a beautiful young woman (Yolanda) into becoming her paramour by any means necessary. In doing so, Sister Julia projects an idealized image of womanhood onto Yolanda and as a result delves into a fantastical world in which the nun and young woman are mandated by God to be together. Almodóvar drives this point home in one particular scene by representing a caricature of a holy vision; specifically through the vehicles of an actress' facial expression and innovative lighting. Yolanda has fled her troubled life and seeks refuge in the convent of the Humiliated Redeemers where Sister Julia is Mother Superior. During the morning services, Yolanda opens the enormous double doors that lead to the chapel in which the nuns are singing a hymn. Julieta Serrano skillfully adopts an awestruck facial expression at the image that the camera now slowly pans to reveal to the viewer. What Sister Julia witnesses is actually created by Almodóvar's astute use of backlighting. Almodóvar orchestrates the framing of Yolanda in this sequence so that her head seems to emit an aura of mystical light.⁶³ Drawn to this radiance, the Mother Superior approaches Yolanda and invites her

⁶³ Paul Julian Smith describes this use of lighting as well and states that Yolanda is "framed by a halo of brilliant light" ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 33). D'Lugo also describes Yolanda's appearance as being a "saintly figure with a halo surrounding her head and body" (*Pedro Almodóvar* 35). During an interview, Almodóvar himself describes this

to seek refuge at the convent. For the spectators familiar with medieval Catholic heritage, it is clear that Almodóvar represents a parody of a nun's spiritual vision with this scene. First, as Smith explains, this image of Yolanda is "reinforced by reference to Christian iconography: Yolanda is blond like an angel. However, at this point in the film, it is not yet clear whether such references are to be taken parodically, as a subversion of Christian dogma, or seriously, as a secularization of divine love" ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 33). Smith is correct on both counts because Almodóvar paints this scene with a double entendre. Julia is swept away by her sexual desire for Yolanda and simultaneously interprets Yolanda's presence to be a sign from God that Yolanda is there by His design. Like the mentally unbalanced Blanche Dubois, Sister Julia loses touch with reality and interprets everything that happens from a self-serving point of view. Whereas Blanche convinces herself that she is a young, genteel lady of high class and unblemished moral standing, the Mother Superior assumes that Yolanda's coming was preordained. Important to note is that experiencing a supernatural vision is a crucial part of a Mother Superior's repertoire of Christian beliefs dating back to the medieval times of Santa Teresa of Avila (Lavrín 35). As hagiographical expert Fernando Baños Vallejo explains, the predominant attitude of the medieval Catholic Church was that the paranormal was in fact an everyday occurrence (46). Sister Julia's reaction to Yolanda's otherworldly appearance draws upon the underpinning connotations between nuns and mystical experiences. The "holy light" that appears to emanate from Yolanda as Almodóvar describes fits the description of what art experts Edwin Hall and Horst Uhr label an *aureola* which is different from a halo (568). An *aureola*, unlike the golden crown of the halo, is portrayed as cloud of light that surrounds the head of a saint who conquered one or more of three major types of conflicts: sexual, other

scene as representing a holy experience, "At the moment of communion, the doors of the church open and a heavenly light bathes in glory the person who enters: Yolanda" (Strauss 36).

worldly temptations, and the battle with Satan (569). Almodóvar utilizes the *aureola* to foreshadow Yolanda's victory over these three categories of conflict that take the form of sexual temptation by Sister Julia, persecution by the police for the death of her boyfriend (who dies from a dosage of heroin laced with strychnine), and the powerful lure of heroin. Yolanda's ethereal appearance consequently functions as both a subversion of a religious visionary experience while at the same time drawing upon the hackneyed convention of a protagonist's first glimpse at his or her romanticized love interest. Sister Julia's rapt facial expression indicates she is mesmerized by Yolanda's physical beauty and by the mystical illumination that surrounds her hair. This supernatural aura that emanates from Yolanda's head is, according to Sister Julia, a direct manifestation of God's presence. Almodóvar implies that Sister Julia has convinced herself that Yolanda's decision to enter the convent is in fact divine intervention for Sister Julia's benefit. Inevitably, at least in Julia's mind, Yolanda will fall in love with the Mother Superior because it is God's will. The heroin that Sister Julia later offers to Yolanda becomes sacred from the Mother Superior's perspective because it is all a part of a celestial scheme to win Yolanda's affections. Crucial to note in the scene during which Yolanda watches Sister Julia inject herself with this drug is the portrait on the wall of the Virgin Mother painted by Virginia. Like the head of Yolanda herself just moments ago, the head of the Virgin also emanates a brilliant *aureola*. The connection between the painting of the Virgin and Yolanda is thereby consummated from Sister Julia's point of view when Yolanda acquiesces and allows herself to partake of this most unholy of communions.⁶⁴ Sister Julia, like Blanche Dubois, fools herself into believing an improbable fantasy because it serves her personal needs.

⁶⁴ This utilization of religious iconography is reminiscent of Goff's observation that "Williams' films are rich in religious symbolism" (245).

The mystical vision of Yolanda's entrance into the chapel is not the only instance in which Sister Julia convinces herself that a true miracle has taken place. Toward the end of *Entre tinieblas*, Almodóvar alludes to the Christian myth of Veronica's Veil.⁶⁵ Much like the legendary Veronica, Sister Julia offers to wipe away the sweat from Yolanda's forehead after her performance at the party. Instead of dabbing away the perspiration, the Mother Superior presses the fabric onto Yolanda's face (despite Yolanda's protests). As a result, Yolanda's makeup transfers to the cloth. When Sister Julia pulls the fabric back and views it, she sees a portrait of Yolanda's face presumably painted in makeup and announces that God has created a "new Veronica." Yolanda refutes the supernatural nature of this incident and states that Sister Julia is either being stupid or is having a drug-induced hallucination. Undeterred by Yolanda's skepticism, Sister Julia clutches the veil and exits the room after peeping at Yolanda while Yolanda is changing clothes. This scene is especially important for the audience because it demonstrates the depth of Sister Julia's conviction that Yolanda is there by divine providence. Although Almodóvar requires the viewer to suspend disbelief because the image of Yolanda's face was obviously painted by a talented artist, there is no doubt that for Sister Julia this "new Veronica" is a sign from God that Yolanda will become her lover. As Almodóvar explains to Vidal, this allusion to Veronica's Veil is "a gag and people always laugh at it. And if you think about it, the fact that Yolanda's face appears on the handkerchief is just as much a gag as the imprint of Christ's face appearing on the Holy Shroud. [...] It may seem like a gag, but the expression on Julia's face at that moment is sublime, it is a very profound and moving moment

⁶⁵ Religious scholar J. Gordon Melton explains the origin of Veronica's Veil, "According to a story included in the sixth-century apocryphal book the Acts of Pilate, as Christ was carrying the cross to His crucifixion a woman showed kindness to Him by wiping His face with a veil. As a result, an image of His face was impressed upon the cloth, much as it is on the Shroud of Turin" (349).

for her” (80). Yolanda’s veil reinforces the idea that the Mother Superior would rather remain lost in her own fantasy world than to accept reality.

In another key scene, Sister Julia delves further into the illusion that Yolanda will become her sexual partner by engaging in seductive behavior. The Mother Superior makes clear her love for Yolanda by singing a bolero to her, flattering her, offering her cocaine, and explaining to Yolanda what motivated her to become a nun. As Yolanda enters Sister Julia’s office, the Mother Superior is listening to a bolero which she then begins to sing to Yolanda. Yolanda reciprocates by singing the song back to Sister Julia. Smith observes “the sequence suggests a lesbian appropriation of ready-made (heterosexual) images found in popular culture: thus each woman in turn mouths to the other the words originally sung by a man to a woman. [...] Yolanda remains the recipient of the Mother Superior’s advances only because she is obliged to remain in the convent as a refuge from the police” (“*Pepi, Luci, Bom*” 36). Despite Yolanda’s protestations to the contrary, it is telling that Sister Julia insists that Yolanda looks quite attractive today when in fact she looks haggard due to the withdrawal symptoms she is already starting to feel. In agreement with her proclivity for the feminine side of the dregs of society, Sister Julia’s compliments are genuinely heartfelt. Yolanda does look good to her because Yolanda is precisely what Sister Julia seeks: a beautiful, young drug addict who is now at the mercy of the Mother Superior because of the circumstances of her life. Moreover, the enshrined collage of photos of “some of the greatest female sinners of this century” (including Ava Gardner, Brigitte Bardot, and Amanda Lear) behind the Mother Superior’s desk also contributes to the Sister Julia’s idealized vision of Yolanda (Vidal 62). While the Mother Superior cuts up cocaine for them to snort, she calmly explains to Yolanda that her purpose is not to save the souls of the saints, but those of the sinners. The audience is consequently confronted

with the ironic juxtaposition of a lesbian nun who is also a drug addict and resorts to narcotics and obsequiousness to attract and to hold captive her prey. Nevertheless, only the viewer who is familiar with the self-denigration required by a nun, which can be traced back medieval times, is capable of comprehending the message fully. Alison Weber, an expert on how religious women were permitted to express themselves during the middle ages, discusses the “self-depreciatory remarks, confessions of wretchedness and incompetence that seemed hyperbolic” as seen in the autobiographical accounts of famous nuns such as Santa Teresa (11). Asunción Lavrin, another expert in Latin American colonial era nuns, sheds light into this seemingly bizarre ritual of self-deprecation by explaining the nun’s most important and fundamental oath: obedience.

According to Lavrin “God favored the obedient nun with His love, or even better, by direct communication through mystical union” (29). With the case of Sister Julia and Yolanda, we have already seen how the Mother Superior experienced a mystical vision of Yolanda when she first entered through the doors of the chapel. It should come as no surprise to the informed spectator that Sister Julia definitely abases herself to Yolanda. The Mother Superior does so by “confessing” her forbidden lust for Yolanda, and by proving to Yolanda that she too is a great sinner (like the women portrayed in the photos behind her desk) due to her drug addiction. In this manner Sister Julia complies with her oath of obedience by dutifully denigrating herself to Yolanda who is her substitute for God (Vidal 71).

One key difference between Dawn, Blanche, and Sister Julia is that Yolanda’s escape from the convent at the end of the *Entre tinieblas* shatters the Mother Superior’s delusion. Unlike Dawn who dies while still under the impression that she is a nationally renowned supermodel and Blanche who is committed to an insane asylum at the end of *Streetcar*, the Mother Superior realizes that the dream is over when she learns that Yolanda has fled the

convent abandoning Julia. For example, when Sister Julia uses her key to open the door to Yolanda's quarters, she surveys the room, notices that Yolanda is not present, she screams and sobs from the emotional suffering of having to witness the death of her fantasy. Nondiegetic sound in this sequence features the same bolero that Sister Julia and Yolanda sang to each other in the previously described scene thereby enhancing Sister Julia's feelings of loss and abandonment.⁶⁶

Now that it is clear that both *Female Trouble* and *Entre tinieblas* are similar to *Streetcar* because they manifest the theme of reality versus fantasy, applying Goff's second observation about loneliness in *The Night of the Iguana* to these films is useful. Like the desolate Reverend Shannon who is ostracized from his church, community, and vocation, Dawn also leads a solitary existence. Dawn flees from her parents' home on Christmas Day because she did not receive the Cha-Cha heels that she had so desperately wanted as her gift. In this manner, Dawn abdicates the support of her family and chooses to live her life on her own. Earl, (played by Divine out of drag) the father of Taffy, is hardly sympathetic towards Dawn. After having sex on the side of the road which left Dawn impregnated with his child, Earl's responses to Dawn's pleadings for child support convince the audience that he will definitely be an absentee father. When told that she wants money to support their unborn child, Earl snarls, "You stole my wallet, you fat bitch!" Dawn replies, "So what if I did? I want money." Earl retorts, "You'll never get any money from me, cow. Just cause you got them big udders don't mean your something special. Get the hook. Go fuck yourself for all I care! Yeah! Go fuck

⁶⁶ Smith also notes the use of the same bolero song and adds that the outside shot utilized in this scene once again frames Sister Julia within a window (*Pepi, Luci, Bom* 37).

yourself!”⁶⁷ Hence Dawn can hardly expect any financial or emotional support from her parents and Taffy’s father.

Furthermore, Waters intensifies Dawn’s seclusion during the scene in which she gives birth to Taffy. Very telling is the fact that Dawn is totally by herself in her room of the Hotel Albion when she begins and completes labor. To establish that Dawn is utterly alone, Waters places the camera in two positions so there is no doubt for the viewer that she is the only person there. The first shot is looking down on a ratty-looking sofa from the top of a staircase. In this shot, Dawn is the only person within the frame. Important to note is the open doorway from which the next shot further exacerbates Dawn’s desolation. After collapsing onto the couch and moaning in agony from the labor pains, the scene abruptly cuts and the camera changes location. In this new position, Waters places the camera in the open doorway so that the lens is facing the sofa (perpendicular from its previous locus). Framing reveals that there is nobody on the stairs. In this manner, Waters emphasizes Dawn’s seclusion by portraying the birth of Taffy as being devoid of any potential assistance from any of her friends or even staff from the hotel. Considering that in most movies the birth of a child is typically a joyous occasion associated with the presence of other characters such as nurses, doctors, midwives, etc., it is revealing that Waters instead chooses to portray this partum process as being carried out by only the mother.

Moreover, by characterizing the mother-daughter relationship between Dawn and Taffy as being one based on mutual hatred, Waters further adds to the feeling that Dawn is lonely. As Pela observes, Dawn is an “unapologetic single mom” (127) in *Female Trouble*. Instead of providing Dawn with a person to love and cherish as is the case with most on-screen mothers

⁶⁷ For the diligent audience, the irony of Earl telling Divine to go have sex with herself is not lost considering that the same actor plays both parts. In other words, Waters indeed has Dawn make love to herself through the use of stop takes and extras.

such as Mildred Pierce, Taffy in fact represents one half of an extremely adversarial mother-daughter relationship (as noted in the previous discussion about melodrama) in which Dawn gains no consolation from her daughter's presence. Clearly Taffy provides nothing more to Dawn than domestic turmoil. Since Dawn is a single mother who hates her only child, Dawn can scarcely fulfill her needs for any meaningful interaction with her peers.

Moreover, Dawn's explanation of her parenting skills to her friends (as illustrated previously) provides further proof that the relationship with her daughter, instead of being one being based on mutual love and consolation, only exacerbates her seclusion. Instead of providing Dawn with a person upon whom she can lavish her maternal affections, Taffy is at best an embarrassing nuisance to Dawn. Consequently Dawn, as a single mother who detests her offspring, cannot help but feel more isolated due to the fact that Dawn has no meaningful, positive interactions with anybody she loves within her own domestic sphere. Furthermore, Taffy's openly hostile attitude toward Dawn drives home the point that Dawn lacks familial intimacy and is subsequently bereft of companionship. In this manner, Waters makes it clear that Dawn distances herself from Taffy, whom Dawn ultimately chokes to death. As a result, doubtlessly the mother-daughter relationship in *Female Trouble* is further evidence of the thematic loneliness of a Tennessee Williams character like Reverend Shannon.

Also like the heroine of *Mildred Pierce*, not even married life brings Dawn any sort of relief from her sense of sequestration. Gator scarcely provides Dawn any of the needed emotional support expected of a dutiful husband. Moreover, he is depicted (like so many other men in Waters' films) as being beneficial only when he is being used as a sexual partner (Pela 126). Nevertheless, Waters makes it clear that even the sexual aspect of Dawn and Gator's relationship is lacking. For example, as the bloody-looking words on the cut screen inform the

audience, five years into the marriage Gator is incapable of performing sexually without relying on pornography and outlandish fetishes. For example, while they are making love, Dawn asks Gator, “Can’t you put down those damn magazines?” to which Gator responds, “I like these damn magazines.” “Better than me, I suppose? [...] Can’t we do it normal?” she rejoinders. Gator informs his wife that viewing pornography during the sex act is normal. Waters further drives home the point that Gator is an impotent lover because he must rely on various tools including a hammer and needle-nose pliers to help Dawn achieve an orgasm.⁶⁸ Moreover, as described previously, Waters introduces the oedipal element of Taffy being the sexual rival of her mother by having Gator and Earl make passes at her. Consequently matrimony combined with motherhood provides nothing but misery for Dawn and alienates Taffy even further from her mother because she is now the object of Gator’s incestuous desires. Gator’s marriage ends up being too depraved and dreary and for that reason he divorces Dawn, leaving her more alone than ever before (although Taffy still lives in her house). This means that Dawn’s only support comes from her friends Concetta, Chiclet, and the Dashers (who betray her as seen previously). The makeshift family of Dawn the mother, Gator the stepfather, and Taffy the daughter serves only to show the audience that Dawn’s needs for any meaningful social interaction are not being met.

Perhaps the scenes that best exemplify the lonesome theme of *The Night of the Iguana* involve Dawn’s capture and subsequent execution. After the climatic grand finale of her nightclub act during which she murders for the sake of art, Dawn becomes a wanted fugitive by

⁶⁸ The hyperbole of this utilization of hardware tools to enhance Dawn’s sexual pleasure clearly exemplifies Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer’s observation that queer postmodern artists tend to portray homosexuality as normal “by making heterosexuality deviant” as noted in chapter two (135). In Waters’ world, heterosexuality is indeed portrayed as a “sick and boring life” as Gator’s Aunt Ida warned him when trying to coax him into becoming gay. Pela also notes that Aunt Ida’s comments summarize Waters’ views about heterosexuality (119).

absconding into the woods. Immediately after the footage of Donald Dasher pleading not to be shot by the police (and hiding behind his wife), Waters cuts to a sequence that begins with Dawn, still dressed in her outfit from the nightclub act, emerging from an unexplained pup tent. The camera reveals that she is completely alone in the woods as she bathes her face and brushes her teeth with her fingers in a nearby stream. The Dashers have obviously abandoned their prized pupil since Dawn is by herself. When Dawn hears the barking of the police dogs on her trail, she unsuccessfully attempts to throw the hounds off of her scent by crossing a river. When compared to being surrounded by the Dashers, Concetta, Chiclet, and the hairdressers during the aforementioned scene during which the nurse reveals Dawn's new face to the audience, Waters makes certain that the audience will notice that Dawn has nobody left upon whom she can rely. Her daughter Taffy is dead by her hands and also Dawn's best friends Chiclet and Concetta are nowhere to be found. The dreary weather conditions add to the isolation and desperation of Dawn's predicament. The lack of sunlight while Dawn is in the forest is not accidental and contrasts sharply with lighting from other scenes of the movie. As Waters explains in *Shock Value*, the decision to go ahead with the shooting of this scene was ultimately his. Waters explains that it was not an easy choice since Divine had to swim "across the raging rapids of a river dressed in full drag. [...] The temperature was near freezing, and the rain turned to sleet as we set up the equipment on one side of the river" (100). Waters' motivation for filming under these weather conditions was based more than just on the fact that everyone else was ready to complete the take as he mentions in *Shock Value* (100). Instead, Waters wanted to attain the goal of communicating the emotions of desolation and fear to his audience by filming the take on that particular day. For these reasons, it is clear that this scene from *Female Trouble* conveys the fact that Dawn is alone to the audience.

The final scene of *Female Trouble*, Dawn's execution in the electric chair, also leaves the viewer with a lasting impression of her Dawn's solitary lifestyle. Considering Waters' affinity for attending trials of notorious criminals in person (such as the Manson family and Patricia Hearst cases) it is difficult to believe that Waters would not have known that the family members of both the victim and the convicted murderer, as well as the prosecution and defense attorneys, are permitted to witness the state carry out the defendant's sentence (Waters *Shock Value* 114-125).⁶⁹ Accordingly, the complete lack of an audience at Dawn's execution is very revealing. Dawn dies knowing that she has been betrayed by the Dashers. Dawn also openly acknowledges the absence of her best friends, Concetta and Chiclet. During her final monologue (which she referred to earlier as her "acceptance speech"), Dawn states that Concetta and Chiclet "should be with me here today." In fact the only people who are present with Dawn when she is escorted to the electric chair are the requisite prison guards and chaplain. Bereft of friends, family, and even her attorney, Dawn dies alone at the end of the film since nobody who was not required to be present comes to witness her execution.

Now that it is clear that Dawn Davenport exhibits loneliness, applying the same theme of solitude taken from *The Night of the Iguana* by Tennessee Williams to *Entre tinieblas* reveals that Sister Julia too is lonely. Sister Julia's isolation is different from Dawn Davenport's in that the Mother Superior is lonesome despite being almost always surrounded by other characters. Nevertheless, there is one specific scene in which Almodóvar makes it clear that Sister Julia prays by herself for an extended time. Wrestling with the dilemmas that Yolanda continuously rejects her advances and that she may lose control of Humiliated Redeemers convent, the Mother Superior turns to the traditional self-denial and constant prayer to ask God for a solution to her

⁶⁹ Waters also discusses the impact of the Manson trials of the early 1970's on his works in *Role Models* (45-91).

problems. Almodóvar once again relies on lighting and camera positioning in order to communicate Sister Julia's isolation. As Mark Allinson observes:

Some of these high angle shots of self-consciously equate the viewer's high position with the omniscience of God: the Mother Superior addresses God after she has had a confrontation with Yolanda and she is filmed from high above, the high contrast image picking out her small image among the shadows of the chapel. [...] we find her once again alone in the chapel, bathed in a white spotlight (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 165).

What Allinson does not discuss is the fact that Sister Lost's dialogue with the Mother Superior informs the viewers that Sister Julia has been praying by herself for hours. Also, Sister Julia at first refuses to eat the food that Sister Lost has brought her. Recognizing the significance of a Mother Superior who maintains a prayer vigil and fasts provokes the viewer once more to draw upon his or her knowledge of the behaviors associated with medieval nuns. Feminist scholar Hilary Mantel explains that for nuns of the Middle Ages, "Starvation was a constant for these women. It melted their flesh away, so that the beating of their hearts could be seen behind the racks of their ribs. It made them one with the poor and destitute, and united them with the image of Christ on the cross" (1). Sister Julia's self-flagellation through fasting and prayer consequently are further evidence that she distances herself from the others both physically and emotionally. In the Mother Superior's mind, Yolanda is predestined to be hers. As Sister Julia explains to Sister Lost, "The only jewels that adorn the wives of Jesus are the thorns and the cross. I have sinned a lot! I need to be punished!" Despite the fact that Sister Lost tries to console the Mother Superior, Sister Julia states that God has abandoned her precisely because Yolanda refuses to play along with her delusional fantasy. In fact, only after the Mother Superior learns that Yolanda agreed to perform at the party does she eat and begin her illicit machinations in order to keep control of her order. This is because for Sister Julia, God has rewarded her self-castigation with Yolanda's acquiescence to perform.

Further evidence that Almodóvar depicts Sister Julia as being isolated includes her dissociated relationship with Yolanda and the other nuns. While the audience naturally expects the Mother Superior of an order to exhibit some detachment from her subordinates because she is an authority figure, Almodóvar portrays Sister Julia's haughtiness as being excessive. For example, the Mother Superior mistreats Sister Rat, who had been her friend since their days as novices, by taking away Sister Rat's novels, threatening to burn them, and by calling her a clown. Sister Rat then confronts Sister Julia about her aloof disposition telling Sister Julia that she is envious of Sister Rat's amity with the other nuns. Sister Julia dismisses this accusation condescendingly informing Sister Rat she has nothing to be jealous of and that she is busy. Sister Julia's interactions with Yolanda also reveal the underpinning theme of desolation. Almodóvar consistently denies Sister Julia intimate spatial relations with Yolanda throughout most of the film. During the aforementioned scene in which Sister Julia and Yolanda sing the bolero to each other, Almodóvar frames each shot so that Yolanda and Sister Julia are kept far apart from each other until the end of the song. As Smith elucidates, Almodóvar utilizes frontal reverse angles "until both actors are singing directly to camera (directly to the other woman). In this highly stylized and emotionally charged sequence the audience is addressed directly as a participant in lesbian seduction" ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 35). Notwithstanding the seductive content of this sequence, it is patently obvious to the viewer that Yolanda does not reciprocate the Mother Superior's adoration. In fact, during one scene that takes place in the garden, Yolanda even goes as far as to tell Sister Julia that she is using her and that she hates her. Moreover, in perhaps the most climatic scene of the film, Almodóvar pointedly separates the images of the two women by means of an innovative outside shot of Sister Julia's office. Yolanda is framed within the window on the left side of the screen while the viewer sees the Mother Superior

through the window on the right; symbolizing the schism that divides the motivations of both characters.⁷⁰ Yolanda's objectives, to detoxify herself from heroin abuse, to set the record straight about the accidental death of her boyfriend, and to leave the convent are the polar opposites of Sister Julia's aims. As this mirror image of the two women divided by a wall implies, Sister Julia intends to seduce Yolanda sexually, to keep Yolanda dependent on her for heroin, and to prevent Yolanda from leaving the convent by whatever means necessary. Very revealing is the verbal exchange between the two in which Yolanda asks the Mother Superior to join her in suffering withdrawal symptoms together as penance for their sin of abusing drugs. Sister Julia replies, "My only sin is to love you too much." Yolanda retorts, "Don't talk to me that way," rejecting Sister Julia's advances yet again. From this point forward, Yolanda takes on the more traditional behavior expected of a nun by seeking redemption for her transgressions whereas Sister Julia sinks deeper into illicit scheming both to keep Yolanda at the Order of the Humiliated Redeemers as well as to blackmail her way into maintaining control of the convent. Although in the same room at the same time with the target of her unrequited romantic fixations, Sister Julia continues hopelessly to be separated from Yolanda both spatially and metaphorically as the framing denotes. Furthermore, Sister Julia cuts herself off from the affections of the one lover who does show the Mother Superior a modicum of affection. This young woman, Merche, enters the convent one night and insinuates that she will have sex with Sister Julia in exchange for drugs and refuge. When Merche tells Sister Julia that she loves her, Sister Julia replies, "No, you need me," characterizing Merche's amorous declaration as being nothing more than a form of manipulation. When the police officers ring the bell the following morning, the camera reveals that Sister Julia and Merche slept together in the same bed alluding that the two women

⁷⁰ Smith also notes that this outside shot separates Yolanda and Sister Julia ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 37).

had sex.⁷¹ Instead of protecting Merche from the police officers, as Sister Julia has done previously for Yolanda, the Mother Superior guides them right away to Merche's room; betraying Merche because of Sister Julia's obsession for Yolanda. Bereft of the companionship of the other nuns and lacking a romantic partner who loves her, Sister Julia leads a solitary life even though she is surrounded by other people.

Now that the themes of self-delusion versus reality and loneliness are clear in *Female Trouble* and *Entre tinieblas*, applying the motif of the old against the new to these two films reveals further evidence of Tennessee Williams' influence on Waters and Almodóvar. A summary of how *Baby Doll* manifests outmoded hegemonic norms being supplanted by nontraditional values establishes the thematic similarities of *Female Trouble* and *Entre tinieblas*. In *Baby Doll*, Williams portrays the protagonist, Archie Lee Meighan, as a longstanding member of the antebellum, aristocratic South that has now gone bankrupt due to its inability to adapt to change. Consequently, Archie Lee loses his livelihood (ginning cotton), chooses to reside in a decrepit plantation mansion that has no furniture, and marries a woman with whom he cannot have sexual intercourse due to her young age. The film's antagonist, Silva Vacarro, symbolizes social mobility and industrial progress thereby granting him victory in his competition with Archie Lee professionally and personally. Ultimately, Silva usurps Archie Lee's role as husband and businessman precisely because he does not align himself with the establishment. Dawn Davenport echoes Silva Vacarro because she too rebels against the hegemony and ultimately triumphs. Although the spoils of her victory, the death penalty, may seem like castigation, Waters explains in *This Filthy World* that from Dawn's perspective, capital punishment is the

⁷¹ Allinson also notes that Almodóvar implies a sexual relationship between Sister Julia and Merche (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 103). Smith remarks that Merche was Sister Julia's ex-lover ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 36). Acevedo-Muñoz states "Their exchange implies that the nun has had a romantic or sexual affair with Merche" (44).

highest possible recognition for her achievements as a criminal (Garlin). Very revealing is that Waters encourages the audience to identify with Dawn and to reject the Dashers. Renouncing their former conviction that Dawn was beautiful because of her facial disfigurements and heinous crimes as well as bribing Aunt Ida to lie on the witness stand are acts which vilify Donald and Donna since they introduced her to the concept that crime and beauty are synonymous. Much like Archie Lee who clings desperately to his identity as a Caucasian native of Tiger Tail in his failed last-ditch effort to regain control of his business and wife from Silva, the Dashers shamelessly grovel before the majority in order to frame Dawn for their own wrongdoing. Despite the fact that the Dashers would not have been arraigned had they admitted their culpability in the brainwashing of Dawn and the kidnapping of Aunt Ida due to their prosecutorial immunity, both portray themselves as innocent members of the establishment who were victimized by Davenport's deviance. In this manner, Waters depicts the Dashers as being despicable and Dawn as a martyr since she pays the ultimate price to stay true to her beliefs about beauty and crime.

In *Entre tinieblas*, the characterization of Sister Julia as a countercultural nun also evokes Silva Vacarro. Allowing the other nuns to choose humorous names for themselves (such as Sister Manure, Sister Rat, and Sister Viper) and permitting them to indulge in their unusual hobbies including owning a pet tiger, writing steamy romance novels, and using LSD, definitely portrays Sister Julia as heading up a nontraditional sisterhood.⁷² These practices along with the party that the Sisters throw in Sister Julia's honor provoke the ire of her superior, the Mother General, who strips Sister Julia of her authority and membership in the Order of the Humiliated Redeemers. Despite these sanctions brought against the Mother Superior, Sister Julia still

⁷² Though Sister Julia at first takes away Sister Rat's novels and threatens to burn them, she ultimately acquiesces.

emerges as the victor in this conflict between the old and new because she has been granted Papal authority to found a new order. Like Vacarro, the Mother Superior succeeds despite setbacks owing to her ingenuity and cunning manipulation of the other characters. Almodóvar in this manner encourages the viewer to side with the unconventional and to rebuff the stringent norms represented by the Mother General. Much akin to how Archie Lee gains a temporary advantage over Silva by burning down the Syndicate Plantation and Gin, the Mother General's attempt to thwart Sister Julia's machinations proves to be fruitless because the hegemony's old-fashioned way of life cannot sustain the inevitability of change. Therefore, Sister Julia represents a revamped Silva Vacarro while the Mother General is conservative like Archie Lee.

Doubtlessly, Waters and Almodóvar pastiche melodrama in order to pay homage to the genre, utilize camp and kitsch to make a queer statement to the viewer, portray female protagonists borrowed from Russ Meyer's pussycats, and recycle themes based on works by Tennessee Williams. Another source of their shared cinematic influences includes the iconoclastic treatment of Catholicism by Luis Buñuel. By far, the Buñuel film that holds the most sway over the work of Waters and Almodóvar is the polemical movie *Viridiana* (1961). Waters mentions *Viridiana* in *Crackpot* in which he discusses the scene during which "filthy beggars riot through a house, listen to Handel's *Messiah*, and are 'photographed' by an old woman obscenely lifting her skirts, as they gather around a table drunkenly and freeze into the infamous parody of da Vinci's *Last Supper*" (151). Although Almodóvar does not cite *Viridiana* as directly as Waters does in *Crackpot*, Almodóvar nonetheless confirms that Buñuel does portray the Catholic faith: "Buñuel would not be who he is if it weren't for Catholicism" (Torres 14).⁷³

⁷³ Both Waters and Almodóvar were raised as Catholics. Waters mentions his Catholic upbringing in *Role Models* (35). Almodóvar describes his Catholic education as, "dark and awful" (Russo 64).

Waters and Almodóvar recycle the anti-Catholic sentiment of *Viridiana* by choosing to portray Catholicism in a negative manner in their own films. Waters most clearly denounces Catholicism in *Multiple Maniacs* while Almodóvar does so in *Entre tinieblas* and especially in *La mala educación* (2004).⁷⁴

Waters definitely utilizes an approach evocative of Buñuel's treatment of Catholicism in *Viridiana* when depicting the religious content of *Multiple Maniacs*. One key sequence involves Mink Stole using a rosary to perform a sexual act on Divine. Waters states that with the "rosary job" scene, "I finally worked Catholicism out of my system" (MacDonald 230). Shot on location in an actual church, this footage unflinchingly shows Mink approach Divine in the sanctuary, kiss her passionately, and then insert a rosary into Divine's anus. While engaging in this bizarre form of sex, Mink encourages Divine to "think about the Stations of the Cross" and narrates the stages of Jesus' persecution and crucifixion in order to heighten Divine's sexual gratification. During this scene, Waters cross cuts to footage of his crew enacting the Stations of the Cross superimposed by the sounds of Divine's moans of ecstasy. The combination of the location of the "rosary job" and the portrayal of the Stations of the Cross disquiets the viewer because of its extremely irreverent treatment of Catholic iconography. This scene is reminiscent of Buñuel's scathing criticism of Catholicism in two sequences of *Viridiana*. The first such scene in *Viridiana* is the one described previously by Waters in which the beggars reenact poses from the *Last Supper* while listening to Handel's *Messiah*. As Víctor Fuentes explains, Buñuel was renowned for satirical anticlericalism in his movies; especially in *Nazarín* (1958), *El ángel exterminador* (1962), *Simón del desierto* (1965), *La vía láctea* (1969) and *Viridiana* (309). With

⁷⁴ While it is possible to analyze the anticlerical content of other films by Waters and Almodóvar, the above mentioned films exhibit the influence of Luis Buñuel the most and are therefore of greatest interest to this chapter.

this “rosary job” segment of *Multiple Maniacs*, Waters taps into Buñuelesque anti-Catholic sentiment and expounds upon it by representing taboo images of a deviant sexual encounter taking place in a church. Like the beggar who attempts to rape Viridiana (who was going to be a nun before visiting her uncle) soon after the caricature of the *Last Supper*, Mink and Divine commit a transgression designed to provoke a strong reaction from the audience. The second scene from *Viridiana* that Waters invokes in *Multiple Maniacs* involves the destruction of the crown of thorns that the title character had revered as sacred until after the sexual assault. Buñuel carefully shows Rita (Ramona’s daughter) accidentally pricking her finger on one of the thorns of the crown, tossing it into a fire, then using a stick to remove it from the flames. The burning corona of thorns symbolizes Viridiana’s abandonment of her faith and piety since it was she who revered this religious icon earlier in the film. Buñuel implies that Viridiana herself discarded it and the other religious symbols (a crucifix and nails) that she brought with her from the convent. In Waters’ world, the religious icon, instead of being merely burned, is depicted as covered in Divine’s fecal matter which Mink wipes away with a handkerchief after the two women have climaxed. In this manner, Waters recycles the anticlericalism of Buñuel’s *Viridiana* into hyperbolic footage that pushes the limits of the trash aesthetic to the profane.

Of Almodóvar’s numerous feature-length films, two stand out as being highly imitative of Buñuel’s anticlericalism: *Entre tinieblas* and *La mala educación*. Like Waters does with *Multiple Maniacs*, Almodóvar pastiches *Viridiana* in order to make the viewer question his or her beliefs about the Catholic Church as a sacrosanct institution. Despite the fact that Almodóvar states when interviewed that *Entre tinieblas* “is not, in my view, an anti-clerical film; that’s a facile superficial interpretation,” further analysis reveals the underpinning anticlerical agenda (Strauss 32). In *Entre tinieblas*, Almodóvar presents the audience with a Mother

Superior based on an inversion of *Viridiana*. Instead of portraying a woman devoted to a life of self-denial, chastity, and other religious values typically associated with nuns, Almodóvar paints Sister Julia as a hardcore, self-deluding drug addict who preys on troubled young women for sexual pleasure. Hardly incidental is Sister Julia's remark to her ward Merche that she dislikes "soft" drugs in favor of cocaine and heroin. On the contrary, Almodóvar painstakingly establishes Sister Julia's preference for "hard" drugs early on in the film when he unflinchingly depicts her lulling Yolanda into a false sense of security by injecting herself with heroin. During this scene, Yolanda states that she wants to leave the convent. In order to enthrall her prey, Sister Julia tells Yolanda that she has brought her something "to calm" her. When Yolanda asks what Sister Julia is going to do, she asks Yolanda, "Don't you trust me?" to which Yolanda replies, "No." Sister Julia then explains, "This heroine will relax you." When Yolanda rejoinders, "I don't know what you're talking about," the Mother Superior methodically prepares a dose of the drug as would a person very experienced with its abuse and then injects herself while using a belt as a tourniquet. This act of the preparation and consumption of the drug takes on religious connotations that go beyond the fact that Sister Julia is a nun with an addiction to heroin. As Almodóvar explains when interviewed by Nuria Vidal:

The only one who has not forgotten her mission is Julieta, the Mother Superior. She is the reason the film could be called religious, because religion is brought about by human beings, or to put it more precisely, by the abjectness of human beings, and to put it even more precisely, by human beings of the female species in trouble with the law or with other types of problems: women in trouble with society having been cast aside by it. In that sense, the film is absolutely religious. Julieta's character is full of piety and all her actions are pious deeds, from shooting up heroin in order to show that it isn't a bad thing, to every last detail. Everything she does is inspired by the love she feels for the girl. And that is religion when you really get down to it. The film does not in any way attack the Catholic religion as such, as some have tried to make out. If I had wanted to make an anti-clerical movie I would have done something altogether different (62).

Notwithstanding Almodóvar's disavowal of anti-Catholic sentiment in this film, it is clear that the ceremony surrounding the ingestion of heroin takes on a religious tone of piety precisely as Almodóvar describes. As a highly stylized act of ritual seduction on Sister Julia's part, the offering of heroin becomes an act of communion that is a scathing parody of traditional Catholic ritual. Instead of offering Yolanda spiritual guidance as Viridiana does the throng of beggars, the Mother Superior proffers her a powerful elixir of sexual seduction combined with addictive drugs. This explains why Yolanda acquiesces and agrees to remain in the convent.

Moreover, Almodóvar paints the Mother Superior as a conniving, treacherous criminal who will stop at nothing to win Yolanda's affections to insinuate that the Catholic Church cannot be trusted. As Allinson posits, "the convent acts as a haven for immorality, a site of opposition to the morality of institutionalized religion" (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 31). As the ironical opposite of the pious Viridiana, Sister Julia exemplifies this immorality in numerous manners. Aside from being a hardened drug addict, the Mother Superior clearly does not take her vow of chastity seriously. Instead of protecting the disadvantaged young women who seek refuge in her nunnery, Sister Julia manipulates them into satisfying her sexual urges. Viewers most clearly witness Sister Julia take advantage of a troubled young woman with the plight of Merche. Merche, who is clearly distressed, enters the convent one night because she is desperate to escape from the police and has nowhere else to go. Sister Julia at first refuses to help her since she is now enamored by Yolanda and has lost interest in Merche. Merche begs on her knees for the Mother Superior to help her, promising that "there won't be any problems this time, I swear." Critical to note is that Merche caresses Sister Julia in hopes that she will be overcome by lust and not turn her away from the sanctuary offered by the convent. Merche's plan succeeds as Sister Julia leads her to a room. Once safely hidden away from the cops, Merche tells Sister Julia that

she needs something to soothe her nerves. When Sister Julia offers her a pill, Merche replies, “I need something stronger than that;” implying she needs a fix of heroin. Sister Julia’s past seduction of Merche echoes in this dialogue because the Mother Superior followed the same *modus operandi* to ensnare Yolanda. As mentioned previously, the following morning finds Sister Julia cuddling in bed with Merche; implying that the two had sex during the night. It is at this point that the Mother Superior shows her true colors by leading the police to Merche instead of protecting her. As Almodóvar explains to Vidal, this act of turning over Merche to the police is not a betrayal because she:

is a kind of composite of all the girls who have loved Julieta and who have then disappeared from her life. But Cecilia [Merche] must be one of the ones who has reached her most deeply, made her suffer most, and who treated her the worst in a very self-centered way. I like to show my heroines in moments when they are the least heroic, when they are actually behaving in a mean, egotistical, spiteful way (68).

A Mother Superior who behaves in a “mean, egotistical, and spiteful way” and allies herself with the police is a clear indictment of the role the Catholic Church played in promulgating the fundamentalist religious values of the Franco regime (Vidal 68). Additionally, this scenario takes the anticlericalism of *Viridiana* a step further by painting a nun as being a master manipulator whose treachery knows no limits. Therefore it comes as no surprise that Sister Julia engages in various criminal enterprises, including extortion and drug trafficking, while using her status as Mother Superior as a front because she is the binary opposite of the humble *Viridiana*. By maligning Sister Julia in such a harsh manner, Almodóvar obviously presents an anticlerical message to the audience much in the same way as Buñuel. Like *Viridiana* herself, Merche learns that putting faith in Catholic dogma can only lead to betrayal and ruin.

The other nuns of the Order of the Humiliated Redeemers also represent caricatures of Viridiana due to their unusual pastimes. Instead of spending the majority of their time in vigilant prayer and performing tasks expected of a nun, each of the Sisters, whose names are transgressive in nature, amuses herself in unconventional ways. As Smith explains, Sister Lost is obsessed with cleaning and has a pet tiger, Sister Manure uses LSD, and Sister Rat authors “sleazy novels” (“*Pepi, Luci, Bom*” 33). In this manner, Almodóvar makes it clear that none of the Sisters exemplifies the virtues expected of women who have dedicated their lives to religious endeavors. Unlike the pious novice Viridiana who prays diligently and provides food and shelter to the indigent, the Sisters of the Humiliated Redeemers are more interested in their secular and self-indulgent behaviors. Although Smith states that Almodóvar “rejects the easy anticlerical option of Buñuel” by making the vicissitudes of each of the Sisters seem natural, the converse of that statement is true (“*Pepi, Luci, Bom*” 33). As Allinson points out, “Almodóvar shows religion as the sublimation of desire for all the nuns” (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 32). Subsequently, Sister Snake’s ceremonious dressing of the religious statues is a cover for what D’Lugo terms her, “amorous relationship with the convent’s chaplain” (*Pedro Almodóvar* 33). Sister Manure’s LSD hallucinations and stroll over broken glass on the floor are a parody of the tradition of a nun’s mystical experiences. The “miracle pies made with the blood and flesh of Christ” sold by the Sisters are “a ridiculous conceit, a literal objectification of the symbolic rituals of communion” (Allinson *A Spanish Labyrinth* 32). Considering Almodóvar’s statement that, “The only one who has not forgotten her mission is Julieta, the Mother Superior,” his anticlerical agenda is obvious in the characterization of the other Sisters as well as in Sister Julia (Vidal 62). Instead of rejecting Buñuel’s anticlerical agenda from *Viridiana*, Almodóvar embraces and augments it with his portrayal of the Sisters of the Humiliated Redeemers.

One key scene of *Entre tinieblas* reproduces the parody of the *Last supper* from *Viridiana* thereby demonstrating Almodóvar's iconoclastic agenda. Soon after Yolanda accepts the heroin from Sister Julia and agrees to stay at the convent, Almodóvar presents a sequence Smith describes as, "reminiscent of the *Last Supper*" ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 33). Yolanda and Sister Julia sit at the center of the frame and are flanked by two nuns on their left and right as they dine. The camera is positioned in the same location as in the *Last Supper* segment of *Viridiana*. During this sequence, Sister Manure experiences LSD-induced hallucinations while Sister Julia and Yolanda (who is dressed in a red sequined evening gown) rush to the window to vomit; their nausea a side effect of mainlining heroin. Though not as conspicuous as the *Last Supper* parody in *Viridiana* because the characters do not assume the same exact pose, the impact on the viewer familiar with Buñuel's work is equally provocative. As Almodóvar explains about *Entre tinieblas*, "Although God is not present in the story, there is a very precise iconography" (Vidal 62). This "precise iconography" pervades the film and includes a system of recycled Catholic icons that constitutes kitsch as clarified by Alejandro Yarza (52). Yarza hypothesizes that the religious kitsch presented in *Entre tinieblas* belongs to a particular classification (52). This type of kitsch is hybridized as a result of the recycling of Catholic religious iconography that is infused with a series of meanings falling outside the realm of their original nature (52). Examples of such kitsch include the crest that the members of the Order of the Humiliated Redeemers wear, the convent itself, the portrait of the Virgin Mary and infant Jesus painted by Virginia, the very habits the nuns wear, and what Yarza identifies as multiple references to the Catholic ritual of communion that are transmuted to the unrequited love story between Sister Julia and Yolanda (64). As per Calinescu's definitions, this recycling of Catholic iconography definitely constitutes kitsch that makes a political statement (236). Almodóvar's specific

anticlerical message is that the Catholic Church's teachings about sin being the inability to communicate with God is erroneous and "one of the cruelest aspects of the Catholic Church" (Vidal 71). When interviewed by Vidal about the influence of Buñuel in *Entre tinieblas*, Almodóvar states that the tiger is the most masculine symbol and that it is also "the most Buñuelian element" (78). Although Almodóvar goes on to deny categorically that *Entre tinieblas* is an anticlerical film like those of Buñuel, his reasoning for why he would not make such a film foreshadows the plot of *La mala educación* as we shall see:

People have tried to compare *Sisters of Night* [Entre tinieblas] with Buñuel's films because of the religious topic, but it isn't true. When they said that any sequence of Buñuel's was more antireligious than my entire film, they were mistaken, because I never tried to make an antireligious film. I am not Catholic. There are aspects of the Catholic Church that I hate and others that I admire, but I in no way have tried to make an anticlerical film. I wasn't interested in making a film out of revenge. You've got to have an excellent memory and a strong dose of bitterness to want to seek revenge for something that happened years past. I don't have either. Which is rather too bad, because memory and hate are two very powerful forces. My own experience with priests as a child was monstrous, but I don't feel greatly affected by it (Vidal 79).

Notwithstanding this repudiation of anticlerical content in *Entre tinieblas*, there can be little doubt that the pastiche of Buñuel's *Last Supper* parody also constitutes kitsch for political motivations. Almodóvar purposefully elects to criticize the Catholic Church by embellishing the imagery of the beggars from *Viridiana* who pose for the "photograph" into a depiction of nuns who abuse illegal drugs while dining. The fact that Sister Manure experiences LSD-induced hallucinations while Sister Julia and Yolanda regurgitate this "last supper" hardly paints the Catholic Church in a positive light. On the contrary, this scene exemplifies Almodóvar's iconoclastic agenda which is a kitsch appropriation of the *Last Supper* segment of *Viridiana*.

Of all of Almodóvar's films to date, the work that most vehemently denounces the Catholic Church in a style similar to Buñuel's *Viridiana* is *La mala educación*. The narrative of

this film is much more sophisticated than *Entre tinieblas*, yet essentially centers on a gay film director (Enrique Goded) whose childhood love (Ignacio) was sexually molested by a priest. Like the pious Viridiana, Enrique and Ignacio both abandon their Catholic faith after coming to the realization that instead of providing protection from harm, it makes them more vulnerable to abuse. For Viridiana, this change of religious conviction comes about as a direct result of a sexual assault by the very beggars she felt obligated by her faith to care for despite the clear warning signs that doing so was a foolhardy endeavor. Similarly, the young Ignacio and Enrique must come to terms with the harsh reality that Catholicism under the Franco dictatorship made boys easy prey for pedophile priests. As D'Lugo posits, the scene in which Padre Manolo attempts to molest Ignacio "is equated in the minds of contemporary spectators with the abuses of the Catholic Church and its historical collusion with the Franco regime" ("Postnostalgia" 379). Crucial to note is that when interviewed about his own experiences as a youth in the Catholic schools, Almodóvar states that the priests sexually abused him and that he was a vocal soloist just like Ignacio (Torres 12-13). Furthermore, Almodóvar's description of when he sang a solo for one of the priests proves that part of Ignacio's story is an autobiographical account of Almodóvar's past:

The headmaster at the Salesian school where I studied liked *Torna a Sorrento* very much. At that time, I was a soloist in the choir. I would spend all day practicing for mass and singing ballads at the piano. One of the priests had the idea of presenting the headmaster with a surprise at his patron saint's day party – which would be a version of *Torna a Sorrento* with a new set of lyrics, and sung by me. The new lyrics were, "Gardener, gardener, all day among your flowers, defending their scents with the flame of your love" (Vidal 79).

When compared to the scene in which Ignacio sings, "Jardinero, jardinero" set to the sound of "Torna a Sorrento," there can be no room for doubt that Almodóvar drew upon his own experiences with the Catholic Church when creating *La mala educación*. This filmic duplication

of the real-life events of Almodóvar proves that he was personally motivated to denounce Catholicism even though he states that when making *Entre tinieblas* he had neither the “excellent memory” nor the “strong dose of bitterness to want to seek revenge for something that happened years past” (Vidal 79). Moreover, unlike the many examples of Almodóvar’s denials that *Entre tinieblas* is anticlerical, he has only the following to say about the presence of the Catholic Church in *La mala educación*:

In *Bad Education*, spirituality is, of course, present through the Church, the official face of spirituality in our society—even if, for me, it represents many other things. In the film, the Catholic liturgy is no longer directed at God, but at the characters in the film. What matters to them is their desire, their passion; more so even than life itself— all are aware that their lifestyles put them at risk. I have no religious faith, yet I feel a deep fascination for religious rituals, which touch me, of course, for what they have of the theatrical. In *Bad Education* there are three masses, an act, which in the Church’s view, unites man with God. However, I leave out God and steal these religious rituals in order to integrate them into the lives of my characters. When Zahara [Ignacio] goes inside the church, Father Manolo is celebrating mass; it’s an act of contrition, and she twists his words to express her own truth. He says, “It’s my fault, my most grievous fault,” and she replies, “It’s your fault, your most grievous fault.” She appropriates the language of the church and makes it her own (Strauss 222).

Reconfiguring Catholic liturgy and using it to make an anticlerical political statement is precisely what Almodóvar does in *La mala educación*. Inspired by Buñuel’s iconoclastic agenda in *Viridiana* and by the events of his own life, Almodóvar methodically portrays the Catholic Church as part of a repressive regime that fomented an environment conducive to sexual abuse of minors and covered up the evidence to avoid public outcry. This is not to say, however, that Almodóvar unjustly depicts the Catholic Church’s involvement in covering up sex abuse scandals out of his personal need to gain revenge. In fact, Almodóvar paints the adult Ignacio as an unscrupulous junkie who extorts money from Padre Manolo so that he can pay for his sexual reassignment surgery. Additionally, Almodóvar creates a sense of empathy for the aged Padre Manolo who is the victim of blackmail by Ignacio. Notwithstanding these concessions on

Almodóvar's part, there can be no doubt that the narratives of *La mala educación* clearly decry the dogma of the Catholic Church. Just like he does with *Entre tinieblas*, Almodóvar builds on the anticlerical agenda of Buñuel's *Viridiana*; this time by portraying protagonists who become disillusioned with the Catholic faith after suffering from a sexual assault.

Also similar to *Entre tinieblas*, *La mala educación* features a scene reminiscent of Buñuel's parody of the *Last Supper*. During this sequence, the young Ignacio sings "Torna a Sorrento" to Padre Manolo in celebration of his birthday. The other priests of the school are present and are seated at the table with Padre Manolo. As Kathleen M. Vernon observes, "The positioning of the priests seated at a long table with Father Manolo in the center recalls Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, and perhaps also Buñuel's musical/visual parody of the same in *Viridiana*" ("Queer Sound" 68). Almodóvar positions Ignacio in the same location (in front of the table) as the indigent woman in *Viridiana* who "photographs" the dining room by lifting her dress to expose her vagina. Crucial to note are Padre Manolo's expressions of lust mixed with guilt during Ignacio's performance. Almodóvar carefully focuses the audience's attention on Padre Manolo's face by crosscutting close up shots taken from Ignacio's perspective with Padre Manolo's. At one key point, the camera points at Padre Manolo and the audience witnesses the other priests who, enraptured by Ignacio's singing, momentarily freeze in place similar to how the beggars pose for the "photograph." At this moment, Padre Manolo, as Ignacio's superimposed voice narrates, looks like he is on the verge of breaking down into tears owing to the fact that he is awash in culpability over his obvious intense sexual attraction to the young boy. This scene unites *Viridiana* with *La mala educación* and exemplifies how Almodóvar expounds upon Buñuel's anticlerical statement. Considering the fact that Almodóvar develops Padre Manolo as a co-conspirator in Ignacio's murder (along with his younger brother

Juan/Ángel) later in the movie, it is clear that *La mala educación* is a denouncement of the Catholic Church. When looking to set his own anticlerical agenda, it is obvious that Almodóvar drew upon the model provided by *Viridiana*.

Having now reviewed the influence of melodrama, camp, kitsch, Meyer, Williams, and Buñuel, an analysis of how B products impacted Waters' and Almodóvar's films gives more insight into the intertextualities between the works of both directors. Of particular interest when discussing the manifestation of B cinema in the pictures of Waters and Almodóvar is the B horror film monster due to its pervasive sway on their work. According to horror film scholar Andrew Tudor, cinematic monsters can take various forms including psychotics, mad scientists, space invaders, and freakish creations of science among the more classical vampires, werewolves, and mummies (20). Tudor concludes the most common type of movie monster is the psychotic (20). The psychopathic murderer represents the most compelling and realistic threat to humanity because the films featuring such characters imply that psychoses are present in all human beings and are inexorably linked to sex (Tudor 45). The sexual predator is also the least expensive to produce, making this type of movie monster an especially attractive vehicle to B film studios. Tudor also explains a boom of B products took place between 1941 and 1946 when "Universal –always the dominant influence in the early years of the genre – was joined by 'Poverty Row' studios like Republic and Monogram. Never heavily resourced, the genre in these years is dominated by the cheap quickie: second-feature vehicles for established horror-movie performers like Karloff and Lugosi" (33). Horror films experienced another surge in popularity from 1956 to 1960 during which the theme of invaders from space became popular (Tudor 39). One feature in particular from this period, Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), impacted Almodóvar to the point that he makes a direct reference to *Body*

Snatchers by utilizing a poster of it in *¡Átame!* (1990), “I used the poster of Siegel’s *Body Snatchers*, a film I adore, because the ‘body snatchers’ are for me a kind of metaphor for heroin, a drug which ‘steals’ your body” (Strauss 102). Tudor classifies *Body Snatchers* as an internal, secular-themed film owing to the invasion motif in which the aliens “replicate humans, replacing the originals with emotionless copies” (44). Therefore an Almodóvarian reduplication of *Body Snatchers* takes the form of a heroin addiction which renders the user an empty shell of his or her former self as seen in the characters Yolanda and Sister Julia from *Entre tinieblas* and Marina in *¡Átame!* B movie monsters in films by Waters take various forms but are especially prominent in *Multiple Maniacs* (1970) and *Female Trouble*. Waters portrays a creature akin to a monstrosity produced by a nuclear science experiment gone horribly wrong and a rampaging gigantic predator in *Multiple Maniacs*. In *Female Trouble*, Waters revamps the B horror movie monster by portraying a psycho killer.

Perhaps the most unusual scene of *Multiple Maniacs* that reflects the influence of the B horror movie monster involves Divine being raped by a gigantic lobster named Lobstora. By depicting an enormous lobster ravishing a hapless female victim, Waters alludes to what Tudor identifies as a subgrouping of horror pictures made during the 1950’s in which the threat to humanity emanates from atomic energy spawning a monstrosity (44). Although Lobstora’s story is not the central narrative of *Multiple Maniacs*, there is no doubt that Waters invokes the B horror movie aesthetic by utilizing a beast reminiscent of the humongous crabs, lizards, spiders, and other mutated animals so prominently portrayed in B horror creature features (Tudor 44). Waters portrays Lobstora’s fleeting rampage from a campy perspective for its shock value. The audience knows not to take Lobstora seriously since, according to Waters, no effort was made to hide the feet of Vince Peranio; the person who dons the lobster costume (MacDonald 233).

Instead, Waters encourages the viewer to laugh at the absurdity of this random sexual assault perpetrated by an aggrandized crustacean while simultaneously associating Lobstora with poorly rendered monsters of B horror cinema. Consequently, Lobstora is a pastiche of movies like *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957), *The Black Scorpion* (1958), and *The Spider* (1959) that functions as a distancing device because its purpose is to make the spectator assume a critical stance (Tudor 44). The utilization of pastiche in this manner recalls Jameson's definition of a nostalgia film as described in chapter one. Waters definitely pays homage to the outmoded and technically flawed B horror films of the past by presenting Lobstora; a monster that demonstrates Waters' desire to experience the genre once more as Jameson describes ("Postmodernism" 116). Instead of denigrating the B horror flick through derisive parody, Waters venerates it by including his own version of the star attraction of such cinema.

Lobstora, however, is not the only monstrous creation that evokes the world of the B horror movie in *Multiple Maniacs*. Waters also portrays Divine herself as being a raging abomination toward the end of the film. When questioned by MacDonald about the allusions to monster movies in *Multiple Maniacs*, Waters affirms the hypothesis that *Multiple Maniacs* is a tribute to such works, "At the end when the National Guard kills Divine, it's like *Gorgo* [1961] – only it's Divine" (233). Waters refers to the military resistance met by *Gorgo*'s mother, a gargantuan lizard, as she runs amok through the streets of London to retrieve her offspring. Like the denizens of London who flee in terror from the colossal vengeful reptile, the citizens who throng the streets of Baltimore bolt from the maniacal, roaring Divine as she attacks anybody who crosses her path. Unlike *Gorgo*'s mother, who triumphs over the multiple assaults by tanks and jets, Divine ultimately succumbs to the barrage of gunfire and dies. Despite the difference in denouement between *Gorgo* and *Multiple Maniacs*, Waters makes it clear that Divine is a

pastiche of the B horror movie monster. For example, Waters' use of nondiegetic music during the scenes in which Divine goes berserk draws upon the hokey aesthetic of B horror cinema. The first musical piece Waters selected to depict Divine's tirade (complete with her foaming at the mouth and vandalizing several cars with a large mallet) is a bombastic orchestral number that evokes horrific images and augments the tension. After the Divine monster is dead, Waters humorously superimposes the song "God Bless America" over the exultant cheers of the soldiers and bystanders; thereby conveying the same theme of the B horror movie in which good prevails over evil. Therefore Waters succeeds in recycling the B horror film monster by portraying Divine as such a creature.

Another monster played by Divine in a John Waters feature is the psychopathic murderess Dawn Davenport in *Female Trouble*. As previously noted, Dawn's victims include her daughter Taffy and members of the audience from her nightclub act. As far as Dawn's sanity is concerned, Waters makes it obvious that the notion that crime is beauty coupled with mainlining liquid eyeliner have transformed the rebellious runaway turned criminal into a homicidal raving lunatic. Dawn's attorney corroborates the hypothesis that she has become psychopathic during his plea to the jury, "But my client is innocent. Innocent by reason of insanity! Listen to her testimony, listen to the whispering of a madwoman and decide for yourselves. If she is not insane, who is?" Unable to distinguish between reality and the fantasy that she is a beautiful model, Dawn is not even capable of recognizing her lawyer; whom she calls a "terrible press agent." Dawn is so deranged that she treats her opportunity to testify in her own defense as a photo opportunity and publicity stunt. This explains why she persistently models while on the stand and flashes her legs to the jurors; behavior the judge calls a, "disgusting display." Considering also that Dawn deliberately associates herself with Juan

Corona, Richard Speck, and Arthur Bremer during the climax of her performance at the club, there is no doubt that Waters characterizes Dawn as a murderous maniac. This depiction of Dawn draws upon the conventions of horror film psycho killers who are “victims of overpowering impulses that well up from within; monsters brought forth by the sleep of reason, not by its attractions. Horror-movie psychotics murder, terrorize, maim and rape because of some inner compulsion, because the psyche harbors the dangerous excess of human passion” (Tudor 185). Similarly, Dawn’s warped motivation for killing is based on her obsessive need to become the most notorious criminal ever known; all for the sake of creating beautiful art. For example, when questioned by her attorney if she strangled Taffy, Dawn replies, “Yes I did, and I’m proud of it. If only you could have seen the photos. They were art!” Like other fictional psychopathic murderers such as Norman Bates from *Psycho* (1960) and Carl Boehm from *Peeping Tom* (1960), Dawn’s depravity twists reality into justification for murder. Dawn rationalizes that since criminality is beauty, homicide must be the ultimate performance art. Likening Dawn to real-life and fictitious murderers in this way depicts her as being one of the most memorable amongst the annals of infamous psycho killers.

Unlike Waters who prominently pastiches monsters in *Multiple Maniacs* and *Female Trouble*, Almodóvar recycles B horror cinema much more subtly by depicting heroin addiction as a metaphor for alien invaders. Perhaps the three most compelling characters from Almodóvar’s work that are heroin addicts are Sister Julia and Yolanda from *Entre tinieblas* and Marina from *¡Átame!* First, as seen previously, the Mother Superior desperately desires a sexual relationship with Yolanda and utilizes heroin and the threat of reporting her to the police to keep the singer under her control. Sister Julia’s scheme is successful only because Yolanda, who at first decides to leave the convent, changes her mind as soon as the Mother Superior offers her the

drug. Despite Sister Julia's attempts to keep Yolanda addicted to heroin, Yolanda eventually suffers through the withdrawal symptoms and regains her independence. Much like Dr. Miles J. Bennell who escapes from the soul-stealing alien pod people in *Body Snatchers*, Yolanda too evades the takeover of her mind and body though at a high cost. The scene in which Almodóvar shows the devastating effects of heroin withdrawal on Yolanda draws upon the invasion theme of *Body Snatchers*. In a reversal of the process in which the townspeople of Santa Mira are replaced by emotionless duplicates during their sleep, Yolanda's vivid hallucinations, delirium trembles and obvious other signs of physical discomfort while she attempts to slumber are parts of a necessary physiological and psychosomatic process to regain what heroine has stolen from her: the very essence of her humanity. The next morning finds Yolanda in far better shape. She no longer looks haggard and is happily working with the plants of the convent's garden. It is telling that Yolanda finds botany therapeutic considering the fact that the farms and greenhouses of Santa Mira are the locations from which the alien invasion of *Body Snatchers* originates. Regaining control of her body, mind, and spirit through gardening thus consummates the *Body Snatchers* narrative for Yolanda who symbolically slays her doppelganger in the same type of location as when Dr. Bennell kills his alien replica in the greenhouse. Therefore on a metaphorical level Yolanda, who was at first like one of the inhuman pod people because of her addiction to heroin, triumphs by winning back her soul.

Unlike Yolanda who recovers from heroin addiction, Almodóvar portrays Marina as being irreparably psychologically harmed by the opiate. Although Marina never takes heroin during the film, her addiction is still very much in control of her body and mind. For example, Marina tells Ricky (her abductor and future lover) that because she was a junkie, no other drug can fully alleviate the pain of her toothache. Moreover, she is unable to obtain legally any

narcotics to stop the throbbing in her tooth because as her doctor explains, Marina is a “naturally-born drug addict” who will definitely relapse back to heroin if given such medications. This addictive personality led to Marina’s former occupation as a pornography star, a career which symbolizes the takeover of her body. The plot of *¡Átame!* parallels the invasion motif of *Body Snatchers* by portraying Marina’s transformation from resistant abductee to willing kidnapping victim of Ricky. Marina’s addictive behavior makes her an easy target for Ricky’s plan to make her fall in love with him by keeping her in bondage. As Smith explains, “Marina’s pharmacodependency thus at once reveals the ‘improper’ character of her body (which does not belong to her, which requires external supplementation) and confirms her ‘hermeticism’ (which divorces her from the world, distances her from the demands of others)” (*Desire* 110). Losing possession of her own body and being distanced from others positions Marina precisely within the narrative of the victims of the body snatchers. Like Dr. Bennell’s girlfriend Becky who falls asleep briefly and is subsequently replaced by her alien copy, Marina’s addictive tendencies have resulted in the loss of her free will. Thus it comes as no surprise when Marina tells Ricky to tie her up to prevent her from attempting escape. As D’Lugo hypothesizes, the metafictional B horror film *Midnight Phantom*, in which Marina is the lead female, is an allusion to *Body Snatchers* and *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) both of which “mirror Marina’s double narrative: her bondage in drugs and by Ricky” (*Pedro Almodóvar* 70). Clearly Almodóvar recycles the alien invasion theme of *Body Snatchers* as an addiction to heroin which strips the user of his or her humanity.

CHAPTER FOUR

BAD GIRLS, DRAG QUEENS, TRANNIES, AND PERVERTS

When considering the parallel strategies Waters and Almodóvar rely upon such as the utilization of melodrama, camp, kitsch, allusions to similar (if not identical) works by the likes of Tennessee Williams, Russ Meyer, Douglas Sirk and Luis Buñuel, the fact that they both also portray archetypal characters is a natural consequence of the recycling processes. An archetypal character, in its literary sense as used in this chapter, refers to a personage that “recurs in different times and places [...] so frequently or prominently as to suggest [...] that it embodies some essential element of ‘universal’ human experience” (“Archetype”). As the analyses of this chapter will prove, the cross-cultural archetypes employed by Almodóvar and Waters include the “bad girl,” drag queens, transsexuals, and straight male sexual deviants. Neither director stereotypes by depicting only the aforementioned classifications of characters within the cinematic worlds he creates. This is important to note because Almodóvar and Waters have been accused of sexism, homophobia, and other forms of stereotyping. Richard Dyer implies that Almodóvar is guilty of “gay misogyny” due to his “enthusiasm for his rape fantasies and crazy ladies” (*Culture of Queers* 47). Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki also note that Almodóvar’s oeuvre “has sparked transnational debates about everything from male-directed feminism and misogyny to the intersections of gay liberation and queer commodification” (12). Similarly,

Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin point out that Waters' camp aesthetic offends many feminists and "lesbian separatists" who view such an approach as being derogatory to both women in general and especially to lesbians (163). Instead of edifying prejudicial norms about women and gays, Almodóvar and Waters include a vast array of gender identities, sexualities, and behaviors that defy traditional definitions of masculinity, femininity, and sexual orientation. In fact, Almodóvar and Waters systematically deconstruct sexist and homophobic norms by proffering each of these characters as parodic manifestations of the idiosyncrasies that make it possible for the audience to recognize each character's identity. Holding up the underpinning norms that govern sexism and homophobia for scrutiny effectively satirizes them. Hence the remainder of the chapter explains how each type of character ridicules sexism and homophobia.

Perhaps of all of the on-screen personas that inhabit the worlds portrayed by Almodóvar and Waters, the "bad girl" provides the most insight into social mores that determine the limits of acceptable "feminine" behavior. As seen in chapter three their depiction of young women who threaten patriarchal authority was heavily influenced by the works of Russ Meyer. Like Meyer's menacing pussycats, the "bad girls" of Almodóvar's and Waters' films are an affront to male-dominated social order. Before proceeding with an explanation of how this type of cross-cultural archetypal character is manifested in movies by Almodóvar and Waters, it is vital to elucidate what it means to be a "bad girl" in each culture and to examine how this figure is manifested uniquely in works by Almodóvar and Waters. What the "bad girl" shares in common in Spain and in the U.S. is that she transgresses the norms that govern the standards of acceptable comportment for female minors as we shall see. As such, the application of sociological studies concerning female juvenile delinquency offers empirical evidence that substantiates how this pervasive personage defies her culture's norms. In Almodóvar's and

Waters' oeuvre, the female juvenile delinquent recurs in several films. For example, Sexilia from *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), the various young women such as Merche who seek refuge in the convent of the Humiliated Redeemers of *Entre tinieblas* (1983), the adolescent drug dealer from *¡Átame!* (1990), the child murderer Rebeca from *Tacones lejanos* (1991), Elena of *Carne trémula* (1997), and Almodóvar's paradigmatic "bad girl" Bom from *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980) all exemplify the definitive characteristics of Spanish female juvenile delinquency. Of Waters' movies, she is present in the characterization of Cookie from *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), Cotton from *Pink Flamingos* (1972), Lu-Lu Fishpaw from *Polyester* (1981), Tracy Turnblad from *Hairspray* (1988), and Waters' quintessential "bad girl" Dawn Davenport from *Female Trouble* (1974). Since Bom and Dawn represent the apogee of the "bad girl" figure, the following analyses focus specifically on the manners in which these two characters exemplify juvenile delinquency.⁷⁵ Subsequently, an explication of female juvenile delinquency in Spain and the United States lays the foundation for better comprehension of Bom and Dawn.

First, Bom meets the Spanish criteria for being an adolescent with delinquent propensities. Given that Bom is a sixteen-year old, it would appear that any offenses she commits would be automatically categorized as acts carried out by a juvenile delinquent. However, this stance erroneously assumes that the age of the offender is the most definitive aspect of juvenile delinquency in Spain. According to sociologists Cristina Rechea, Rosemary Barberet, Juan Montañes, and Luis Arroyo, a Spanish adolescent who commits crimes such as violence against other persons, vandalism, drug and alcohol abuse, and exhibits other illicit behaviors is a juvenile delinquent (1). What constitutes adolescence in Spanish culture differs from the U.S. perspective and is essential to explain. Rechea, Barberet, Montañes and Arroyo

⁷⁵ Future studies of the "bad girl" as manifested in the other characters mentioned above will reveal the underpinning impact of the recycling processes that take place between both directors.

point out that the very concept of adolescence in Spain is not as fixed on a precise age as it is in the United States (1). Instead, the period of transition between childhood and adulthood starts with the onset of biological changes related to age (i.e. puberty) and terminates when the young person considers and declares himself or herself to be an adult (1). As these social scientists explain, adolescence is “an invention of Western and industrial society which is closely related to the legal declaration of reaching the majority of age, the possibilities of familial independence, the finalization of studies, access to work, and other psychological, social, and political circumstances” (1). Adolescence within the Spanish culture is also associated with “crisis, instability, and immaturity” (Rechea 2). Bom manifests these characteristics of a Spanish adolescent in many ways. Although she lives apart from her biological parents, her colorful assortment of friends and fellow band members serve as a surrogate family that supports her needs. The scarcity of resources reflected in the *mise en scène* of her area of the apartment she shares with her associates implies that she is not financially independent from either one of her families. Unlike Pepi, whom Almodóvar portrays as a wealthy independent heiress, Bom must rely upon her newfound “family” for financial support. Also unlike Pepi, who is employed by an advertisement agency, Bom has no access to work. Her role as the lead singer of the group Bomitoni is hardly portrayed as gainful employment. Almodóvar does, however, make it clear that Bom experiences an identity crisis that is ultimately resolved by her becoming more mature at the very end of the film; thereby complying with the “crisis, instability, and immaturity” aspects of Spanish adolescence (Rechea 2). For example, during the final scene of the movie, Bom’s dialogue with Pepi reveals that she has been undergoing a gradual maturation process throughout the film that culminates in a newfound sense of sexuality and self-esteem. During this sequence, Bom bemoans the fact that her taste in sexual partners has changed and that her

band's punk style has now gone out of fashion. Pepi suggests that Bom move in with her and sing *boleros* to earn a living. The fact that Bom needs Pepi's economic support is an indicator that despite her newfound emotional development, she is still an adolescent because she is not yet autonomous. Bom's identity crisis, which again Pepi helps to resolve, is a bildungsroman in which she grapples with her sexuality and self-esteem as she realizes that the punk movement upon which she previously defined herself is coming to a close. Faced by the reality of her failed sadomasochistic relationship with Luci, Bom realizes that she is not as sadistic as she once thought and therefore desires more conventional relationships with women closer to her own age. Understanding that the punk aesthetic is now waning, Bom must also come to terms with the consequences of basing her identity on what turned out to be a fad. This critical moment of self-reflection on Bom's part makes it clear that she is still in the early stages of self-actualization like any other teenager. Therefore, since Bom has no gainful employment, depends on her friends to provide for her financial needs, has not legally declared herself to be an adult, and because she grapples with the crises associated with being a teen, she meets the criteria for being an adolescent according to Spanish norms. This in turn means that any crimes she commits fall into the category of juvenile delinquency as identified by Rechea, Barberet, Montañes and Arroyo. As the following analysis of her transgressions proves, Bom is a paradigm of the Spanish "bad girl" because she embodies female juvenile delinquency.

Essential in comprehending how Bom exemplifies the "bad girl" archetypal character is an explication of how her association with the punk movement in Spain makes her a countercultural figure. As Almodóvar explains to Nuria Vidal, "When I started writing the script I used a lot of punk ideology; the social corruption that punk stood for, which Alaska's part

represented in the film” (35).⁷⁶ As the incarnation of this “social corruption,” Bom definitely meets the criteria of being a violent juvenile delinquent as we shall see. However, in order to conceptualize the significance of the punk movement as it pertains to Alaska/Bom, it is vital to contextualize Spanish punk historically within the cultural movement known as *la movida madrileña*. According to José Manuel Lechado, *la movida* was first officially known as such in 1982 yet its origins can be traced back to 1975 (291-94).⁷⁷ Lechado asserts that *la movida* ended in 1986 while Allinson places its demise between 1984 and 1985 (Lechado 296; Allinson “Alaska” 224). Both critics agree that by 1985, this cultural phenomenon had begun to decline (Lechado 295; Allinson “Alaska” 224). As an aesthetic movement, *la movida* brought about sweeping changes in all modes of artistic expression though not without differing viewpoints from its advocates. Gema Pérez-Sánchez explains the three predominant schools of thought regarding *la movida*:

Interpretation of the scope and aims of this urban, cultural movement vary drastically: from the most celebratory ones (Almodóvar) to nostalgic, pessimistic ones (Vilarós); to the most critical, condescending ones (those launched by older, leftist intellectuals like José Carlos Mainer). For Almodóvar, *la movida*, which, strictly speaking, happened during the first half of the 1980’s, ‘was a crazy, playful, creative time, full of feverish nights, where Madrid became an explosion that left the world with its jaw dropped’ (106).⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Alaska is the stage name of Olvido Gara, the actress who plays Bom.

⁷⁷ Mark Allinson confirms Lechado’s chronology of the inception of *la movida* taking place in the late 1970’s (“Alaska” 224).

⁷⁸ Pérez-Sánchez refers to Teresa Vilarós whose seminal essay “Mono del desencanto. Una crítica cultural de la transición española, 1973-1993” describes “the circumstances that that affected the political and literary development of the generation of intellectuals who, like herself and [Eduardo] Mendicutti, were born between 1950 and 1960” (105).

Despite this difference in perspectives about *la movida*, perhaps its greatest manifestation was in new forms of popular music, transgressive attitudes about sexuality, and an overall desire for experimentation and breaking away from tradition (Lechado 15). An integral part of the aesthetic of *la movida* stems from its association with glam and punk rock, new wave, performers and bands like David Bowie, Depeche Mode, and The Cure (Lechado 18).⁷⁹ Of all of the cultural influences from outside Spain, British punk rock music was the most emulated and found a new transgressive voice within the Spanish punk subculture (Lechado 18). After the nearly forty years of repressive cultural isolationism under the Franco dictatorship, the proponents of *la movida* found the countercultural nature of British punk rock to be particularly alluring precisely because of its defiant stance against the establishment. Alaska, as Allinson explains, “is intimately related to the *movida* and illustrates as well as any the link between it and British punk” (“Alaska” 224). Over time, she came to represent punk, new wave, and cross-dressing the most (Lechado 19).⁸⁰ Alberto Mira and Lechado also recount that Alaska became a gay icon during *la movida* in part because of her public announcement that she “wanted to become a man to be a queer” (Lechado 19; Mira *De Sodoma* 522). Alaska’s two punk groups, Kaka de Luxe (formed in 1977) and the subsequent band known as Alaska y los Pegamoides (1979), became synonymous with *la movida*’s punk underground movement (Lechado 43-47). In Spain, the punk style was associated with subversive, countercultural values as well as “bad taste and corrosive humor” that defiantly undermined the establishment’s notion of acceptable musical artistic expression (Allinson “Alaska” 225-27). Important to note is that prior to the

⁷⁹ Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki also agree that *la movida* had its “origins in the ‘drug culture’ of rock, punk, and new wave music” (5).

⁸⁰ Allinson confirms Lechado’s observation that Alaska is closely associated with *la movida* and British punk (“Alaska” 224).

release of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* in 1980, both Almodóvar and Alaska were unknown to the Spanish public in general (Allinson “Alaska” 223). In fact, as Almodóvar explains, he was the first to have Alaska sing because at the time of the debut of the film, “she was fourteen and played the guitar” (Strauss 19). Hence the audience unfamiliar with Almodóvar and Alaska at the time of the film’s release did not necessarily relate them to their transgressive agendas as would be the case contemporarily with both iconic figures. Notwithstanding this gap in connotations between Almodóvar, Alaska, and *la movida*, even the viewer not familiar with the oeuvre of these creative artists can at the very least recognize that Bom manifests punk characteristics. These are the very traits Almodóvar draws upon to characterize Bom as a uniquely Spanish “bad girl” and should therefore be examined in more detail.

The first characteristic of Bom that identifies her as a “bad girl” involves the punk costumes she sports. When the viewer first sees Bom, she is performing a punk rock song with the fictional group Bomitoni (the actual Pegamoides). The loud and mismatched outfit Bom wears includes hot pink tights, a yellow and black zebra-striped blouse, a leather wristband with long metallic spikes, a black collar offset by a necklace of pink beads, and a headdress consisting of fans and multicolored poofs. Her foundation is very heavy and pale to contrast with the dark eye makeup. Bom’s belt is black and studded with spikes like her wristband. Since Bom is also playing the guitar during the musical number, the overall effect of her clothing, accessories and music make it clear that she is a punk rocker herself. By dressing Bom in this way, Almodóvar implies that she is a rebellious and formidable member of the punk counterculture thereby associating Bom with transgression. Bom’s clearly deliberated choice of punk fashion is also visible in two other scenes. As Bom leads Luci around on a leash in the streets of Madrid, she wears loud leopard-print tights, a masculine-looking black biker jacket, a wide black collar,

spiked heels, and metallic silver blouse. These accouterments are the epitome of the punk predilection for garish and androgynous mismatches. Considering that Bom drags Luci on the leash as though it were perfectly natural, Almodóvar here adds sadism to Bom's image. This in turn directly documents the sadomasochistic lifestyle which was more freely expressed during *la movida* than during the years of the Franco regime (Lechado 20). The fact that Bom is Luci's master embellishes Bom's image as being a "bad girl." Bom strips away control of Luci from her husband, who is a policeman and therefore symbolic of patriarchal authority, thereby making Bom an extremely transgressive figure for her era when considering the legacy of the multiple levels of marginalization imposed upon women and homosexuals by the Franco regime. For example, the passage of *la Ley de Peligrosidad y Rehabilitación Social* in August of 1970 specified that homosexuality, which had previously been sanctioned under *la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes*, was a crime against the State (Mira *De Sodoma* 324). Ten years later, only five after the death of Franco, Almodóvar represents Bom as an adolescent girl who has usurped the erotic and proprietary control of Luci's husband in a manner that shatters the notions that Bom herself should be meek and heterosexual because she is female. As Paul Julian Smith hypothesizes, this sadomasochistic coupling between Bom and Luci is not "a mere reproduction of (repetition) of heterosexual power structures but rather a [...] liberating adoption of erotic roles that are at once constrictive and mobile" ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 30). Instead of portraying a butch/femme duo transposed from patriarchal power structures, Almodóvar exploits the associations between punk and sadomasochism to augment Bom's representation as a "bad girl." Bom therefore is not countercultural based merely on the fact that she is a lesbian (an identity that was classified as dangerous to the Spanish nation prior to and especially during Francoism). She is truly subversive of Spanish patriarchal authority by being an aggressive female punk who, at least at

first, easily bests Luci's husband in the competition for her affections. Despite the fact that she eventually returns to her husband, it is only after Luci has successfully manipulated him into giving her the beating she so desperately desired all along; which is further evidence that women wield the true power in this film. Perhaps the most punk of Bom's outfits that illustrates her identity as a "bad girl" is the virile clothing she wears during the scene in which she practices boxing. Replete with boxing gloves and trunks, the spiked leather wristband and studded leather belt, Bom's costume in this scene combines punk elements with masculinized boxing apparel. These vestments add to Bom's characterization as being the sadistic partner of the Bom/Luci couple while simultaneously reinforcing the depiction of Bom as a tough "bad girl." By choosing to dress Bom in mannish punk regalia, Almodóvar manipulates the audience's horizon of expectations concerning sexuality and gender identity in order to undermine traditional patriarchal definitions of "feminine" behavior and gender-specific clothing.

If Bom's wardrobe was not sufficient to convince the spectator that Bom is a "bad girl," the fact that she eagerly participates in an act of assault and battery on a man she believes to be a police officer fossilizes the image of her as such. In exchange for Pepi's marijuana plants, Bom and the rest of her gang agree to beat the man Pepi erroneously believes to be the policeman who raped her (it is actually the police officer's twin brother). Bom clearly takes great delight in kicking the group's victim while he writhes around on the ground in a vain effort to protect himself. As Smith observes, Bom and the rest are dressed "in nineteenth-century costume as if 'for the *verbena* [...] of San Isidro'" and that they attack the man set to the sound of the *zarzuela*, *La revoltosa* ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 26). Although Allinson states, "There is something of the absurd in the spectacle of the punk in full *zarzuela* costume. The resulting parodic stand on national culture is playful rather than politically subversive," Almodóvar's stance is both ludic

and politically subversive simultaneously because it draws upon the camp aesthetic to make a very political statement (“Alaska” 232). As discussed in chapter one, camp allows an artist to be “serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious” (Sontag 288). Such is the case with this humorous depiction of the attack carried out by Bom while she is dressed in a *zarzuela* outfit. The political message of this segment is that the newly emerging generation of Spaniards represented by Bom and her companions resolutely reject the legacy of Francoism and will lash out violently against any who seek to return to its values. Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz adds, “The band of attackers is dressed in *chulapo* costumes, a ‘typical’ popular Madrid style, with grey pants, black vests, and white ascots. The significance of the disguises is that they suggest Spanish clichés of rebellion against the authority figure while he repeatedly screams, ‘Not on the balls!’” (11). Isolina Ballesteros also affirms that Bom’s group is “dressed in folkloric garb and singing the *zarzuela* ‘*La verbena de la Paloma*’ (The Festival of the Paloma) [and] avenge[s] Pepi’s rape by a fascistic policeman and, in the process, ridicule[s] the remnants of Francoist Spain” (72). What none of the aforementioned critics mention is that Bom is wearing a white dress, a white mantilla on her head, a white shawl around her shoulders, and is carrying a bouquet of white carnations. While true that her dress is indeed of the same style as women who participate in the *verbena*, the fact that it and the other elements of her attire are white is a very significant aspect of the humor of this sequence. Instead of representing purity and innocence, the white of Bom’s costume, in Almodóvar’s hands, ironically symbolizes malevolence and subterfuge. Also important to notice is that Bom and her entourage successfully dupe the ill-fated twin brother into believing that their intentions are to entertain him before commencing the brutality. This is an indication that Bom and the others used their garb to lull the man into a false sense of security; thereby heightening the tension between viewer and on-screen action. Ruses

and deceptive festive garb aside, Bom's actions during this melee provide clear evidence that she enjoys inflicting bodily injury upon another person she believes to be an authority figure; behavior which doubtlessly aligns her within the "bad girl" milieu.

Having now reviewed how Bom's clothing, sadomasochistic tendencies, and attack on a perceived authority figure make her a uniquely Spanish "bad girl" from *la movida* period, an analysis of her dispassionate demeanor gives more insight into her status as a punk. Part of Bom's detached attitude stems from Alaska's real-life identity as a punk (which was well known within the inner circles of *la movida*) and her lack of acting prowess. As Almodóvar explains when interviewed by Frédéric Strauss, what interested him the most in using Alaska had nothing to do with her limited acting skills, but rather "her character, her nature [that] interested me a lot. Most of all she had the guts to agree to being in the film. I like her a lot" (19). Indeed, it was Alaska's nature as a punk "bad girl" that made her such an intriguing character which in turn is reflected in Bom.⁸¹ Alaska's lack of acting abilities comes across through Bom as a general attitude of purposeful disinterest common to the punk aesthetic. As Smith posits, "the monotonous performance of Bom [...] does indeed give the impression of antipathy rather than sadism, however much she drags Luci round on a dog collar" ("*Pepi, Luci, Bom*" 29). Always aware of the impression that this will leave on the audience, Almodóvar has Pepi ironically coach Bom and Luci on how to make their performances during the film within the film more realistic. Pepi informs the couple, "In addition to being yourselves, you have to represent your own characters. And representation always looks artificial. [To Luci] Otherwise nobody will believe you are a masochist. [To Bom] You too [...] I know you're violent and perverted, but looking the way you do, you seem more unpleasant than sadistic." Bom, whose reply indicates

⁸¹ Contemporarily, Alaska is a member of Fangoria and is now associated with "goth" instead of punk as she was during *la movida* (Allinson "Alaska" 234).

that she is not enthusiastic about Pepi's film, shrugs off Pepi's suggestions to improve her acting and resumes exercising. This interchange between the actresses is highly self-reflexive and reveals that Alaska successfully conveys the apathetic attitude which edifies Bom's identity as a punk. Almodóvar utilizes this scene for its estrangement impact on the viewer so that the audience will be more aware of the general change in attitude about the punk aesthetic which was beginning to give way to a new generation of pop. As Allinson explains:

At every opportunity, Almodóvar exploits Alaska's ambivalence, caught between a second-hand punk culture which is fading fast, and the new kitsch pop which she will soon come to embody in her real life public persona" [...] And at the end of the film, Bom's look (a combination of punk remnants and kitsch pop) is exactly the look which she sports on the cover of Alaska and the Pegamoides' first album. The changing times are signaled in the film itself. Bom bemoans the stagnation of the music scene and Pepi suggests she become a singer of *boleros* ("Alaska" 233).

Bom's antipathy therefore is a deliberate representation of how a punk "bad girl" reacts to the changing times and is not simply the result of poor acting. In fact, Almodóvar carefully orchestrates the entire film, especially during the scene in which Pepi encourages Bom and Luci to exaggerate their emotional reactions for the camera, so that Bom manifests a decidedly "bad girl" aura. Complete disinterest thus becomes a characteristic innate to the punk "bad girl."

Having now analyzed how Bom is Almodóvar's ultimate "bad girl," an investigation of how this archetypal character manifests in *Female Trouble* reveals similarities between Bom and Dawn. Before examining these cross-cultural commonalities, it is necessary to explain what constitutes female juvenile delinquency within the U.S. culture. Determining the precise set of socially unacceptable behaviors that constitute delinquency on the part of U.S. adolescent females is a relatively recent and polemical sociological endeavor. Rosemary Barberet, Benjamin Bowling, Josine Junger-Tas, Christina Rechea-Alberola, John van Kesteren, and Andrew Zurawan point out that girls' delinquency was not a topic of sociological and

criminological study in Western societies until the 1970s (33). As Leslie D. Leve and Patricia Chamberlain explain, studies of delinquency in childhood and adolescence tend to assume that the factors that contribute to criminality in teenage boys are the same for girls (439). Nevertheless, Leve and Chamberlain point out that a major differentiating facet of female juvenile delinquency is the “girls’ adherence to the feminine gender stereotype, which does not sanction aggressive behavior” (440). Leve and Chamberlain also give these other characteristics of female juvenile delinquency: risky sexual behavior, mental illness, drug abuse, dropping out of school, behavior deemed by the hegemony to constitute criminality, a defiant attitude, and unplanned teen parenthood (440-41). Barberet et al categorize juvenile delinquency similarly including: “problem behaviors;” such as truancy, running away, and alcohol consumption; “youth-related offenses;” such as “fare dodging and driving without license and or without insurance,” “property offenses;” including theft, violence against persons; and lastly, drug abuse (12). Donald J. Shoemaker defines delinquent behavior as “illegal acts, whether criminal or status, which are committed by youth under the age of 18” (*Theories* 3).⁸² Herein lies the chief difference between the meaning of delinquency in Spain and the United States. In the US, the definition of an adolescent is much more rigid than the Spanish meaning. This in turn implies that any act as described above carried out by Dawn while she is younger than eighteen constitutes an act of juvenile delinquency. After reviewing these sociological explanations of delinquency, it is remarkable that a girl in the United States need only to participate in risky sexual behavior one time to be considered a delinquent while sexual promiscuity is never mentioned as a definitive trait for boys. These studies therefore reveal the underpinning sexist norms of US cultural identity since there is a clear double standard regarding delinquency, gender, and being sexually active at a young age. Part of Waters’ political agenda with the

⁸² A status offense is an act that “would not be considered criminal if one were an adult” (Shoemaker *Juvenile* 271).

representation of Dawn as the “bad girl” is to ridicule sexism as we shall see. With this background information about what it means to be a female juvenile delinquent in the United States, it will be easier to comprehend how Dawn Davenport represents Waters’ take on the figure of the “bad girl.”

First, Dawn meets the criteria for being an American female juvenile delinquent because she manifests a defiant attitude, wants to drop out of school, and has a violent disposition. Waters very carefully crafts this image of Dawn as a “bad girl” from a camp perspective by treating a serious subject (high school dropout and its relationship to delinquency) humorously and by greatly exaggerating Dawn’s recalcitrant behaviors. Viewers learn this in the very first scene of the film when Dawn establishes her oppositional defiance towards school. When asked by her friend Concetta if she finished her geography homework, Dawn retorts, “Fuck, no! Fuck homework! Who cares if we fail? I want to quit, and I am, right after I get my Christmas presents.” The audience readily associates Dawn’s desire to drop out of school with delinquency as documented by the findings of Shoemaker, Leve, and Chamberlain because of the fact that high school dropouts are statistically more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (Shoemaker *Juvenile* 168; Leve and Chamberlain 440). To strengthen Dawn’s portrayal as a teen who shows little respect for authority figures, Waters has her arrive tardy to class, eat a meatball sandwich while her teacher is lecturing, pass notes to other students surreptitiously, give threatening looks to a student who protests Dawn’s disrespectful comportment, and deny that she was guilty of any wrongdoing.⁸³ The audience is therefore aware from the very start of the film that Dawn is a high school student who manifests the ungovernability associated with

⁸³ Important to note is that Waters portrays Concetta as being a violent delinquent since she threatens to stab another student.

delinquency as described by Shoemaker (*Theories* 310). To add to Dawn's mystique as a delinquent, Waters adds a violent outburst to the scene. Dawn accosts another student by yanking up the young lady from her desk by pulling her hair; an action that makes Dawn more threatening since this violent act surpasses typical female delinquent behaviors as described by Shoemaker's notion of the "wayward girl" (*Theories* 314).⁸⁴ Although the teacher halts Dawn's assault, it is clear that her response to receiving an insult (that she is fat) is to lash out physically. This in turn augments Dawn's persona as a dangerous and deviant "bad girl" since violent crimes are more traditionally associated with male offenders (Shoemaker *Theories* 314). Nevertheless, in characterizing Dawn as the "bad girl" in this manner, Waters presents a scathing parody of feminine juvenile delinquency that ridicules the notion that schools produce "good girls." As explained in chapter two, Waters tends to make audiences laugh at topics that are uncomfortable because he finds the ensuing confusion to be humorous (MacDonald 231). This humor is based on camp and has a definite political statement. Waters' agenda with presenting such a hostile and violent young Dawn from the camp perspective is to encourage the audience to side with her and to reject hegemonic assumptions that formalized education is a deterrent of juvenile delinquency. Moreover, Waters wants his audience to agree with Dawn and her friends that the rigidity and normalizing effect of school is in fact a primary causative factor of their delinquent tendencies. This explains why as viewers we laugh at Dawn's rejection of the notion that education is valuable and that girls by default are less violent than boys. This also clarifies why as spectators we take Dawn's side and agree that the "good girl" whom she attacks is a villain who got what she deserved because of her whining protestations that Dawn and those "awful

⁸⁴ A "wayward girl" is a delinquent female "characterized as having difficulties at home, becoming incorrigible or 'ungovernable,' running away from home, becoming or suspected of becoming sexually promiscuous, and perhaps ultimately becoming involved in various acts of criminal behavior" (Shoemaker *Theories* 314). Wayward girls, nevertheless, tend to commit more status offenses than carry out violent acts against other persons (Shoemaker *Theories* 314).

cheap girls”(Dawn and her friends) are preventing her from obtaining “an education so I can get into college, it’s not fair.” Notwithstanding this ludic stance on Waters’ part, it is clear that Dawn is clearly in compliance with sociological definitions of US female juvenile delinquency because of her defiance, compulsion to quit school, and the fact that she batters another student. These attributes definitely add to her image as a “bad girl,” but in such a way as to satirize the establishment’s assumptions that girls are docile and receptive students.

The very next segment, which also takes place at school, further establishes Dawn as a juvenile delinquent who is part of a gang and also does so from a camp perspective. According to Shoemaker, a gang is a peer group “consisting of members who share similar social characteristics such as gender, social class, age and ethnicity” (*Juvenile* 222). Shoemaker is careful to point out that gangs do not necessarily consist of groups of criminals whose goal is to profit; but instead can be “social gangs in that their members interact with one another much like members of a social club or a clique” (*Juvenile* 221). Such is the case with Dawn, Concetta and Chiclet. All three are girls, around the same age, hail from the same ethnic background, and are depicted as being a group that ostracizes itself from the other students. Moreover, Waters makes it clear that Concetta and Chiclet are part of Dawn’s social gang because they share her delinquent propensities. For example, each young woman is smoking a cigarette in the girls’ bathroom which would constitute a status offense since smoking is prohibited in bathrooms (Shoemaker *Juvenile* 191). Although cigarette usage was commonplace for U.S. teens during the mid 1970’s, Waters doubtlessly depicts the trio in this manner in order to amplify their identities as rebellious adolescents who encourage each other to participate in illicit activities (Shoemaker *Juvenile* 196). To fossilize this depiction of all three girls as comprising a social gang, Waters offers up more evidence of their criminal tendencies through the ensuing dialogue of this scene.

For example, Dawn perfunctorily declares, “I’d like to set fire to this dump;” thereby bragging that she would happily commit an act of arson. Concetta remarks that she plans to return all of her upcoming Christmas presents to exchange them for cash; an act that reflects her insolent disposition since “nice girls” would keep the gifts and express appreciation for them to their parents. Chiclet announces they are skipping class and asks, “Who cares if we fail? It would be fun to be expelled!” thereby aligning her within the juvenile delinquent paradigm that much more since expulsion from school is the most serious sanction available to secondary administrators and because it would effectively make Chiclet a dropout. To enhance Dawn’s image as being the most transgressive of the three, Waters has her announce, “I hope I get arrested! I hate this school and all these ignorant teachers who don’t know one thing! I’m the one who should be teaching! I hate my parents too!” Hoping to be arrested singles Dawn out as being a more formidable female delinquent since data indicates that girls are far less likely to be arrested than male offenders (Shoemaker *Juvenile* 34). By stating that she despises her parents and by denigrating her teachers, Dawn exhibits the “hostile or antagonistic demeanor” associated with delinquents who are more likely to be arrested than those who manifest a more “civil” attitude (Shoemaker *Juvenile* 346). By exaggerating Dawn’s identity as the ultimate “bad girl” in this manner, Waters successfully employs the hyperbole of camp in agreement with Sontag’s findings (275). Camp’s humor and artifice become tools Waters utilizes in order to deconstruct both hegemonic assumptions that adolescent females are innately docile and that formalized education guarantees the best possible opportunity for success for teens. Waters therefore encourages the ticketholder to identify with this social gang and to reject the normalizing impact of the education system. Waters portrays this trio of “bad girls” as the most interesting characters whose defiance of school parallels Waters’ antiestablishment agenda. These three are

clearly portrayed as being the heroines of the movie precisely because they transgress the norms in such an ostentatious manner.

If there was any doubt about Dawn's identity as a "bad girl" while at school, Waters makes it abundantly clear that Dawn evinces the characteristics of a juvenile delinquent while interacting with her parents. During the scene immediately following the bathroom segment, viewers behold Dawn and her parents celebrating Christmas together followed by Dawn attacking them both and running away from home. Waters first has Dawn's mother beg her father Howard to refrain from fighting with Dawn; especially "not on Christmas." After Dawn opens her gift and realizes the shoes are not the cha-cha heels she desired, she reprimands her mother and father for not conceding to her wishes. Howard's response, "Nice girls don't wear cha-cha heels" reinforces the idea of Dawn being refractory and implies that she has proclivities for provocative apparel. Revisiting Shoemaker's definition of a "wayward girl," even the suspicion that a girl is promiscuous is one of the definitive characteristics of female delinquency (*Theories* 314). Dawn then proceeds to call her mother a bitch and shove her so that the Christmas tree pins her mother to the floor. Dawn also pushes her father away from her and then wails, "Lay off me! I hate you! Fuck you! Fuck you both you awful people! You're not my parents! I hate you, I hate this house, and I hate Christmas!" As Dawn bolts from the home sobbing, Howard solidifies Dawn's identity as a juvenile delinquent by shouting, "You're going to a home for girls. That's where we're going to put you! I'm calling the juvenile authorities right now!" Waters ironically superimposes the song, "Merry Merry Merry Merry Christmas" (by Ruby Wright, performed by Cliff Lash and his Orchestra and the Dick Noel Singers) over shots of Dawn (who is wearing only her pajamas and a coat) as she runs across a field to a road and begins hitchhiking. The juxtaposition of this jingle in which a children's choral group

gleefully wishes the listener a merry Christmas and happy holiday versus Dawn's desperate plight as an adolescent girl who just assaulted both parents and absconded emphasizes her status as a "bad girl" from a definitively camp perspective while simultaneously complying with Shoemaker's observation about running away from home being a trait of a "wayward" girl (*Theories* 314). The artificiality of a drag queen playing a runaway female juvenile delinquent coupled with the humor and incongruity between song and action draws upon the camp aesthetic as a distancing device.⁸⁵ The audience knows not to take this combative situation seriously and is therefore more receptive to Waters' critique of the establishment's views about the importance and influence of parents on youth. Waters clearly portrays this "wayward" girl as being the heroine who must overcome the hegemonic oppression symbolized by her parents. By combining irony and camp, Waters successfully convinces the viewer to side with Dawn and to reject her parents' authoritative stance. Waters reveals his thought processes behind the characterization of Dawn and this fight with her parents during an interview with John G. Ives. Ives poses the question:

Well, what you see in the Dawn Davenport early years is that she's totally out of control and impossible and her parents are fairly innocent, but if you stop and think about it for a minute, you've got to conclude that if this child is this bad, so completely out of control and insane that she would throw her mother under the Christmas tree because she didn't get cha-cha heels, maybe her parents did something awful to her. And then, when she gets older, and she has a child..." (108).

Waters responds, "See, I never thought that her parents did something awful to her. I guess I thought it would be more interesting if her parents didn't do anything bad to her and she was just rotten" (108). When Ives then asks Waters if Dawn is "[j]ust a bad seed," Waters responds:

⁸⁵ See chapter two for a definition of camp and chapter three for the meaning of distancing device.

Yes. *The Bad Seed* [1956] was my Christmas Card one year. [...] So that's where that came from. Her parents were just so suburban. They were like, "Come on Dawn, please." It was almost how I saw all of my friends' parents, like when Divine's parents said, "What are you thinking about?" They were so appalled at the shit we were doing that they'd just say, "How could you do this?" That's what I wanted to show. I didn't think of Divine's (Dawn Davenport's) parents as being white trash child beaters; she became that because she was pregnant, she had no money-every horrible thing that could happen to a runaway girl happened to her (108).

The characterization of Dawn as a juvenile delinquent is therefore a pastiche of *The Bad Seed* as Waters explains above. This emulation of the "bad girl" played by Patty McCormack complies with Jameson's notion of a nostalgia film in that Waters satisfies his desire to revive this notion of a child who was evil at birth (the core of *The Bad Seed*'s narrative); yet he executes this pastiche from a campy perspective so that viewers will laugh at Dawn's parents and side with Dawn instead of empathizing with her mother and father (Jameson "Postmodernism" 116). Waters' comments about Dawn's parents being suburbanites also concur with Robt Pela's conclusion that Waters typically manifests "contempt for class distinction with his condemnation of suburban America" (112). This combat between a "wayward" girl and her parents thus cannot be taken at face value. At a symbolic level, it is representative of the hegemony asserting its considerable clout over the marginalized who consequently rebel by transgressing the norms. Despite the frivolity of this camp reenactment of *The Bad Seed*, the message that those who are ostracized by society can empower themselves by means of civil disobedience is quite staid; thereby illustrating the complexity of how camp "dethrones the serious" since "[o]ne can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious" as described by Sontag (288). Dawn's identity as a "bad girl" is thus augmented through physical altercation with her parents in order to make the audience, as Waters explains to MacDonald, "laugh at things they feel unsafe laughing at" (231). As the ultimate "bad girl," Dawn embodies the countercultural agenda of *Female Trouble* by refusing to subordinate herself to her parents' demands.

The decisions Dawn makes after fleeing from her home plot her progression from being a juvenile delinquent and gang member to becoming the monstrous murderess and ultimate “bad girl” into which she evolves at the end of the film. Dawn’s first action after her flight from her parents is to have sex with Earl and subsequently become a teen mother of an illegitimate child. In doing so, Dawn effectively marginalizes herself by moving down the social hierarchy from the middle class, as represented by her bourgeois family, to living destitute and alone as an unwed underage mother. Dawn’s unsuccessful attempt to garner any child support from Earl (as described in chapter two) means that she must eventually resort to criminal enterprises to support herself and her daughter Taffy financially due to her lack of education. As the title screen and montage of shots of Dawn depict, her early career spans from being a waitress, an exotic dancer, a prostitute (along with Chiclet and Concetta), to a mugger (also accompanied by Chiclet and Concetta). While it is true that Waters never gives Dawn’s precise age, it is possible to infer from the title screens that she spends her teen years as a juvenile delinquent whose transgressions progressively evolve from the unruly to the criminal. While Dawn is still an adolescent, the audience witnesses her soliciting as a prostitute and assaulting a drunken bum with Chiclet and Concetta as her accomplices. Dawn’s delinquent proclivities as a teenager therefore become the launching point for her career as a criminal whose greatest professional achievement is murder. For Waters therefore, the “bad girl” is a juvenile delinquent whose oppositional defiance of all authority figures takes the form of petty crimes and status offenses and inevitably leads to a life as a ruthless felon.

Now that the analysis of how Bom and Dawn are “bad girls” yet nonetheless very distinct owing to their different cultural and historical settings, a review of what they share in common answers the question of what exactly a “bad girl” is. Age is certainly a major factor

since the very term “bad girl” implies youth. Dawn and Bom definitely share delinquent propensities in common. The aspect of both “bad girls” that is perhaps the most menacing to their patriarchal societies is the fact that both adolescents commit heinous crimes of violence against male authority figures even though Bom and Dawn are so young. The implicit threat is twofold: a female (the minority) victimizes a male (the majority) and the young (the disempowered) take advantage of adults (the empowered); both of which are diametrically opposed to traditional power structures. Moreover, the “bad girl” is dangerous to the hegemony because of the implied danger that her delinquent behavior will not only continue into adulthood, but will also escalate into worse transgressions as is so clearly the case with Dawn. Next, by refusing to dress according to the standards handed down to them by patriarchal control, Bom and Dawn go beyond the rebellion expected of a teenage girl and delve into defiant transgression. Bom does so to represent the changing culture of punk rock and kitsch pop while Dawn dresses as she does to reflect her descent from sexually provocative rebellious teen into an insane murderess. Extrapolating further from what Bom and Dawn share in common, “bad girls” use illegal drugs. Even though Bom refuses Pepi’s offer of cocaine during the scene in which Pepi tells Bom and Luci about how to perform for their movie, there can be no doubt that Bom has used drugs recreationally before and will do so again in agreement with the “drug culture” of the punk lifestyle. For Dawn, mainlining liquid eyeliner is a metaphor for heroin use which in turn insinuates that the use of controlled substances is concurrent with being a “bad girl” and is a clear indicator of future criminality. Another aspect of a “bad girl’s” repertoire of transgressive behaviors includes an attitude of oppositional defiance towards authority figures. While Dawn rebels against her teachers and parents as a juvenile delinquent, Bom goes as far as to carry out an actual physical assault against a man whom she believes to be a policeman. Moreover, both

Bom and Dawn view traditional patriarchal norms from perspectives that range from antipathy to outright anathema. In this sense, both are “bad girls” because they manifest an overall negative attitude regarding “feminine” behaviors such as being nurturing, subservient, and demure. Dawn is an abusive mother who dominates the men in her life and is portrayed as a larger than life figure while Bom is the master of a sadomasochistic relationship and lead singer of a punk rock band. Finally, Waters and Almodóvar characterize “bad girls” as young women who engage in nontraditional sexual relationships. Dawn’s sexual escapades include the tryst with Earl, the aberrant fetishes with her husband Gator, and a lesbian relationship while she is incarcerated. Bom’s gamut of sexual encounters includes giving a “golden shower” to Luci, making Luci eat her phlegm, and ordering Luci to perform fellatio on the winner of the *erecciones generales* contest. Overall, a “bad girl” defies patriarchal conventions with a unique sense of style, which makes her an irresistible character for Waters and Almodóvar alike.

Like the “bad girl,” the drag queen is another character that recurs frequently in the oeuvre of Almodóvar and Waters to the point that she incarnates the social deviance of strong feminine characters and suggests that both directors share cross-cultural agendas. In Almodóvar’s films, drag queens are featured in *Pepi, Luci, Bom, Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984), and *La mala educación* (2004). One film in particular, *Tacones lejanos* (1991) depicts a *travestí* as a protagonist as examined in chapter three.⁸⁶ In Waters’ case, Divine plays a leading role in all but one of his short films: namely *Roman Candles* (1966), *Eat Your Makeup* (1968), *Mondo Trasho* (1969), and *The Diane*

⁸⁶ Refer to chapter three for an explanation of the differences between a drag queen and a *travestí*.

Linkletter Story (1969).⁸⁷ Of Waters' feature-length films, Divine plays the lead in *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), *Pink Flamingos* (1972), *Female Trouble* (1974), and *Polyester* (1981).⁸⁸

Before Divine's demise in 1988, she played two supporting roles in Waters' *Hairspray* (1988) (Waters ix).⁸⁹ Considering that both directors choose to focus on drag queens or cross-dressers logically raises questions that are best examined from a queer theory perspective. Recalling Annamarie Jagose's definition of queer from chapter one is essential to comprehending the methodology and meaning behind the use of drag and *travestismo* by Almodóvar and Waters:

queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire. [...] queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. Institutionally, queer has been associated most prominently with lesbian and gay subjects, but its analytic framework also includes topics such as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Demonstrating the impossibility of any 'natural' sexuality, it calls into question even such apparently unproblematic terms as 'man' and 'woman' (3).⁹⁰

As the analysis in this chapter reveals, drag via its connection to camp offers Almodóvar and Waters a means by which the audience identifies with characters that in traditional settings

⁸⁷ To date, Waters' short films are not widely distributed. In the case of *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket* (1964), Waters has not screened this movie since its original release (*Shock Value* 50). Since these works are currently unavailable, this chapter focuses solely on Waters' feature-length films.

⁸⁸ Though true that Divine plays the protagonist of *Polyester*, Waters' purpose with this film is to deconstruct the idealized, hegemonic definition of a family. For example, when interviewed by Gerald Peary in 1997, Waters explains that with *Polyester*, he sought to debunk "the 'normal'" family as seen in the television show *Father Knows Best* (Egan 69). Since Divine's character, Francine Fishpaw, is more dedicated to spoofing the middle class housewife and mother, the focus of *Polyester* is far less queer than *Pink Flamingos* and *Female Trouble*. Consequently, the analysis that follows studies the queer construction and significance of drag in *Multiple Maniacs*, *Pink Flamingos*, and *Female Trouble*.

⁸⁹ As Waters explains in the documentary *Divine Trash*, he never wanted to cast another female impersonator in any of his films after Divine's death because she was irreplaceable. This explains why drag queens do not appear in any of his works after *Hairspray*.

⁹⁰ As explained in chapter two, bisexuality also falls within the spectrum of queer theory although Jagose does not use that specific term in the above definition.

would be marginalized. Essentially, the theatricality, artificiality, exaggeration, and humor of drag and *travestismo* disarm the viewer's resistance to the uniquely queer statements made in films in which such characters appear. More specifically, they present drag queens and *travestís* to undermine traditional patriarchal definitions of gender identity and sexual orientation. As the embodiment of strong feminine leads, drag queens and *travestís* in the worlds of Almodóvar and Waters debunk sexist and homophobic beliefs.

The figures of the drag queen and the *travestí* in Almodóvar's hands become archetypal characters that profoundly critique hegemonic notions about men who cross-dress and their sexual orientations. In fact, Almodóvar deliberately obfuscates the sexual orientation and gender identity of his cross-dressed characters in a much more sophisticated and subversive manner than Waters. Whereas Waters always depicts Divine as if she is in reality a woman, Almodóvar's treatment of drag and cross-dressing unerringly deconstructs the very meaning of these terms. This practice on Almodóvar's part manipulates the horizon of expectations of the viewer and undermines traditional definitions of sexuality, gender identity, cross-dressing, and drag. As is the case with queer theory, which hypothesizes that the very concept of homosexuality is just as oppressive as heteronormativity, Almodóvar's cross-dressed characters cannot be placed neatly into the singular category of drag queen as is possible with Divine (López Penedo 192). An examination of all characters that cross-dress in films by Almodóvar is a daunting task and must take into account both male and female protagonists. For example, as noted previously in the analysis of the "bad girl," Bom often dons clothing of the opposite gender to enhance her punk image; a practice repeated by Sexilia from *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982) when she is performing with her band. *Laberinto de pasiones* also features the Empress Toraya who dons a man's suit as a disguise and goes "cruising" in order to attempt to locate Riza (Acevedo-Muñoz 32). Chapter

five examines in detail how María Cardenal from *Matador* (1986) cross-dresses in order to deconstruct patriarchal assumptions that femininity equals passivity. Lydia from *Hable con ella* (2002) definitely defies Spanish traditions of femininity and masculinity by being a bullfighter, complete with her *traje de luces* and extremely virile makeup and hairstyle while in the bullring. Future studies of Almodóvar's female characters who cross-dress will reveal a similar antisexist and anti-homophobic agenda as is the case with the representation of drag queens and *travestís*. However, for purposes of this chapter, the more salient archetypal characters are men who cross-dress because the overriding objective of this dissertation is to examine how Almodóvar and Waters recycle each other's works. This is not to say that Waters does not portray cross-dressing women in his films. In fact, Mole from *Desperate Living* (1977) is the epitome of a woman who wears men's clothing. Nevertheless, unlike Almodóvar, Waters (to date) does not depict any other female characters who dress in men's attire to the point that they could be considered to be recurrent enough to be an archetypal character. Since this leaves very little room for comparison between Almodóvar and Waters, the analyses that follow focus on men who cross-dress because this type of character definitely recurs throughout their films. Taking this caveat into consideration, the remainder of the discussion that follows investigates Almodóvar's movies during which men cross-dress in chronological order by release date starting with Fanny McNamara from *Pepi, Luci, Bom*.

Whereas Divine's look from *Multiple Maniacs*, *Pink Flamingos*, and *Female Trouble* unforgettably exaggerates her "female" anatomical parts, Fanny McNamara's appearance in *Pepi, Luci, Bom* deconstructs the stereotypical belief that all drag queens want to be perceived as being actual women (i.e. "pass for real"). As described in chapter two, Fanny's outfit during the performance of Bomitoni draws attention to her male sex characteristics in order to drive home

the point that gender identity is a type of performance. Almodóvar was undoubtedly aware of drag in all of its manifestations prior to scripting this film due to the fact that he and McNamara used to perform comedic drag shows in Madrid during *la movida* (Lechado 271). It is no coincidence then that Almodóvar made no attempt to construct Fanny's image into one that assumes she is a woman as is the case with Waters' treatment of Divine. This makes Almodóvar's portrayal of drag much more transgressive than Waters' because Almodóvar constantly challenges the viewer's expectations about gender identity and sexual orientation whereas with Divine it is a given that she is in actuality a gay man playing female roles. Almodóvar consistently underscores the subjectivity of gender identity by providing the viewer an example of a drag queen whose defies being readily identified as male or female. The spectator must note how Fanny refers to herself using feminine adjectives to discern her self-proclaimed femininity. Even though this practice of using feminine affirmations to refer to oneself is common among some homosexual males and is most often meant to be taken humorously, Fanny's insistence upon the feminine is a skillful performance of femininity that Almodóvar utilizes to imply that gender is a construction of the individual and not an identity assigned by society. This in turn exemplifies Jagose's definition of queer in that Fanny questions the very concept of a "natural" biological sex while employing drag to do so (3). By making it clear that Fanny is a man in drag who does not try to hide his masculine features yet self-identifies as feminine, Almodóvar skillfully reminds the audience that gender identity is performative in nature and not an innate trait determined by biological factors. Moreover, with this mixture of masculine and feminine traits as presented by McNamara, Almodóvar also deconstructs the heteronormative assumption that all drag performers feel compelled to "pass for real" or even surpass femininity itself via exaggeration of feminine traits. Almodóvar's message

is twofold: it is a futile endeavor to assign gender identity based solely on the anatomical features of the performer and it is equally erroneous to presume that all drag queens perform in drag because they want to be mistaken for “real” women. Instead, Almodóvar wants his audience to conclude that sexuality and gender identity are roles that the individual determines. In Almodóvar’s world, biological and sociological factors do not mandate how a person chooses to self-identify.

In the film *Laberinto de pasiones*, Almodóvar once more employs drag to make a queer statement to the audience but does so in a much more self-reflexive manner. During one key sequence of this film, Almodóvar himself along with Fanny McNamara make an on-stage appearance while dressed in drag and sing, “Suck It to Me.” Like the depiction of drag in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, both Almodóvar and McNamara sport wardrobe and makeup that make it obvious they are men who are cross-dressing. Almodóvar is wearing women’s hosiery, a leather coat that cut to look like a miniskirt, foundation, earrings, lipstick, eye makeup, and tall platform heels. He does not have on a wig which gives the overall effect of a masculine appearance despite the clothing and makeup. Fanny McNamara dons very heavy, pale foundation, red lipstick, a punk-styled wig, a blouse that leaves most of her chest exposed, a bright red belt, women’s hose, and a gold-colored cape. McNamara’s appearance is that of a punk rock drag queen who is nonetheless clearly a man due to her masculine chest. Recalling Linda Hutcheon’s hypothesis that a postmodern work is “self-conscious, self-contradictory, [and] self-undermining,” (1) the representation of drag in this segment manifests a metafictional self-awareness that critiques drag itself. Since Almodóvar plays a role as himself in a drag performance in *Laberinto*, he grants the viewer privileged space. As the beholder of the director’s interpretation of drag, the audience is aware on a metafictional level that Almodóvar depicts drag in a manner that, like *Pepi, Luci,*

Bom, draws attention to the performative nature of gender identity while simultaneously deconstructing the notion that all drag is what Ester Newton describes as glamor drag in which the performer tries to appear as feminine and beautiful as possible (49). The net effect of Almodovar's and McNamara's performance evokes a queer aesthetic by demonstrating the subjective nature of gender identity, featuring drag as its main dramatic device, and by self-reflexively drawing the audience's attention to Almodóvar's vision of drag as an art form that combines both masculine and feminine traits. In this manner, like *Pepi, Luci, Bom, Laberinto* challenges the notion of the establishment that all drag performers want to "pass for real."

In Almodóvar's next feature, *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?*, he and Fanny McNamara make another appearance in an additional self-reflexive scene that also utilizes drag to make a queer statement to the audience. This time, only Fanny is in drag while Almodóvar is dressed "in a bright, kitsch, incongruous hussar costume, starring in a rudimentary music 'video' lip-synching Miguel Molina's '*La bien pagá*'" (Acevedo-Muñoz 53). According to Marvin D'Lugo and Smith, Fanny is dressed as Scarlett O'Hara during this scene (D'Lugo *Pedro Almodóvar* 43; Smith *Desire* 54). Smith correctly notes that this scene functions as a "camp distraction from the vulgar brutalities of Gloria's domestic regime" (*Desire* 54). The artificiality of the hussar outfit juxtaposed against the humorous, theatrical, exaggerated, and ludic ensemble of McNamara definitely evokes the camp aesthetic. Aside from providing the audience comic relief from the drudgery of Gloria's reality as a housewife, this scene also presents another example of cross-dressing being used to deconstruct hegemonic beliefs about gender identity and drag while also functioning to foreshadow the events of Gloria's life. Specifically, MacNamara's drag persona as Scarlett O'Hara parallels the plight of the hapless Gloria who must overcome seemingly insurmountable odds in order to persevere. As D'Lugo hypothesizes:

This is a camp moment, but one that reinforces the multiple scenarios of coupling and of the status of women, conspicuously those of wife and prostitute. If Gloria is to be paired with Scarlett O'Hara, it will be through the insistence of her indomitable spirit. Yet the ironic cross-dressing of MacNamara suggests that Gloria's survival will require a regendering of her femininity if she is to succeed (*Pedro Almodóvar* 43).⁹¹

By evoking this image of Scarlett O'Hara, Almodóvar draws upon the heroine of *Gone With the Wind* (1939) in order to ascribe Scarlett's portrayal as a woman who never succumbs to extremely unfortunate circumstances that are beyond her control. Like Scarlett, Gloria must overcome exceedingly challenging obstacles including the abuses of her tyrannical husband, her own drug addiction, and her delinquent children.⁹² Taking on a violent disposition traditionally ascribed to males explains why Gloria practices karate moves surreptitiously and eventually bludgeons her husband to death after he strikes her. Fanny's obvious masculinity despite being dressed in women's clothing in this manner manifests as foreshadowing of Gloria's masculinization. As the Rhett Butler of the pair, Almodóvar ironically lip-synchs the lyrics of the song, which according to Acevedo-Muñoz, "speaks of a man's tribulations and heartbreak after having 'paid well' for the unnamed woman's 'dark flesh'" (53). This song therefore parallels the Rhett and Scarlett narrative as Rhett ultimately abandons her to fend for herself after their torrid love affair ends during the final scene of the film. Just like he does with Fanny in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, Almodóvar depicts drag in such a way that it challenges the views of the establishment about masculinity, femininity, sexual orientation, and cross-dressing. Fanny's rendition of Scarlett O'Hara combines her obviously accentuated masculine features (which are manifested by a noticeable lack of foundation and eye makeup) with feminine costume for an overall camp effect in agreement with D'Lugo and Smith. Though McNamara does not have any

⁹¹ Angel S. Harguindey also notes that McNamara is dressed as Scarlett O'Hara in this scene (37).

⁹² Chapter five explains Gloria's plight in greater detail.

speaking lines in this part and her role is very brief, the astute viewer familiar with Scarlett O'Hara's story can surmise that the heroine of *¿Qué he hecho yo?* will also endure many tribulations and emerge victorious and independent at the end of the movie. The point of McNamara's presence therefore is to present a drag show which reinforces the idea that gender identity is an individual's choice while simultaneously debunking the myth of the glamorous drag queen and foreshadowing the film's denouement.

After *¿Qué he hecho yo?*, Almodóvar does not portray a cross-dressing male protagonist again until the 1991 release of *Tacones lejanos*. As discussed in chapter three, Almodóvar identifies Femme Letal as a *travestí* which is not by definition the same as a drag queen. Important to note is that unlike McNamara's version of drag in which no attempt is made to disguise her physical masculine attributes; Almodóvar has Miguel Bosé completely cover up his secondary sex characteristics when performing as Letal. Almodóvar took advantage of Bosé's androgynous style and pop stardom to appeal to a wider audience as noted by Marsha Kinder ("High Heels" 41). Doubtlessly Almodóvar manipulates the viewer's expectations about men who cross-dress by carefully withholding Letal's "true" identity as an undercover heterosexual male until the very end of the film. Like Manuel who attempts to discern Eduardo's sexual orientation after Letal's first nightclub performance, the viewer is confused by what on the surface appears to be a gay man who cross-dresses and imitates famous divas. Even Rebeca, who purports to be Femme Letal's close friend, is fooled by Eduardo's disguise since she expresses disbelief at first when Eduardo seduces her. Almodóvar even goes as far as to imply that Eduardo may enjoy his alter ego as Femme Letal too much since he is so skilled at imitating Becky del Páramo. Compared to Fanny MacNamara, Femme Letal's elusive sexuality presents a much more complex statement to the audience. Portraying sexuality that refuses to be

placed within the confines of a singular definition evinces the nature of queerness on multiple levels. First, as explained in chapter two, Jackie Stacey and Sarah Streets point out that queerness, like Letal's ambiguous sexual orientation, rejects "[i]nclusion, understanding [and] tolerance" (2). This explains why Almodóvar portrays Eduardo/Letal in such an open-ended fashion because the underpinning statement is that a person's sexuality is determined by that individual and not something dictated by the definitions of the cultural elite. Next, the sexual encounter with Rebeca and the romance with Paula while he is Hugo the informant make the case that Eduardo is heterosexual. Eduardo's oscillation between what the other characters misconstrue to be an implied homosexual identity and emphatically stated heterosexuality combined with the artifice of his other personas leaves Rebeca completely bewildered. When asked why Miguel Bose's name was superimposed over an image of Femme Letal during the opening credits of *Tacones lejanos*, Almodóvar clarifies the chief source of suspense in this work (Strauss 103). According to Almodóvar, what was most interesting about Rebeca was her inability to recognize Femme Letal as Judge Domínguez and Eduardo; an aspect of her characterization that had to be credible (Strauss 103). Thus part of the tension stems from the audience knowing about Eduardo's multiple identities while Rebeca fails to unveil his disguises until the very end of the movie despite the clues she is given. Rebeca's resistance to recognize Letal as Hugo and Judge Domínguez stems from her deeply rooted incestuous desire for her mother. As Linda Williams elucidates, Rebeca's tryst with Letal while he is still partially cross-dressed is proof that it is the "imitation of her mother, not Eduardo himself, that Rebeca desires when, later in the film, Eduardo again attempts to seduce her, this time without his Becky-drag accoutrements. Although he is shirtless, handsome, and virile, Rebeca does not give him a second look" (174). Rebeca therefore makes herself incapable of realizing the "true" identity of

Letal because she chooses to be blinded by her obsessive need to be with her mother. Rather than suffer the loss of the solace provided by the illusion of Becky that Letal provides her, Rebeca subconsciously chooses to be duped by Eduardo's multiple personas. This explains why Rebeca fails to recognize Hugo as Letal even when prompted by the photographic evidence Paula supplies her. Once Rebeca finally does grasp the fact that Eduardo is Hugo, Judge Domínguez, and Femme Letal, very revealing is her response to Eduardo's marriage proposal. She asks Eduardo which of the identities she would be marrying because each alter ego has taken on a life of its own to the point that Rebeca believes that Eduardo himself (as an undercover police officer) could very well be another façade. Eduardo's response, that she would marry them all, is evasive; thereby leaving room for doubt for the viewer as well. Eduardo's questionable sexual orientation personifies queerness because Almodóvar makes it impossible to affix a single label to him.

Perhaps the queerest archetypal drag queen presented in a film by Almodóvar to date is the profoundly complex Zahara/Juan/Ángel Andrade character from *La mala educación*. Much like Miguel Bosé's roles as Eduardo, Hugo, Femme Letal, and Judge Domínguez, Juan is but one alter ego of the same personage played by Gael García Bernal. For purposes of clarifying how Zahara exemplifies a queer nature, it is vital to comprehend the multiple identities of Juan and his older brother Ignacio. Almodóvar does not reveal Juan's true identity as Ignacio's younger sibling until near the end of the film. Indeed, Juan masquerades as Ignacio throughout the majority of this work. Almodóvar, through flashback and highly stylistic special effects, makes it seem that Juan is in fact the young Ignacio who is presently an adult. For example, immediately after the scene set in the past during which the youthful boys exercise as directed by the priests, Almodóvar purposefully misleads the audience into mistaking Juan for Ignacio. This

sequence begins with a medium close up of Ignacio's face as it was in the past. As the shot progresses, the spectator sees layered images of Ignacio growing up from being a boy to becoming a man. At the end of this special effect, Almodóvar utilizes a close up of Juan's face as it appears in the present (1980) to fool the viewer into believing that Juan is really Ignacio. To compound this blurred identity, Juan (who claims to be Ignacio) insists on being called Ángel Andrade (his stage name). Moreover, before the film within the film (*La visita*) is shot, Gael García Bernal plays the part of Ignacio's drag counterpart Zahara. During a different flashback from Enrique's point of view, the audience sees Juan as Zahara since Enrique is imagining Juan playing the part of Zahara (Acevedo-Muñoz 265). As D'Lugo astutely observes, Zahara performs drag interpretations of Sara Montiel who was a Spanish megastar (a singer and actress) of the 1950's and 1960's (*Pedro Almodóvar* 118).⁹³ Moreover, Sara Montiel "became the embodiment of the Spanish cult of nostalgia in the 1960's only to reemerge in the 1970's as a popular Spanish gay icon (D'Lugo "Postnostalgia" 357). By associating Montiel's status as a gay icon with a man who is performing while cross-dressed, Almodóvar in turn insinuates that Zahara is either a *travestí*, *transformista*, or drag queen. Much later in the film, viewers learn that Ignacio's identity as Zahara is indeed a representation of drag since she was at that time in her life a homosexual man who performs for an audience while cross-dressed.⁹⁴ This does not mean, however, that Ignacio's sexuality is immutably set as homosexual since he ultimately opts to undergo gender corrective surgery. Instead, Almodóvar once more portrays sexual orientation as a diverse spectrum of possibilities that vary according to the individual's desires. Very

⁹³ Acevedo-Muñoz also observes that Zahara performs a Sara Montiel number while wearing a sequined dress that features "simulated pubic hair and nipples" (266).

⁹⁴ D'Lugo also asserts that Zahara's show is a drag performance since she is part of a "traveling drag show" (*Pedro Almodóvar* 118).

revealing is Strauss' interview with Almodóvar about the significance of the segment during which the youthful Enrique and Ignacio masturbate in a movie theater while watching a Sara Montiel film. Strauss asks, "You also explained to me how at the time of the scene in *Bad Education* takes place – the early 1960's – Sara Montiel was a real gay icon. Did you take all that into account when constructing this scene and selecting this extract?" (228). Almodóvar responds, "Though I am one of her admirers, in Spain and America there are people who profess an absolute devotion to her. And yes, she does have a cult gay following. So, once again, for the two boys in *Bad Education*, it's as though they were seeing their future on screen. One will become a transvestite singer and dancer, the other a film director, also homosexual" (228). Therefore Almodóvar clearly portrays both Ignacio/Zahara and Enrique as being gay men. The fact that Zahara performs while cross-dressed implies that she is a drag queen owing to her implied homosexuality. Almodóvar fossilizes this portrayal of Zahara's gay identity by portraying her having sex with another man who turns out to be Enrique; Ignacio's long-lost childhood love. To identify Juan as Zahara once more, Almodóvar has her write a letter to the unconscious Enrique (whom Zahara and her friend Paquita were going to rob) and sign it from "Ignacio." Therefore, Zahara is the drag counterpart of Ignacio whether speaking of the Zahara imagined by Enrique or the Zahara identity assumed by the actual Ignacio. Since Almodóvar depicts a drag queen in a leading role in this manner and fools the audience into believing that Juan is Ignacio, Zahara's performance of the Sara Montiel number is perhaps Almodóvar's most direct representation of a drag performance to date. Unlike *Femme Letal* who is portrayed as a heterosexual *travestí*, Ignacio in his Zahara persona is characterized as a gay man who cross-dresses for entertainment purposes. This is not to say, however, that this portrayal of drag is straightforward. Noticeable only to the most attentive viewer at this point is the fact that Zahara

is a metafictional drag queen. Since the scenario that the audience sees takes place only in Enrique's mind as he reads the manuscript of *La visita* and envisions it on film, Zahara is an imaginary character within that fictional narrative. Gael García Bernal interprets two roles simultaneously during this highly self-reflexive sequence. On the surface, he plays Zahara who enacts a drag show. Nevertheless, because Enrique is picturing the man whom he believes to be Ignacio as Zahara, Bernal also plays Ignacio. Viewers never see the real Ignacio as Zahara. This utilization of metafiction recalls Linda Hutcheon's hypothesis that postmodern works are "self-conscious, self-contradictory, [and] self-undermining" (1). Almodóvar, via the imagination of a fictional film director, reminds the audience via this distancing device that what they witness is a performance within a performance and not to be taken at face value. Almodóvar's agenda with this deception about the identity of a drag queen is to heighten the catharsis that the viewer experiences upon learning the truth about Ignacio. In reality within the present timeframe, Ignacio is a pre-op transsexual who, along with his younger brother Juan, blackmails the former priest (Padre Manolo) who sexually abused him when he was a child. Important to note is that Juan participates in a sexual and romantic relationship with Padre Manolo that ends with the two of them conspiring to murder Ignacio by giving him a fatal heroin concoction. Juan/Ángel as Ignacio and Zahara therefore represents a character that manifests the queer tendencies of focusing on drag, homosexual relationships, and a refusal to being categorized within traditional definitions of sexuality.

Another aspect of Juan that evokes the queer aesthetic is the means by which he gains the leading role of Zahara in *La visita*. Very revealing is the fact that Enrique at first tells Juan/Ángel that he is too masculine to play Zahara despite the fact that Enrique had already envisioned him as Zahara (D'Lugo *Pedro Almodóvar* 118). The problem, according to Enrique,

is that Juan is too well built to be a credible drag queen. In reality Enrique's motivation for saying this is because he has begun to suspect that Juan is not really Ignacio. This commentary on Enrique's part about what a drag queen should look like also functions to deconstruct the hegemonic assumption that all drag queens are by their very nature highly effeminate men. Bent on playing the role, Juan promises to lose weight and to study "real" drag queens so that he can better fit Enrique's vision of how Zahara should look and act. As Kathleen M. Vernon observes, "If the goal of a successful female impersonator is to make the spectator aware of the coexistence of contradictory identities, and ultimately of the performative nature of gender roles while simultaneously embracing the illusion, then Zahara can be said to fall short" ("Queer Sound" 65). Notwithstanding the flamboyant gown designed by Jean Paul Gaultier, Vernon is correct that Zahara's performance is lacking but does not elaborate as to what Almodóvar's motivation is for representing a drag show in this manner (Vernon "Queer Sound" 64). In fact, Almodóvar does not even show Zahara's entire number but does reveal that Paquita and Zahara's audience is less than enthusiastic about the show since Paquita prompts them to applaud and chides them when they do not. The reason Almodóvar portrays a short segment of such a lackluster drag performance is to plant the seed of doubt in the minds of the audience about Juan's true identity. Indeed, Enrique's suspicions that Juan is not Ignacio are based on the mismatch between Juan's virile physique and mannerisms in contrast to Enrique's heteronormative expectation that Ignacio would have been more svelte and passive. Juan is so driven to play the part of Zahara in *La visita* that he promises Enrique that he will slim down and act more effeminate. To achieve this goal, Juan even goes as far as to attend drag shows and seek out coaching from an established drag queen. Depicting Juan as a man who has had sex with other men (Padre Manolo and Enrique), pretends to be his brother Ignacio, and one who is losing weight and studying drag

presents a multifaceted queer statement to the moviegoer. Juan's obsession with playing the part of the drag queen Zahara deconstructs traditional definitions of sexual desire, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Considering that Juan tells Padre Manolo that he is "not Ignacio" after Padre Manolo makes a pass at him (thereby implying that Juan is not attracted to men), Almodóvar portrays the "incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire" as described by Jagose (3). With Juan, Almodóvar presents a character whose sexuality is based not on heteronormative expectations that sexual orientation is an innate and fixed state of being, but rather that it is a choice that the individual makes. This explains why Juan unhesitatingly has sex with Enrique in exchange for playing the role as Zahara since his sexual preference is merely a means to an end. In order to destabilize the notion that Juan is homosexual merely because he has sex with men, Almodóvar adds title screens at the end of the film that inform the viewer that Juan marries Mónica, the "girl from wardrobe" whom he met when playing Zahara in *La visita*. Juan's sexuality therefore is hardly stable and it is no coincidence that his compulsion to succeed as an actor is enmeshed with cross-dressing and gay sex. On the contrary, as indicated by the title screens at the end of this movie, Juan as Ángel Andrade does indeed become a famous heartthrob and enjoys a decade of fame followed by a regular part on a television series; all owing to the fact that he transgressed hegemonic definitions of gender identity and sexual orientation by playing the role of Zahara in the film within the film. By representing Juan in this manner, Almodóvar complies with Jackie Stacey and Sarah Street's hypothesis that the nature of the term queer defies inclusive definitions of sexuality of any type (2). Far from presenting a statement that seeks to limit Juan by affixing the label of heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual to his identity, Almodóvar challenges such

notions and instead represents sexuality as mutable depending on the desires and circumstances of the individual.

Of the myriad characters from films by John Waters, Divine in *Multiple Maniacs*, *Pink Flamingos*, and *Female Trouble* presents the most transgressive queer statement. Lady Divine, Divine/Babs Johnson, and Dawn Davenport incarnate the countercultural values of Waters' trash aesthetic and are depicted as dangerous criminals whose sexuality defies the norms of the establishment.⁹⁵ In order to facilitate the comprehension of how these characters convey the essence of queer, it is important to investigate each character separately since they play roles that are very different. Proceeding in this manner, the discussion that follows explores the queer statement made by Lady Divine, Divine/Babs, and Dawn.

First, Lady Divine's *Cavalcade of Perversions* presents a definitively queer statement to the audience. As the owner and star attraction of this sexual freak show, Lady Divine surrounds herself with performers who have a wide array of bizarre sexual fetishes. For example, the initial acts include a young woman who performs oral sex on a bicycle seat, a man who is aroused by a bra, two men who enjoy licking the hairy armpits of a half nude woman, a lady who enjoys exposing her vagina to a camera, the "puke eater," (Waters' exaggerated portrayal of emetophilia) and as Mr. David describes, "two actual queers kissing each other on the lips." Bonnie, whom Mr. David characterizes as an "autoerotic, a coprophasiac, and a gerontophiliac," is auditioning for the variety show but is rejected by Lady Divine for being a "cheap little one-night stand." Within the first ten minutes of this work, moviegoers witness this litany of sexual "perversions" that culminate in robbery and murder at the hands of Lady Divine. By ascribing

⁹⁵ The so-called "trash aesthetic" consists of glorifying members of the lower class, vilifying representatives of the hegemony, focusing on scatological humor, and overall defying traditional definitions of what constitutes "good" taste. In both Almodóvar's and Waters' worlds, hegemonic definitions of acceptable artistic standards are replaced by the "trash" aesthetic. Chapter five analyzes how films by both directors manifest the "trash" aesthetic in greater detail.

Lady Divine to a realm of unusual paraphilias, Waters implies that Lady Divine herself has a proclivity for only the most taboo sexual practices; especially the sexual excitement of committing homicide. Taking into account that Lady Divine is played by a drag queen, the *Cavalcade of Perversions* presents a queer statement on multiple levels. Waters' focus on the exaggerated and outlandish sexual fetishes, which he associates with Lady Divine, exemplifies the "mismatches between sex, gender and desire" as described by Jagose (3). From the woman who becomes intimate with a bicycle seat to the even more outrageous sexual appetites of Bonnie, Waters emphasizes the arbitrary nature of sexuality while deconstructing heteronormativity. The shock value of the *Cavalcade of Perversions* functions to make the audience identify with the performers and to reject the traditional views expressed by the onlookers (MacDonald 231). As Waters explains to Scott MacDonald, "The 'perversions' were all the standard, cliché things suburbanites were uptight about—drugs and homosexuality, all things I figured you could laugh at. It's hardly threatening"(231). These "perversions" comply with the queer tendency to undermine the concept of a "natural" sexuality as explained by Jagose (3). As the ringleader of this decidedly queer troupe of performance artists, Lady Divine's identity as a woman with a zeal for erotophonophilia questions hegemonic beliefs about gender identity and sexuality since violence and aggression are traditionally "masculine" behaviors. The fact that Lady Divine is in actuality a man in drag underscores the performative nature of gender thereby exemplifying the queer nature of *Multiple Maniacs*.

In addition to her *Cavalcade of Perversions* and lust for murder, Lady Divine manifests a queer disposition due to her ambiguous sexual orientation. Throughout *Multiple Maniacs*, Lady Divine refers to Mr. David as being her boyfriend which would imply that she is heterosexual although the audience knows that she is actually a drag queen. In fact, during the

“rosary job” scene, Lady Divine’s inner monologue reflects her initial misgivings about Mink approaching her for sex while she prays in the church, “Not personally enjoying sexual encounters with members of the same sex, I made every possible move to discourage her. [...] Although lesbianism has never really appealed to me, there was still an aura about her that attracted me to her, even in all my distaste for such perversion.” The irony of Lady Divine (who is the star attraction of the Cavalcade of Perversions) using the word “perversion” to describe lesbianism functions as an ironic distancing device to make the viewer criticize her for adopting such a conformist stance given that she is in fact a drag queen. To drive home the point that Lady Divine thinks of her own sexual identity in a different way after the “rosary job,” Waters presents this monologue:

She kissed me as if Christ Himself had ordered every movement of her experienced tongue. I was suddenly uncontrollable! Although she had only said seven words to me [think about the stations of the cross], these words proved to be the key to the most satisfying sexual experience of my entire life!

Clearly, Lady Divine transgresses heteronormative sexuality by engaging in an atypical sexual act with Mink. Like the iconoclastic tendencies of Luis Buñuel, Waters transforms revered Catholic liturgy and iconography into a transgressive anticlerical statement while simultaneously queering heterosexuality. The “stations of the cross” Mink narrates and that Waters portrays crosscut against the “rosary job,” instead of being a sacrosanct religious experience, become a profoundly anticlerical sexual mantra which efficaciously evokes intense shock value. The fact that this scene was obviously shot within an actual church, as Scott MacDonald observes, enhances this shock value because it intensifies the overall impression that Divine and Mink commit a sacrilege on consecrated ground (231). As analyzed in chapter three, the footage of Mink wiping the rosary clean of fecal matter after she and Divine experience an orgasm is Waters’ recycling of the destruction of the Catholic symbols of faith from *Viridiana* (1961).

Juxtaposing the sanctified imagery of the stations of the cross and the rosary against this unflinching portrayal of an aberrant sexual act deconstructs heteronormative presumptions that sex between a man and a woman is normal and decries the Catholic Church's marginalization of homosexuality. With this scene, Waters complies with Stein and Plummer's hypothesis that queer creative postmodern artists tend to make homosexuality seem normal by making heterosexuality deviant (135). To confuse the audience even more about Lady Divine's sexual orientation, Waters has Lady Divine half-heartedly deny that she is a lesbian to Mink, "Gay? I'm no lesbian...at least not until a little while ago. You're the first female I ever did anything with." Since Waters makes no attempt to disguise the fact that Divine is actually a drag queen, this ironic reply problematizes the notions that gender identity and sexual orientation are permanent, innate characteristics. This stance from Waters complies with the hypotheses of Jagose and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick about the nature of sexual orientation and Butler's notion of the performativity of gender. As Jagose explains, the concept of a fixed sexuality such as homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality is debatable "It is particularly hard to denaturalize something like sexuality, whose very claim to naturalization is intimately connected with an individual sense of self, with the way in which each of us imagines our own sexuality to be primary, elemental, and private" (17). Moreover, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out that more recent theories about what constitutes homosexuality have revealed these underlying assumptions about sexuality itself:

(1) that the differences between the homosexuality "as we know today" and previous arrangements of same-sex relations may be so profound and so integrally rooted in other cultural differences that there may be no continuous, defining essence of "homosexuality" to be known; and (2) that modern "sexuality" and hence modern homosexuality are so intimately entangled with the historically distinctive contexts and structures that now count as knowledge that such "knowledge" can scarcely be a transparent window onto a separate realm of sexuality, but, rather, itself constitutes that sexuality (44).

Additionally, Butler states that cross-dressing “suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance” (*Gender* 187). Later when Lady Divine and Mink return to Cookie’s apartment, Mr. David confronts her about Mink’s presence, “So you finally turned dyke, I’m not surprised.” Lady Divine retorts, “Dyke? Look who’s talking, all peroxidized up! [...] Well, I don’t like people calling me a dyke when it’s obvious that you have extremely perverted tastes yourself.” The dramatic irony of a drag queen (who is the ringleader of the Cavalcade of Perversions nonetheless) refuting to be attracted to women and labeling lesbianism “perverted” undermines heteronormative and sexist ideals that sexual orientation and gender identity are immutable, intrinsic characteristics of an individual.

Perhaps the most transgressive queer depiction of all of John Waters’ works is the characterization of Divine/Babs from *Pink Flamingos*. Recalling Divine’s interview segment with the various tabloid reporters as described in chapter one, the viewer learns that Divine condones cannibalism, associates sexual pleasure with the sight, taste, and feel of human blood, purports to be a lesbian who has “done everything,” advises her followers to “eat shit,” and states, “Filth is my politics, filth is my life,” Divine is definitely portrayed as a countercultural, marginalized member of a mainstream society to which she is a dangerous threat. This clear hyperbolicism is a camp strategy that Waters utilizes to encourage his viewers to empathize with Divine’s worldview since she is definitely portrayed as being the heroine of *Pink Flamingos*. An integral part of the camp aesthetic invoked by Waters is the fact that his leading lady is in reality a man in drag which is obvious to the spectator.⁹⁶ Instead of inciting the audience to reject Divine, Waters uses Divine’s overt and highly exaggerated aggressive behaviors to make the spectator laugh at the absurdity of the hyperbole and in doing so, subverts traditional patriarchal norms. The analogy for the viewer is clear: if a man can play a woman who challenges the status

⁹⁶ Refer to chapter two for an explanation of the connections between camp and drag.

quo, gender is not based on biology but instead is an act to be performed by the individual. This explains why Waters had Van Smith aggrandize the anatomical features that society traditionally relies upon to distinguish a man from a woman in the creation of Divine's distinctive look. Divine's enormous breasts showcased in the skin-tight and revealing dresses prompt the viewer to recognize that gender identity, like Divine's falsies, can be put on and taken off to suit the whims of the wearer. In other words, gender is a construct of the individual and not an innate characteristic. Like Baudrillard's concept of simulacra which questions the authenticity of the very notion of originality, Divine's performance as a woman (which is a simulacrum) deconstructs the idea that those who were born women are the originators and most authentic manifestations of femininity. The implication is that a reproduction of a woman replaces the need for an "original" one.

Like Babs, Dawn Davenport also manifests a fetishized and mutable sexual orientation. Viewers first encounter Dawn's sexuality early in the aforementioned scene in which she has sex with Earl by the side of the road. Later when Dawn is married to Gator, the couple engages in bizarre fetishes for sexual pleasure including using a hammer and needle nose pliers as described in chapter two. Also mentioned in chapter two is the fact that Waters follows suit with other queer postmodern artists who portray heterosexuality as deviant and homosexuality as normalized in accord with Arlene Stein's and Ken Plummer's theory (135). As an adolescent, Dawn is a heterosexual who becomes a single mother. While married, she is also heterosexual though her husband requires unusual sexual toys to arouse and intensify their sexual pleasure. Having a drag queen play a heterosexual woman in this way is a deliberate tactic employed by Waters. When interviewed about his definition of beauty in *Female Trouble*, Waters states that he always casts "heterosexual people as homosexuals and homosexuals as heterosexuals to

further confuse people, because I think confusion is humorous” (MacDonald 236).⁹⁷ To add to this audience’s confusion, Waters has Dawn engage in a same-sex relationship with Earnestine while in prison. This is consistent with Waters’ antiestablishment view as he expressed it when interviewed by John G. Ives about sexuality, “In the long run, people’s sexuality makes very little difference. No matter what you do in bed, everybody is fairly the same emotionally. That’s the most interesting part of it, and that’s what makes people the most crazy about it” (85). As is the case with Lady Divine and Babs, Dawn transgresses the norm by choosing her own sexuality to suit her desires instead of being subjugated by a label affixed to her by the hegemony.

In addition to the “bad girl” and drag queen archetypal characters, Almodóvar and Waters also feature transsexuals in their films. Whereas Waters to date portrays only two transsexuals in his films (one in *Pink Flamingos* and another in *Desperate Living*), Almodóvar depicts this personage in *La ley del deseo* (1987), *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999), and *La mala educación*.⁹⁸ Whereas Waters utilizes a real-life male-to-female transsexual to shock the audience and Raymond Marble in *Pink Flamingos*, the character Mole in *Desperate Living* has a sex change because she feels that she is a man trapped in a woman’s body. Important to note is the meaning of the terms transsexual and transgender. A transsexual is a person who voluntarily seeks medical treatments including but not limited to hormone therapy and surgical interventions in order to make his or her body take on the anatomical attributes of the opposite sex. The word “voluntarily” in this definition is key because people who were born with both male and female

⁹⁷ Waters affirms the practice of casting heterosexuals as homosexuals and homosexuals as heterosexuals in another interview with Jenny Stewart in 2005 (Egan 160).

⁹⁸ Famous Spanish transsexual Bibi Andersen plays minor roles in *Matador* (1986), *La ley del deseo*, *Tacones lejanos*, and *Kika* (1993). Andersen worked as a collaborator on many of Almodóvar’s films and her contributions will be examined in greater detail in my future studies (Smith “Almodóvar” 40).

genitalia and who subsequently undergo coerced gender reassignment surgery during their infancy had no opportunity to select which sex they wished to become and therefore cannot be considered to be transsexuals (Butler *Undoing Gender* 6-8). There are two types of transsexuals: male-to-female and female-to-male. Granted, this definition of a transsexual is not without controversy. As Nikki Sullivan explains, transgender theorists have rejected the idea that surgery is a definitive characteristic of transsexualism (104). Nevertheless, the word transgender is a more inclusive term that, according to Butler, “refers to those persons who cross-identify or who live as another gender, but who may or may not have undergone hormonal treatments or sex reassignment operations” (*Undoing Gender* 6). Félix Rodríguez-González adds that transgender is a “generic category, very much in fashion currently, that includes transsexuals, *travestis*, effeminate gay men, and lesbians with masculine behaviors and attire. It also includes those who alternate gender roles frequently, thus questioning the rigid scheme that conventional society establishes for the categories man/woman and masculine/feminine” (451). Sullivan supports Rodríguez-González’s definition stating that transgender refers to “cross-dressers, drag queens and kings, intersexed people, hermaphrodykes, people who modify their bodies in a variety of ways and to varying degrees with or without hormones and/or surgery, butch dykes, fairies, she-males, bi-gendered individuals, those who see themselves as belonging to a ‘third sex,’ androgynes, transsexuals, cyborgs, queers, and so on” (112). Essential to take into account is that transsexuals typically follow a gradual process of gender reassignment interventions. Some do not ever choose to change their birth genitalia but still take on the physical appearance of the gender they desire to be. As such, the term transsexual is not strictly limited to those who have had vaginoplasty or metoidioplasty. Since a transsexual is a person who seeks a medical resolution (even if only partially) to the disparity that he or she feels between his or her

biological sex and how she or he perceives to be his or her true gender, he or she can be thought of as falling within the broad classification of transgendered. Whereas Waters presents a male-to-female and a female-to-male transsexual, Almodóvar concentrates on the depiction of male-to-female transsexuals. In *La ley del deseo*, Pablo Quintero's sister Tina (Carmen Maura) underwent sex reassignment surgery in order to please their father. In *Todo sobre mi madre*, Lola/Esteban and Agrado both undergo extensive plastic surgery to look like women but elect not to have their male genitalia removed. Ignacio from *La mala educación* has breasts as a result of surgery and would have had a complete sex change operation had it not been for his death at the hands of his brother Juan and Padre Manolo. Vicente from *La piel que habito* (2011) has vaginoplasty, breast augmentation, and hormone therapy forced upon him when he is forcibly transformed from a man to a woman (Vera Cruz). Since Vicente did not seek out these treatments of his own free will, he cannot be considered to be a transsexual but instead is the victim of the horrific experiments perpetrated on him by the vengeful Doctor Robert Ledgard. At the end of *La piel que habito*, Vera Cruz becomes a transgender figure (and not a transsexual) since he still identifies as Vicente after killing Ledgard and Marilia and escaping from his long confinement. In all of these cases of on-screen transsexuals, Waters and Almodóvar convey the queer concept that gender identity and sexuality are not fixed innate characteristics as per hegemonic definitions but instead are mutable traits determined by the individual. Almodóvar, furthermore, problematizes the establishment's assumption that all transsexuals by definition feel that their birth genitalia are deformities correctable only through surgery as we shall see. An analysis of how each character manifests this queer statement to the audience fully explores the utilization of the transsexual as a universalized, cross-cultural character to reinforce Waters' and Almodóvar's queer agendas.

The first transsexual character Almodóvar portrays in his films is Tina Quintero from *La ley del deseo*. As mentioned previously, Tina became a woman in order to placate the incestuous desires of her father. During the especially significant scene in which Pablo is in the hospital and has become an amnesiac, Tina explains their family history to Pablo hoping that doing so will help him recuperate his memory. Since Pablo can recall nothing of their childhood, Tina feels compelled to reveal that she was born a boy, had an ongoing affair with her father, and underwent gender corrective surgery at their father's behest. Instead of stating that the sexual relationship between Tina and her father was forced upon her, it is very telling that Tina professes that the two of them were very happy with this arrangement. Tina blames herself for their parent's separation owing to the fact that her mother found out about the affair and subsequently abandoned her husband and Tina. Pablo went to live with their mother whereas Tina moved to Morocco with their father where she claims the two of them were content for a few years until he left her for another woman. Tina also reveals to Pablo that their father is still alive but is living in New York and has cut off all contact with Tina and Pablo. Representing a transsexual who becomes the sexual rival of her mother, undergoes a sex change operation to please her father, and then cuts off all ties with her father represents a uniquely queer statement with allusions to the Jungian concept of an Electra complex. The implication is that even as a little boy Tino (Tina's name before her sex change) self-identified as a female and therefore is treated as a daughter figure by her father. As such, Tino completes the Electra scenario by becoming sexually attracted to her father while competing against her mother for her father's affections (Scott 8). After having the sexual reassignment surgery, Tina consummates the Electra narrative by choosing to remain in a sexual relationship with her father for a few years. Almodóvar queers the traditional Freudian definitions of the Oedipal complex and penis envy by

featuring a young boy who becomes the sexual rival of his mother (as opposed to his father) and is driven by his yearnings to have a vagina (instead of a penis) in order to please his father sexually. In this sense, Tino resolved his “vagina envy” through gender corrective surgery. When considering this subtle underpinning Electra complex as experienced by Tino who is a youthful pre-op transsexual, the fact that Tina eventually becomes a well-adjusted woman comes as no surprise since the sex change operation resolved her desire to have female anatomical parts. Nevertheless, the end result of this Electra complex has left Tina unwilling to trust any other man since her father ultimately abandoned her. This explains why Tina has problematic relationships with men as she expresses to Pablo when he wishes to write his next film about her life. Tina, upon hearing that the script regards her “problems with guys” responds, “I don’t have problems with guys. For me, it has been a long time since they have existed. [...] No matter how ridiculous I am, I have the right to my self-respect. [...] My failures with men are more than just a plot line for a script. I will not permit that you or anybody else play with my problems!” Almodóvar therefore portrays not as a submissive victim but instead as a strong female lead character who instead of regretting her sexual reassignment operation embraces her identity as a woman. Important to note is that Almodóvar did not want a real-life transsexual to play the part of Tina. As he explains to Strauss:

I didn’t want a real transsexual for the transsexual in *La ley del deseo*, but an actress who could interpret a transsexual. This is very difficult to do because a transsexual won’t show his femininity in the same way as a woman. A woman’s femininity is more relaxed, more serene. I was interested in a woman showing the exaggerated, tense, and highly exhibitionist femininity of a transsexual (71).

By casting Carmen Maura as a transsexual, Almodóvar underscores the performative nature of gender. D’Lugo also notes this aspect of Maura playing a transsexual and states that “Maura is not given the luxury of camping up her role. She portrays a transsexual, not a cross-dresser, and

therein lies the power of her performance” (*Pedro Almodóvar* 56). This concept that a woman could better interpret the “exaggerated, tense, and highly exhibitionist femininity of a transsexual” also evokes Baudrillard’s postmodern theory of simulacra. Maura’s performance is a simulacrum of a transsexual that Almodóvar utilizes to debunk the notion that the “originality” of a real transsexual would make Tina into a more “authentic” personage. Since she represents an emulation of a transsexual who replaces the need for a “real” transsexual, Maura’s interpretation of her role also evokes Baudrillard’s hypothesis of the hyperreal in which “[t]he very definition of the real becomes: that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction [...] At the limit of this process of reproducibility, the real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced. The hyperreal” (146). Since a transsexual by his or her very nature is a reproduction of a “real” man or woman, he or she demonstrates the hyperreal while simultaneously destabilizing the heteronormative belief that the anatomical parts a person is born with determine masculinity and femininity. Maura’s projection of femininity also exemplifies the hyperreal because her embellished “effeminate” traits (including her love of makeup, flashy and revealing women’s clothing, and complete contentment with her female anatomy) have already been reproduced via transsexualism. Thus the duplication of womanhood has replaced the need for the “authentic” and the real has been usurped by the hyperreal because Almodóvar chose to have Maura play the role of Tina.

Agrado and Lola from *Todo sobre mi madre* are also transsexual characters who undermine heteronormative assumptions about sexual orientation and men who undergo gender corrective surgical procedures. By far, Almodóvar depicts Agrado as being the more compelling transsexual character that embodies queerness. Despite the fact that the overriding narrative of the film involves Manuela’s quest to locate Lola (Esteban) in Barcelona so that she can notify

her of the death of their son, Agrado has much more screen time than Lola and is characterized as being an endearing character while Lola is vilified. Indeed, Almodóvar endows Agrado with an indomitable nobility of character that is completely lacking in Lola. What the two do share in common is that they were both born as men, self-identify as female, have undergone extensive surgical interventions (including breast implants) to look like women, yet retain their male genitalia. This image of the transsexual as an individual who wanted to become essentially a hermaphrodite problematizes the very notion of what a transsexual is as per hegemonic definitions. Part of the disparity between Agrado's and Lola's characterization stems from the fact that Almodóvar based them on two real-life cross-dressing men. As Almodóvar explains, Agrado:

was one of the first transvestites that I met twenty years ago when I went to Paris for the first time. There were a lot of girls there, especially from Andalucía, who had arrived as men, leaving their families at home, married, with children. And right away, in less than a year, they had breasts that were bigger than the ones their wives had. [...] La Agrado was marvelous and they called her that because she was nice to everyone. [...] It's curious, because the most outlandish and exaggerated characters in the film – La Agrado (Antonia San Juan) and Lola (Toni Cantó) – were inspired by real people (Montano 134).⁹⁹

As far as Lola is concerned, Almodóvar states when interviewed by Strauss:

The character Lola is inspired directly by a transvestite who had a bar by the beach in La Barceloneta. He lived with his wife and would never allow her to wear a miniskirt, although he himself went around in a bikini. When I heard this story, it struck me as a perfect illustration of the utterly irrational nature of machismo (183).

In Almodóvar's world, equally illogical is the belief that every transsexual ultimately desires to undergo vaginoplasty or metoidioplasty. In fact, as Agrado explains to Nina, she would be unable to compete for clients as a transsexual prostitute if she were to remove her penis since

⁹⁹ Although Almodóvar describes Agrado and Lola as based on transvestites, they are portrayed in the film as transsexuals because they underwent surgery to look more like women. The myth that all transsexuals seek to have their genitalia surgically altered is precisely what Almodóvar seeks to debunk with Agrado and Lola, as we shall see.

men are more attracted to her if she is “well hung” (as she puts it). Unlike the conventional notion that all male-to-female transsexuals find their penises to be anathema to their ideal bodies, gender identity, and sexual orientation, Agrado makes no attempt whatsoever to conceal the fact that she still has a phallus. Very revealing is Agrado’s viewpoint on drag queens and what she believes constitutes being a woman. Agrado professes that she cannot tolerate drag queens because they “confuse transvestism with the circus. Worse than circus, with mime. A woman is her hair, her nails, a good mouth for giving blowjobs and criticizing. Where have you seen a bald woman? I can’t stand them. They are all scumbags.” The irony of such a marginalized character (a transsexual prostitute) maligning drag queens in this manner evokes camp’s humor, theatricality, and exaggeration of “sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms” (Sontag 275-279). Clearly Agrado self-identifies as a woman who is more “authentically” female than drag queens because they are still men despite the fact that they cross-dress to entertain. Stating that drag queens confuse transvestism with a circus or mime act reminds viewers of the performative nature of gender identity in an ironic manner since the audience knows that Agrado was originally born a man and manifests her own feminine identity by choosing to embellish her effeminate characteristics. Agrado’s definition of womanhood focuses not on having a vagina or breasts, but on the very same anatomical features (i.e. hair, nails, and mouth) that drag queens typically exaggerate when enacting their own version of femininity; regardless of the performer’s intention to be outrageously glamorous or comedic. This representation of women being comprised of a conglomeration of “effeminate” physical attributes also recalls Baudrillard’s hypotheses of simulacra and the hyperreal. Agrado implies that she is more of a “real” woman than drag queens since she lives her everyday life as a woman whereas drag artists put on and take off their femininity as easily as applying makeup and donning dresses. This makes Agrado

a simulacrum of womanhood in a similar manner to Divine's and Miguel Bose's representation of women despite Agrado's disparagement of drag queens. Since Agrado's feminine identity is reproducible and already has been reproduced via her mannerisms and surgical interventions, she represents a hyperreal woman who undermines the alleged authenticity and originality of females who were born women. Furthermore, the fact that Agrado makes no qualms about the fact that she still has a penis demonstrates Almodóvar's undermining of the traditional belief that transsexuals by definition loathe the body parts associated with their sex at birth. As Sullivan explains, this notion pervades the U.S. hegemony to the point that part of the medical criteria for being eligible for transsexual surgery used to be that the candidate expressed marked feelings of disgust for his or her birth genitalia (105). In fact, if a person seeking gender corrective surgery confessed to the medical practitioner that he or she had ever received any sexual pleasure from his or her genitals through any sexual act including masturbation, this would be used as a reason to disqualify him or her from the sexual reassignment program (Sullivan 105). In Spanish culture, as explained by Vincent Bataller i Perelló, the predominate attitude about transsexualism still continues to be that it has psychopathological origins that manifest as a gender identity disorder or the so-called gender dysphoria ("Transexualidad"). Similar to the extensive steps a transsexual in the US must take in order to be considered for surgical intervention, Spanish transsexuals must also undergo extensive psychological counseling in order to ascertain if the candidate is a "true" transsexual (Gómez-Gil 358). One of the clinical definitions is that the patient suffers from acute gender dysphoria accompanied by an emphatic dislike of his or her birth genitalia (Gómez-Gil 358). It is not incidental, therefore, that Almodóvar unflinchingly portrays a male-to-female transsexual like Agrado who transgresses the hegemonic assumption that a such a person would loathe her penis. To emphasize that Agrado is happy with her

anatomy as is, Almodóvar has two other characters express their fascination with Agrado's penis: namely Nina and Mario. At the point that Agrado has been asked to expose her phallus to satisfy Nina's inquisitiveness and after Mario's comment that he would be willing to perform fellatio on Agrado in return for "a good blow job," Agrado's exclamation, "the entire company is obsessed with my cock" reinforces the idea that she is completely at ease with her body as opposed to manifesting a profound abhorrence of her "male" member. To fossilize this depiction of Agrado as being content with her masculine and feminine physical attributes, Almodóvar has her deliver a monologue about her "life story" which in actuality recounts the measures she has taken to achieve her idealized physique. She narrates:

They call me Agrado, because I have always tried to make people's lives agreeable. As well as being agreeable, I am very authentic. Look at this body. All made to measure. Almond-shaped eyes, 80,000. Nose, 200,000. [...] Tits, two, because I am not in any way a monster. 70,000 each, but I have more than earned that back. Silicone in the lips, forehead, cheeks, hips and ass. [...] Jaw reduction 75,000. Complete laser depilation, because women, like men, come from monkeys, 60,000 per session. [...] It costs a lot to be authentic, lady. And with these things one cannot be stingy because one is more authentic the more one resembles what one has been dreaming of.¹⁰⁰

The key term in this speech is "authentic." Agrado redefines what it means to be a woman on her own terms; thereby reconstructing femininity as a reduplication of idealized anatomy attainable by means of medical procedures. As Acevedo-Muñoz correctly observes, Almodóvar implies with the *mise en scene* that what Agrado has to say is also authentic owing to the fact that she is performing on stage in front of closed curtains (235). Instead of representing the fictional account of the canceled play (*A Streetcar Named Desire*), Agrado's performance is a narration of reality. By emphasizing the costs associated with her operations to become an "authentic" woman, Agrado reminds the viewer of the extremely polemical belief that transsexualism is in fact a disorder and its "cure" can only be achieved in the operating room.

¹⁰⁰ This is my translation of Agrado's monologue.

For the contemporary viewer familiar with Spain's policies regarding transsexualism and healthcare, Agrado's monologue also introduces the equally polemical practice of Spain's national healthcare system not funding gender reassignment surgery even when the candidate has meet all of the criteria for gender dysphoria (Bataller i Perelló "Transexualidad"). When considering the vastly disproportionate unemployment rates of transsexuals in Spain, (80% unable to find work because of their transsexualism as of November 2006), Agrado's professed reliance upon prostitution as a means to pay for her various operations is not incidental (Bataller i Perelló "Transexualidad"). Instead, this performance and the audience's bemused acceptance of it is a camp moment with an emphatic political message. Almodóvar wants the spectator to react like the members of Agrado's audience who remain to hear her speak and enthusiastically cheer her on to divulge more information about her transformation to an "authentic" woman. Also important to note is that Agrado states that she is "not in any way a monster" because she elected to have two breast implants. For her, having only one would be a deformation of her idealized body image. Nevertheless, noticeably absent from her monologue is any mention that she still has a penis. This implies that a person with breasts, "effeminate" jaw structure, "almond shaped eyes," lack of body hair, and who still has male genitalia has just as much right to self-identify as female as male-to-female transsexuals who have undergone vaginoplasty and people who were born women. Once more, the concept that Agrado self-professes to be "authentic" draws upon Baudrillard since she is essentially a hyperreal simulacrum that questions the authenticity of and replaces the need for the "original." By encouraging the viewer to side with the highly likeable Agrado, Almodóvar successfully undermines hegemonic assumptions about feminine identity and transsexualism.

Whereas Agrado is the main focus of transsexualism in *Todo sobre mi madre*, the antagonist Lola/Esteban transgresses heteronormative assumptions about male-to-female transsexuals as well. Like Agrado, Lola elected to keep her penis despite the fact that she also underwent numerous operations to look more effeminate including breast implants. Lola is also a transsexual who funded her surgery via prostitution. The chief difference between Agrado and Lola is that Agrado has sex exclusively with men while Lola has sex with both males and females. Viewers know this because Lola is the father of both Manuela's son Esteban and Sister Rosa's son Esteban. Although Lola never directly states that her clientele consists of men as openly as Agrado acknowledges, Almodóvar implies this via her friendship with Agrado who states that the two of them are alike since they both had their breast implant surgery done at the same time and because they both shared an apartment. What the other characters, especially Manuela, do emphasize is that Lola is a heroin addict who is dying from AIDS. In fact, Manuela even chastises Sister Rosa for having sexual relations with Lola when Sister Rosa should have known that doing so would most likely result in becoming HIV positive. Thus Almodóvar portrays a transsexual hooker who in her private life prefers women but whose livelihood requires her to have sex with men. Just as was the case with Juan/Ángel from *La mala educación*, Lola problematizes the assumption that sexual orientation is an inherent and fixed characteristic. On the contrary, Lola uses her professional sexuality as a means to an end: to fund her gender reassignment surgery. In this manner, Almodóvar further complicates the hegemony's belief that male-to-female transsexuals are women trapped in men's bodies who seek surgical intervention so that they can "become" heterosexuals who have sex only with men. This paints Lola's sexual orientation as ambiguous: precisely the message Almodóvar conveys with his case study of a male-to-female transsexual who, like the real-life transvestite upon

which Lola is based as mentioned previously, blurs the establishment's lines between the presumed heterosexuality expected of transsexuals and the reality that sexual orientation cannot be assumed based on anatomical features. Lola therefore embodies Almodóvar's queering of transsexualism itself more so than even Agrado. Very much like the image of the macho transvestite who forbids his wife from wearing miniskirts yet wears bikinis himself, Almodóvar portrays Lola as a womanizer who indiscriminately has sex with women even though she knows she has AIDS. As such, Almodóvar critiques machismo while simultaneously redefining what it means to be a transsexual.

Ignacio from *La mala educación* is a transsexual who also embodies the queer aesthetic. Important to distinguish is that, unlike Tina, Agrado, and Lola, Ignacio has not yet undergone all of the sexual reassignment surgical procedures she desires yet still self-identifies as a woman. For example, when Ignacio first confronts Padre Manolo (who has left the priesthood and now goes by the surname Berenguer) in her apartment, she talks about her "divine tits" which in fact have the appearance of a female's breasts. Moreover, as the blackmailing scheme unfolds, Ignacio makes it clear that she self-identifies as a woman by referring to herself using feminine adjectives such as "*una junkie*," "*muerta*," and "*harta*." Although referring to oneself using feminine adjectives is commonplace among drag queens (e.g. Fanny McNamara) as well, the fact that Ignacio has begun his transformation to a woman makes it clear that she no longer thinks of herself as being male. Unlike the temporary representation of femininity associated with drag, Ignacio's feminine identity is a permanent commitment. Ultimately Ignacio plans to fund her sex change operation with the money she extorts from Padre Manolo/Berenguer. Dissimilar to Tina, Agrado, and Lola, who represent much more well-developed portrayals of transsexuals because they have already attained their idealized bodies

and are content with the results, Ignacio “appears as a kind of fallen angel, trapped in the way station of a body that is no longer male but not yet fully female” (Vernon “Queer Sound” 63). Indeed Ignacio comments that she is very content with her breasts but dissatisfied with “the rest” of her body. Although Ballesteros claims that Almodóvar punishes Ignacio for his desire to change his anatomy by associating it with “drug addiction and death” this is not the case (94). Instead, Almodóvar indicts the Catholic Church; implying that Ignacio’s addiction to heroin stems from the childhood sexual abuse he suffered at the hands of Padre Manolo/Berenguer. Ignacio’s motivation to become a woman is not portrayed as a neurosis that began with the molestation, but as the only manner by which Ignacio can break free from a lifetime of dissonance between his male body and his feminine identity. Ignacio’s addiction to heroin is depicted as an obstacle to Ignacio’s goals of becoming a woman who can start life anew. This explains why Ignacio tells Berenguer that she is a junkie whose habit is killing her and that she plans to check into a detoxification clinic before finalizing her surgical procedures. By manipulating Padre Manolo into helping her overcome her dependency on heroin, Ignacio essentially relegates her childhood sexual abuse to the past so that she can begin a new life as a woman. Unfortunately for Ignacio, her “last fix” is a lethal dose obtained by Juan and Berenguer for the sole purpose of murdering her. In this manner, Padre Manolo turns the tables on the blackmailing scheme and victimizes Ignacio once more; for purposes of pursuing Juan romantically and to free himself from Ignacio’s extortion scheme. This is hardly a castigation of Ignacio on the part of Almodóvar but instead is a condemnation of the Church for creating an environment in which young boys could be victimized by priests.¹⁰¹ As a former drag queen turned pre-op transsexual who would have completed her surgery had she not been assassinated

¹⁰¹ Acevedo-Muñoz affirms that Almodóvar treats the Catholic Church “as a source of repression and abuse” in *La mala educación* and other films (150).

by her brother and Berenguer, Ignacio exemplifies the queer aesthetic. Almodóvar presents the viewer with a lasting impression of Ignacio as the drag queen Zahara (although played by Juan) and eventually a body in transition since Ignacio still retains her male genitalia yet has breasts. Due to the fact that Ignacio towards the end of the movie refers to herself in the feminine and clearly is sexually attracted to men, this character undermines the traditional belief that a person's gender identity and sexual orientation stem from their anatomy at birth. As Jagose explains, queer redefines the very concept of man and woman such as illustrated by Ignacio's progression toward becoming a transsexual (3). Representing a repertoire of queer topics including cross-dressing, homosexuality, hermaphroditism, transgressive gender identity, and transsexualism, Ignacio incarnates a broad spectrum of definitively queer characteristics.

Whereas Almodóvar queers hegemonic definitions of transsexualism, Waters features two transsexual characters to invert patriarchal power structures. In *Pink Flamingos*, the unidentified transsexual who triumphs over her would-be accoster Raymond Marble symbolizes Waters' queer agenda. As described in chapter two, Raymond reacts with horror and flees when confronted by the transsexual's male genitalia. Waters' decision to present the audience with a male-to-female transsexual who has not finalized her surgery transcends mere shock value.¹⁰² The purpose of this scene is to prompt the audience to side with a marginalized member of society whose sexuality would be classified as deviant according to traditional patriarchal norms and to reject the aberrant sexual proclivities of Raymond who symbolizes male authority. Ascribing Raymond's sexuality to the realm of the forbidden in this manner while simultaneously portraying a transsexual who beats Raymond at his own game places *Pink*

¹⁰² Elizabeth Coffey played the role of the transsexual mentioned in this scene. Unlike Agrado and Lola, Elizabeth conforms to the belief that male-to-female transsexuals wish to undergo vaginoplasty. As Waters explains in *Shock Value*, Coffey had breast implant surgery prior to *Pink Flamingos* and genital reassignment surgery before *Female Trouble* (129). After completing her operation, Coffey played Dawn's girlfriend Earnestine in *Female Trouble* (Waters *Shock Value* 129).

Flamingos among the most innovative queer movies of its time. Few non-pornographic films from this era can claim to portray an actual transsexual who exposes her female and male anatomy to the camera. As such, this scene exemplifies Jagose's definition of queer in that it depicts transsexualism while also satirizing heteronormativity. This makes *Pink Flamingos* one of the most noteworthy examples of a postmodern queer work that normalizes homosexuality by making heterosexuality deviant as described by Stein and Plummer (135). In this manner, Waters presents a queer countercultural model that has usurped patriarchal control. As a result, viewers identify with the transsexual and ridicule the "perverted" heterosexual Raymond Marble. Waters achieves this inversion of expectations that results in the audience siding with Raymond's would be victim via camp. First, Waters carefully sets the stage so that the viewer expects to see another example of Raymond successfully victimizing a woman. The off-screen narrator informs the viewer that Raymond plans to perpetrate another act of indecent exposure while his "wife waits in the car. Is there no shame?" Next, Waters uses the "Chicken Grabber" song to remind the spectator of Raymond's past conquests the resulted in the women being shocked and disgusted; which is the exact reaction that feeds his fetish. Waters utilizes a medium close up of an attractive female who is brushing her hair and checking her appearance in a handheld mirror while Raymond spies on her with his binoculars. When Raymond closes in on the woman and exposes his penis to her, he strokes his penis hoping that doing so will heighten the impact of this act. Waters then returns to a medium close up of the female who, instead of looking horrified by what she sees, smiles, laughs, then exposes one of her breasts while licking her lips. At this moment, the audience already knows that Raymond is one of the villains of the film and that his goal is to accost this woman sexually in order to gratify his perverted need to expose himself. Since Waters utilizes a medium close up of the transsexual, moviegoers can

easily read her facial expressions and realize that she is not threatened at all by Raymond. By having her fondle one of her breasts, Waters reverses Raymond's and her roles by making her the more aggressive of the pair. When Raymond reacts by masturbating more, Waters has the transsexual expose her penis and fondle it while laughing at Raymond. To fossilize the notion that the transsexual has effectively victimized Raymond, Waters cuts to a close up of his dismayed expression followed by a medium close up of him fleeing in terror. This sequence employs the humor, exaggeration, and the love of vulgarity of camp as described by Sontag (275-289). By transforming an act of indecent exposure into a comedic reversal of roles between victim and perpetrator, Waters utilizes camp's humor to disarm the audience's potential resistance to seeing the male genitalia of the transsexual. Moreover, the woman's campy hyperbolic and lascivious expressions and gesticulations completely reverse the power differential between Raymond and the transsexual granting her the upper hand and thereby thwarting his attempt to add her to his string of victims. The vulgarity of Raymond's indecent exposure attempt going wrong becomes a tool that Waters utilizes to cause the audience to empathize with the transsexual. The underpinning queer message is clear via Waters' camp portrayal of an act of indecent exposure. Viewers are encouraged to side with the transsexual, who would normally be a marginalized figure, and to reject the perverse lasciviousness of Raymond, who symbolizes heteronormativity, in this reversal of roles.

Waters' only other portrayal of a transsexual to date is the character Mole from *Desperate Living*. Mole becomes a female-to-male transsexual who undergoes metoidioplasty and then later, goaded by her girlfriend Muffy, cuts off her penis: an act that epitomizes the queer movement's stubborn refusal to accept inclusive labels. Waters depicts Mole as an extremely masculinized lesbian who claims, "I'm a man [...] A man trapped in a woman's

body.” This sentiment on Mole’s part complies with traditional definitions of transsexuals being born “in the wrong body” and wishing to have sexual reassignment surgery to make the body match the transsexual person’s desired gender identity (Sullivan 105). This explains why Mole cross-dresses and self-identifies as a man. For example, when the audience first sees Mole, she sports a platinum blond, closely cropped man’s hairdo, an outfit that looks like two different men’s suits stitched together, and a man’s formal jacket.¹⁰³ Mole’s disposition is a highly embellished caricature of “virile” behavior replete with spitting on the floor, tucking her hand under the front of her pants, clearing phlegm from her nostril, and an over-the-top domineering attitude. In fact, this portrayal of such a butch lesbian, according to Waters, caused many gay critics to denigrate this film based on their belief that Waters was guilty of misogyny and homophobic stereotyping (MacDonald 239). In his interview with MacDonald, Waters states:

That’s why some women say my films are a put-down of women, which I totally disagree with. I like aggressive women. I have a lot of friends who are aggressive women, and I get along with women very well. Dave Lochary died after we made *Female Trouble*, and I didn’t know who I could replace him with, so I figured I’d make a movie with women, about lesbians. Gay papers really came down on me, and I thought, there are so many lesbians working on the movie! (239).

What the critics who accuse Waters of disparaging women and especially lesbians overlook is that his portrayal of Mole deconstructs sexism and homophobia since Mole is ultimately the heroine of the film and triumphs over the evil Queen Carlotta. Thus Waters retools a stereotypical figure (i.e. the butch dyke) but does so in a manner that encourages the audience to identify with her and to reject the mantle of heteronormativity imposed upon her by the hegemony. As Richard Dyer explains, homosexual stereotypes offer directors (especially queer ones like Almodóvar and Waters) an advantageous position from which to deconstruct the

¹⁰³ Since Mole ultimately decides that her sex change operation was a mistake and subsequently identifies herself as a lesbian, she is referred to using feminine pronouns in this chapter.

associated behaviors of characters who manifest the connoted stereotypical traits (*Matter of Images* 16). Therefore, instead of relying on a superficial reading of Mole that amounts to no more than an impulsive reaction to reject the politically incorrect stereotype she represents, it is more useful to delve into the manners by which Waters makes a queer and feminist statement with this character. Given the fact that traditionally film has tended to vilify the butch lesbian as a dangerous other, very revealing is the fact that Waters encourages the audience to side with her (Dyer *Matter of Images* 32). In addition to missing the point that Waters portrays Mole in a positive light, his detractors do not account for the fact that she is in actuality a transsexual whose idealized gender identity is masculine. Just as Divine's impersonation of women proves that gender is a performance, Mole's manliness proves the instability of heteronormativity by undergoing sexual reassignment surgery and then by undoing it. Part of Mole's motivation for having her operation is so that she better please her girlfriend Muffy who complains, "Oh, Mole, sometimes I need a man." After forcing the doctor to perform the gender corrective surgery, Mole returns home to show off her new penis to Muffy who, instead of being grateful, is horrified by it and calls it an "ugly deformed worm." For that reason, Mole cuts off her penis and bemoans the fact that she "won't have any organs. It'll be like having a Barbie doll crotch." Nevertheless, Muffy repairs the open wound and promises to "love it, [and] eat it, just like old times." A female-to-male transsexual who receives gender corrective surgery and who then undoes that operation in order to please her partner mocks the Freudian concept of penis envy and demonstrates the "impossibility of any 'natural' sexuality [and] calls into question even such apparently unproblematic terms as 'man' and 'woman'" (Jagose 3). Mole's rejection of her male anatomy is reinforced by Shotsie, who calls men "genetic rejects" and refers to male sexual organs as "gristle they got hanging between their legs [that] was God's first mistake and us

women [have] been paying for it ever since.” Like Almodóvar does with Agrado and Lola, Waters problematizes the notion that all transsexuals innately loathe their birth genitalia and view sexual reassignment surgery as the only way to reconcile the dissonance between their desired gender identity and their anatomy. This also explains why Mole does not hesitate to cut off her penis after Muffy expresses her disgust for it despite the fact that she considers herself to be a man trapped in a woman’s body. Ultimately, “Barbie doll crotch” does not define Mole’s sexuality or gender. Instead, Waters empowers her to explore and to choose her own sexual orientation and gender identity which is hardly the traditional superficial treatment afforded to the stereotyped butch lesbian. In this manner, Waters transforms a stereotypical representation of homosexual women into a quintessentially queer and liberating subversion of prejudicial beliefs about lesbianism and transsexualism.

Not only is Mole a definitively queer character, the battle for supremacy between her and Queen Carlotta is symbolic of Waters’ countercultural feminist agenda. Essential in comprehending the feminist statement represented by Mole’s struggles is a foundation of the norms governing sexuality and deviancy vehemently opposed by the activists of the so-called second wave of feminism. Generally speaking, according to Nancy A. Hewitt, feminism has been traditionally considered to exist within three distinct chronologically arranged movements (1-2). These “waves” of feminism took place with the first one occurring between 1848 and 1920, the second beginning in the 1960’s and 1970’s, and the third surging in the 1980’s and 1990’s (Hewitt 3-4). The most salient aspect of the second wave feminist ideology (which is concurrent with *Desperate Living*’s release date of 1977) as it applies to Mole and Carlotta concerns the struggle to debunk Freudian and other hegemonic sanctioned definitions of acceptable and deviant human female sexuality. According to Jane Gerhard, second wave

feminists rebelled against the Freudian notion of penis envy which theorized that all women are masochists because of their perceived “psychic wound” (i.e. their vaginas), the ingrained and prevalent belief that orgasms for women could only be achieved via vaginal penetration by a penis and exclusively when engaging in sexual intercourse for purposes of procreating, and the labeling of sexual deviancy in women as constituting an “abnormal” fixation on clitoral stimulation as opposed to women’s “normal” and “innate” desire to become mothers through the sex act (535-718). Instead of promulgating these theories about female sexuality, Waters joins the ranks of second wave feminists by creating a countercultural reality in which lesbians are the heroines and the concept of all women secretly desiring to be mothers is the object of scathing parody. In *Desperate Living*’s fictional town Mortville, a place where criminals flee to escape prosecution, Waters presents the viewer with a matriarchal microcosm which is ultimately dominated by lesbians. The tyrannical Queen Carlotta, who symbolizes the oppression of heteronormativity, reigns with absolute monarchal authority which she demonstrates by humiliating her subjects whenever she feels the need to do so. Waters systematically parodies the hypothesis that women’s sexual pleasure is inextricably tied to motherhood in many ways. Important to note is Queen Carlotta’s obvious disdain for homosexual women whom she denigrates by calling them “filthy muff divers” and “dykes.” Using terminology like this clearly portrays Queen Carlotta as a homophobe and her totalitarian regime as an apparatus used to force heteronormative values on her subjects. The queer message that Waters conveys by aligning Queen Carlotta’s dominion with heteronormativity is that, like the hapless denizens of Mortville, homosexuals are marginalized people whose oppression is authored by despicable authority figures. Equally vital to analyze are the narrative strategies Waters utilizes to deconstruct the stereotype of the woman who is by her very nature a good mother and Waters’ assault on the

very same theoretical explanations for female sexuality that second wave feminists denounced. It is not incidental that Queen Carlotta herself is a mother who punishes her daughter Princess Coo-Coo for abdicating her royal heritage by choosing to become romantically involved with a nudist garbage man. Instead of merely berating Coo-Coo for loving a man who is from a lower socioeconomic background, Queen Carlotta orders her to be gang raped by her guards, injected with a virulent strain of rabies, and to be left for dead in the streets of Mortville. This is hardly the behavior expected of a “loving” mother whose daughter’s only infraction is to be in love with a member of the lower class. Moreover, Waters makes it clear that Queen Carlotta satiates her voracious sexual appetite by having sex with her guards; each of which is assigned to have sex with her at designated days and times. Very revealing are the uniforms sported by Queen Carlotta’s goons. They all wear the black leather pants, see through mesh shirts, biker jackets, and black leather hats associated with the gay sadomasochistic leather fetish subculture. Issuing royal decrees that she is to be “serviced” by these guards, Queen Carlotta makes them into her sexual playthings to be used at her whim. This depiction of Queen Carlotta’s sexuality clearly decries heteronormativity while presenting the viewer with a case study of a woman whose sexual desires have nothing to do with an alleged subconscious desire to be a mother. Instead, Queen Carlotta is a dominatrix who experiences sexual pleasure by being in absolute control of her romantic partners. Furthermore, Waters derides the belief that that feminine Eros stems exclusively from vaginal penetration by presenting lesbian seduction in the form of two glory holes in a women’s restroom. While in Flipper’s bar, Peggy Gravel excuses herself to go use the bathroom. On her way, she is accosted by several women who try to coerce into having sex. As she is sitting on the toilet, two breasts emerge through twin glory holes. Although Peggy refuses these advances, Waters makes it obvious that these women do not subconsciously desire penile

penetration; an image fossilized by one of the lesbian strippers whose on-stage performance consists of kicking and beating the unconscious body of a man. Essential to take into account is the fact that the lesbians of Mortville, whose ringleader is Mole, are the “good guys” of the film who successfully lead a coup, assassinate Queen Carlotta, and supplant Carlotta’s monarchy with a democracy free from the oppression of enforced heterosexuality. As Mole announces to the citizens of Mortville after Queen Carlotta’s demise, “Attention all Mortville residents! Queen Carlotta is dead! Your days of humiliation have come to an end! To celebrate this joyous occasion I invite you to join me in a victory feast in honor of our newly found independence. Let the ring of freedom be heard all over this land. Mortville is at last a free city!” In this fantasy world of a free and independent Mortville, women themselves, not outmoded pseudoscientific hypotheses, determine their own libidinal pleasures in direct defiance of hegemonic authority structures. When factoring in Waters’ portrayal of lesbianism as a liberating form of female sexuality that trumps straight sex into the representational equation, there can be no doubt that Mole’s victory over Queen Carlotta symbolizes Waters’ antiestablishment and second wave feminist stance.

Doubtlessly, transsexuals play a vital role in the queer statements made by Almodóvar and Waters. However, another archetypal character that both directors employ presents a queer statement to the viewer by presenting a parody of the belief that heterosexuality is “normal.” This type of protagonist most commonly takes the form of the “perverted” heterosexual male. From Almodóvar’s filmography, sexually deviant heterosexual men are portrayed in *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984), *Matador* (1986), *¡Átame!* (1989), *Kika* (1993), *Hable con ella*, (2002) and *Volver* (2006). In films by Waters, deviant straight men appear in *Multiple Maniacs*, *Pink Flamingos*, *Desperate Living*, *Polyester*, *Cecil B. Demented* (2000), and *A Dirty*

Shame (2004). A comprehensive examination of the sexually aberrant heterosexual male in these works is certainly warranted for future studies. For purposes of concision, the remainder of this chapter focuses only on the characters who present the most outrageous examples of straight men who deviate from the norm and on those who have not already been discussed previously in this dissertation. Proceeding in this manner, we will analyze the serial killer Diego Montes from *Matador*, the crazed rapist Pablo from *Kika*, Benigno who sexually assaults his comatose patient in *Hable con ella*, the transvestite police officer from *Desperate Living*, and the leader of the sex addicts Ray Ray from *A Dirty Shame*. As we shall see, each of these characters symbolizes a queering of heterosexuality by portraying it as abnormal in accordance with Stein and Plummer's hypothesis (135). Whereas Waters approaches the topic of male heterosexual deviance from an overall camp perspective in order to shock the audience into laughter, Almodóvar treats this topic in a much more serious manner while simultaneously critiquing traditional definitions of heterosexuality. The overriding queer agenda of both directors with their depiction of "perverted" straight men is to encourage their audience to eschew homophobic beliefs and to reflect on their own established beliefs about sexuality.

One example of a straight male whose sexual appetites deviate from the norm is the matador Diego Montes from *Matador*. In this film, Almodóvar depicts a character who is sexually excited by murder (or erotophonophilia) and whose profession as a bullfighter symbolically unites sensuality with death. As Leora Lev explains, tauromachy is a sport with libidinal ties to injury, castration, and sacrificial death (76). As a torero, Diego incarnates what Lev refers to as:

an unequivocally masculinist position from which the male self must conquer, mutilate, or (less frequently) defend himself against a female other. [...] Alternatively, the torero is the male lover seducing his unruly woman to the point of penetration via his lance (estoque) of “her” vagina. [...] Whichever way one slices it, however, these gender dynamics are plotted and lyricized as an irreducibly masculinist dialectic that, furthermore, disavows any hint of transvestism or homoeroticism (76).

As the quintessential symbol of Spanish masculinity, the matador incarnates Iberian machismo. As such, it is very revealing that Almodóvar chooses to characterize Diego as an ex-matador who was gored and who now associates murder with sex. Denied the thrill of the kill in the bullring, Diego now satiates his murderous sexual impulses by preying upon young women. Almodóvar makes it obvious that Diego associates homicide with sexuality from the very start of the film. During the opening credits, viewers see images of women being murdered in horrific ways crosscut with footage of Diego masturbating.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, Almodóvar establishes that Diego is sexually attracted to the act of murder within the first two minutes of the movie. As Almodóvar explains, “With that image [Diego masturbating to women being killed] I explain that this man gets excited with the image of women dying violently and that he is all alone” (Vidal 167). Nevertheless, Diego is no longer alone after meeting María Cardenal: a woman who is his exact match in her zeal for committing murder at the height of climax during the sex act. Moreover, Diego and María consummate their love by assassination and suicide while having sex. As Allinson observes, María uses a long hairpin to stab Diego in the neck (bullfighter style) then commits suicide by shooting herself in the mouth as they both climax sexually (*A Spanish*

¹⁰⁴ The films Diego watches, according to Almodóvar, “come from very bad horror movies – bad ones are always the most entertaining: films by Jess Frank, the worst kind of schlock horrors they used to make in Spain and Italy in the sixties and seventies” (Strauss 102). Smith confirms that Diego is a serial killer who is sexually aroused by the scenes of women being brutally murdered (“Almodóvar”42).

Labyrinth 28).¹⁰⁵ Throughout the film, Diego pursues María romantically while she in turn teases him in order to heighten his desire much in the same way as the torero “seduces” the bull. Lev posits that this interchange between the two deconstructs “patriarchal constructions of gender, whose investment in such divisions is shown to be literally and figuratively necrophilic” (79). This is a clear indictment of heteronormativity on Almodóvar’s part because Diego and María represent the consummate heterosexual couple who are a perfect match for each other both amorously and criminally. Like the Connie and Raymond Marble duo from *Pink Flamingos* and Donald and Donna Dasher from *Female Trouble*, the Diego and María dyad links sexuality with criminality in order to deconstruct the notion that heterosexual coupling automatically implies normality according to hegemonic standards. This is not to infer, however, that Diego is in any way a sycophant like Raymond and Donald. On the contrary, Almodóvar portrays him as a virile and menacing psychopath. In fact, Diego is depicted as being a sexually-driven serial killer; thereby insinuating that for him sexual arousal is paired with the act of committing murder. As machismo personified, the wounded Diego is compelled to kill women in order to maintain his masculine ego which Almodóvar so skillfully aligns within the tauromachy paradigm. Almodóvar therefore queers Diego’s sexuality by imbuing him with the characteristics of a lust murderer. In this manner, Almodóvar encourages the audience to question the notion that heterosexuality is sacrosanct by presenting a case study of a lethally aberrant straight man who can achieve an orgasm only by killing his sexual partner.

Whereas Diego in *Matador* is sexually attracted to murder, Almodóvar portrays Pablo (whose stage name for his pornographic movies is Paul Bazzo) from *Kika* as a hypersexual

¹⁰⁵ Acevedo-Muñoz also affirms that for Diego and María, killing during the sex act represents the apex of sexual pleasure (78).

heterosexual deviant. As Allinson explains, “sex maniac and rapist Paul Bazzo (literally ‘Big Fuck’) associates everything with sex” (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 96). According to Pablo’s sister Juana, Pablo has been a sex fiend for his entire life and had sex with “all the cows, goats, and sheep in town” before having sex with her. Juana also states that Pablo “raped all of their neighbors.”¹⁰⁶ To drive home the point that Pablo’s libido is unchecked, Almodóvar shows extended footage of him raping Kika. During this scene, which lasts almost nine minutes, Pablo smells Kika’s vagina, inserts a slice of orange in it then eats the orange slice, then penetrates her at knifepoint in an attempt to beat his best personal record of having four orgasms. It is only when the two police officers break down the door and drag him off of Kika that Pablo ceases to rape her. By depicting a heterosexual man who practiced bestiality, forces himself upon his sister, and sexually assaults Kika, Almodóvar undermines hegemonic assumptions that heterosexuality automatically denotes “decency.” Utilizing Pablo in this way has a normalizing effect on homosexuality while queering heterosexuality because his deviancy as a straight man makes gay sex seem mundane by comparison. At the very least, Pablo demonstrates that his sexuality, like any other, can be labeled as perverse by the heteronormative majority. Not only does Pablo represent a parody straight sex, Almodóvar also uses him to mock the homophobic belief that all homosexual men are promiscuous by presenting a straight man whose sexual appetite cannot be quenched.

One of the most unsettling heterosexual males who engages in atypical sexual behavior is Benigno from *Hable con ella*. Benigno’s obsession with the comatose Alicia culminates in Benigno raping her while she is under his care (he is her nurse). Considering that Alicia is totally unresponsive to any stimulus, this act of sexual assault takes on an undertone of

¹⁰⁶ While true that Pablo confesses to having sex with men during his incarceration, he tells Juana that “it is not the same” and expresses his preference for vaginal sex.

necrophilia. As Almodóvar responds when questioned about the rape of Alicia, “Some might say that Benigno is a necrophiliac. That wouldn’t necessarily be wrong.” (Strauss 219).

Although Acevedo-Muñoz and Linda Williams refer to the story of Benigno raping Alicia as a “sleeping beauty scenario” since Alicia’s pregnancy causes her to wake up from her coma, Almodóvar instead portrays this violation of Alicia as an act of sexual deviance and not an idealized romantic love story (Acevedo Muñoz 240; Williams 184). Moreover, Almodóvar makes it clear that Benigno is sexually obsessed with the helpless Alicia by emphasizing the great lengths to which he goes to keep Alicia looking the same as before her accident. As Acevedo-Muñoz posits, Benigno is clearly enamored with his duties to care for Alicia which are “gentle, [and] even feminized” (242). This devotion to Alicia is in fact a manifestation of Benigno’s compulsive drive to possess Alicia. This overwhelming desire to control her began with Benigno’s acts of voyeurism during which he spies on her and progressively becomes more possessive of her (Acevedo-Muñoz 248). This compulsive desire to control Alicia culminates in Benigno sexually assaulting her while he recounts the silent film *The Shrinking Lover* to her. As Almodóvar explains, the function of *The Shrinking Lover* “is to cover up what Benigno has done” (Strauss 219). To communicate the depth of Benigno’s depravity, Almodóvar unflinchingly shows footage of him undressing her like a lover would, and massaging her nude body with rubbing alcohol. Acevedo-Muñoz adds that this massage “becomes increasingly charged with sexual tension” and that “Benigno clearly looks at Alicia’s genitals, mesmerized, his hands dangerously close to the pubic area, his voice trembling with anxiety and desire” (253-254). Eventually, when another nurse notices that Alicia does not menstruate, Benigno’s crime is discovered and he is put in prison for it. Toward the end of the film, Benigno commits suicide because he knows that he will never be permitted to see Alicia again. By representing a

heterosexual male who victimizes a helpless woman in this manner, Almodóvar challenges the viewer's horizon of expectations concerning heteronormative sex. Almodóvar makes it clear to the audience that Alicia would never have consented to having any kind of relationship with Benigno, much less a consensual sexual one. Benigno therefore presents a queer statement to the viewer since his characterization and actions make heterosexuality seem deviant.

Similar to Almodóvar, Waters also features deviant heterosexual men in many of his films and also utilizes them to deconstruct homophobia and heteronormative values. One of these protagonists is the police officer from *Desperate Living*. Played by Turkey Joe, this incarnation of patriarchal authority intercepts Peggy and Grizelda after they abscond into the woods following the accidental death of Peggy's husband. The police officer restrains both women and then informs them that they are both wanted for the death of Peggy's spouse.¹⁰⁷ Instead of arresting Peggy and Grizelda and calling for backup to transport them to prison, the policeman offers to let them escape to Mortville if they cooperate with his unusual request. When asked what they will have to do, the officer replies, "Sit on that car hood. You'll see. I've got something to show you first." He then proceeds to strip to expose that he is wearing women's lingerie underneath his uniform. After fondling himself and talking about how the feel of nylon arouses him sexually, the police officer tells the two "What I like best is a French kiss when I'm all dressed." He then demands that each woman remove her underpants and give them to him. While moaning in delight, the policeman puts on Grizelda's panties and asks, "How does that look? Pretty sexy huh?" He then kisses Grizelda passionately stating that he wants "a real wet one [kiss]." After finishing with Grizelda, the policeman turns to Peggy and states, "Mrs. Gravel, I'd like to examine your underpants." When Peggy throws her panties at him, the police

¹⁰⁷ This analysis of Turkey Joe falls into the category of "perverted" straight men because he is carefully constructed by Waters to be a heterosexual male who enjoys the more private and sexual aspects of cross-dressing as opposed to performing in drag or as a *travesti*.

officer sniffs them, grunts with pleasure, and talks about how expensive the undergarment is. After donning Peggy's panties, the patrolman kisses her then falls to the ground and fondles himself while groaning in ecstasy. True to his word, the policeman allows Peggy and Grizela to leave for Mortville. A transvestite police officer who takes such obvious intense sexual pleasure in donning women's underclothes and who abdicates his legal responsibility to arrest Peggy and Grizelda represents a caricature of a patriarchal authority figure. This character embodies the characteristics of the transvestite (in US culture) who wears women's clothing for his own private sexual gratification as opposed to a drag queen or *travestí* who cross-dresses for entertainment purposes (Ross 162). The fact that this character hides his feminine apparel in the trappings of a police officer's uniform does not in any way diminish the fact that he is a transvestite. In fact, this drives home the point that in the US, transvestism connotes a heterosexual male who dons women's intimate apparel exclusively in private settings and only because doing so excites him sexually. Waters reinforces the idea that a policeman with a fetish for wearing women's undergarments is a sexual deviant by having Grizelda remark to Peggy that she "knew cops were sick" moments before she hands him her panties. By ignoring his legal obligation to detain these two women in favor of indulging his own deviant need for sexual gratification through cross-dressing, this policeman represents Waters' critique of corrupt law enforcement officers and the heteronormative vision of what constitutes "normal" sexuality. This queering of the police is part of Waters' countercultural agenda that destabilizes the myth of the ethically irreproachable policeman. Instead of enforcing hegemonic norms as would be expected of a police officer, this character embodies sexual deviance and as such deconstructs the traditional belief that heterosexuality is "normal." Waters also utilizes Turkey Joe's character to satirize heteronormative sexual hypocrisy. Since the police officer feels compelled

to hide his cross-dressing, Waters proffers him as an example of sexually repressed individuals who gratify their sexual urges surreptitiously (i.e. “on the low down”) but also by taking advantage of their positions of authority. The underpinning message is that this policeman is a villainous sexual deviant whose “perverted” urges unambiguously overpower his legal and ethical responsibilities.

Of all of John Waters’ films that deal with sexuality, *A Dirty Shame* presents the audience with the most exaggerated examples of sexual deviance. Indeed, the plot of this movie centers on a group of sex addicts who are seeking to discover a new sex act. The lead male protagonist, Ray Ray, is the quintessential example of a “perverted” heterosexual. Waters depicts Ray as a messianic figure of the oversexed population of Baltimore who has supernatural powers that stem from his hyperbolic sex drive. For example, Ray has the ability to resurrect the dead by touching them; whereupon the revived person transforms into a sex addict. Of Ray’s multiple sexual preferences, including cunnilingus, felching (licking semen from a person’s anus), earning his “red wings” (performing oral sex on a woman who is menstruating), a “plate job” (viewing a person defecate onto a clear glass plate), perhaps the most unusual takes place when Ray has sex with a lascivious tree. All of Ray’s fetishes reinforce Waters’ proclivity for portraying only the most outlandish sexual preferences as seen previously in Lady Divine’s Cavalcade of Perversions from *Multiple Maniacs*. In fact, when interviewed by John G. Ives about sex in his films, Waters responds, “In all of my films, sex is made to look ludicrous” (85). Such is definitely the case with Ray Ray who epitomizes aberrant heterosexuality. As “perversion” personified, Ray embodies Waters’ queer statement to the audience. If a heterosexual person can become sexually excited by such exotic fetishes, homosexuality is tame in comparison.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE WATERS IN ALMODÓVAR

Since Pedro Almodóvar's first commercially successful film *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* debuted in 1980, film critics have compared him to John Waters. For example, Román Gubern mentions the connection between *Pink Flamingos* (1972) and Almodóvar in his article on cultural influences on Almodóvar's work, "el cineasta siempre haya declararse (sic) más próximo al Waters de *Pink Flamingos*" (63). Similarly, Ignacio Oliva notes that Almodóvar looked to the "irreverent work" of Waters when creating his own style (397).¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Almodóvar himself, when interviewed about the impact of Waters on his oeuvre, consistently acknowledges that he recycles elements of Waters' movies. In a 1992 interview with Julian Schnabel, Almodóvar states that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is "in the style of an early John Waters film" (95). When asked by Frédéric Strauss about the mixing of the comic strip aesthetic with the cinematic code as found in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, Almodóvar once more confirms his previous assertion about Waters, "I was also more naturally influenced by the American underground, Paul Morrissey's first films, and most of all John Waters' *Pink Flamingos*" (13). Although scholars clearly agree that Waters swayed Almodóvar's cinema and despite the fact that Almodóvar himself openly acknowledges this fact, to date there has been no in-depth study of precisely how Waters influenced the cinema of Almodóvar. Considering the recycling

¹⁰⁸ Mark Allinson also hypothesizes that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is "reminiscent of the early work of John Waters such as *Pink Flamingos* (163). Víctor Fuentes draws the same conclusion that Waters affected Almodóvar's works (157). Tim Clark observes that Almodóvar "has been compared to John Waters, Buñuel, Fassbinder, even Billy Wilder" (58).

processes in which both directors pastiche works by other creative artists such as Tennessee Williams, Douglas Sirk, and Luis Buñuel, the next logical step is to analyze allusions to Waters' films found in Almodóvar's. Essential to note is that presently Almodóvar has not depicted any actual footage from a Waters film within any of his own works as he did with the excerpt of Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954) featured in *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988). Instead of making direct allusions to Waters in this manner, Almodóvar chooses a much more subtle approach in which he pastiches the "trash" aesthetic associated with Waters' themes, characters, and narratives. As is the case with the shared filmic influences of both directors and the archetypal characters they utilize, a thorough investigation of each reference Almodóvar makes specifically to the work of Waters is required to comprehend the implicit meaning conveyed. To facilitate this process, the analyses that follow trace Almodóvar's allusions to Waters' movies in chronological order by release date starting with *Pepi, Luci, Bom* and ending with *Carne trémula* (1997). After concluding this chapter, the allusions to Waters Almodóvar makes in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984), *Matador* (1986), and *Carne trémula* will be clear.

Of Almodóvar's current eighteen feature-length cinematic productions, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is by far the most inspired by Waters. When examined closely, the similarities between this movie and *Pink Flamingos* manifest in aesthetic, characters, and style. First is the overall impression that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is an example of underground, do-it-yourself cinema just like *Pink Flamingos*. Drawing heavily upon the "trash" aesthetic in this film, Almodóvar chooses to mimic Waters' proclivity for glorifying members of the lower classes, vilifying the elite, focusing on shocking footage, and making women the triumphant heroines over weak, ineffectual men. As Andy Medhurst points out, Almodóvar most commonly employs this artistic

expression by utilizing a comedic tone in his movies, much like Waters, because comedy is intended for wider audiences, whereas the “self-selecting” art cinema connoisseur prefers more serious topics (119). Although Medhurst’s conclusion is correct in that humor is a part of the “trash” aesthetic, he overlooks the fact that Almodóvar and Waters, as postmodern auteurs, actively and purposefully seek to erode the boundaries between “high” and “low” cultures with their works. Subsequently, the screwball comedy scenes of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* do not in any way detract from this film’s value as an art form. Despite Medhurst’s position that “comedy courts the vulgar, [and] art cinema yearns for the refined,” *Pepi, Luci, Bom* advances a postmodern aesthetic that undermines hegemonic definitions of “high” art forms and that places the “refined” and comedy on equal footing. Therefore the “trash” aesthetic, like any other aesthetic, offers both Almodóvar and Waters vantage points from which they can convey their artistic visions. The comedic content of such films does not relegate them to being inferior art in any way. In fact, in Almodóvar’s and Waters’ hands, humor becomes a tool that makes the movie watching process an unforgettable experience for the viewer because both directors make audiences laugh at topics normally considered taboo. One example illustrating the influence of the “trash” aesthetic on Almodóvar involves the “golden shower” scene in which Bom initiates a sadomasochistic relationship with Luci by urinating on her. Alejandro Yarza describes this act as one of many “instances that intend to provoke the revulsion of the spectator” and attributes such footage to the punk aesthetic (61). While true that Almodóvar includes the punk aesthetic in this movie, as personified by Bom, the “golden shower” sequence is based more on the “trash” aesthetic and Waters’ influence. Additionally, Almodóvar follows Waters’ example by using shockingly humorous footage to disarm the viewer’s potential disbelief that a sadomasochistic relationship between the teen and the forty-year old housewife could exist. Paul Julian Smith

posits “it is clear that the humor of this scene lies in the contrast between banal, domestic reality (knitting lessons) and perverse sexual practice: after urinating on her newfound partner, Bom politely asks which part of Spain she is from” (“*Pepi, Luci, Bom*” 26). However, Smith’s use of the word “perverse” implies that he is making a value judgment on this sexual act from a biased perspective. To label the “golden shower” as “perverse” implies heteronormative criteria for evaluation of acts that precludes the possibility that any two sexual partners could find such an act to be a mutually pleasurable experience. From Smith’s perspective, urinating on one’s partner falls within the realm of the “perverse” because it is not a sex act in which a male vaginally penetrates a woman for the purposes of procreation. Luci’s ecstatic moans of delight during the act of urination convey her obvious sexual satisfaction. For Bom, Luci, and Pepi, the “golden shower” is an expression of sexuality set free from the limitations of traditional definitions of acceptable sexual pleasure. The true nature of the comical content of this scene is not based on “perverse” sexuality as Smith indicates, but on the nonchalant manner in which Pepi, Luci, and Bom treat the “golden shower,” which is typically an extremely intimate sexual act between partners who know each other well, as if it were a normal, everyday occurrence coupled with the shock value of such footage considering that Bom and Luci have just met. Another source of the humor of this scene stems from how easily Pepi identifies Luci as a masochist (she notices that Luci becomes sexually excited after she strikes her in frustration during the knitting lesson) and also from Bom’s and Luci’s blatant mutual attraction for each other after this act of urination is consummated. This utilization of bodily functions as the basis for comedic impact on the viewer is doubtlessly the direct result of Almodóvar recycling the segment during which Divine eats dog feces in *Pink Flamingos*. Although the two acts are different in that one involves the consumption of fecal matter and the other involves urinating on

another person, closer inspection reveals that Almodóvar emulated Waters' climactic exercise in the grotesque. Instead of parodying *Pink Flamingos*, Almodóvar pastiches its "toilet humor" with this sequence. He transposes the consumption of bodily waste, which was intended to shock and to leave a lasting impression on the audience, into a sadomasochistic ritual replete with Luci's overtly sexualized groans of ecstasy as Bom relieves herself on top of Luci. Taking Waters' fecal coup de grace a step further, Almodóvar has the act take place between two consenting partners which enhances this scene's shock value. Much like the one-take sequencing of Divine eating the dog's waste, which leaves very little room for doubt that this event actually occurred, Almodóvar confronts the viewer with a very realistic depiction of this "golden shower." At the start of this segment, Almodóvar presents a medium close up of Luci on a sofa, Pepi propping up Bom's leg against the wall, and Bom's raised skirt on the left side of the frame. As the scene progresses, a stream of what appears to be urine spurts forth from beneath Bom's dress and hits Luci's face and body while Pepi helps to hold Bom's clothing out of the way and encourages Bom to give Luci more. The camera then shifts positions four times. The first change in placement is from Luci's location, looking up toward Bom's face. This causes the spectator to see from Luci's perspective; heightening the tension for the viewer because he or she is viewing the stream of urine from a passive, receptive position. In the next shot, Almodóvar places the camera from Bom's perspective looking down on a medium close up of Luci's face as the urine soaks her. This augments the shock value of this sequence and places the audience in Bom's dominant position. The camera returns to Luci's perspective (once again looking up at Bom) in the following shot. In the final sequence, the camera returns to its original locus with Bom's skirt on the left, Pepi in the middle, and Luci on the right. The urine stream splattering on Luci provides the continuity of the editing of this scene while the shift in

perspective from Luci to Bom causes the spectator to adopt both the passive and dominant positions. It is obvious to the viewer that Almodóvar captured the images of Luci bathing in Bom's urine in one take, notwithstanding the changes in camera placement. Much like Divine's feces-stained grin at the end of *Pink Flamingos*, the "golden shower" segment ends with Luci's face contorting in various expressions of pleasure. The similarities of subject matter (bodily waste) and both directors' unflinching technique make it clear: Almodóvar pastiches the final scene of *Pink Flamingos* with the "golden shower" segment of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* and maximizes the impact of shock value to convey a more transgressive message to the audience than does Waters. Instead of being satisfied with merely shocking his audience, Almodóvar follows Waters' example but presents this "golden shower" scene to subvert heteronormative restrictions on human sexual freedom. Comedy functions to make the audience side with the female protagonists and to accept what would traditionally be considered a taboo sexual act.

The recycling of the canine fecal matter consumption scene into a character willingly being urinated upon is not the only indicator that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is a recycling of *Pink Flamingos*' "trash" aesthetic. In fact, Bom is a member of the middle class whom Almodóvar exalts in much the same manner as Waters treats Divine. First, both Bom and Divine reside in domiciles that bespeak of the bourgeoisie. Like Divine's trailer, Bom's apartment is a carefully crafted homage to kitsch which reflects her middle class origins. Almodóvar painstakingly zooms out from the collage of pinup girl cutouts from magazines that adorn Bom's bedroom wall to reveal the mass-produced paintings of Spanish women in traditional garb that were established in chapter two as constituting examples of kitsch art. The sparseness of the rest of the mise en scene suggests that Bom, like Divine, has had to furnish her apartment with an assortment of inexpensive pieces. The only room in the dwelling that features décor that does not immediately

call to mind a middle class lifestyle is the living room. Replete with an expensive-looking sofa, statuary, posters, and a stuffed animal, the salon implies that the shared space of the apartment is better furnished than Bom's private area. Notwithstanding the upscale look and feel of the living room, it is clear to the audience that Bom's domicile is not a lavishly appointed luxury apartment of the wealthy but is instead reflective of her middle class status. Unlike Pepi, whom Almodóvar unambiguously depicts as being a wealthy, independent heiress, Bom (like Divine) must rely upon her friends to help pay the rent. For example, Pepi receives a phone call from her father who asks her if she has been able to find a job yet since he and her mother are paying for rent and living expenses and are growing tired of Pepi's freespending habits. Pepi tells him that she has found employment in advertising and he cautions her not to fool him again. Clearly Pepi, who lives alone and is supported by her parents, has money to spare as she begins her career as marketing consultant who invents a variety of comical products including urine-absorbing panties and dolls that menstruate. Instead of maligning Bom due to her bourgeois origins, Almodóvar lauds Bom as a celebrity. As the lead singer of the group *Bomitoni*, (Bom and Toni) she leads an enviable life replete with concerts, adoring fans, and groupies. In fact, during the concert segment, Bom is clearly the glamorized star attraction. It is Bom's song, dedicated obviously to Luci, that the group performs and the audience adores. Moreover, the lyrics of that number also obviously manifest the influence of the "trash" aesthetic and the punk aesthetic's desire to create shock:

Te quiero porque eres sucia, guarra, puta y lisonjera. La más obscena de Murcia y a mi disposición entera. [...] Sólo pienso en ti, murciana. Porque eres una marrana. Te meto el dedo en la raja, te arreo un par de sopapos y te obligo a hacerme una paja [...] Te voy como anillo al dedo. Conmigo tienes orgasmos. Si en la boca te echo un pedo me aplaudes con entusiasmo. Me perteneces, murciana porque a mí me da la gana.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Allinson's translation of this song: I love you because you are dirty/ Disgusting whore and crawler/The most obscene of all Murcia/And entirely at my beck and call./All I think about is you, Murciana./Because you're a dirty

Declaring her adoration of a “dirty whore” coupled with such extreme scatological terminology paints Bom in much the same manner as Waters depicts Divine: a low-class heroine whose well-deserved celebrity status stems from her “filthiness.” Even though Bom never consumes dog feces to prove that she is the “filthiest person alive,” she is nevertheless a punk reincarnation of Divine owing to her middle-class standing, star persona, affinity for kitsch, and tendency to express herself artistically via the “trash” aesthetic.

Now that it is clear that Almodóvar was influenced by the aesthetic of *Pink Flamingos*, a comparison between Bom and Divine/Babs yields further evidence of the recycling process. First, Bom embodies Almodóvar’s reappropriation of Divine from *Pink Flamingos* because she too is a queer character who underscores the performative nature of gender. Whereas Waters relies upon the fact that Divine is really a drag queen to deconstruct gender roles, Almodóvar does so by ascribing behaviors to Bom that would traditionally fall into the masculine realm. Examples of her masculinization include her overtly aggressive disposition in general, her proclivity for practicing boxing, her punk affiliation and regalia, her exaggerated butch demeanor, and the androgyny of her costume and makeup. Bom, much like Divine, is a lesbian who exudes aggressive behaviors. Both female characters fit the definition of a “bad girl” as described in chapter four by manifesting an oppositional disposition toward policemen. In *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, the key police officer is the chauvinistic, fascist husband of Luci. The fact that Bom seeks him out and beats him (although it is really his twin brother) characterizes her as a threat to patriarchal order. Since she uses violence as the means to settle the score between Pepi and him, Bom effectively usurps his authoritative position thereby emasculating him and internalizing that

pig./I stick my finger in your slit./I give you a couple of slaps/ I make you wank me/I’m more violent than the GRAPO/I’m like the ring on your finger/With me you reach orgasms/If I fart in your mouth/You applaud me with enthusiasm/You belong to me, Murciana/Because I like it that way (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 201).

masculinity within her own demeanor. This partially explains Bom's overly exaggerated butch demeanor. Her other "masculine" features stem from her membership within the punk movement; thus the associated utilization of gender-bending makeup, leather-studded accessories, defiant attitude, and propensity for androgyny; all of which are all punk attributes. This characterization of Bom's masculinity is analogous to Divine's portrayal of femininity. In the worlds evoked by Waters and subsequently the object of pastiche by Almodóvar, both traits are acts to be performed which are not dependent on anatomical features. Considering the fact that Luci deliberately instigates her husband's sadistic behavior, the implication is that Bom is much more of a "man" than he could ever be; thereby queering Almodóvar's portrayal of gender roles in a manner similar to that of Waters.

Moreover, Bom is like Divine because she too dresses in drag. In Bom's case, she is a drag king or homosexual woman who wears men's clothing and exaggerates masculine traits for purposes of entertainment (Rodríguez González 126). Of Bom's many changes of wardrobe, she definitely shows a penchant for men's black leather apparel; especially a biker jacket. Bom often strides around the streets of Madrid sporting this coat and the butch disposition to match it. For example, while cross-dressed in this biker jacket, Bom meets with Pepi and her coworkers then boldly drags Luci around by a leash during the day in public. The biker jacket is not the only article of drag apparel that Bom wears. Right before performing "Murciana marrana," at the concert, it is very telling that she snatches Fanny McNamara's wig from her head and places it on her own. This disheveled, highly teased wig symbolizes the quintessential drag accoutrement. By having Bom place the drag queen's wig on her head for a performance, Almodóvar attributes an effeminate trait to the highly masculine Bom which ironically underscores the subjectivity and mutability of traditional gender roles. Essentially Bom puts on this feminine accessory

typically worn by men who perform dressed as women to remind the viewer of the performative nature of gender. The irony of a drag king donning a drag queen's wig in order to perform in front of an audience is not lost to the attentive viewer. Considering that Bom is dressed in her most effeminate clothing during the concert, (she is wearing a brightly colored sequined dress) this utilization of a drag queen's most prominent feminine accessory is not incidental. Bom's rendition of a drag queen has a queer deconstructive agenda since the same performer is a drag king in all other scenes. Bom essentially reminds the audience that gender, like the wig, is a characteristic that can be put on and taken off to suit the needs of the individual; thereby nullifying the heteronormative belief that gender is anatomically assigned. The wig, dress, and other feminine accessories that Bom sports during the concert symbolize Almodóvar's deliberate deconstruction of mainstream symbols of gender identity. If the butch, masculinized Bom can become more effeminate by merely changing costume, especially considering that she borrows the most significant accessory from a drag queen, then it follows that masculinity and femininity depend on the vicissitudes of the individual and are not predetermined by society. The wig itself therefore functions as an ironic distancing device to prompt the viewer to recognize the fact that even a butch lesbian like Bom can enact a drag show. Bom's most masculine outfit, her boxing attire, similarly characterizes her as a drag king. Complete with boxing gloves, trunks, the omnipresent leather-studded bracelet and belt, Bom's mannish wardrobe in this scene confirms her identity as a gay woman who wears men's clothing and exaggerates her "masculine" characteristics. Although she trades the gloves for a set of dumbbells and starts to exercise her arms, Bom's attitude throughout this sequence during which she sports the boxing outfit ranges from exaggeratedly brusque to disdainful. For example, when Luci complains that Bom is more interested in hitting her punching bag than in hitting her, Bom roars back at her, "Shut up,

stupid!” When Pepi asks for something to drink, Bom says “Luci” with a menacing inflection implying that if Luci does not obey her, she will be beaten. Pepi then offers Bom cocaine, which she turns down in a rude manner saying, “I don’t have the appetite for it.” Next, when Pepi tells Bom that she seems more unpleasant than sadistic and must therefore embellish her acting, Bom bursts out, “Just leave me alone!” These emotional reactions coupled with her manly costume doubtlessly paint a very virile picture of Bom as a drag king since she exhibits the aggression, bad temperament, and lack of manners associated with a caricature of masculinity.

Another aspect that makes it clear that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* recycles *Pink Flamingos* involves both films’ style. A film’s style is defined by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson as the “repeated and salient uses of film techniques characteristic of a single film or a group of films” (481). A movie’s techniques include mise en scène, the processes used to capture shots on film (or cinematography), editing, and sound (Bordwell 112-265). At this point, we have already analyzed the kitschy aspects of the mise en scène that both films share in common as well as the employment of medium close ups of shocking footage. Other technical commonalities that tie *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi Luci Bom* together include the overall impression that they exemplify amateur cinema, utilize music for its humorous impact, and purposefully feature “bad” acting. Proceeding in this order, the analyses that follow prove that Almodóvar deliberately emulates the style of *Pink Flamingos* with his first commercially successful film, *Pepi, Luci, Bom*.

First, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* evinces *Pink Flamingos* partially because both directors were amateurs when they created these works. While it is true that distinguishing an amateur from a professional director is polemical as Patricia R. Zimmerman posits, her findings about this debate shed light on how *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom* are examples of amateur cinema (1). While the very term amateur film connotes home videos of private, familial events, such as

fodder for the television program *America's Funniest Home Videos*, Zimmerman clarifies that the distinction between professional and amateur filmmaking has more to do with the cultural elite's standards of acceptable cinema as well as economic concerns (4). Zimmerman states that Hollywood movies became the definition of professional products in the US:

The popular discursive construct of Hollywood exhibits the structures of professionalism through its division of labor in production, its development of formalized paradigms of narrative construction and composition, and its control and dominance of the motion picture market through distribution and exhibition. Hollywood professionalism consolidates three trajectories: division of labor, formal paradigms of aesthetic standards and conventions, and market control and monopolization through access to national distribution because of technological standardization (5).

Furthermore, any movie that deviated from Hollywood's norms, even as far as by not utilizing 35-millimeter film, was considered to be an amateur film (Zimmerman 5). Zimmerman also hypothesizes that amateur works "translated, deflected, and mediated larger social and historical constructs on craftspersonship, social mobility, creativity, professionalism, Hollywood, efficiency, naturalism, technical control, pictorialism, and private life" (145). Therefore, an amateur movie is one that was produced outside the sphere of a major motion picture production industry, manifests marked technical differences from the hegemonic standards and aesthetics, and was created by filmmakers whose primary employment falls outside the realm of producing cinema.¹¹⁰ Both *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom* exemplify these characteristics of amateur cinema. Waters wrote, directed, and produced *Pink Flamingos* as a project that had nothing to do with the economic resources of Hollywood. Waters explains in *Shock Value* that *Pink Flamingos* had a budget of \$10,000 (which Waters procured through marketing the movie on his

¹¹⁰ To date, Almodóvar has not directed any film with backing from a Hollywood studio. This is not to say, however, that all of his films are the works of an amateur as per the above definition. As his career progressed, Almodóvar garnered support from various major movie-making production entities such as Canal + España and transitioned from working at a telephone company (Telefónica) to becoming employed solely as a writer and director (Strauss 8). The worldwide cinema industry has recognized Almodóvar's contribution to filmmaking via the various awards he has won including an Academy Award for best writing, an Academy Award nomination for best director, the Cannes Film Festival best director, and multiple nominations and wins for the Goya Awards.

own) and was filmed by a cast and crew who performed only “once per week over a six-month period” (6-8). Waters further explains that the actors, set designer, and others involved with shooting this movie did so in their spare time and had to balance their “other life” with the demands of producing a film (8). Similarly, Almodóvar scripted and produced *Pepi, Luci, Bom* with the help of his associates. As he explained to Juan I. Francia and Julio Pérez Perucha during an interview in 1981, the budget for *Pepi, Luci, Bom* came from “small financial contributions from friends” and the fundraising efforts of Félix Rotaeta as opposed to being financed by a professional production company (4). Moreover, Almodóvar explicates that this movie was shot “with a crew of almost all first-timers. The cameraman cut off some heads, mine above all during the general erection competition. [...] We could only work weekends and when we had the money. We constantly had to adapt the schedule to our material circumstances - which changed constantly”(Strauss 12). Next, it is very telling that both *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom* were shot using 16 millimeter and then later blown up to 35-millimeter film (Ives 164; Acevedo-Muñoz 304). Considering Zimmerman’s stance that one aspect of professional cinematography is that all footage is captured directly onto 35-millimeter film, this deviation from the norm is one indication that both movies are examples of amateur cinema. Concerning the differences in aesthetics between professional and amateur motion pictures, *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom* manifest unambiguous technical mistakes. For example, during the scene in which Divine struts the streets of Baltimore set to the song, “The Girl Can’t Help It,” the camera is obviously inside of a moving car. As the lens shifts positions to track Divine, the car window’s frame is clearly visible and blocks part of the images (“*Pink Flamingos*”). In another sequence during which viewers see Cookie calling the Marbles, the shadow of one of the camera crew appears and abruptly disappears behind her shoulder (“*Pink Flamingos*”). In

addition to the cutting off of heads mentioned previously by Almodóvar, another technical error of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* takes place when Pepi is spying on Luci from behind the corner of a building. The sequence inexplicably fades to black and when the image reappears, it is obvious that the camera has shifted position and that the new footage was captured several hours later based on the position of the sunlight even though the missing time is not accounted for in the narration. Allinson observes many other inaccuracies of focus, lighting, and continuity all of which he describes as “reminiscent of the early work of John Waters such as *Pink Flamingos*” (161-163). Very revealing is the fact that Almodóvar and Waters claim that the flaws in these works were not intentionally done as a stylistic technique but rather resulted from their limited budgets. For example, when asked by Scott MacDonald if he wanted to make more “polished slick films” in the future (after *Polyester*), Waters replies, “We always tried to make them look as good as we possibly could. I never thought, ‘Let’s make them look technically fucked up.’ I did the best I could at the time” (233). Similarly, when queried by Juan I. Francia and Julio Pérez Perucha in 1981 about the “formal carelessness” of *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, Almodóvar responds:

I wanted to make the film, and I was even prepared to sacrifice it in the process. The price of making it was to accept doing without many things, some of them as essential as a good lighting technician. But I was not ready to let myself be overwhelmed by the difficulties, and in order to resolve them I adapted the tone of the film to these circumstances. It’s poorly photographed, but I conceived a film in which the cinematography wasn’t essential. [...] That is to say the technical shortcomings were not voluntarily chosen but rather had to be embraced (7).

When considering all of these methodological oversights, the fact that these movies were originally produced and promoted outside of the filmmaking industry, the utilization of 16-millimeter film, and given that Waters and Almodóvar both were not professional directors by trade, there can be no doubt that *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom* are examples of amateur cinema. Like Warhol who inspired Waters to create his cinematic features “with my friends, for

no money,” Waters showed Almodóvar that he could indeed make his own movie on an impecunious budget despite the obstacles encountered by such an endeavor by involving his colleagues (Ives 28). In this manner, Almodóvar followed Waters’ example in his efforts to create *Pepi, Luci, Bom*. This, however, only partially accounts for the multiple likenesses in aesthetic between these two works. As we shall see in the remainder of this chapter, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is a pastiche of *Pink Flamingos* in many more ways than merely the fact that both directors were amateurs when they created their movies.

In addition to the technical similarities that stem from the fact that Waters and Almodóvar were not yet professional filmmakers when they made their first commercially successful movies, the usage of music in a humorous manner demonstrates that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* recycles *Pink Flamingos*. This practice of utilizing music as part of the joke takes place frequently throughout *Pink Flamingos* and is then the object of pastiche in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*. One example from *Pink Flamingos* involves the infamous footage during which Divine eats dog feces. These visceral images are juxtaposed against Patti Page’s performance of “How Much is That Doggie in the Window” for comedic impact. Though Almodóvar presents different songs and engages in various other strategies such as featuring shocking footage, making diegetic sounds seem nondiegetic, and including false commercials to elicit laughter from his audience, there is no doubt that Waters’ ironic use of music inspired Almodóvar. In fact, the opening scene of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is set to “Do the Swim” performed by Little Nell from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). Allinson correctly posits that the use of this song “not only connotes the cult movie, but the English lyrics testify to the popularity of Anglo-Saxon culture at the time” (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 199). Indeed the proponents of *la movida*, having had experienced the ravages of censorship and isolationism of the Franco regime, found inspiration

in British and American groups such as The Ramones, The Clash, Queen, and Depeche Mode (Lechado 43). British punk, with its do-it-yourself attitude toward music and outright defiance of all bastions of the establishment was especially attractive to the youth of *la movida* and manifested in Spanish music of that time (Allinson “Alaska” 225). What Allinson does not mention is that Almodóvar purposefully plays with the viewer’s expectations about the presence of the song in his movie. The moviegoer hears “Do the Swim” during the opening credits and is not aware that the music is actually explained by circumstances within the scene until Pepi turns down her radio. In this manner, one of the first amusing moments in the film takes place because Almodóvar tricks the audience into believing that diegetic sound is actually nondiegetic. Although Almodóvar chooses not to follow Waters’ example by having the on-screen action directly conflict with the message of the song being played, he nevertheless employs music in humorous manners. Like Waters’ ironic use of “I’m Not a Juvenile Delinquent” (performed by Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers) during the scene in which Divine shoplifts a steak by hiding it in between her thighs underneath her dress, Almodóvar manipulates the moviegoer’s expectations about the on-screen action as it contrasts with the music. Another example takes place when Almodóvar superimposes the theme from *Psycho* (1960) over the title screen that reads, “the following morning, Pepi receives her first lesson.” In this case, the sampling of the score from *Psycho* foreshadows the aforementioned “golden shower” scene. The attentive spectator familiar with *Psycho* knows to expect something bizarre because of the connotations between it and aberrant behavior; thereby increasing the comedic impact of the incongruity of Luci’s exaggerated moans of sexual ecstasy during the act of urination. Allinson points out that the most important musical number in the film, “Murciana marrana” (analyzed previously) manifests “both a debt to punk and a departure from it. Almodóvar et al. took up the punk

posture of parody and exploited it for humor rather than for subversive satire” (201). In addition to these examples, Almodóvar also ironically intersperses segments of traditional Spanish music on several other occasions including the *zarzuela* *La revoltosa* during the sequence when Bom and her gang beat the policeman’s twin brother, a whimsically-employed tango piece which is superimposed over the title screen “Pepi was thirsty for revenge,” and an unidentified, bombastic symphonic flamenco number which begins with the screen reading, “Also the police officer found out what it was like to be thirsty for revenge” and ends when one of the policemen who raid Pepi’s apartment turns off the radio. Considering all of these ways in which Almodóvar utilizes music for its comedic impact, it is clear that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* was partially inspired by Waters’ proclivity for juxtaposing on-screen action with the message conveyed by a particular song.

The final technical aspect that reflects the influence of *Pink Flamingos* on *Pepi, Luci, Bom* concerns the deliberate emphasis of “bad” acting skills that occurs in both works. Qualifying a performer’s skills as being lackluster definitely recalls Frederic Jameson’s hypothesis that postmodern works erode the boundaries between hegemonic definitions of acceptable artistic aesthetics and the proclivities of the bourgeois as well as the notions of kitsch, camp, and Baudrillard’s theory of simulacra (112). By no means should a viewer perceive the performances of these actors as flawed in any way. Such an assumption places an elitist value judgment that overlooks the unique talents of both directors and cast. On the contrary, as we shall see, Waters and Almodóvar actually encouraged these thespians to embellish their performances in such a way as to destabilize the very notion of “good” acting. The fact that they had limited budgets in and of itself cannot sufficiently explain why Waters and Almodóvar for the most part made the decision to cast their acquaintances in the majority of the leading roles as

opposed to hiring and paying established celebrities. If this were the case, it would not account for the propensity that both directors have for giving parts to the same crew when budgetary constraints were no longer an issue. Waters routinely cast the likes of Divine, Mink Stole, and Edith Massey in many of his works while Almodóvar chose Carmen Maura, Julieta Serrano, and Eva Siva (among many others) precisely because these actresses were highly talented at evoking the interrelated kitsch, camp, and “trash” aesthetics they seek to promulgate with their films. While true that Maura and Serrano were professional actresses before starring in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, neither had the nationwide recognition they do currently. Important to note is that Waters and Almodóvar openly acknowledge that they directed their actors to heighten the illusion that they were in fact unskilled. For example, when queried by Scott MacDonald about if Waters encouraged the cast to embellish their acting, Waters responds, “Oh, I always encourage hamism” (239). The term “hamism” in Water’s answer denotes a methodical process in which the actor hyperbolically emotes for purposes of drawing the audience’s attention to his or her performance. This term also connotes that the performance artist’s motivation for this well planned and overwrought representation of a role is to attain stardom. Similarly, when Frédéric Strauss asks Almodóvar about the nature of Pepi making a movie about the lives of her friends as did Andy Warhol, Almodóvar’s answer confirms the hypothesis that casting his colleagues was a deliberate tactic:

My desire was no doubt similar to Pepi's, but different from Warhol's. Actually, Pepi explains this in the film: when you want to shoot a kind of documentary about people you know and present them as characters, the very nature of the project implies a certain manipulation of your friends, of their true personalities. She must play herself, not just be herself. [...] This is exactly what interests me in cinema: cinema speaks of reality, of things which are true, but must become a representation of reality in order to be recognizable. There's a very important difference between me, and Morrissey or Warhol. They simply stuck their camera in front of the "characters" and captured everything that happened. [...] I love the artifice which is a part of a director's work. And artifice is precisely what communicates a filmmaker's intentions (14).

Moreover, when prompted by Strauss to explain Alaska's performance, Almodóvar states, "I hadn't found her a particularly gifted actress, but her character, her nature, interested me a lot" (19). This very embellished "artifice" or "hamism" described by Almodóvar and Waters endorses an approach to acting that challenges the hegemonic definitions of acceptable performances. Both directors embrace the postmodern tenet of breaking down barriers between "high" and "low" culture by making the cinematic performing arts available to the masses as opposed to hiring classically trained actors. Moreover, they also endorse a kitsch approach to acting since the two directors encouraged their performers to enhance their routines through carefully considered falsification of "good" acting skills. Divine, Mink Stole, Edith Massey, Carmen Maura, Julieta Serrano, Eva Silva and Alaska all evince kitsch alike through deliberate and exaggerated imitation of the "original" performances of other thespians. For example, by emulating Divine's proclivity for violent behavior, Alaska by default also copies Russ Meyer's deadly pussycats; especially Varla. In this manner, Alaska is a simulacrum of Divine who is, in turn, an emulation of Varla. Like Baurdillard's example of the Lascaux cave complex illustrates, this interconnected chain of imitation and artifice makes it impossible to determine which actress's performance is in fact an "original" (18). Furthermore, this acting strategy on the part

of Waters and Almodóvar also confirms Ester Newton's and Susan Sontag's findings about camp. An actress who methodically exaggerates her "bad" acting definitely evokes the incongruity, theatricality, and humor described by Esther Newton's definition of camp (106). This practice also demonstrates camp according to Susan Sontag's findings by focusing on a "love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration" (275). This likens Waters and Almodóvar to Sontag's description of "the lover of Camp, [who] appreciates vulgarity [and] sniffs the stink and prides himself on his strong nerves" (289). This latter observation by Sontag also serves well as a description of the "trash" aesthetic that Almodóvar and Waters foster by promoting "bad" acting. Not seeking Academy Award winning interpretations in this manner decidedly promotes the artistic tastes of the lower and middle classes while simultaneously ridiculing the "high" arts. These numerous similarities between *Pink Flamingos* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom* in aesthetic brought about by deliberate "bad" acting are not coincidental. As this analysis demonstrates, Almodóvar recycles these aspects of kitsch, camp, and the "trash" aesthetic from Waters' work. This illustrates why Almodóvar admitted to being influenced by Waters, *Bom* shares so much in common with *Divine* from *Pink Flamingos*, the focus on shocking footage such as the "golden shower" scene, the aforementioned other technical aspects such as the use of music, editing, and framing that these two films share in common, and finally the "bad" performances by members of the cast such as Concha Grégori (who plays Luci's concerned neighbor).

Almodóvar recycles elements of Waters' movies in more than just *Pepi, Luci, Bom*. A comparison between *Laberinto de pasiones*, *Pink Flamingos*, and *Female Trouble* (1974) reveals further evidence that Almodóvar pastiches Waters' works. Important to note before proceeding is that Almodóvar openly acknowledges the intertextualities between *Laberinto de pasiones* and Waters' movies. During a 1998 interview with Philippe Rouyer and Claudine Vié, Almodóvar

states, “I wanted to make a comedy that was very pop, along the lines of Richard Lester in the ‘70s, but less caustic than *Pepi, Luci, Bom...* that referenced more Russ Meyer, John Waters, or Andy Warhol. *Labyrinth of Passions* is softer; I made fun of style” (72). Alluding to Waters is precisely what Almodóvar did when creating *Laberinto de pasiones*. As the following analysis substantiates, Almodóvar drew specifically upon *Pink Flamingos* and *Female Trouble* by portraying heterosexuality as deviant, painting procreation as being repugnant, featuring oedipal narratives, and by recycling the “trash aesthetic.” First to be analyzed are the manners by which Almodóvar makes heterosexual sex abnormal by recycling the Marbles and the Dashers from *Pink Flamingos* and *Female Trouble* respectively into their counterparts in *Laberinto de pasiones* who are Sexilia, Doctor de la Peña, and Queti.

Of all the characters of *Laberinto de pasiones*, Sexilia incarnates Almodóvar’s anti-heteronormative agenda the most. Almodóvar unapologetically characterizes Sexi (whose very name implies lasciviousness) as a wanton, sex-crazed nymphet who has incestuous desires for her father. In fact, during the opening credits, Almodóvar depicts footage of Sexilia staring at men’s crotches and buttocks as she ambles through *El Rastro*. Not long after this act of unflinching voyeurism, Almodóvar shows Sexi talking a group of young men into participating in an orgy with her in which she is the only female. Considering the legacy of oppression of women’s sexuality perpetrated by the Franco regime, especially significant is the fact that Sexi is the uninhibited and skilled aggressor in this conquest while the males she seduces so easily are her passive prey. This is an inversion of traditional patriarchal roles that Almodóvar employs to debunk the myth that women are sexually passive by nature. Moments later, Almodóvar cuts to a scene during which Sexi talks about this tryst with her therapist Susana. Susana’s part in this film is especially important to note because she is a substitute for the role traditionally carried

out by a priest who hears her confessions. Within the therapist-patient relationship which has been transposed from the penitent-clergy dynamic, Sexi's absolute trust in the boisterous Susana, who is trying to "cure" her of her nymphomania, functions to criticize psychology as being incapable of explaining human sexuality. Sexi flippantly remarks that she did not have to pay the men for sex and that there were, "well, eight or ten. I didn't count them." When Susana reacts in shock to this news, Sexi nonchalantly confesses to being a, "nymphomaniac, since I was a girl." Susana then introduces the oedipal narrative by stating that Sexi is very much in love with her father and would have sex with anybody, "to see if there would be a reaction [from him], to see if he would notice you exist."¹¹¹ Thus, Almodóvar establishes Sexi as a voyeur and an incestuous nymphomaniac within the first six minutes of the film. The initial act of voyeurism on Sexi's part (Riza, who is Sexi's love interest, spies at the same men in a lewd manner as well) is a direct reflection of Raymond Marble from *Pink Flamingos*. Despite the fact that Sexi does not expose her genitalia and use binoculars while surveying the crowd for potential sexual partners, she is nevertheless clearly an experienced sexual predator on the prowl. The net effect of Almodóvar's utilization of close up shots of the men at whom Sexi leers is highly redolent of Raymond's modus operandi. Her approving nods, coy smiles, and other facial expressions of sexual interest in these men are reminiscent of Raymond's during the moments leading up to his first act of indecent exposure. Moreover, the fact that Sexi entices the throng of young men to join her in the orgy with offers of "music, alcohol, porno videos, [and] drugs" obviously characterizes her as a victimizer and therefore a perpetrator of sexually aberrant behavior like Raymond. Although critic James Mandrell labels Almodóvar's career as exhibiting a "latent heterosexuality" because Sexi allegedly resolves her nymphomania through her newfound monogamous love for Riza and also due to the fact that Riza had sex only with

¹¹¹ Acevedo-Muñoz also notes that Sexi's "Oedipal/Electra complex is quite literal" (27).

other men before meeting Sexi, such a reading fails to take into account the anti-heteronormative stance offered by the film's open ended denouement and the fact that *Laberinto de pasiones* spoofs the notion that psychological approaches can provide viable solutions to sexual deviancy (54). At the end of the movie, Queti becomes Sexi's exact duplicate through plastic surgery and makeup (Cecilia Roth plays both Sexi and Queti at this point). Sexi/Queti successfully "cures" her "father" of his aversion to sex by seducing him. When Susana calls to check on her, Sexi (who is really Queti transformed into Sexi) triumphantly declares to the psychologist that she is in bed with her father and that her family's "problems with sex have ended." The "real" Sexilia consummates her love for Riza while on board a flight departing for Panama, in full view of the other passengers. Rather than suggest that Sexi is no longer sexually promiscuous and that Riza has been "cured" of homosexuality, this ending invites viewers to conclude that their monogamous heterosexual relationship will not endure for long. Almodóvar implies that years of hypersexuality on Sexilia's part and Riza's lifetime of being homosexual cannot be changed instantaneously and irrevocably by the fact that they become infatuated with one another. Such an implausible resolution is not to be believed. Just like Raymond's marriage to Connie does not in any way prevent him from being an exhibitionist, this coupling of Sexi and Riza will not "cure" either of their taboo sexual inclinations. Almodóvar confirms this position when interviewed by Frédéric Strauss about Sexi and Riza. When Strauss asks about the comedic treatment of psychology in the film, Almodóvar replies, "Yes, my use both of the character [Susana] and psychoanalysis is strictly parodic. [...] The two main characters of *Labyrinth of Passion* often speak of their nymphomania and I decided that they should do so to a psychoanalyst in order to show that this type of behavior has no explanation" (25). This insight provided by Almodóvar makes it patent that part of the humor of this movie's ending is based on

the audience's knowledge that Sexi and Riza cannot be "cured" of their sexualities because such phenomena defy scientific classification and treatment. Therefore the spectator knows not to believe that nymphomania and homosexuality can be resolved by a singular sexual tryst on a jetliner.

Sexi's father, Doctor de la Peña, also embodies a queer agenda that Almodóvar recycled from the characters Donald and Donna Dasher of *Female Trouble*. De la Peña's distaste for the sex act is what led him to become an obstetrician gynecologist whose specialty is in vitro fertilization so that human beings can reproduce without intercourse. For example, when Susana tells Sexi's father that she wants to sleep with him, he responds, "I am going to explain this to you frankly. I have never been interested in sex, not even when I was young. There's something, dirty, something repugnant about the union between two bodies. That's why I have dedicated myself to artificial insemination." When compared with Donald and Donna Dasher's response to Dawn's query if the photographs they plan to take of her are pornographic in nature, the pastiche of *Female Trouble* in the characterization of Doctor de la Peña is unmistakable. Donald haughtily responds, "Certainly not! Sex is not one of our interests. As a matter of fact, one of the rules you must always obey is to never, ever mention the sex act in front of us." Donna adds, "We find the subject most repellent. We must ask that you observe this rule at all times. You should know that we view sex as a violation of the spirit, and we would certainly never allow ourselves to be caught in one of those ludicrous positions." This direct allusion to the Dashers in De la Peña's revulsion of the sex act is not coincidental. Almodóvar follows Waters' lead in queering heterosexuality by portraying it as abnormal while simultaneously portraying homosexuality as acceptable. This depiction of sexuality confirms Arlene Stein's and Ken Plummer's finding that queer postmodern artists tend to normalize homosexuality by

making heterosexuality deviant (135). This also explains why De la Peña has a change of heart at the end of the movie by deciding to sleep with a girl young enough to be his daughter and one who looks exactly like her. In the end, the viewer learns that his disgust for sex was caused not from the sex act itself like he expressed to Susana, but because of his repressed desire to bed his daughter. Important to note is that by becoming Sexilia and having sex with her surrogate father Queti too very willingly transgresses the incest taboo thereby further portraying heterosexuality as aberrant behavior. In Almodóvar's hands, the Dashers' comical loathing of sex transposes into two heterosexual characters who find contentment only by engaging in incestuous sex. By recycling the Dashers in this manner, Almodóvar advances the queer agenda established in *Female Trouble* one step further. Viewers are supposed to be repulsed by heteronormative sex just like the Dashers are disgusted by the sex act itself.

Doctor de la Peña is not the only recycled character from *Female Trouble* discernible in *Laberinto de pasiones*. Almodóvar also presents an intertextuality via the mother-daughter conflict motif between Dawn and Taffy Davenport in the personages of Azafata and her youthful daughter Carmen. Although only minor characters, the blatant hatred that Azafata expresses for her offspring is highly reminiscent of Dawn's propensity to despise Taffy. For example, when in Doctor de la Peña's waiting area, she warns another unnamed client that artificial insemination will yield dangerous results since Carmen "will be the end of her." The unidentified patient, shocked by Azafata's hostile response in front of her young tells her that she should not make such remarks in the child's presence. "It doesn't bother me, and she's already used to it," she hatefully replies. When the Empress Toraya comments that she too wishes to have a baby by in vitro fertilization, this extremely unhappy mother warns her and the other patient that they do not know what they are doing; implying that they are better off not being able to have children since

“Nature knows best.” To emphasize the contempt that Azafata has for Carmen, Almodóvar has Empress Toraya ask if Carmen is “completely normal” whereupon she retorts, “Yes, except she is a monster!” As the conversation ensues, she explains to the other patient that Carmen’s father wanted a child but then abandoned them after she brought the baby home from the hospital. Clearly, she blames Carmen for her lover leaving her and for taking up all of her time when she is not working at the airport. Such unabashed loathing for a daughter on the part of her mother recalls Dawn Davenport’s overwrought and ironic explanations of her attempts at being a “good mother” when in fact Dawn’s actions are abusive. Both mothers, Dawn and Azafata, make it clear that they regret having their children even though their progeny can overhear their mothers’ harsh words. Like Dawn, Azafata manifests a total disregard for the emotional damage that ensues from Carmen being told that it would have been better had she never been born. Very revealing is the fact that Almodóvar acknowledges that this “bad mother” figure pervades many of his films. When asked about the hateful mother figure from *Laberinto de pasiones* in his other works, Almodóvar explains, “Yes, she does recur in my work. This character was born out of my observation of a certain type of Spanish mother. She is often frustrated and embittered because her husband has either disappointed her or left her and so she becomes cruel towards her child” (Strauss 26). Of all of Almodóvar’s films, the most notable exception to the abandoned mother who becomes cruel toward her child is Manuela from *Todo sobre mi madre*. Although she loves her son Esteban unconditionally, Manuela never grants him his greatest desire which is to know who his father is so that he can establish a relationship with him. Even though Manuela is somewhat justified in withholding this information from her son since his father is a villainous womanizer (and AIDS-stricken transsexual who knowingly infects others), Esteban dies never knowing the truth; a fact Manuela later regrets. While true that Almodóvar based Azafata at

least in part on the Spanish mother figure he describes, the similarities between how Dawn and she treat their daughters suggest he also borrowed this representation of motherhood from *Female Trouble*. When pressed further by Strauss on how the representation of the abused little girl also recurs in his oeuvre, Almodóvar confesses to borrowing ideas from other filmmakers, “There’s a Spanish proverb: to steal from a thief is not a sin. So to imitate an imitator doesn’t strike me as dishonest and this trade of influences amuses me enormously” (28). Although Almodóvar refers specifically to recycling Brian De Palma’s representation of the troubled adolescent girl from *Carrie* (1976), this acknowledgement on his part coupled with the previously mentioned quotation in which he admits to being influenced by Waters when making *Laberinto de pasiones* make it obvious that Almodóvar’s depiction of the mother-daughter conflict theme can also readily be traced back to *Female Trouble*. Despite the fact that the tumultuous relationship between mother and daughter is not a central narrative of *Laberinto de pasiones* as is the case with *Female Trouble*, there can be no doubt that the humorous treatment of this phenomenon stems in part from Almodóvar borrowing material from Waters.

The final evidence of recycling between *Laberinto de pasiones* and *Pink Flamingos* involves the evocation of the “trash” aesthetic via scatological humor. “Toilet” or scatological comedy refers to jokes whose punch lines center around the excretion of bodily wastes such as feces, urine, flatulence, phlegm, and vomit (Persels xiii). The “golden shower” scene of *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, the sequence in which Bom orders Luci to eat her mucus, and the final segment of *Pink Flamingos* in which Divine consumes dog feces are quintessential examples of scatological wit. For Waters, including scatological humor is one of his most effective techniques at gaining shock value to make his films an unforgettable viewing experience. Waters has become associated with scatological humor to the point that he is known by such appellations as the

“vomit king” and the “prince of puke.” As Pela points out, regurgitation especially offers Waters the opportunity to critique hegemonic values while simultaneously leaving an indelible impression on the mind of the spectator (123). Hence the “puke eater” from *Multiple Maniacs* whose ingestion of vomitus greatly shocks and offends the uptight suburbanites who tour the Cavalcade of Perversions serves as a Waters’ overt critique of conservative values. For Almodóvar, scatological humor also serves similar purposes: to loosen the establishment’s stranglehold over acceptable comedic representation, to cause the audience to empathize with the principle protagonists’ plight, and to make viewing the film a memorable experience. In *Laberinto de Pasiones*, Waters’ influence via scatological humor is discernible in two minor characters. The first is Angustias who is the drummer of Sexi’s band. The other is the woman in charge of the studio in which Riza and his band *Ellos* practice. Upon meeting Queti for the first time, Angustias casually explains, “When I eat, I fart a lot.” Queti promptly advises Angustias to do “five knee bends every morning in front of the window, naked if possible” to combat her problem with flatulence. To maximize the hilarity of this regimen, Almodóvar shows Angustias doing her exercises right before meeting her potential boyfriend Ángel on a crowded elevator. When he remarks that she has lost weight and no longer has dry lips or brittle fingernails, she replies, “Now I don’t get wind, my stomach doesn’t swell any longer, and I don’t fart any more” much to the chagrin (and possible relief) of the other passengers on the elevator. While not as undisguised an allusion to *Pink Flamingos* as Luci’s “golden shower” and being made to consume Bom’s snot, this recurring scatological joke definitely evokes the “trash” aesthetic of Waters’ oeuvre. Viewers can surmise Angustias’ social ranking based on the modest apartment in which she resides with her mother. The mise en scène of Angustias’ cramped room, like Divine’s trailer, overflows with kitsch including a plethora of posters, a mannequin head used as

a hat rack, and various ornaments strewn over a glass table. The combination of the bourgeois mise en scène, the minuteness of the apartment, and the fact that Angustias lives with her mother instead of being independently wealthy like Pepi imply that she indeed is lower to middle class. Despite these humble origins, Almodóvar portrays her as an attractive celebrity since she is a part of Sexilia's band; thereby emulating Waters' tendency to aggrandize the image of the marginalized in accord with the "trash" aesthetic. The reliance upon flatulence for its comedic impact on the viewer recalls Waters' scatological style in many scenes of *Pink Flamingos* including the sequence in which Divine receives a gift-wrapped bowel movement from the Marbles as a birthday gift and the "singing asshole" segment which features a nude man who rolls over on his back to expose his anus and then manipulates his sphincter to make his rectum open and close repeatedly. Although Almodóvar when interviewed about the content of his films states, "My goal has never, never, never been to make shocking movies," there can be little doubt that he invokes "toilet humor" for its shock value in a manner similar to Waters' methodology (Russo 66). Nevertheless, shock value alone does not sufficiently explain why Almodóvar dedicates so much screen time to Angustias' flatulence problem. Her frank attitude about passing gas adds to the humor of the situation. This allows the viewer to laugh that much more about a taboo topic which in turn makes the audience more receptive to Almodóvar's hidden feminist message. Angustias is an aggressive woman who unapologetically achieves whatever she sets out to accomplish no matter the obstacles (even flatulence) she encounters. As such, she symbolizes Almodóvar's vision of the Spanish woman who is set free from the domestic sphere of existence and the yoke of inculcated passivity.

A more visceral example of "toilet humor" which is also a pastiche of *Pink Flamingos* involves the caretaker of the studio in which the group *Ellos* practices. This unidentified woman

makes it clear via a telephone conversation that she is constipated and subsequently takes a laxative to ease her discomfort. Near the denouement of the film, Almodóvar presents another scatological sequence involving her which is also intended to shock the viewer into laughter. After the laxative begins to work, this character attempts multiple times to rush to the restroom only to be thwarted repeatedly by the various groups who seek to know the whereabouts of Riza, Sexi, and *Ellos* as they evade their pursuers in route to the airport. After the fourth interruption, she can no longer stop herself and subsequently loses control of her bowels. Important to note is the detailed depiction of this act of involuntary defecation. The audience can tell that she is clearly distressed by the delays from her facial expressions and repeated pleas to be allowed to go to the bathroom. Almodóvar then superimposes an unmistakable sound of flatulence followed by a close up of the feet and calves of the hapless attendant. What appears to be loose fecal matter covers the floor and slowly drips down her left leg. This unflinching portrayal of “toilet humor” is a recycling of Divine’s consumption of dog feces intended to produce the same effect: to shock the audience into laughing while simultaneously leaving an indelible impression on the viewer. Even though the attendant does not go as far as Divine and actually eat the bowel movement, this focus on feces for shock value and comedic impact clearly was inspired by Waters. In both films the utilization of feces functions to test the boundaries of acceptable filmic representation within Waters’ and Almodóvar’s respective cultures. Waters laid down the gauntlet by challenging the status quo and Almodóvar followed his lead. In this manner, Almodóvar recycles the end of *Pink Flamingos* in order to make *Laberinto de pasiones* an unforgettable experience.

Of all of the films that Almodóvar recycles from Waters, *¿Qué he hecho yo?* most clearly draws upon *Polyester*. The similarities in characters, themes, and aesthetic between these two

works leaves no room for doubt that Almodóvar was inspired by *Polyester* when he created *¿Qué he hecho yo?* Most notable is the fact that both movies are about the plight of housewives, Francine and Gloria, who overcome the domestic crises imposed upon them by their tyrannical and sexist husbands as well as by their wayward children. Very revealing is that Waters and Almodóvar describe the tribulations faced by their leading female protagonists in these films to have an overall comedic impact on their audiences. For example, when John G. Ives asks Waters about Divine's character in *Polyester* being "horribly tormented," Waters replies, "Yes, she is, but in a way that everybody finds funny" (71). Similarly, upon Frédéric Strauss querying Almodóvar about the comedic content of *¿Qué he hecho yo?*, he explains:

It's not a love story; I recount the horrific life, the daily injustices of a housewife. She's a very serious character and Carmen Maura played her that way. When she saw the film, she said, "My God, it's cruel! How can people laugh at such an unhappy character? She is doubly victimized, by life and by the audience laughing at her." The story is pathetic, but there is also a great deal of humor in the film. [...] I replace most of the codes of melodrama with black humor. Therefore, it isn't surprising that the audience first takes the film to be a comedy, although of course it's a very tragic, pathetic story (44).

Francine's tale is also a "very tragic, pathetic story" that substitutes melodramatic conventions with black humor. In order to reveal more fully the recycling processes that take place between *¿Qué he hecho yo?* and *Polyester*, a thorough comparison of Francine's and Gloria's characterization and circumstances, an examination of their relationships with their husbands and children, and an analysis of the comedic aesthetic of the films is in order.

First, Francine's and Gloria's primary actions take place within the household milieu. Waters makes it explicit that Francine has no job outside the home. Examples of Francine's routine chores include serving her husband Elmer drinks from a bar cart, preparing meals for the family, washing the dishes, and managing their unruly children. In fact, Francine spends most of her on-screen time within the confines of her domicile, and when she does leave for brief periods

of time, it is to pursue her cheating husband, her newfound love interest Todd, or to spend time with her friend Cuddles Kovinsky. While Francine has no other employment other than to care for her family, Gloria works part time at a karate school as a janitor and as a cleaning lady for Lucas in order to supplement the familial income. Even when Gloria is not at home, viewers witness her scrubbing floors, cleaning bathrooms, tidying someone else's kitchen, or on her way to perform such duties. Very important to notice is the placement of the camera in many of the scenes in which Gloria is in her own kitchen. Almodóvar positions the camera so that the audience looks at her from the interior spaces of the domestic appliances. When asked by Strauss about these shots from within the inner spaces of the machines, Almodóvar clarifies:

The housewife is the main target of the consumer society and of all advertising. [...] Her only companions are her household appliances. They're the sole witnesses to her pain, her solitude and her anxieties. They're also the only witnesses of the murder she commits. That's partly the reason why I film her from within these machines as they do in commercials. I wanted to underline the fact that only these machines see her and watch her (47).

Almodóvar's observation about commercials and housewives still holds very true contemporarily. Despite the progress that has been made in Spain and the U.S. in advancing equal rights for women, television announcements for household appliances and especially cleaning products continue to focus on women as being solely responsible for domestic responsibilities. While true that such advertisements may feature men and children as well as women, the overwhelming majority of them focus on the wife and mother doing the cooking and cleaning. According to a study of advertisements conducted in 2011 by Martina Infanger, Janine Bosak, and Sabine Szesny, women in advertising are still portrayed almost exclusively as caring mothers and adoring wives who are "gentle, shy, helpless, dreamy, dependent and subservient to men" (219). Neither Waters nor Almodóvar endorse these sexist beliefs and use their films to deconstruct the image of the woman as passive housewife. Obviously, very much like Waters

accomplishes with Francine, Almodóvar establishes Gloria within the private, familial sphere thereby embellishing her characterization as a housewife.

In addition to being relegated to domestic servitude of their respective families, Francine and Gloria are clearly portrayed as being representative of the middle class. The opening sequence of *Polyester* makes it clear that the Fishpaw residence is bourgeois. Viewers at first see aerial shots of sundry middle-class suburban residences. Waters then transitions by fixating the camera on one particular home as the title song's ironic lyrics provide the audience with further proof of the inhabitants' social ranking, "See the houses, look at the trees, swayin', in the cool breeze, [...] What a lovely street! It's a dead end. Hey why don't you come on in? French provincial. They do their best, to stay neutral. Expressionless. Come on upstairs, meet your polyester queen. Francine. Francine." The key terms "French provincial," "neutral," "expressionless," and "polyester queen" connote kitsch from a camp perspective and ironically imply that those who dwell within the walls of this house are also suburbanites who are neither wealthy nor impoverished. The "French provincial" furniture design implies kitsch because it is a cheap imitation of what the aristocracy deems to be of high value. "Neutral" and "expressionless" invoke kitsch's proclivity for mass production and "polyester queen" insinuates that Francine's apparel is off the rack; since polyester is hardly the fabric expected of "high" fashion, one of a kind designer styles. This is not to say, however, that Waters is guilty of snobbism by drawing the audience's attention to these facets of Francine's middle-class status. On the contrary, Francine ultimately triumphs over her villainous and conniving mother and boyfriend Todd who hobnob with the wealthy, plot to commit Francine to an insane asylum, sell her house, then use the proceeds to purchase a "big purple Cadillac" so her mother can "ride around and laugh at poor people." The muted décor of the home's interior, complete with a

small television in the master bedroom, further solidifies the message that Francine, the “polyester queen” herself is definitely neither affluent nor poverty stricken.

Although not presented in the opening credits, Almodóvar too uses outside shots of middle-class dwellings to set the audience’s horizon of expectations about Gloria’s social hierarchy. Instead of suburbia, the audience sees apartment buildings which the Spanish audience familiar with Madrid can readily identify as middle class. Almodóvar discusses the importance of this location in his interview with Strauss, “We shot the film in an area which dated from the Francoist building boom. The buildings represent the idea of the upper class supplying the proletariat with comfort. But they’re unlivable places; people call them beehives. When I used to work at the phone company I’d go past these housing estates on the freeway and the vision of these vast buildings would stay with me for the rest of the day” (50). Indeed, the establishing interior shots of the family’s apartment tell a story of cramped living conditions that would make it challenging for anyone to live comfortably. For example, in one particular scene, Antonio’s mother combs Toni’s hair while Miguel is brushing his teeth. When Gloria walks past the open bathroom door, there are four people in the frame to give the impression that the flat is minuscule and badly overcrowded. The boys’ grandmother has her back to the wall, and she, Toni, and Miguel (who is facing the camera) take up nearly all of the frame’s width. Gloria’s position on the hallway’s wall highlights the shallowness of the bathroom’s depth thereby driving home the point that space is a luxury this family cannot afford. Acevedo-Muñoz also notes that the cramped conditions of life in their tiny apartment directly reflect the family’s middle-class standing (51). Moreover, like Waters’ use of the term “polyester queen” to suggest Francine’s middle-class standing, Gloria’s costume reflects her bourgeois identity. Her outfits, especially the ones she dons when cleaning, are tattered, frumpy, and provide further proof of her

status as a member of the working class. As Almodóvar explains to Strauss, this was a deliberate tactic, “Carmen Maura’s clothes, which were very important to me, belonged to my sisters or friends of my sisters. It was vital Carmen’s clothes look worn, that they should have the ugliness of overuse” (50). This concept of “ugliness of overuse” of Gloria’s wardrobe evokes kitsch and its affinity with the middle class much like Waters’ use of the fabric polyester as the title of his film. While certainly not dressed in pauper’s rags as if she were from the lower class or an indigent, her garments, much like Francine’s, are obviously not designer attire such as Rebeca and Becky prominently wear in *Tacones lejanos* (1991). As the recycled reincarnation of Francine, it was necessary that Gloria too hail from the middle class. Clearly, based on the cues of their domiciles and clothing, Waters and Almodóvar direct their audiences to conclude that their housewife protagonists are members of the bourgeois.

Further evidence that Almodóvar recycled *Polyester* stems from the shared narrative of the unfaithful, abusive, and sexist husband. Both housewives suffer horrendously from verbal, emotional, and physical abuse carried out by their cheating husbands. In Elmer Fishpaw’s case, his disposition toward his wife ranges from hostility to homicide. For example, Elmer goes as far as to mount a loudspeaker system to the top of his car and drive around the neighborhood (with his mistress Sandra along for the ride) making announcements to degrade Francine such as, “She weighs three hundred pounds and is an alcoholic. She eats an entire cake at one sitting. You should see her stretch marks. Because of her drunkenness, both her children are delinquents. She’s the hairiest woman I’ve ever laid eyes on.” Elmer and Sandra also make harassing phone calls to keep Francine upset and eventually attempt to murder her. Similarly, *¿Qué he hecho yo?* also features an abusive, controlling husband who is depicted as being adulterous. While true that Gloria’s husband Antonio does not have sex with another woman

during the film, it is obvious that he is madly in love with the German singer Ingrid Müller, his former girlfriend.¹¹² Almodóvar also makes it clear that Antonio verbally, emotionally, and physically assaults his spouse and feels that being her husband gives him the right to do so. For example, Antonio constantly plays tapes of Müller's songs even though he knows that doing so will only antagonize his wife since he makes no attempt to disguise his romantic interest in his former paramour. Furthermore, Antonio barks orders at Gloria constantly, treating her as his inferior throughout the film. Indeed, he is the incarnation of the Francoist husband who ruled over his wife with absolute authority mandated by the state. As such, Antonio causes the spectator to recollect the outmoded concept of *permiso marital* and to associate him with the dictatorship. Antonio makes no attempt to disguise his admiration of Adolf Hitler's totalitarian rule and applies those principles to the treatment of his wife. This explains why he refuses to go along with the forgery scheme of writing Hitler's memoirs as suggested by Lucas since to Antonio doing so would be a betrayal of Hitler. This also clarifies why Antonio feels that he is entitled to denigrate his spouse since, from his perspective, she is his property to do with as he pleases. It comes as no surprise then when Antonio grabs his wife's hand and chastises her for speaking her mind in front of his mother he states, "Here, I am the one who rules. And if you don't like it, you know where the door is!" Of the myriad examples of Antonio's mistreatment of Gloria, the most compelling involves commanding her to iron a shirt for him so that he can look his best for Ingrid when he picks her up from the airport. Gloria, who is busy preparing dinner, refuses and tells him to press it himself. When he insists that she should do it, she replies, "I told you that you can iron the shirt yourself!" Antonio then slaps her face with such force that it makes her nose bleed. She then justifiably defends herself by using the moves she learned from emulating the karate students and hits Antonio over the head with a large pork

¹¹² Acevedo-Muñoz confirms my hypothesis that Antonio is still in love with Ingrid (50).

bone. This causes him to fall back and hit his head accidentally on the sink which results in a fatal blow to the head. By fighting back against Antonio, Gloria emerges the victor in her struggle to escape life under the iron fist of a husband who believes he is entitled to wield absolute power over his wife. As Almodóvar responds when interviewed about the death of Antonio, “¿*Qué he hecho?* is about the liberation of women, even if it takes killing” (Kinder “Pleasure” 54). The fact that both Gloria’s and Francine’s oppressive husbands die at the end of the films suggests that Almodóvar was influenced by the denouement of *Polyester*. In Francine’s case, Sandra Sullivan accidentally shoots Elmer during their surreptitious attempt to assassinate Francine. Todd Tomorrow, Francine’s new love interest, had been carrying on an affair with Francine’s mother and conspired with her to bilk Francine of all of her assets and have her committed to an insane asylum. In an act of poetic justice, Waters also has the two-timing Todd and Francine’s unscrupulous mother La Rue killed unintentionally by being hit by Cuddles’ driver. The demise of Elmer, Todd, and La Rue free Francine from all sources of oppression and domestic tyranny much the same way as the death of Antonio liberates Gloria. The only deviation in the narrative between *Polyester* and *¿Qué he hecho yo?* is that Gloria kills her husband herself whereas Elmer, Todd, and La Rue all die as previously described. The net impact, however, is the same. Both wives prevail because their domineering husbands meet an accidental death. Viewers side with Gloria and Francine and are encouraged to conclude that Antonio and Elmer got what they deserved.

Having patriarchal tyrants for husbands who ultimately die is not the only evidence that Almodóvar pastiches *Polyester* in the characterization of Gloria. Both housewives also suffer from substance abuse problems. In Francine’s case, she is an alcoholic who attempts to numb her suffering by self-medicating with alcohol. Gloria, on the other hand, escapes by inhaling

cleaning detergents and glue and by taking massive doses of amphetamines. Whereas Francine overcomes her alcoholism by attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings during which she admits that she is an alcoholic, Almodóvar's protagonist never confesses that she has a substance abuse problem. In fact, when she attempts to purchase dexadrine and other amphetamines from a pharmacy, she becomes highly insulted when the pharmacist tells her she has the symptoms of drug addiction and that she should go to a doctor for a prescription because she is an addict. The audience sympathizes with Gloria's plight, because as she explains to the pharmacist, she works 18-hour days and needs the stimulants to stay awake. Whereas Waters treats Francine's alcoholism humorously at first and then portrays it to be a serious matter that she must overcome, Almodóvar depicts Gloria's drug habit as a natural consequence of the abuse she suffers at the hands of her husband (who is "too decent" to get a better paying job) and because she is overworked. At the end of the movie, Almodóvar implies that the huffing and pill popping will stop now that she has been emancipated from her husband. In fact, Gloria even proudly confesses to the police officer who is investigating Antonio's death that it was she who murdered him. In typical Almodóvar fashion, the policeman does not detain her for questioning upon hearing this admission of guilt but instead advises her to keep it a secret. This act by a police officer, who would normally represent the authority of the state, augments the sense that true justice has prevailed for Gloria since she is not punished for Antonio's murder. In this manner, Almodóvar exacts poetic justice for Gloria in much the same manner as Waters does for Francine. At the end of both films, Francine and Gloria reap the benefits of their newfound freedom owing to the demise of their tyrannical husbands. Francine reconciles with her children, no longer has to endure the abuse heaped upon her by Elmer, Todd, and her mother, and is receiving the help she so desperately needs to overcome her alcoholism. Similarly, Gloria

resolves the familial strife between her and her sons, has overcome her addiction to amphetamines since the day Antonio died, and is free from the economic burden of working constantly to maintain such a large household since Toni and his grandmother leave Madrid to return to the village from whence she came. Clearly the manners in which both housewives recover from their substance abuse problems and familial strife is an indicator that Almodóvar recycled the plot and denouement of *Polyester*.

More proof that the characterization of Gloria recycles Francine involves the resolution of the delinquent behaviors of their adolescent children. Lu-Lu Fishpaw and her brother Dexter both meet the criteria for being juvenile delinquents as established in chapter three. Lu-Lu consistently rebels against her mother's wishes, fails every class and eventually drops out of school, is extremely sexually promiscuous, becomes pregnant by the very boyfriend Francine forbids her to date, and attempts multiple times to induce a miscarriage because the baby, as she defiantly exclaims to her mother, is "like cancer, getting bigger and bigger like the blob. One day it'll rip me open! And it will be there in my life, ready to rob me of every bit of fun I deserve to have!" Moreover, Waters portrays Dexter as a violent drug addict whose narcotics of choice include angel dust, sniffing glue, and inhaling amyl nitrate. Additionally, he is the "Baltimore Foot Stomper," a wanted criminal who acts out his fetish for women's feet by stomping on them. Dexter's felonious propensities result in the police raiding Francine's home and imprisoning him. Notwithstanding the Fishpaw children's identities as juvenile delinquents throughout most of *Polyester*, by the end of the movie both have experienced a complete recovery and become totally supportive of Francine.

Gloria's offspring, Toni and Miguel, are also exemplary of juvenile delinquency. Toni is a fourteen-year old drug dealer who, like his father, is a master forger. The younger Miguel is a

prostitute who prefers to have sex with older men. In fact, Miguel willingly goes to live with a pedophile dentist in exchange for giving his mother cash so that he can escape the drudgery of his meager existence due to his family's economic problems. Medhurst clarifies that Miguel "is the antithesis of the stereotyped 'passive prey' victim of adult predation; he is fully aware of his needs, desires, and the rewards they can sometimes help to unlock" (129). Considering that she is the mother of a drug-dealing swindler and a prostitute, Gloria shares much in common with Francine. This is especially true at the end of the film when Toni renounces drug trafficking and Miguel returns home because "this house needs a man" and he has come to the realization that he is too young to be in a relationship with anybody. Therefore like Lu-Lu and Dexter, Toni and Miguel also completely turn their lives around for the better and support their mother.

The final aspect of Francine's and Gloria's characterization that shows that *¿Qué he hecho yo?* recycles *Polyester* concerns the complete mental breakdown both protagonists experience. As a result of the abuse heaped upon her by Elmer, Sandra, and La Rue along with the trauma of being the mother of two delinquent children and compounded by her alcoholism, Francine teeters on the brink of insanity in many scenes of the film. For example, near the end of the movie, Francine discovers that her mother and lover Todd had been conspiring against her to ruin her financially meanwhile La Rue and Todd had been carrying on an affair behind her back. The final straw is after Francine finds her mother and Todd kissing on her sofa. Todd tells her, "Let's keep love in the family, honey." Her mother offers a bouquet of flowers to sniff only to force a pair of filthy sneakers onto her olfactory sense instead. Additionally, Francine learns that Elmer and Sandra had entered her home with the intention to murder her and that Todd and La Rue have taken steps to sell Dexter and Lu-Lu into slavery. As a result, she begins sobbing and babbling incoherently. Todd and La Rue sit on her back while Francine continues to

mumble incomprehensibly. Another key moment that exemplifies the fact that this character has lost her mind takes place earlier in the movie when she attempts to commit suicide by hanging herself from her refrigerator. At the last moment, Bubbles enters the home and stops her from killing herself.

Although much more subtle in nature than the inane babbling of Francine, Gloria too suffers the effects of post-traumatic stress. After the scene in which the telekinetic Vanessa repapers the kitchen, Gloria makes her way back to the karate school. During this segment, she works through her inner turmoil physically by repeatedly practicing the same karate move that she used to kill Antonio. When the police inspector asks what she is doing, she replies, “I am letting off steam.” He then tells her that there are more “normal ways” to accomplish this. She retorts that none of the “normal” methods work for her and then asks how the investigation is proceeding. When asked if he suspects Cristal of committing the homicide, the policeman queries her about her intentions for asking this question. It is then that Gloria breaks down and confesses to the crime. While not portrayed as comically tragic as Francine’s mental breakdown, Gloria’s expression of pent-up emotions via physically reenacting the killing of Antonio followed by her confession are the cathartic and climatic points of the movie’s plot. She is clearly distressed and no longer cares about the repercussions of admitting to the police that she killed Antonio. This attitude on behalf of Gloria is highly self-destructive considering the fact that Antonio’s death has liberated her from his domineering ways. As the police officer tells her, she would be better off keeping the truth to herself rather than face arrest and incarceration. Nevertheless, she cannot help herself because she is in such a frenzied state of mind. This is not the only scene in which Gloria experiences mental anguish. Very telling is that, like Francine, Gloria also attempts suicide. After leaving the karate school, she returns home to an empty

apartment and the loneliness is too much for her to bear. As Almodóvar explains to Strauss, “When Carmen goes home after leaving her son, she has nothing left to do, not even the housework or cooking. Her life is completely empty, she's helpless. She walks over to the balcony to throw herself off” (43). However, as she is leaning over the railing of the balcony and visibly struggling with this life or death decision, she spots Miguel down below and subsequently scurries back into the apartment. Like Francine, it takes another person interrupting her to prevent Gloria from killing herself. Despite the fact that Almodóvar depicts Gloria's suicidal ideation in a much more serious manner than Waters, it is clear that Almodóvar borrowed the concept of a housewife being driven insane and suicidal from *Polyester*.

The overriding aesthetic of both *Polyester* and *¿Qué he hecho yo?* consists of the substitution of melodramatic conventions with black humor and is additional proof that Almodóvar recycles Waters. Both films represent very serious subject matters (as we have seen) but do so in a way that allows the audience to laugh at the absurdity of the extreme situations confronting Francine and Gloria. As Waters clarifies to Ives, “There is a certain humor in everything going wrong one day in your life. ‘What’s the worst thing that can happen to you?’ can be funny, because it's not real. It wouldn't be funny in real life at all. It would be really sad, but in a movie theater maybe it's so sad that it's funny. Nobody could have that bad a day. Everything goes wrong” (72). This explains why Waters chooses to exaggerate the melodramatic norm of the mother and daughter vying for the same love interest by having Todd and La Rue conspire to have Francine committed to an institution, to pin the death of Elmer on her, and to use the proceeds from selling Francine's assets to move to Miami in order to be, “free, white, rich, and happy.” Similarly, Almodóvar presents a case study of a working class housewife whose extremely disastrous circumstances have driven her to the point of substance

abuse, mental breakdown, and suicidal inclinations. Very revealing is Almodóvar's answer to Strauss when asked about the mixing of comedic and melodramatic codes, "For the Spanish, humor is a weapon against suffering, anxiety and death. There is humor throughout the film, but I deliberately distance Carmen's character from the comedy" (44). This distancing of the comedic content from Gloria's suffering is the key difference between *Polyester* and *¿Qué he hecho yo?* Whereas Waters at first ridicules the notion that Francine could suffer as much as she does and then later allows her to triumph over her tribulations, Almodóvar portrays Gloria's plight in a very serious manner and then utilizes humorous moments to remind the audience that what they are viewing is fictitious. As in many other films by Almodóvar, comedic relief takes the form of parodic commercials that the characters watch on television. When questioned by Strauss about the use of fake advertisements in his films, Almodóvar replies:

I have a very ambivalent attitude to advertising. It entertains and horrifies me at the same time. [...] The advertising genre interests me solely cinematically. What interests me in a commercial is not the selling of a product but the story it tells and the way it tells it. [...] Commercials are also, in principle, the genre most open to comic delirium, to humor, and surrealism. That's why I always insert a commercial into my films (46).

One example of a false ad that Almodóvar utilizes as a comedic distancing device is a commercial for coffee. In this advertisement, a young woman recounts how her face became horribly scarred as a result of her husband accidentally spilling coffee on her; a cup of coffee that she says she "will never forget." As Acevedo-Muñoz astutely observes, "The message that the scars of the past are impossible to heal and difficult to overcome is presented here as a literal representation of that metaphor. But cheekily, Almodóvar turns the message into an uncomfortably humorous moment" (51). The term "uncomfortably" connotes the black humor that Almodóvar consistently employs throughout the film to allow the viewer a respite from the overwhelmingly desperate circumstances of Gloria's life. Although different stylistically in that

Almodóvar does not treat Gloria's misfortunes lightly as Waters does at first with Francine, the omnipresence of black humor as a substitute for melodrama is a clear indication that Almodóvar was influenced by Waters' work.

As Almodóvar's career progressed from his days as the amateur auteur of *Pepi, Luci, Bom* to becoming a professional filmmaker as his exclusive trade, he borrowed less directly from the oeuvre of Waters. This is not to say, however, that Almodóvar no longer alluded to works by Waters. Instead, the allusions to Waters' films became more subtle in nature and he ceased basing his own movies on the "trash" aesthetic. One film that exemplifies this new period of Almodóvar's cinema is *Matador*. In *Matador*, Waters' influence manifests in the characterization of the protagonists, the deconstruction of traditional patriarchal norms governing what constitutes "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors, and one key exchange of dialogue between Diego Montes and María Cardenal. The analyses that follow will elucidate how Almodóvar pastiches *Pink Flamingos* and *Female Trouble* when creating the main characters from *Matador*. Additionally, an investigation into the feminist themes of both works reveals that Almodóvar follows Waters' lead by portraying Ángel as a weak, ineffectual milquetoast who is easily dominated by women. Finally, by comparing the scene in which Connie and Raymond Marble declare their love for each other to a remarkably similar sequence involving Diego and María, this study demonstrates that Almodóvar appropriated lines from *Pink Flamingos* in *Matador*.

Although it may seem that María Cardenal and Dawn Davenport are unrelated since they hail from different cultures, distinct time periods, and social classes, a closer inspection of their characterization proves that María is in fact a recycled Dawn. A preliminary indicator of the relationship between these two characters involves the utilization of cross-dressing. While María

is certainly not played by a man in drag like Dawn (Assumpta Serna interprets the role), Almodóvar nonetheless blurs the lines between “masculine” and “feminine” makeup and costume with the representation of this protagonist. In fact, throughout *Matador*, María’s costume “alternates between ostentatiously feminine creations and virilized business suits” in a type of cross-dressing which directly reflects the masculinization of María (Smith *Desire* 69). Essentially, María leads a double life: she is a ruthless murderess who kills her prey matador style by stabbing victims with gigantic hairpins and she is an attorney who serves as Ángel’s defender. In both lives, Almodóvar creates a drag-like effect by portraying her as a caricature of a woman when she is in the process of luring and murdering men while simultaneously attributing masculine features to her appearance when she is within the public sphere of being a lawyer. For example, near the beginning of the film, viewers witness María seduce a man and then murder him. During this sequence, María sports her hair in a fashion reminiscent of the Frankenstein monster’s paramour (Elsa Lanchester) from *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). María looks like an exaggerated representation of femininity in much the same way as Dawn. As Lev points out, “the camera also teases out her virility;” meaning that Almodóvar wanted María to have masculine traits even when she is at her most “feminine” private moments (79). By contrast, when dressed as an attorney, María’s hair is down and shoulder-length meanwhile her business attire does have an overall masculinized look as described by Smith. Even her most flashy outfit, which looks like a matador suit and cape, also gives the impression of masculine features being concealed by femininity as if the part were really being played by a man. Therefore, whether in drag when dressed to kill or to go to work, María evinces the same drag sensibility as does Dawn by presenting a highly exaggerated representation of a woman who has masculine features hidden underneath.

Not only do María's hair and costume constitute a type of drag impersonation that evokes Waters, the fact that she is a serial killer who idolizes death also reflects that she is a recycled Dawn Davenport. Very compelling is that both women treat murder as if it were a form of art. Whereas Dawn, when examined by her defense attorney about if she killed her daughter responds, "Yes, I did, and I'm proud of it. If only you could have seen the photos. They were art!" María calmly explains to Diego that women do not consider murder to be a crime. Moreover, María also tells Diego that she imitated his style as a matador when finishing off her victims. Clearly, María is like Dawn in that she views executing human beings as being the ultimate expression of artistic beauty. This explains the elaborate and highly stylized death scene in which María murders Diego at the point of reaching sexual climax then commits suicide. After stabbing Diego in the "eye of the needle" at the back of his neck, she grasps his head and exclaims, "Look at me! Look at me, how I die!" then puts the barrel of a pistol in her mouth and pulls the trigger. Like Dawn who calls her final words right before her execution her "acceptance speech" as if she were receiving an Academy Award, María believes her own death to be the ultimate act of artistic beauty; which she gifts to Diego because he is a kindred spirit. The "obsession with death" that Diego says he and María share unites Dawn and María. Although Dawn does not utilize methods associated with tauromachy to commit her crimes, she is just as convinced as María that doling out death to other people has the greatest aesthetic appeal of all forms of art. Expressing themselves by killing and dying to advance their careers as murderesses makes it clear that Almodóvar based part of María's characterization on Dawn.

María is not the only protagonist that manifests characteristics of a John Waters character. Ángel is a composite of *Pink Flamingos*' Raymond Marble and *Female Trouble*'s Donald Dasher. As Robt Pela explains, Waters tends to portray men as "either completely

worthless or subservient to strong women” (126). This is definitely the case with Raymond Marble as seen in chapter one as well as true for Donald Dasher. Donald even goes as far as to use his wife as a human shield to protect himself from the police during their raid on Dawn’s nightclub act. To state that Ángel is “worthless” or “subservient” is a vast understatement. In Ángel’s private life, he is totally dominated by his overbearing mother. Very revealing is how Almodóvar describes his mother to Strauss, “By contrast, the mother of Antonio Banderas, played by Julieta Serrano, typifies what I consider to be most terrible in Spain: the castrating mother. She is responsible for her son’s terrible neurosis and guilt complex. She constantly judges and condemns and stands for what’s worst in religious education in Spain” (55).

Almodóvar indeed depicts Ángel as being completely ineffectual, weak, and scarred psychologically. So desperate to deflect any accusations of being a homosexual, he tries to rape Eva and when doing that fails (he ejaculates prematurely and she successfully fights him off), he confesses to the murders of all of Diego’s and María’s victims. True to his style of portraying the police as characters who empathize with the protagonists (like the police inspector who allows Gloria to remain free even though she admitting killing Antonio), Almodóvar has the police inspector in *Matador* disbelieve Ángel’s inconsistent story. Moreover, like Raymond and Donald who are desperately afraid of any physical confrontation (e.g. Raymond warns Dawn’s doctor that he will “sue and bruise easily” if accosted), Ángel is a meek character. Almodóvar drives home this point by having him faint at the sight of blood; hardly the aggressive nature required of a serial killer. Furthermore, he is very self-conscious of his timidity to the point that proving his “masculinity” becomes an obsession for him. Goaded by Diego’s instructions that he should treat women like he would a bull, he is compelled to attempt the rape of Eva in order to prove himself “masculine.” When Eva tells the police detective that Ángel failed to rape her

in front of him, he quickly changes tactics and begins to confess to murders he did not commit in a last ditch effort to salvage his desperately-desired macho image. In fact, Almodóvar hints that Ángel is a repressed homosexual who is overcompensating for his self-perceived lack of masculinity. Once more, Ángel is completely submissive to a domineering woman: this time Eva. This clarifies why he felt it necessary to apologize to Eva for the sexual assault he tried to commit. Ángel is so emasculated by his mother that he even fumbles with the knife he holds at Eva's throat, pulling out the corkscrew attachment by mistake before finding the serrated blade. The very notion of this character failing to ejaculate inside of his victim is highly reminiscent of Raymond's inability to victimize the transsexual in *Pink Flamingos*. Eva's brash narration to the police officer of how Ángel was unable to carry out the rape and apologized to her for doing so is similar to how Raymond becomes the quarry of his own attempt to shock the transsexual. Eva takes away any modicum of power that he could possibly have gained via the attempted rape by going so far as to tell the truth that the laceration on her face resulted from a fall in the mud and that he passed out after she escaped. This leaves him completely at her disposal much like the transsexual turns the tables on Raymond by shocking him into dismay by exposing her male genitalia. A male character who loses consciousness at the mere sight of blood, is willing to go to prison in order to edify his fragile male ego, is incapable of carrying out a sexual assault and then says that he is sorry for trying to do so, and who is subservient to women definitely evokes the sycophantic, cowardly milquetoast characterization of Raymond and Donald.

In addition to portraying men who are subservient to women, Almodóvar pastiches one key set of dialogue from *Pink Flamingos*. When Connie and Raymond Marble are having sex, they declare their love for each other in a manner that undermines heteronormative beliefs about marriage. Connie says to him, "Oh, I love you Raymond! I love you more than anything in the

whole world. I love you even more than my own filthiness, more than my hair color. Oh God, I love you more than the sound of bones breaking, the sound of the death rattle, even more than my own shit do I love you Raymond.” Raymond responds, “And I, Connie, also love you more than anything I could imagine. More than my hair color, more than the sounds of babies crying, dogs dying, even more than the thought of original sin itself. I am yours, Connie, eternally united to you through an invisible cord of finely woven filth that even God Himself could never ever break.” Connie and Raymond’s farcial declarations to one another deconstruct the concept that marriage is a “sacred” bond between a man and a woman. Waters equates the emotions that they feel for one another to criminality, perversity, and blasphemy. When put through the recycling process, this dialogue becomes the following conversation between María and Diego. Set to the sound of a bolero song playing in the background, María tells him, “I’ve never been kissed like that before. Until now, I’ve always made love by myself. I love you more than my own death. Would you like to see me dead?” Diego replies, “Yes, and that you also see me dead.” These aberrant declarations of love between such deviant heterosexual couples deconstruct the patriarchal norm that marriage is a venerated bond. Although María and Diego are not officially married like Connie and Raymond, Almodóvar definitely portrays them as soul mates who have met their perfect match in each other. If their one and only sexual union had not had such fatal consequences, doubtlessly they would have been wed since they are so enamored with one another. Like Waters does with the Marbles, Almodóvar makes heterosexuality deviant by reducing it within the realm of the absurd. Taking lines from Waters and retooling them to convey the same message is clear evidence that Almodóvar pastiches *Pink Flamingos* in *Matador*.

The final commonality that links *Matador* to *Pink Flamingos* and *Female Trouble* is the overriding feminist agenda of all three films. As discussed in chapters two and three, Waters definitely portrays Divine as being a larger than life heroine who upsets the traditional patriarchal norm that men are aggressive and women submissive. Babs Johnson and Dawn Davenport are formidable and dangerous women who will do anything, including murder, in order to get what they want. This link between femininity and criminality led to many feminist groups, especially lesbians, to disparage Waters' works as being sexist (Benshoff 163). This viewpoint overlooks the fact that Divine, no matter how devious according to the norms established by the hegemony, is always a countercultural heroine who triumphs over adversity brought upon her by traditional, patriarchal authority figures. When recycling Divine's characters in *Matador*, Almodóvar definitely endows María Cardenal with these same feminist traits. María too symbolizes a threat to patriarchal authority because of her preference for killing men. Her conversation with Diego during two key sequences reveals the underpinning feminist message of the film. María enters the men's restroom to confront Diego who has been following her. When he remarks that she should not be in the men's bathroom, she responds, "don't trust appearances." Later, when discussing their shared proclivity for murder, María clarifies that women do not consider killing to be a crime. She says to Diego, "In every criminal, there is something feminine." Diego replies, "And in every murderess, something masculine." It is precisely this visage of masculinity on María's part that Almodóvar utilizes to critique sexist norms. As he explains to Strauss when asked about María's symbolic meaning:

By contrast in *Matador*, Assumpta Serna has from the very beginning a very masculine role. She is the active partner in her relationships with men; she ends up penetrating and killing them with her hair pin, in a deliberate imitation of a *torero*. In this way, there is a constant inversion in the film of male-female roles. Sometimes the woman is the *torero*, sometimes she's the bull. She's so masculine, one could characterize the relationship between the two lovers as

homosexual (56).

This inversion of masculine and feminine roles mirrors Waters' style and conveys the same message. Like *Divine and Dawn*, María blatantly defies the notion that women are by default passive in nature. Although Almodóvar does not portray María as the heroine of the movie, she is nonetheless an attractive protagonist who captivates the audience's attention. As the exact opposite of the passive, effeminate Ángel, María embodies the antisexist agenda that Almodóvar borrowed from Waters.

The final Almodóvar movie (to date) that recycles from a Waters film is *Carne trémula*. Although very fleeting, Almodóvar pastiches the scene from *Female Trouble* in which Dawn bites through and spits out her daughter's umbilical cord because nobody else is present to help her. In *Carne trémula*, Isabel (a young prostitute) gives birth to Víctor on a moving city bus. Doña Centro, the madam of the bordello, assists Isabel during the partum process but neither she nor the bus driver has a knife or scissors. Subsequently, Doña Centro chews the umbilical cord in order to separate it from the infant. The mastication of this tissue is a direct allusion to Dawn's desperate plight. Like Dawn, Isabel is an unwed mother for whom the possibility of raising her child is daunting at best. Although Almodóvar does not actually depict this act of chewing the umbilical cord in a visceral manner as does Waters (the shot is from a great distance and from outside the bus thereby obscuring the view and enhancing the sense of isolation) the message of helplessness on the part of the single mother is the same. Both directors present such similar scenes in order to critique the social stigma associated with unmarried, young women who have children. In Isabel's case, just like with Dawn's, there is no hope of any financial or any other type of support from the child's father. Therefore, Almodóvar recycles the scene in which Dawn cuts the umbilical cord with her teeth in *Carne trémula* in order to encourage the

audience to side with an unwed mother whose access to resources for herself and her offspring is extremely limited.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ALMODÓVAR IN WATERS

From the evidence garnered from interviews with Pedro Almodóvar and by analyzing the stylistic, aesthetic, and narrative commonalities as detailed in chapter five, it is obvious that Almodóvar recycled some of Waters' films. However, as we shall see in this chapter, recycling between these directors is a two-way process. Undoubtedly, Almodóvar found inspiration for *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980), *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984), *Matador* (1986), and *Carne trémula* in the oeuvre of Waters. Careful analysis of Waters' more recent movies *Cecil B Demented* (2000) and *A Dirty Shame* (2004) reveals that he pastiches some of Almodóvar's movies. Just as is the case with Almodóvar's approach to alluding to Waters, references Waters makes to works by Almodóvar are either very subtle or direct in nature. Subsequently, the most efficacious manner in which to proceed is to uncover all of the allusions Waters makes to Almodóvar in *Cecil B Demented* and then continue to do the same with *A Dirty Shame*. Owing to the fact that the theory of auteurism is central to gaining insight into the title character of *Cecil B Demented*, a preliminary step is to elucidate the definitive characteristics of an auteur and then explain how Almodóvar's status as an international auteur impacted Waters' film.¹¹³ To illustrate the fact that Waters recycles the auteur figure from Almodvar's works, we will compare the characterization of the fictional

¹¹³ The very name Cecil B. Demented is an allusion to the famous filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille.

director Pablo Quintero from *La ley del deseo* (1986) to *Cecil B. Demented*. Once *Demented*'s auteurism and its relationship to Almodóvar and his imagined auteurs have been established, it is

essential to scrutinize how Almodóvar's Andrea Caracortada from *Kika* (1993) swayed the "ultimate reality" visionary drive of Cecil B. Demented. By far the most unambiguous allusion to Almodóvar is incarnated in the hairstylist Rodney. For this reason, it is vital to investigate this character. Especially pertinent is a detailed explanation of how Rodney's sexual orientation is an indirect allusion to Almodóvar's practice of queering heterosexuality. After analyzing these implied and explicit references to Almodóvar and his works in *Cecil B Demented*, further evidence of how Waters recycles Almodóvar can be revealed by studying and comparing the key characters of *A Dirty Shame* to their counterparts in films by Almodóvar. Those protagonists are Caprice Stickles, whose stage name is Ursula Udders, and the sex maniac Ray Ray. An in-depth comparison of Ursula to Sexilia from *Laberinto de pasiones* shows that Ursula is a revamped Sexilia. Waters viewed *Laberinto de pasiones* and was inspired by its contemptuous parody of psychological theories concerning sexuality; especially the concept of nymphomania. Consequently, Waters chose to queer psychoanalytic explanations of "oversexed" females in a manner similar to that of Almodóvar. In order to elucidate the connections between Sexilia and Ursula, a succinct explication of historical psychoanalytic hypotheses about nymphomaniacs lays the foundation for comprehending precisely what Almodóvar and Waters mock with these characters. One of the recurrent archetypal characters portrayed by both directors is the deviant heterosexual male as analyzed in chapter three. In the present chapter, we will take a much closer look at the correlating characteristics shared by Paul Bazzo (Pablo) from *Kika* and Ray Ray from *A Dirty Shame* because Ray Ray is in fact a recycled Paul Bazzo. Waters expounds upon Almodóvar's unflinching depiction of Bazzo's hypersexual nature by parodying the notion of sexual addiction. A necessary preliminary step in grasping how Waters borrows from Almodóvar to ridicule sexual addiction is to define it. The most logical approach to analyzing

the influence of Almodóvar on Waters' *Cecil B Demented* and *A Dirty Shame* is to proceed in chronological order by release date. Therefore, we will investigate how Waters recycles Almodóvar starting with *Cecil B Demented* and then continue with *A Dirty Shame*.

As detailed in chapter two, *Cecil B Demented* is to date Waters' most self-reflexive, self-ironizing, and subsequently postmodern work. Essential to elucidate the queer and postmodern statements made in this film is an explanation of what constitutes an auteur. An auteur is a director whose stylistic distinctiveness pervades all of his or her works to the point that critics and audiences can readily identify a work as being a movie "authored" by that particular director. Auteur theory has its origins within French film criticism; hence the use of the word auteur (author). As Brian Michael Goss explains, the French periodical *Cahiers du cinéma* "assumed the mantle of being the principal organ of auteurism" (43). Auteur theorists postulated that the director of a motion picture is the most important creative voice and should therefore be considered to be the film's author (Goss 41).¹¹⁴ In his foundational essay on auteur theory in American films, Andrew Sarris also posits that the "distinguishable personality of the director" is chief among the cinema's "criteria of value" and a definitive characteristic of an auteur ("Notes" 562). Sarris additionally credits François Truffaut's article "A Certain Tendency in the French Cinema" published in the January 1954 edition of *Cahiers du cinéma* as being one of the most influential regarding the meaning of auteur (*American Cinema* 27). While true that auteur theory is polemical because of the clash between definitions of "high" art and "low" art among auteurist critics such as Truffaut, and Lawrence Alloway there is a consensus that auteurism is chiefly concerned with how the director's personality is manifested in his or her works (Sarris *American*

¹¹⁴ This is not to say, however, that auteur theory is an uncontroversial theoretical framework within film scholarship. Auteur theory is more of a critical approach than it is a theory per se. Its principal tenet is to inject the concept of a lone artist into filmmaking which is in fact a collaborative process.

Cinema 29-32). Furthermore, the very term auteur connotes directors who either write the scripts for their films or adapt them to suit their own artistic visions. Considering that Almodóvar and Waters are renowned for authoring their own scripts and for creating movies that evince their unique personalities, it comes as no surprise that film critics refer to them both as auteurs. Goss typifies Almodóvar as an auteur based on his female-centric themes (63). Ann Hornaday refers to Waters as an “auteur of bad taste” because of Waters’ trash aesthetic (“Auteur of Bad Taste”). This means that a viewer who is familiar with the oeuvre of Almodóvar and Waters can identify the telltale characteristics that each director includes in his films and anticipate that both auteurs will craft their art around their own signature visions.¹¹⁵ The fact that Almodóvar and Waters portray a fictional auteur in their movies augments the postmodern trait of manifesting a self-ironizing disposition as described by Hutcheon (1). By focusing on protagonists who are auteurs, Almodóvar and Waters explicitly critique the filmmaking process via metacinema. A detailed comparison of the protagonist Pablo Quinto from *La ley del deseo* and Cecil B. Demented proves that Almodóvar’s character inspired Waters to follow suit with his own depiction of an auteur. With this objective in mind, we will scrutinize the shared traits that both fictional auteurs manifest.

Almodóvar portrays Pablo Quintero as an auteur in many different manners. First, Almodóvar makes it obvious that Pablo writes and directs all of his movies. Pablo’s works include *Paradigma de mejillón*, *Remake*, *Cara de culo*, *Halitosis*, and the future movie *La voz humana*. Almodóvar implies that it is Pablo’s creative input as both the screenwriter and director that controls the overriding artistic statements made by these fictional films. As Marsha Kinder correctly observes, *La ley del deseo* has “a powerful, manipulative auteur, Pablo Quintero, the

¹¹⁵ Future studies of what constitutes each director’s auteurist style will reinforce the fact that Almodóvar and Waters are auteurs and reveal how their development as directors shares commonalities due to the recycling of other movies including works by one another.

sensitive writer/director who stands in for Almodóvar [...] As is apparent from the self-reflexive soft-core sequence that opens the film, Pablo's authorship is a matter of control rather than criminality" ("All About" 284). Kinder also points out that Pablo "exploits his sibling's pain to empower his own writing" (Kinder "All About" 284). Kinder refers to the fact that Pablo plans to make his latest project the life story of his transsexual sister Tina and her "problems with guys." Although the viewer never sees him actually directing any of his films, the audience does witness multiple examples of him authoring the metacinematic narrative of *Laura P*, the name he has ascribed to the female protagonist based on Tina. With *Laura P*, Almodóvar demonstrates in a self-ironizing manner the processes involved in creating a fictional character and how that personage takes on a life of his or her own. *Laura P* becomes so realistic that the police at one point suspect that she is Juan's killer (Juan is Pablo's former lover) since "she" (it was really Pablo) authored several letters to Antonio (Antonio is Pablo's current lover). It is Pablo's vision as an auteur that drives the narrative of the death of Juan at Antonio's hands. The most tangible symbol of his auteurism is his typewriter. With this machine, Pablo authors both scripts for his movies and he also utilizes it to determine the fate of Juan, Tina, Antonio, and himself. For example, after receiving a letter from Juan that does not please him, Pablo writes the missive he would have preferred Juan to write and asks him to title it, sign it, and mail it back to him. This superseding creative voice on Pablo's part directly reflects the notion of the auteur as being the "author" of the film; or in this case, of his and Juan's relationship. This reinforces Kinder's hypothesis that Pablo is manipulative and controls the actions of others by means of his prowess as an auteur ("All About" 284). Moreover, Almodóvar gives the audience insight into how a movie director is the author of the work by having Pablo write correspondence to Antonio and sign it as *Laura P*. Almodóvar makes it clear that Antonio is attracted to Pablo because of his

status as an auteur. During one key sequence near the beginning of the film, Antonio masturbates in a public restroom after seeing Pablo's film. It is not incidental that he says, "Fuck me, fuck me" while masturbating in an imitation of what he saw in Pablo's latest box office smash. Furthermore, the titles of Pablo's movies, *Paradigma del mejillón*, *Remake*, *Cara de culo*, *Halitosis*, and the feature about Tina's life *La voz humana*, reinforce the concept that Pablo is an auteur because they are indicative of a unique personal style owing to the fact that they are unconventional. In one particular scene toward the beginning of *La ley del deseo*, an adoring fan enthusiastically flatters Pablo and his movies and augments the notion that he is an auteur. Her conversation with Pablo consists of a litany of praise for *Paradigma del mejillón* (which she saw three times that day), *Remake*, *Cara de culo* (which she viewed five times), and *Halitosis*. When she asks Pablo which of his is his favorite, Pablo's response, that he loves to make his films but cannot stand watching them, functions as a self-reflexive distancing device that reminds the audience that *La ley del deseo* is also a work of fiction and suggests that Almodóvar himself would respond to her question as did Pablo. Not only does this demonstrate the self-ironizing nature of postmodern art as explained in chapter two, it also fossilizes the image of Pablo as an auteur created by one since Pablo's fan eagerly watches all of his films due to the distinct and controlling voice that he imbues them with by being both the scriptwriter and the director. Taking all of the characteristics of how Pablo is an auteur into account, it is clear that Almodóvar has created a character whose dominating creative voice makes each film uniquely his own. In doing so, Almodóvar suggests that to be an auteur, one must be like Pablo and maintain absolute control of the filmmaking processes and consistently insert one's unique artistic vision into all works. Almodóvar's definition of auteur complies with Goss' and Sarris' explanations of

auteurism; deviating from them only in that Almodóvar suggests the true auteur must necessarily also be the scriptwriter so as to maintain absolute dominion over the film.

When creating his own auteur, Cecil B. Demented, Waters based his character on Almodóvar's theory of auteurism and also on part of Almodóvar's signature style. Whereas Cecil embodies the definitive and connotative aspects of being an auteur according to Almodóvar in a subtle manner, Waters directly alludes to Almodóvar's oeuvre twice during *Cecil B Demented*. First, Cecil, who declares himself to be "the ultimate auteur," is similar to Pablo in many ways. Both are screenwriters who also direct their own works. Like Pablo's total control over his cinematic productions and his manipulation of the other protagonists, Cecil wields totalitarian authority over his movie (*Raving Beauty*) to the point that he too controls the other characters' lives. Calling themselves an "outlaw cinema" gang, the cast and crew of *Raving Beauty*, to whom Cecil refers as being the Sprocket Holes, willingly give up their own free will to Cecil. For example, Cecil enforces a strict policy of "celibacy for celluloid" in which the actors, costumer, hairstylist, sound technician, and the rest of the "outlaw cinema" throng must forbear from having sex in order to channel all of their energies into the creation of *Raving Beauty*. Waters humorously drives home the point that Cecil and the Sprocket Holes are deprived of sex by having them moan and rub against each other in eager anticipation of watching Honey Whitlock disrobe for a costume change. Another example of Cecil's complete control of the Sprocket Holes and Honey involves the scene in which each character has his or her skin permanently branded with Cecil's logo. As each personage receives Cecil's mark, he or she says, "Demented forever" and explains how making *Raving Beauty* is the pinnacle of human achievement. Building upon Almodóvar's definition of auteurism, Waters portrays the branding scene to convey the message that working for an auteur leaves an indelible impression upon the

careers of everyone involved in the filmmaking process. To commit to work for an auteur is a life-changing event in both the public and private spheres.

Not only does Cecil exemplify Almodóvar's concept of auteurism by ruling over the professional and personal lives of his followers, he also, like Pablo, utilizes his power as an auteur to change the fate of his actors and crew; especially Honey Whitlock. While Pablo invents the character Laura P. and uses it as a pseudonym to write letters to Antonio and rewrites Juan's letter to suit his own needs, Cecil kidnaps Honey and gradually convinces her that starring in *Raving Beauty* is the only way she can gain any artistic integrity as an actress. Following suit with Almodóvar's penchant for self-reflexivity, Waters has Cecil persuade Honey to side with the "outlaw cinema" gang because of her mediocre performance in the family film (which she describes as a screwball romantic comedy) *Some Kind of Happiness*. As Waters explains to James Painter Young, the role of Honey Whitlock is highly self-ironizing and self-reflexive for Melanie Griffith because in this part she makes fun of her own career as a mainstream actress whose past movies were romantic comedies (141). It comes as no surprise then that she at first resists acting under Cecil's guidance but then later voluntarily joins forces with him upon hearing harsh reviews of her acting prowess and after seeing her ex-husband call her a "nut" when being interviewed by Rosanne Barr. Indeed, as Honey embraces Cecil's mission to create the ultimate underground film, her acting talents improve greatly and she finds herself regretting her enactment of past roles. This transformation on Honey's part is symbolic of Waters' criticism of mainstream cinema and augments the notion that Cecil as an auteur wields supreme power over cinematic creative expression because he molds her from a talentless Hollywood hack into a gifted thespian. The climax of Honey's Künstlerroman experience takes place when she agrees to Cecil's request to set her hair on fire for the shock value that such an action would

add to *Raving Beauty*. Considering the fact that she initially resisted having her hair dyed blond for her part, acquiescing to Cecil's request to engulf her hair in flames for the sake of "outlaw" cinema symbolizes the transformative and persuasive power of the auteur. Honey grudgingly concedes to this dangerous incendiary stunt (as did Melanie Griffith in real life as Waters clarifies to Young) due to Cecil's coaching and owing to her desire to break away from the legacy of her lackluster performances in "wholesome" cinema (142). Had it not been for Cecil's intervention in her personal and professional life, Honey would never have realized that her past movies were commodities designed to appeal to the banal American film palate; hardly making them noteworthy contributions to film art. This is the same exact conclusion that Waters wants the viewer to reach as well. As the "ultimate auteur," Cecil reaches far beyond the scope of industry standard directors whose only goal is profit. Cecil's artistic vision forces Honey and the audience to adopt new standards of acceptable movies and to reject those of the hegemony.

Not only does Cecil's auteurism grant him dominion over the personal and professional development of Honey Whitlock, it also determines the fate of the rest of his actors and crew. As cinematic terrorists guided by Cecil, the Sprocket Holes demonstrate their total devotion to the creation of *Raving Beauty* even if it costs them their lives. Cecil's artistic concept that his film should be created under his "ultimate reality" aesthetic, which consists of "real life, real people, and [...] real terror," transmogrifies the lives of the Sprocket Holes and the denizens of Baltimore who become unwitting extras. Rodney (the hairstylist) is but one example of Cecil's gang who, according to Cecil, "died for the roots of cinematic rebellion, and he's now in cinema hell, where one day, we'll all be reunited." In this manner, Waters portrays Cecil's auteurism as transcending the mundane aspects of filmmaking to the point that it achieves equal footing with spirituality. Important to note is that Waters ironically states that Rodney's reward for dying for

his craft is to spend eternity in “cinema hell” and not heaven. Furthermore, as reflected in the sequence in which the Sprocket Holes and Cecil sing the refrain “Demented forever” while being branded with his insignia, Cecil’s control over their careers extends beyond death itself. Rodney is not the only character whose altruistic dedication to *Raving Beauty* has fatal results. Lyle (the leading male character), Dina, Pam, Cherish, and even Cecil himself (who at the end of the movie is in a wheelchair, has himself doused in gasoline, and then set ablaze) sacrifice their lives for the good of the film. This hyperbolic emphasis on the omnipotence of the director draws heavily upon auteur theory as Cecil explains inspiringly to the Sprocket Holes after one of their filmic raids. Very revealing is that during this scene, Waters directly credits Almodóvar for the black comedy of *Cecil B Demented* by having Cecil announce that his followers should “feel the black humor of Almodóvar.”¹¹⁶ Cecil is correct in his assertion that Almodóvar consistently demonstrates a penchant for depicting human mortality and other “disturbing or sinister topics” in ironic and humorous manners for their shock value (“Black Comedy” 36). Examples of Almodóvar’s black humor include Luci’s deep-seated desire to be beaten by her husband in *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980), and the incest taboo in *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982); the heroine addicted Mother Superior of *Entre tinieblas* (1983); the murder of Antonio by his wife Gloria in *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984); the homicide-suicide of María and Diego of *Matador* (1986); the terrorist plot to bomb a plane and murderous pursuit of Iván in *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988); the masochistic yearnings of Marina from *¡Átame!* (1990); the morbid makeover of the presumed dead Ramón in *Kika*; and the demise of the shrinking lover from the film within the film in *Hable con ella* (2002). Following Almodóvar’s example, Waters treats the passing away of the aforementioned Sprocket Holes and

¹¹⁶ Black humor or black comedy is “a kind of drama (or, by extension, a non-dramatic work) in which disturbing or sinister subjects like death, disease, or warfare are treated with bitter amusement, usually in a manner calculated to offend and shock” (“Black Comedy” 36).

Cecil as part of the punch line of *Cecil B Demented*. The audience knows not to lament over each character who dies as would be expected of a tragic figure because Waters is so obviously greatly exaggerating the importance of underground cinema in order to scorn mainstream films. Of all of the Sprocket Holes who meet an untimely end, Lyle expires in a manner which definitely recycles the black comedy of an Almodóvar film. Like many Almodóvar characters whose drug addictions are depicted as whimsical yet acrimonious vicissitudes of that particular protagonist (examples abound including Sister Julia and Yolanda from *Entre Tinieblas*, Gloria from *¿Qué he hecho yo?* and Marina from *¡Átame!*), Lyle's substance abuse problem is treated humorously even during the segment in which he expires from a gunshot wound to the head. During the raid of *Gump Again*, one of the disgruntled teamsters escapes his bonds and shoots Lyle in the middle of his forehead. Instead of crying out in pain, Lyle wails, "Drugs! Get me poppers!" Mentioning poppers in this manner is further evidence of Lyle's homosexuality given that this drug is very commonly abused in the gay community. Two of the other Sprocket Holes administer the amyl nitrate to Lyle who then passes away with a blissful smile on his face thanks to the the drug he snorts and also because, as Cecil informs him, his death was captured on film and therefore was not in vain. Invoking Almodóvar's name and proclivity to employ black humor in such a deliberate manner allows Waters to pastiche Almododóvar's fame as an author/director which augments the characterization of Cecil as the "ultimate auteur." Clearly, Waters' use of hyperbole combined with likening him to Almodóvar's penchant for black humor transforms the deaths of the Sprocket Holes from being casualties of Cecil's war against "bad" movies into a gimmick Waters employs to encourage the viewer to side with Cecil and his entourage. The net effect of their altruistic sacrifices makes big budget Hollywood productions

and especially family films seem trite exercises in banality that ultimately ruin the artistic nature of cinema.

The semblances between the fictional auteur Cecil and Almodóvar consist of more than just the reliance upon black humor. Throughout the movie, Cecil is driven by quasi-mystical experiences that he calls “visions” that tell him the most efficacious way to capture the most compelling footage of *Raving Beauty*. The chief source of his inspiration, “ultimate reality” as described above bears a striking resemblance to the artistic vision of Andrea Caracortada from *Kika*. Her “ultimate reality” aesthetic takes the form of a television program she calls *Lo peor del día*. During her show, Andrea unflinchingly presents a recap of only the most sordid, disturbing, exploitative, and sensationalistic news of the day. When considering the fact that Andrea selects the stories, appears in some of the footage, produces, films, and stages the show on her own, she definitely is the auteur of *Lo peor del día* even though it is not a movie. As Allinson observes, “Andrea’s stylized delivery strips all humanity from the horrific details of the litany of crime and violence. [...] Andrea –embodying the entire show as journalist, camerawoman, editor, and presenter–pursues him [a wanted murderer] but is shot at herself” (*A Spanish Labyrinth* 57). Andrea’s show very much complies with Baudrillard’s notion of the hyperreal, “[t]he very definition of the real becomes: that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction [...] At the limit of this process of reproducibility, the real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced. The hyperreal” (146). An empty studio audience in which the applause is superimposed also evokes Baudrillard’s theory of simulacra since Andrea’s program is a simulation that replaces the need for the “original.” Even Andrea’s wardrobe and makeup while she is on stage reinforce the fact that *Lo peor del día* is designed to appeal to Andrea’s audience’s bloodlust. Designed by Jean Paul Gaultier, Andrea’s

dress looks like her flesh and costume have been violently ripped open with a jagged knife leaving her breasts exposed. She also uses makeup to exaggerate greatly the scar that she has on her face to give it the appearance of a fresh wound. When asked by Strauss to explain Andrea's "horrific and spectacular" reality show, Almodóvar responds:

What shocked me and directly inspired Andrea's character was a show I saw in America relaying real trials. The trial I watched was that of the Kennedy boy accused of rape. The very fact of filming a trial is ghastly: if the man's guilty, it's terrible for him; if he's innocent, then it's terrible for the girl. But the program went even further. At one point, the camera zoomed in on a piece of evidence, the girl's underpants on which were supposed to be traces of sperm. The image struck me as more humiliating than the rape itself. I gradually realized these video images would become an enormous market for television. [...] For me as a filmmaker, reality shows are an interesting phenomenon. But they should be controlled and humanized, otherwise it all becomes too ghastly for words (134).

When creating Cecil's "ultimate reality" aesthetic, Waters recycles Andrea and *Lo peor del día* in many ways. Cinematic terrorists like Cecil and the Sprocket Holes who capture the "real terror" of extras who are not actors emulate Andrea's show by focusing on only the most shocking and sensationalist footage. Moreover, by instigating those acts of violence themselves and then by filming them, Cecil and his crew engage in the creation of the hyperreal just like Andrea does. The simulacrum of the real must be believable for Andrea and for Cecil or it is dismissed as not being worthy of their cameras. For example, Andrea (whose costume incorporates a menacing-looking camera mounted on her head) not only interviews victims of crimes, but also puts herself in danger by recording a murder on film. Instead of running away to escape from the gunman, Andrea pursues him on her motorcycle; all of the sake of producing the most shocking footage possible. To make matters truly the "worst of the day," Andrea features an interview with the assassin's mother during which she causally says, "Clarify something for us, Angelina. Your son has murdered his wife and raped his daughter. When he was a child, did he have any abnormal instincts that would drive him to kill her or to rape her?" Such a crass

attitude of morbid fascination with the suffering of others completely dehumanizes Andrea and her “show” in agreement with Almodóvar’s critique of television reality programs. The message conveyed is that such reality programs are detrimental to society because they place ratings above human dignity and sensationalism over ethics; all in the name of creating marketable hyperreality. On Cecil’s part, the straight jacket he prefers to don and his shock of unkempt-looking hair give him the appearance of an obsessed and deranged individual. His version of the hyperreal consists of his “ultimate reality” vision in which he and his group of cinema terrorists engage in fatal melees with teamsters and the police for the sake of making *Raving Beauty* as authentic as possible. One example of a scene in which Cecil’s impulse to create a simulacrum of the real takes place when he orders Honey to leap several feet from the top of a tall building and to land on her mark. When Honey tells him, “Surely you realize that I could be seriously injured. I mean there should be an air bag or some kind of safety precaution.” Cecil replies, “Prove yourself Honey, and maybe you’ll live to read your reviews.” Once the cameras are rolling, Honey throws herself over the edge of the building and hits her mark perfectly despite the fact that in reality such a fall would indeed cause grave or even fatal injuries. This is a very humorous moment for the audience because Waters utilizes the impossibility of this stunt to parody the suspension of disbelief directors require of the spectator while simultaneously playing on the audience’s morbid curiosity. Like Andrea, Honey voluntarily puts her life at risk for the sake of making the captured footage as realistic as possible. Other examples of Cecil’s aesthetic that are similar in nature to Andrea’s show involve the filming of the deaths of the Sprocket Holes. For Andrea and Cecil both, any violence not captured on tape may as well not have even happened. In other words, it is real only when recorded. In this manner, Waters pastiches *Lo peor del día* when he has Cecil capture video of Rodney, Lyle, Dina, and the others dying because,

like Andrea, he puts himself in great danger for the sake of his sensationalist art. Almodóvar and Waters both critique the marketing value that representations of morbidity hold over the spectator. For Almodóvar, this takes the form of a parody of television reality shows. When recycled by Waters, this criticism becomes an auteur obsessed with making the ultimate reality film.

To drive home the point that he recycles themes and characters from Almodóvar, Waters presents the spectator with a key scene in which the Sprocket Holes reveal the names of the directors with whom they most closely identify. Their adulation of their favorite directors takes the form of tattoos. Cecil and each Sprocket Hole has the name of the director they admire the most tattooed on their bodies. For example, Cecil has Otto Preminger tattooed on his forearm, Cherish sports Andy Warhol on her leg, Lyle has Herschell Gordon Lewis emblazoned on his chest, and Chardoney has Spike Lee on her torso. Very telling is the fact that Rodney the hairstylist has a tattoo of Almodóvar's name on his arm. This direct allusion to Almodóvar strengthens Cecil's status as an auteur and, for the viewer familiar with Almodóvar's oeuvre, foreshadows Rodney's queer sexuality. Not long after Rodney shows Honey his Almodóvar skin art, the audience sees him dancing intimately with Petey; thereby implying that the two men are lovers. In another segment soon after Rodney and Petey gyrate together, Waters shows the two men kissing each other passionately and sleeping together which further insinuates that they are both homosexual. Nevertheless, in a direct homage to Almodóvar's practice of deconstructing hegemonic ideals that sexual orientation is a fixed and innate trait, Waters problematizes Rodney's sexuality from a camp perspective. It is not incidental that the same character who bears the Almodóvar tattoo is a hairstylist who desperately wants to be able to reciprocate Petey's affections yet cannot because of his heterosexuality. Waters at first wants the audience

to assume, as does Honey, that a male beautician who shares such intimate acts with another man is by default gay. In an inversion of the spectator's horizon of expectations, Waters has Rodney declare, "That's just it Honey. I'm not gay. I'm straight and I fucking hate it! Petey loves me and I can't love him back. I've tried. I kiss him, and all I feel is whiskers. I can't take that certain thickness in his pants. I'm ashamed of my heterosexuality! [...] I'm straight, and I hate it so get used to it Honey Whitlock!" A straight male character who loathes his heterosexuality employs the humor, incongruity, exaggeration of sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms, tendency to "dethrone the serious," and the artifice associated with camp as described by Sontag (275-279). This is not to say, however, that Waters fails to convey a serious message for the audience with this inverted characterization of Rodney as a self-loathing heterosexual. As Sontag explains, camp allows the creative artist to be "serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious" which is precisely what Waters accomplishes with this character (288). The lesson for the viewer is clear: it is a foolhardy endeavor to force a person into a rigidly defined sexual orientation. This subsequently parodies heteronormativity itself in a manner similar to that of Almodóvar's queer characters since Rodney can no more make himself be gay than a homosexual can make himself or herself straight. Although this is a recycling of Almodóvar's proclivity for queering heterosexual men such as Paul Bazzo from *Kika* and Benigno from *Hable con ella*, Waters' depiction of sexuality with Rodney is less transgressive than the protagonists of Almodóvar. Rodney's inability to have sex with Petey despite his love for him is treated as a humorous personality vicissitude that functions to make the audience laugh at the absurdity of a person hating his own sexuality. When interviewed by J.T. Leroy about the characters' ideal fates, Waters substantiates this hypothesis, "And Rodney, the heterosexual hairdresser, would still be dead-because all heteros that feel guilty have to be

punished in my films” (152). Once more, Waters presents an inversion of the viewer’s expectations in order to make the audience laugh at topics normally considered taboo for shock value. As we have seen in previous chapters, Almodóvar suggests to the spectator that the very notion of a fixed sexual orientation is flawed. In Almodóvar’s world, sexual attraction is secondary to an individual’s choice; whether that person is motivated by greed such as is the case with Juan from *La mala educación* (2004) or by lust like Antonio from *La ley del deseo* who becomes obsessed with Pablo Quintero despite the fact that he previously self-identified as straight. If Rodney had been an Almodóvar character, his heterosexuality would have been no obstacle for him to be able to reciprocate Petey’s love romantically and sexually. This is not to say, however, that Waters subscribes to the notion that sexual orientation is inborn and immutable. On the contrary, Rodney’s hatred of his sexuality undermines the hegemonic idea that heterosexuality is the pinnacle of human sexual expression by spoofing the phenomenon known as homosexual panic. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explicates, homosexual panic refers to a condition in which a person who is extremely insecure about his or her own sexual identity reacts violently when an individual of the same gender makes a sexual advance on him or her (20). Long used by defense attorneys of gay bashers, homosexual panic is alleged to be a psychiatric illness that, when triggered, results in the battery of or even the murder of the individual who made the sexual advance (Sedgwick 21). Instead of responding to Petey’s sexual and romantic overtures in a homosexual panic, Rodney ironically experiences “heterosexual panic” and subsequently despises being straight. Moreover, due to the fact that he and the other Sprocket Holes have foresworn any sexual activity for the sake of *Raving Beauty* and because he is the first to die, viewers never witness Rodney consummate any of his sexual urges; whether homosexual or heterosexual in nature. These facts preclude any violent incidents resulting from

Rodney being tempted by a woman. Utilizing the camp aesthetic and parody of homosexual panic as distancing devices, Waters systematically obfuscates Rodney's self-professed heterosexuality in order to make the audience question their perceptions about sexual orientation. This tendency to deconstruct heteronormative assumptions about sexuality is a direct result of Waters recycling Almodóvar's oeuvre. Like Paul Bazzo and Benigno, Rodney's sexual deviance as a heterosexual male is a tool that Waters uses to queer heteronormative sexuality.

Having analyzed how Waters pastiches Almodóvar's works and fame as an auteur in *Cecil B Demented*, careful scrutiny of *A Dirty Shame* gives additional proof that Waters recycles films by Almodóvar. Essential in comprehending this movie and how it reflects Almodóvar's influence is an explanation of sexual addiction. As Waters explains to Leroy about the script that would become *A Dirty Shame*, the film's basic premise is about sex addicts (155). Waters explains to Leroy that although he did not attend any Sex Addicts Anonymous meetings himself, he did conduct research including gathering "all the literature, and I've talked to a lot of people who have been to them" (155). During another interview with Young, Waters clarifies that *A Dirty Shame* is "about blue-collar sex addicts in Baltimore and their search for some kind of dignity. It's about people that are compulsive about their sex lives, but who don't want to be. I haven't done sex, as a theme, in a movie in a while. I think sex is funny and it's surreal"

(145).¹¹⁷ Fundamental in the comprehension of this movie is a definition of paraphilia because

¹¹⁷ Doubtlessly, part of the literature about sexual addiction to which Waters refers originates from the chief reference book of mental disorders, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Third Edition – Revised)* published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1987. As the "bible" of neurological disorders, the *DSM-III-R* codifies and describes all mental disorders officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association as of 1987. While this compendium is now outmoded, its description of sexual addiction, lumped under the category of "other" sexual disorders, accurately describes a hegemonic definition of sexual disorder: "distress about a pattern of repeated sexual conquests or other forms of nonparaphilic sexual addiction, involving a succession of people who exist only as things to be used" (296).

Waters presents a vast array of characters who are sexually stimulated by them.¹¹⁸ In *A Dirty Shame*, Waters presents characters who manifest: mysophilia (sexual attraction to dirt), infantilism, splashing (the desire to splatter food on erogenous zones of the body), frottage, emetophilia (vomiting on oneself or on one's partner), autoerotic asphyxiation, sexual attraction to raw meat, exhibitionism, tickling, coprophilia (feces), and foot fetishism. Waters defies the psychological hypothesis that sexual addiction is nonparaphilic by linking it to these paraphilias and a multitude of other sexual acts. While true that Waters' vision of sexual addiction conveys a clear, compelling and liberating message that it is not a mental disorder, the practice of portraying hypersexual characters whose sexuality parodies psychological explanations stems from Almodóvar's works. Specifically, Waters was inspired to create his troupe of sex addicts based on Sexilia from *Laberinto de pasiones* and Paul Bazzo from *Kika*. Sexilia became the wanton Ursula Udders (Caprice Stickles) and Waters recycled Paul Bazzo as Ray Ray. Not only did Waters recycle Ursula and Ray Ray from Almodóvar's oeuvre, he also emulates Almodóvar's tendency to ridicule psychological hypotheses regarding human sexuality. The analyses that follow make the recycling process between Waters and Almodóvar clearer.

First is the figure of the nymphomaniac. A comparison of Ursula Udders to Sexilia reveals that these two protagonists share too much in common for their similarities to be caused by mere coincidence. In both cases, a psychologist or psychiatrist diagnoses each young woman as being a nymphomaniac. Before analyzing the other traits Ursula and Sexi share in common, it is essential to explain why a diagnosis of nymphomania is being used ironically by Almodóvar

¹¹⁸ The *DSM-III-R* states that a paraphilia consists of "recurrent intense sexual urges and sexually arousing fantasies generally involving (1) nonhuman objects, (2) the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one's partner (not merely simulated), or (3) children or nonconsenting persons" (279). Paraphilias identified by the *DSM-III-R* include fetishism ("recurrent, intense, sexual urges and sexually arousing fantasies, of a least six month's duration, involving the use of nonliving objects"), frotteurism ("touching and rubbing against a nonconsenting person"), infantilism, pedophilia, sexual masochism, sexual sadism, transvestic fetishism, voyeurism, and zoophilia (279-290).

and Waters. As Carol Groneman explains, the term nymphomania refers exclusively to a hypersexual female and has dominated medical theory about women's sexuality since the classical period of the ancient Greeks (*Nymphomania* xvii). The usual remedy for such cases, as proposed by Hippocrates, called for the woman to get married (Groneman "Nymphomania" 343). Women judged as being "oversexed" were "cured" by bloodletting, leeches, "purges, emetics and a variety of herbal medicines to restore equilibrium to the body's elements" during the Renaissance (Groneman "Nymphomania" 346). Some physicians even up to the nineteenth century went as far as to recommend the surgical removal of the clitoris and ovaries as treatment for women diagnosed as nymphomaniacs (Groneman *Nymphomania* xxi). With the advances made by psychology during the early twentieth century, nymphomania was no longer thought of as being a physical disorder but was instead categorized as a mental illness that could be cured by psychoanalysis (Groneman "Nymphomania" 359). Symptoms of nymphomania, according to late nineteenth century and early twentieth century physicians, included "committing adultery, flirting, being divorced, or feeling more passionate than their husbands" (Groneman "Nymphomania" 341). Freud's belief that "erotogenic susceptibility to stimulation [is] transferred by a woman from the clitoris to the vaginal orifice, [and] it implies that she has adopted a new leading zone for the purposes of her later sexual activity" inferred that a sexually mature woman could achieve fully-developed orgasms only vaginally by the heterosexual sex act (Freud 86-93; Groneman "Nymphomania" 359). Groneman asserts that Freud's theory that non-vaginal orgasms meant that a woman was sexually maladjusted and therefore "frigid" lasted well into the 1960's (*Nymphomania* 40). During the 1980's, the nymphomaniac paradigm shifted; this time to the polemical concept of the sex addict (Groneman *Nymphomania* 151). Groneman points out that the belief that sexual addiction exists reflects conservative political and moral

values since “sexual behavior is believed to be normal and healthy only when it takes place within a monogamous, committed relationship; anything else is a symptom of psychological disorder” (*Nymphomania* 178). The *DSM-III-R*’s definition of sexual addiction (as seen previously) substantiates Groneman’s hypothesis because of its emphasis on multiple sexual partners for whom the alleged addict has no romantic feelings. Dorothy Litwin adds that twelve-step programs based on those developed by Alcoholics Anonymous and the proliferation of popular self-help books for so-called sex addicts tend to ignore the fact that sexual activity cannot be considered addictive in the medical sense because it has no “physiological withdrawal symptoms” (32). Weighing in against the now defunct anatomical explanations and conservative socio-psychological definitions of nymphomania, Waters follows Almodóvar’s example by ridiculing the concept that promiscuity in women is some form of a pathological condition. Very revealing therefore is the fact that Sexilia is a self-proclaimed nymphomaniac whose Lacanian psychotherapist Susana immediately turns to the Freudian theory of the oedipal complex (as Lacan himself would have done) to explain why Sexi is promiscuous. Susana proposes that Sexilia’s wanton nature is the direct result of her suppressed desire to have sex with her father. This diagnosis is Freudian in nature, borrowing from his concept that girls are more sexually repressed than boys and that women are more susceptible to “neurosis and especially to hysteria” than men (Freud 86). Very important to note is that Sexi often repeats the phrase, “*me pone histérica*” quite frequently, especially when referring to her photophobia. Having Sexilia refer to herself as a “hysterical” woman who also possesses an unchecked libido evidences Almodóvar’s appropriation of the Freudian theories described above that are built into her characterization. Sexi’s fear of sunlight and subsequent nymphomania are merely symptoms of underlying neuroses that began early in her childhood when the Empress Toraya took Riza away from her

and when her father, too busy to be bothered with his daughter, refuses to console her and leaves her by herself under the oppressive rays of the sun. The young Sexi finds comfort by playing wife to a group of boys; hence her nymphomania can be traced back to this traumatic childhood experience. Almodóvar, however, does not intend to substantiate psychoanalytic reasoning by representing Sexi as the paradigm of the hysterical nymphomaniac. As analyzed in chapter five, Sexi is the incarnation of Almodóvar's parody of psychology as Almodóvar expresses openly when asked about the role of psychotherapy in *Laberinto de pasiones* (Strauss 25). Viewers are encouraged to side with her and are not supposed to perceive her sexual conquests as symptomatic of any kind of pathology. Additionally, toward the end of the film, the audience cheers her on when she finally overcomes her childhood trauma by coupling with Riza once more.

Ursula Udders also represents a character that deconstructs psychological explanations of nymphomania. With the characterization of Ursula, Waters merely substitutes the Freudian hypotheses Almodóvar debunks with the more contemporary concept of sexual addiction. Sexi's ventures into *El Rastro* to solicit young men for orgies becomes recycled by Waters as Ursula's obsession with dancing topless at the local biker bar. It is not accidental that both women openly acknowledge that they are nymphomaniacs. Sexilia mentions casually to her therapist Susana that she has been a nymphomaniac since childhood while Ursula climatically confesses to being a sex addict during a Sex Addicts Anonymous meeting.¹¹⁹ Bothered by her emerging amorous feelings for Riza, Sexi, who hums the song Riza performed in the nightclub, abruptly halts the threesome stating that she is "no longer in the mood." Although both men try to convince her to

¹¹⁹ Moreover, one could easily utilize the *DSM-III-R*'s verbiage concerning sexual addiction being a "pattern of repeated sexual conquests [...] involving a succession of people who exist only as things to be used" to describe Sexilia's and Ursula's preference in sexual partners. For example, Sexilia cares nothing at all about the two random men with whom she engages in a ménage à trois.

stay, her newfound love for Riza compels her to abandon this tryst thereby dismissing their resultant sexual frustration as completely inconsequential to her. Like the throng of young men Sexilia entices for an orgy, Ursula's multiple sexual partners are no more than bodies to be used to satisfy her limitless sexual appetite. As her adoring "fans," Ursula's lovers include the mailman, a multitude of anonymous bikers, and especially fellow sex addict Fat Fuck Frank. Whereas Sexi's sexual compulsion takes the form of having sex with multiple partners simultaneously, Ursula's paraphilia consists of exposing her "criminally enlarged" breasts to as many patrons of the biker bar as possible. In the cases of both women, anonymity and quantity intensify their sexual gratification. Waters follows Almodóvar's lead by parodying the very notion of nymphomania so that the audience will side with Ursula and reject the anti-sex agenda of the "neuters" who are headed up by Big Ethel (Ursula's grandmother). Indeed at the end of *A Dirty Shame*, Ursula, like Sexi, triumphs over the psychiatrist who tries to "cure" her of hypersexuality. In Sexi's case, Susana's conviction that incestuous desire is the underlying cause of Sexilia's nymphomania proves to be ridiculous. Almodóvar instead insinuates that Sexi's proclivity for having sex with many men is a behavior that psychoanalysis cannot explain. Moreover, Almodóvar wants his audience to conclude that passing judgment on her libidinal tendencies is reprehensible. This is evidenced by the ludicrous nature of Susana's professional opinion that Sexi really wants to have sex with her father. Waters follows suit with Ursula by presenting a psychiatrist, Dr. Arlington, who forces Ursula to ingest Prozac because it "can lower the libido and stymie the sexual fantasies of many female patients." Like Susana's explanation for Sexi's nymphomania, Dr. Arlington's rationale for Ursula's hypersexuality is completely absurd. According to him, Ursula's breasts have been enlarged so much ("criminally" as he puts it) that her brain is deprived of oxygen which in turn resulted in her experiencing "permanent

depression.” The Prozac he administers to Ursula does nothing to squelch her voracious sexual appetite. However, it is important to note that Dr. Arlington is correct when he states that concussions can bring on sexual addiction. In fact, Waters portrays a blow to the head as instigating and stopping hypersexuality. It is only when part of the ceiling falls and hits Ursula on the cranium that she renounces her nymphomania and reverts back to referring to herself with the name her parents gave her, Caprice Stickle. Caprice then readily agrees to attend the Sex Addicts Anonymous support group suggested by Arlington. Just like Almodóvar wants his viewers to reject psychological hypotheses about sexuality and to accept that this aspect of the human condition defies explanation, Waters utilizes the humor of camp as a distancing device to make the spectator question his or her beliefs about nymphomania and sexual addiction in general. This explains why each of the sex addicts, including Sylvia, Ray Ray, Ursula, the “bears,” and Fat Fuck Frank all were “normal” until they suffered from accidental concussions. The audience knows that suffering an injury to the head being responsible for sexual addiction is just as preposterous as Dr. Arlington’s reasoning for Ursula’s state of “permanent depression.” It is at this point that Waters chooses to present a scathing indictment of the Sex Addicts Anonymous twelve-steps. Juxtaposed against a performance of the song “Open Up Your Heart (And Let the Sunshine In),” that sounds as if the record were played at too great a speed, Waters superimposes title screens of each of the twelve steps:

Step 1: We admit we are powerless over sex addiction. Step 2: A power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. Step 3: Our lives have become unmanageable. Step 4: Turn our will and our lives over to the care of God. Step 5: Take moral inventory of ourselves. Step 6: Admit to God and ourselves the nature of our wrongs. Step 7: I am ready to have God remove these defects of character. Step 8: Humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings. Step 9: List all persons we have harmed and make amends. Step 10: Take personal inventory and admit when we are wrong. Step 11: Pray for knowledge of God’s will and the power to carry that out. Step 12: We carry this message to sex addicts and practice these principles all our lives.

The impact of these sobering phrases contrasted with the hyperbolic wholesomeness of “Open up Your Heart” combine to make this scene one of the campiest in Waters’ works. Drawing greatly upon the humor, exaggeration, artifice, theatricality, and the love of the unnatural of camp, Waters definitely dethrones the serious as described by Sontag (288). Viewers are encouraged not to take the twelve steps seriously and can easily surmise that Caprice will revert to Ursula once more since only an accidental concussion is necessary to convert a “neuter” to a sex addict. Like Almodóvar’s rejection of the concept of nymphomania and psychology’s ability to explain sexual behavior, Waters resoundingly ridicules the twelve steps and the belief that sex can be addictive. This stance on Waters’ part parallels Almodóvar’s position in *Laberinto de pasiones* and offers further proof that Ursula is a recycled Sexilia.

Another similarity between Ursula and Sexilia is that both directors spoof the popular psychological tenet that sexual addiction has its origins in unresolved childhood trauma and can be resolved only by heterosexual monogamy. With Sexilia and Ursula alike, viewers are privy to flashback sequences in which both auteurs establish the event that occurred to each woman when she was a girl. In Sexi’s case, the youngster finds solace in playing the “wife” for several boys who all want to play house. The implication is that the young Sexi learned to find acceptance by sharing her love with multiple anonymous partners as opposed to monogamy; a behavior which subsequently developed into sexual addiction. Nevertheless, this is a superficial interpretation which fails to take into account the underpinning ironic tone of this scene. Almodóvar does not want the viewer to take Sexi’s apparent sexual addiction and fear of light at face value. Instead, he uses camp to point out the absurdity of these diagnoses. For example, when Sexi makes a desperate flight to Susana’s office for help with her photophobia, Susana tells the other patient Alicia that someone else needs her help more which will require Susana to interrupt their session.

Alicia's humorous reaction to this situation sums up Almodóvar's message about psychology, "What I need to do is throw myself off the balcony and get rid of psychologists!" When Susana gives Alicia pills to take to calm her nerves, she spits them out and announces, "Psychologists are full of shit!" To drive home the point that the viewer should not take Sexilia's nymphomania and fear of the sun literally, Almodóvar invokes melodrama during the flashback scene. When Susana opens the window to allow the sunlight to strike Sexi on the face (at the start of the flashback sequence), Cecilia Roth, the actress, adopts an exaggerated look of hypnotized enrapture that evinces the camp aesthetic. During the flashback, Almodóvar relies on exaggeration, theatricality, artificiality, and a love of the unnatural to remind the spectator that what he or she witnesses is not serious. This explains why the Empress Toraya throws sand in the young Sexi's eyes and the melodramatic music that swells into a sweeping crescendo at the precise moment that Sexilia decides that Riza prefers Toraya to her. Just seconds later, Almodóvar once more utilizes the overly emotionally charged music (when Sexi covers her eyes to block out the sun) in order to make the audience realize that this farcical incident is the very one that was supposed to have caused her photophobia. Almodóvar thus transforms the serious (a pathological fear of sunlight and nymphomania) into comedy by drawing upon melodramatic conventions in this manner. Although the denouement at first glance seems to imply that Sexilia has been cured of her sexual addiction and photophobia by her monogamous coupling with Riza, the fact that they have sex on an airplane where everybody can see them makes it clear that this resolution is not to be taken seriously. Additionally, Almodóvar ends the film without giving any further information regarding Sexi's alleged psychological problems thus reinforcing the concept that psychology cannot explain human sexuality. Like Almodóvar, Waters also utilizes camp during a flashback sequence to convey the message that Ursula's sexual addiction is

nothing more than a flawed hypothetical psychological construct. For the young Ursula, torment comes in the form of an accidental concussion she suffers while dancing around a maypole. Emulating Almodóvar's parodic treatment of the origin of Sexilia's photophobia and nymphomania, Waters presents the viewer a scene in which Ursula confronts her mother Sylvia with the story of how she became a sex addict, "I tried to tell you about my maypole accident when I was eleven; but you never listened." Sylvia replies as she wipes away Ursula's tears, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'll make it up to you, Ursula I promise. Let's go down to the Holiday House and fuck the whole bar!" This too is a camp moment in which Waters utilizes comedy based on the outrageous idea of a mother and daughter healing a long-held breach between them by participating in an orgy together. Similar to how Almodóvar creates a scenario which mocks the belief that neuroses can be "cured" by exposing repressed childhood memories, Waters also wants his audience to disbelieve that Ursula's promiscuity was caused by the incident with the maypole. Although Waters' flashback segment occupies only the upper right quadrant of the screen and is very brief, it is very similar in style to the one by Almodóvar. The audience hears melodramatic music playing in the background and sees Ursula at age eleven collide with another young lady. The hyperbole of the girls' delight in the maypole festivities is suddenly interrupted by Ursula's concussion; which are both examples of camp being used as a strategy to ridicule sexual addiction as a psychological diagnosis. These similarities between flashback scenes involving implausible psychological explanations for sexual addiction in a leading female protagonist make it obvious that Waters recycles *Laberinto de pasiones*. Considering the fact that Ursula ultimately triumphs over the "neuters" and the psychiatrist who have labeled her a sex addict, it is clear that Waters unapologetically pastiches the resolution of *Laberinto de pasiones* as well. In both films, a woman who calls herself a nymphomaniac at the behest of

therapists learns that such a diagnosis is at best erroneous and at worst a label used by the patriarchy to subordinate her. Sexilia and Ursula refuse to be ghettoized as sexual deviants and symbolize Almodóvar's and Waters' feminist statement. Like Sexi who is liberated from the centuries-old double standard that women should be chaste and passive wives while men establish their virility based upon sexual conquests, Ursula too is set free from the sexist notion that females who enjoy sex are by default mentally ill. Also similar to Sexi who finds her ideal mate in Riza, Ursula pairs off with her greatest admirer, Fat Fuck Frank and participates in the new sex act created by her mother (butting heads with one's partner) with him. Waters' denouement therefore directly reflects the influence of *Laberinto de pasiones*.

The recycling of sexual addiction as a theme and characters between Almodóvar and Waters does not end with Sexilia and Ursula. A detailed analysis of Paul Bazzo from *Kika* and Ray Ray from *A Dirty Shame* provides further evidence of the recycling process. Chapter three presents evidence of how Waters and Almodóvar queer heterosexuality by making portraying straight men as aberrant. Closer scrutiny of Paul and Ray Ray reveals that Waters was also influenced by *Kika*. Similar to how the figure of the nymphomaniac is key to comprehending how Waters' *A Dirty Shame* recycles Almodóvar's *Laberinto de pasiones*, an explication of satyriasis (hypersexuality in men) provides the necessary context in which to interpret the shared theme of sexual addiction in *Kika* and *A Dirty Shame*. As Groneman explains, satyriasis as a medical condition goes back to the nineteenth century (*Nymphomania* 11). Unlike nymphomania, however, it was generally not taken as seriously and usually only resulted in medical interventions in cases of "men who openly masturbated, exhibited their genitals, and sexually attacked women, children, and mental institution attendants" (*Nymphomania* 12). Castration was used as solution to satyriasis only in rare cases (Groneman *Nymphomania* 12).

As Groneman clarifies, satyriasis was also known as “Don Juan syndrome” and was viewed by society in a positive light because virile men were supposed to have sex with many different women as a means to establish their masculinity (*Nymphomania* 135). Psychological approaches to hypersexuality in men did not identify it as a pathological diagnosis as was the case with nymphomania until the twentieth century concept of sexual addiction; whose proponents report that far more men than women are addicted to sex (Groneman *Nymphomania* 179). Groneman states that contemporary models of explaining sexual addiction are divided into biological and psychological hypotheses, “Biological theories proposed that such behavior created endorphin ‘highs’ or that genetic coding or biochemistry predetermined those most susceptible to addiction. Psychological explanations assumed that low self-esteem or anxiety disorder drove individuals to compulsive, self-destructive behavior” (*Nymphomania* 175). As is the case with beliefs about nymphomania, Waters follows Almodóvar’s lead by portraying a sex-obsessed protagonist whose sexual practices queer heterosexuality. Both directors equally ridicule the notion that sexuality can be addictive as we shall see in the following comparison of Paul Bazzo and Ray Ray.

A preliminary similarity that exemplifies how Ray Ray is a recycled Paul Bazzo involves the quantity and nature of their sexual partners. For Almodóvar and Waters, heterosexual men are intrinsically more inclined to sexual “perversion” and excess. In Paul’s case, his libido is so pronounced that he is driven to a litany of paraphilias including sadism, raptophilia (rape), somnophilia (sleeping people), a food fetish, and zoophilia. It is not incidental that Ray Ray too exhibits a penchant for paraphilias including coprophilia, dendrophilia (trees), menophilia (menstruation), and a foot fetish. Neither is it a coincidence that Paul and Ray Ray are far more lascivious than any female characters presented by Almodóvar and Waters; including Sexilia and

Ursula. In fact, having sex is the driving force of Paul's and Ray Ray's actions. Although it seems that Almodóvar and Waters present two case studies of satyriasis due to Paul's and Ray Ray's out of control sexual appetites, both directors portray them utilizing the hyperbole and humor of camp to undermine the assumption that straight men are normal and also to demonstrate the inability of psychology to explain their limitless sex drive. Both Paul and Ray Ray predate numerous sexual partners including ones of the nonhuman variety. In Paul's case, as his sister Juana explains to Kika, he has sex with cows, goats, and sheep. Waters exaggerates Paul's zoophilic tendencies with Ray Ray by depicting him becoming sexually aroused by and having sex with a tree. As a recycled Paul, Ray Ray also has grown complacent about "normal" sex and therefore seeks out the most taboo and sexual acts that have never been done before. This is because both men have had so many sexual partners that they have become attracted to nonconsenting and nonhuman partners.

In addition to the vast number of people with whom they have had sex and their affinity for atypical partners, Paul and Ray Ray are alike in that both possess limitless sex drives that transcend categorization. Almodóvar is careful to depict Paul's sexual stamina as being preternaturally indefatigable. For example, after escaping from prison, Paul (who is a famous porno star) finds the sleeping Kika and proceeds to rape her. During the rape scene that lasts nearly nine minutes, Paul refuses to stop penetrating Kika because he wants to break his record of ejaculating four or five times during the same sex act. In fact, it takes two armed policemen to drag him off of Kika to force him to stop raping her. Even then, Paul is still so obsessed with having an orgasm that he runs away from the police, stands on the ledge of the balcony, and masturbates until he finally ejaculates. In addition to his superhuman stamina, Almodóvar portrays Paul Bazzo as having had tried all available sexual outlets in an attempt to satisfy his

unbridled libido. Juana mentions to Kika that Paul bedded cows, goats, and sheep as well as the neighbors during his childhood and adolescence. Additionally, Juana finds out that Paul has delved into homosexuality while incarcerated. When she asks him why his sex drive is so high when he recently had access to have sexual relations with “faggots” while in jail, he responds that he did “but it isn’t the same.” The implication is that Paul’s hypersexuality is so powerful that it eclipses his self-proclaimed heterosexuality since he has been the aggressor in acts of incest, rape, heterosexuality, homosexuality, and zoophilia. In this manner, Almodóvar depicts Paul’s satyriasis as a phenomenon that defies the limits of “normal” human sexuality. When Waters viewed *Kika*, he found in Paul the seeds of creating the ultimate male sex addict, Ray Ray. In a great exaggeration of Paul’s sexual prowess, Waters attributes supernatural powers to Ray Ray’s sexuality. Calling him a “sexual healer,” Waters presents two scenes in which Ray Ray’s otherworldly hypersexuality has the power to bring the dead back to life. Examples include the sequence in which he brings a flattened, dead squirrel back to life by giving it mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and when he lays hands upon the corpse of Big Ethel and subsequently resurrects her and simultaneously converts her into a sex addict. In both cases, the resurrected comes back from the dead with an unchecked libido like Ray Ray. The squirrel repeatedly has sex throughout many scenes of the film and Big Ethel turns into a sex fiend. Also like Paul, Ray Ray has participated in a vast array of sexual acts in his never-ending quest to satiate his sexual urges. Examples of Ray Ray’s sexual repertoire include striking a person’s face with his erect penis, sucking his partner’s toes, masturbating while defecating, felching (licking up semen deposited on an anus or a vagina), performing cunnilingus on a woman who is menstruating, acts of coprophilia, and the previously described scene in which he copulates with a tree. However, Waters makes it clear that these are not the only acts in which Ray Ray will participate. As Ray

Ray explains to Sylvia, any means of achieving sexual gratification is acceptable as long as the people involved consent to what is being done. This is the only major distinguishing factor between Paul and Ray Ray. Paul is willing to rape whereas Ray Ray is not. Other than that, both protagonists are very much alike in their voracity and willingness to do almost anything to fulfill their sexual desires. This makes labeling them as heterosexuals a foolhardy endeavor since Almodóvar and in turn Waters deliberately deconstruct the very idea of sexual orientation by representing Paul and Ray Ray as being attracted to all forms of sexual pleasure.

One particular scene from *Kika* makes it obvious that Waters recycles Almodóvar's oeuvre. After Paul escapes from the policemen and ejaculates, the semen astonishingly lands directly onto the uplifted face of Andrea Caracortada who has a camera mounted on her head. This is very much a humorous and shocking camp moment given the improbability of semen falling from several stories up, over the side of the building, and down to her face. At the very end of *A Dirty Shame*, Waters aggrandizes this scenario by having Ray Ray (who is floating in midair) ejaculate a large quantity of semen from the top of his head. The semen then gushes skyward and then miraculously lands on the lens of the camera. The similarities between these two scenes leave no room for doubt that Waters' denouement is an embellished pastiche of *Kika*.

The final correlation between Paul and Ray Ray consists of the impossibility of "curing" either one of them of their hypersexuality. Just as was the case with Sexi and Ursula, Paul and Ray Ray are portrayed as emerging victorious over the sexual oppression that confronts them. Paul easily escapes from the police and the viewer knows that even if he is captured again, his sexual appetite cannot be squelched by being in jail. Almodóvar makes it clear that Paul would return to having sex with men if he were incarcerated once more. As the spiritual leader of the sex addicts, Ray Ray's satyriasis utterly defeats the "neuters" who rally for abstinence and

“normalcy.” Moreover, Ray Ray converts the ringleader of the “neuters,” Big Ethel, and several more of them over to becoming sex addicts themselves. While Sylvia, as the twelfth sex apostle, creates the new sex act, it is Ray Ray’s divine influence that makes it into an “astral orgasm.” Borrowing from Almodóvar’s concept that hypersexuality cannot be explained nor cured by psychology, Waters has Ray Ray fully recover from being drugged with Prozac by Caprice. The Prozac does make Ray Ray lose consciousness and his ability to get an erection temporarily. Nevertheless, the other sex addicts aid him by administering aphrodisiacs and amyl nitrate. As a result, he begins to float in the air and has an “astral orgasm,” having completely overcome the libido-inhibiting effects of Prozac. As is the case with Sexilia and Ursula, Almodóvar and Waters encourage the spectator to reject the idea that sexual addiction actually exists; therefore nullifying psychology’s and psychiatry’s ability to “cure” it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

As meticulously proved in this dissertation, Almodóvar and Waters create a transcultural cinematic dialogue by means of recycling from the same sources of filmic works including movies by one another. In this manner, Almodóvar and Waters demonstrate the commonalities between Spanish and US queer culture as well as highlight the distinctions. The findings presented in the preceeding chapters lead to the logical conclusion that recycling is a two-way process between these two directors. The previously unanswered questions as to why their films share so much in common despite the fact that they hail from two different cultures have now been answered in this study. Drawing upon the same filmic resources and then decidedly alluding to the work of each other clearly intertwines their movies. What emerges from studying these recycling processes is that Almodóvar and Waters share a united desire to deconstruct homophobia, sexism, and the hegemony's stranglehold over artistic expression. Future studies of their short films will undoubtedly reveal the same system of mutual allusions and influences.

Chapter two serves as a launching point from which to begin to undertake the task of explicating the interwoven system of allusions that bind their movies. Almodóvar's and Waters' reliance upon the "trash" aesthetic in their earlier films proves that postmodernism represents a distinct break from modernism. Rebellious against the canonical and hegemonic methods of artistic expression, these two amateurs from the bourgeois succeeded in creating art

that defied the status quo and enunciated a unique perspective based on their “trash” aesthetic. This demonstrates one of the key differences between postmodernism and modernism. Whereas modernism, though at times as innovative and shocking as postmodernism, merely continued the centuries-old tradition of the artistic elite dictating what is and what is not acceptable art, postmodernism empowers members of the lower and middle classes the opportunity to express themselves and to elevate their own aesthetic onto equal footing with the hegemony. Baudrillard’s theories of simulacra and hyperreal proved to be the most applicable to explaining the multifaceted phenomena of metacinema, drag queens, and the “ultimate” reality visions of *Andrea Caracortada* and *Cecil B. Demented*. The camp and kitsch aesthetics clearly abound in their films and also strengthen Almodóvar’s and Waters’ anti-establishment agendas. Also pertinent to a comprehensive investigation of their films is the insight provided by queer theory. Chapter two’s composite definition greatly aided in the comprehension of the queer nature of movies by Almodóvar and Waters including their overriding objective to normalize homosexuality by making heterosexuality seem deviant. The subsequent application of this definition of queer in later chapters elucidated the antihomophobic and antisexist agendas of both directors.

Though a daunting endeavor, chapter three’s profound analysis of Almodóvar’s and Waters’ shared filmic history revealed that the parallels between their works stem in part from the fact that both directors watched, revered, and wanted to pay tribute to the same types of movies. Whether the great melodramas of Sirk, the vastly influential works of Tennessee Williams, or B products, there is no doubt that classical Hollywood left an indelible imprint on Almodóvar and Waters as discernible in the similar allusions they make. Instead of parodying these Hollywood pictures, Almodóvar and Waters venerate them into objects of pastiche. Russ

Meyer's violent pussycats became recycled into the beautiful and deadly women that rule the cinematic worlds of Almodóvar and Waters. These ferocious fetching females were such alluring images to both directors because they incarnate Almodóvar's and Waters' antisexist agenda in which women not only rebel against outmoded patriarchal norms, they surpass men as being the more intriguing and menacing of the sexes. It is hard to imagine any man, not even the fascist husband of Gloria from *¿Qué he hecho yo?* attempting to abuse physically or in any other way Varla and her recycled counterparts Dawn Davenport and María Cardenal. Lastly, being both of Catholic upbringings, Almodóvar and Waters were inspired by Buñuel's anticlericalism as portrayed in *Viridiana* and continued his tradition in their own works. Almodóvar's message is clear: one should not place any confidence in the priests or the church as a whole because of rampant sexual abuse that was simply ignored. For Waters, the anticlerical message is less personal and more intended to garner shock value because of the profane images of the "rosary job" being performed in an actual church.

In the subsequent chapter, the analyses of the "bad" girl, drag queen, transsexual, and heterosexual pervert reveal that Almodóvar and Waters share the same deconstructive agenda regarding gender and patriarchal assumptions about it, sexual identity and cross-dressing, and the notion that straight men are "normal." Bom and Dawn are both juvenile delinquents who epitomize the danger violent young women represent to the patriarchy and its authority figures. Both directors utilize drag queens in ironic manners to underscore the performative nature of gender. By contrasting the masculine and feminine attributes of the performer, Almodóvar and Waters further nullify the hegemony's inculcated values that women are by nature docile; and even deconstruct the very meaning of the term drag queen. Whereas Waters features transsexuals for their shock value, Almodóvar's *Agrado*, of all of the transsexual characters in

his films, most unambiguously redefines what it means to be a female and a transsexual. Agrado defies the status quo's presumptions about transsexuality while simultaneously encouraging the audience to abandon their prejudices and to accept her as the woman she so plaintively professes to be. In agreement with Stein's and Plummer's theory, both directors ridicule the notion that homosexuality is deviant by creating hyperbolic examples of heterosexual males whose outrageous paraphilias and unquenchable sex drives make heterosexuality seem far more bizarre.

Chapter five details the movies by Waters that Almodóvar recycles in his own films. *Pepi, Luci, Bom* utilizes the "trash" aesthetic both for shock value, such as during the "golden shower" scene, and to promulgate the aesthetic so viscerally established in *Pink Flamingos*. Since Bom and Divine both dress in drag, they reinforce the concept that gender is performative in nature. The fact that both Waters and Almodóvar created their first commercially successful films as amateurs partially explains why these movies have the same look and feel to them. The deliberate "bad" acting that Waters and then Almodóvar encouraged in their performers redefines the limits of what constitutes acceptable performances thereby challenging the values of the establishment. The humorous utilization of music is another aspect that Almodóvar recycled from Waters. After examining *Laberinto de pasiones* in detail, it is clear that Almodóvar recycled from Waters' films in this movie. Sexilia and Raymond Marble are both sexual deviants who are a part of the overall queering of straight sex. Doctor de la Peña's aversion to the sex act is a direct result of Almodóvar recycling the dialogue between Donald and Donna Dasher in which they express their disgust for sexuality. The mother-daughter hatred motif between Dawn and Taffy Davenport manifests as Azafata's abhorrence for her daughter Carmen. When Almodóvar sought to create a film concerning the domestic tyranny of the housewife, he found inspiration for *¿Qué he hecho yo?* in *Polyester*. Francine and Gloria both

suffer the abuses of sexist, unfaithful husbands but emerge victorious in the end when their husbands die. The substance abuse problems that Francine and Gloria have symbolize both directors' vehement rejection of sexism. The implication is that the oppressed housewife turns to addiction in order to numb the suffering that is a direct result of traditional definitions of a "woman's place" in the home. Hardly accidental is the fact that Francine's and Gloria's children are at first delinquents who worsen the suffering the housewives endure but who then later become the allies of their mothers. Clearly, Almodóvar recycled this aspect of the domestic plight of Francine when creating Gloria. The fact that both housewives succumb to a complete mental breakdown but later overcome their psychoses is further evidence that Almodóvar recycled *Polyester*. The similarities between Waters' characters and those of Almodóvar also includes the characterization of María Cardenal from *Matador*. Like Dawn Davenport, María Cardenal is a cross-dresser whose vacillation between her "masculine" and "feminine" modes conveys the message that gender identity is a matter of choice. Both Dawn and María, when dressed in effeminate attire, are highly exaggerated portrayals of femininity who combine the feminine with violence. Any man who crosses paths with Dawn and María should count himself lucky if he survives such an encounter as the two of them are ruthless serial killers. Also from *Matador* is the character Ángel whose subservience to women and repressed homosexuality is a direct result of the recycling of Raymond Marble from *Pink Flamingos* and Donald Dasher from *Female Trouble*. Lastly, the scene in *Female Trouble* in which Dawn bites through the umbilical cord is recycled by Almodóvar in *Carne trémula* in which the madam tears through this same tissue with her teeth. Though very brief and subtle, this allusion to *Female Trouble* drives home the desperate plight of the single mother who lives in a male-dominated society.

Chapter six proves beyond any doubt that recycling between Almodóvar and Waters is a two-way process. Though later in his career than Almodóvar, Waters definitely recycles from Almodóvar as made clear in the films *Cecil B. Demented* and *A Dirty Shame*. First, building upon Almodóvar's status as a world famous auteur, Waters recycles Pablo Quintero from *La ley del deseo* when creating Cecil. The omnipotence that both auteurs wield over their films and the personal lives of their cast and crew symbolizes the absolute dedication required to make successful cinema when major studio funding is lacking. Like Almodóvar, Waters chooses to queer heterosexuality by representing Rodney the hairstylist who despises his heterosexuality. The "black humor of Almodóvar" that Cecil says his cast should feel becomes recycled into the notion that dying for art is sacrosanct. Andrea Caracortada's (*Kika*) preference for the hyperreal becomes Cecil's "ultimate reality" vision. Even though the allusions to Almodóvar films in *A Dirty Shame* as not as obvious as they are in *Cecil B. Demented*, the commonalities make it clear that Waters recycled from Almodóvar. Following suit with Almodóvar, Waters chooses to ridicule the psychological diagnoses that a person can be addicted to sex. Ursula Udders, who is the recycled counterpart of Sexilia from *Laberinto de pasiones*, is a nymphomaniac because she suffered from a head injury as a child. Neither the twelve-step program from Sex Addicts Anonymous nor the psychiatric medication given to Ursula is enough to "cure" her of nymphomania permanently. It takes another blow to the head for her to resume her lascivious nature. *Kika*'s Paul Bazzo becomes the insatiable deviant Ray Ray whose supernatural sexual prowess defies all psychological explanations. In both cases, Waters saw the aforementioned films by Almodóvar and recycled the protagonists while greatly embellishing them in order to convey the same message as Almodóvar regarding human sexuality and psychology's inability to explain it.

Having now established the recycling processes that take place between both directors, future studies of their short films and movies produced after the date of publication of this dissertation are in order to uncover additional links between their works. As Almodóvar progressed in his career as an auteur, he recycled less from Waters and turned instead to classical Hollywood models and even more recently to film noir. The converse of that statement is true for Waters. As Waters advanced, he unabashedly recycled more from international sources such as Almodóvar's oeuvre and less from classical Hollywood products. A comprehensive study of Waters' proclivity for recycling during this phase of his career will undoubtedly reveal a plethora of other directors from whom he borrows and to whom he pays homage. Since both continue to create motion pictures via recycling, it is vital that critics take this perspective into account when analyzing their films.

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