

## ***Diálogos con otras artes: Almodóvar***

## ***Dialogues with other arts: Almodóvar***

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### **Abstract:**

From an academic point of view, interest in Almodóvar's work has also grown throughout the world; just check the number of doctoral theses, scientific publications and conferences around the world where concern for Pedro Almodóvar's cinema is present, both in Spain and international abroad.

The topics that are usually addressed in academic approaches to Almodóvar work are very broad, from historiographical issues to aesthetic issues, from studies on his narrative or script writing, to film analysis, from issues of social representations to gender through cultural or politics problems, etc. This monograph, on this occasion, focuses on the relationships or dialogues that Almodóvar has with the arts, from cinema itself to painting, photography, literature, theater, etc. And all this from all the methodologies that usually operate in film and audiovisual studies: textual, semiotic, narratological, sociological analysis, critical content analysis, cultural and gender studies, feminist, queer and all the long etcetera.

### **Resumen:**

Desde un punto de vista académico el interés por la obra almodovariana ha crecido en todo el mundo, basta comprobar el número de tesis doctorales, publicaciones científicas y congresos donde se hace presente la preocupación por el cine de Pedro Almodóvar tanto en el ámbito español como internacional.

Los temas que se suelen abordar en los acercamientos académicos a la obra almodovariana son muy amplios, desde cuestiones historiográficas a cuestiones estéticas, desde estudios sobre su narrativa o escritura de guion, al análisis fílmico, desde cuestiones de representaciones sociales a género pasando por problemáticas culturales o políticas, etc. Este monográfico, en esta ocasión, se centra en las relaciones o diálogos que Almodóvar tiene con las artes, desde el propio cine a la pintura, fotografía, literatura, teatro, etc. Y todo ello desde todas las metodologías que suelen operar en los estudios fílmicos y audiovisuales: análisis textuales, semióticos, narratológicos, sociológicos, análisis crítico de contenidos, estudios de género, feministas, queer y todo el largo etcétera que componen las diversas metodologías de investigación en comunicación audiovisual.

**Keywords:** Pedro Almodóvar; transtextuality; literature; photography; painting; cinematic self-referentiality.

**Palabras clave:** Pedro Almodóvar; transtextualidad; literatura; fotografía; pintura; autorreferencialidad cinematográfica

## 1. Introduction

A few months ago, Issue No. 31 (2025) of this journal was published under the title *Studies on Almodóvar*. That volume was also under my direction, in collaboration with Professor Alberto Mira (Oxford Brookes University).

We now present a second volume that enters into a harmonious dialogue with the previous one. This issue adopts a research perspective focused on Almodóvar's connections with other arts and disciplines. This field of study possesses a long-standing tradition, originating from the compelling relationship between Almodovarian cinema and literature, as well as the visual arts. During the 1980s, Almodóvar himself ventured into the plastic arts through drawings and collages. For the filmmaker, the iconic eighties were years of experimentation and self-discovery: he wrote short stories, created collages, and sought to express himself through every available medium. It was through his employment at Telefónica that he acquired a Super 8 camera and began devising silent short films, discovering a cinematic vocation that has remained constant. Indeed, his life has evolved into an absolute symbiosis between cinema and existence: "I could say that cinema is my life or that my life is cinema" (Almodóvar 2019). He confesses this through the character of Salvador Mallo (the protagonist of *Pain and Glory*): "And without a shoot in sight, his life lacks meaning" (Almodóvar 2019).

From his early explorations in the eighties to the present, Almodóvar has embraced diverse forms of creative expression. Noteworthy is his enduring interest in photography, showcased particularly during the production of *Talk to Her* (2002) and *Bad Education* (2004), his exhibition of still-life photographs<sup>1</sup>, and more recently, his painting exhibition ("Flores") in collaboration with the painter Jorge Galindo<sup>2</sup>.

Consequently, this special issue features texts that highlight Almodóvar's intertextual play and the relationship between his oeuvre and literature or

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eldeseo.es/bodegones/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_RARvMQYgSQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RARvMQYgSQ)

photography. The volume opens with a contribution by Professor Pedro Poyato (University of Córdoba), who examines intertextuality in Almodóvar's work. Taking *The Flower of My Secret* (1995) as a starting point, Poyato analyzes the filmmaker's own texts, seminal influences such as Alfred Hitchcock, and Almodóvar's characteristic self-referentiality. Through textual analysis, this article explores the complex spheres of intertextuality within the film.

Alejandro Soto-Chaves (University of Glasgow / University of Costa Rica) analyzes *Live Flesh* (1997), the cinematic adaptation of Ruth Rendell's 1986 novel. He examines Almodóvar's narrative shifts and adaptations within the context of genre cinema, exploring a generic palimpsest that incorporates elements of *neo-noir*, melodrama, and psychological thriller. Almodóvar undertakes a highly liberal adaptation of Rendell's text regarding both plot and characterization. Furthermore, the article investigates the representation of various forms of violence: state-ideological (Francoism), institutional (police), and symbolic-extrajudicial (gender and masculinity), demonstrating Almodóvar's subversion of noir conventions. Another significant aspect addressed is the transformation of Madrid from the Franco era to the unbridled capitalism of the 1990s.

In another study of literary adaptation, Endika Rey Benito and María Adell (University of Barcelona) focus on *The Room Next Door* (2024), which adapts Sigrid Nunez's novel *What Are You Going Through* (2020). The authors present this as Almodóvar's subjective re-reading of Nunez's text, offering a comparative analysis of the novel, screenplay, and film. They emphasize the narrative catalysts, turning points, and resolution, revealing Almodóvar's intermedial, interdiscursive, and deeply intertextual strategies.

Daniel Acle (University of Salamanca) proposes a connection between theatre and cinema through a comparative study of Federico García Lorca and Pedro Almodóvar, centred on the figure of the mother. Acle explores thematic convergences and the treatment of motherhood—whether idealized or transgressive—concluding that both authors tend to represent conflicted and egoistic mothers. These complex characters diverge from patriarchal

ideals, and the article provides a framework for understanding the intricacies of maternal representation in both authors.

Almodóvar's cinema also engages with photography, an aspect explored by Eva Hernández Martínez and Francisco-José García-Ramos (Complutense University of Madrid). Hernández Martínez utilizes textual analysis of *All About My Mother* (1999), *Talk to Her* (2002), and *Pain and Glory* (2019) to investigate how family photographs —particularly when torn or fragmented— serve as narrative devices revealing the presence or absence of the paternal figure, a character that often appears “missing” in Almodóvar's universe.

Conversely, García-Ramos focuses on *Parallel Mothers* (2021) to highlight the “parallel” relationships established in the film, specifically between the photographer Janis and the forensic anthropologist Arturo. He establishes an illuminating dialogue between Janis's photographic praxis and Arturo's work in recovering the remains of victims disappeared during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime. Using a qualitative methodology, García-Ramos analyzes the imagery of exhumation, positioning Almodóvar's cinema as a platform for justice, reparation, and the denunciation of an unsustainable historical silence.

The monograph also reserves space for the “spectral,” the uncanny, and the eerie in Almodóvar's work. Fernando Sáez Pradas (University of Seville), Tecla González Hortigüela, and Shaila García Catalán (University of Valladolid / Jaume I University), along with Elena Rosillo and José Antonio Sánchez Sanz (European University), address these themes. Sáez Pradas provides an interdisciplinary analysis of the “ghost” concept in *Volver* (2006), encompassing death, mourning, ritual, memory, and identity, while drawing parallels with sculptors such as Do-ho Suh and Rachel Whiteread. González Hortigüela and García Catalán examine the unrepresentability of death, noting how Almodóvar's work has gravitated toward this theme since 1999. Their comparison of *The Room Next Door* (2024) and Nunez's novel suggests that Almodóvar approaches death not as a terminal state, but as something mythical and original. Finally, Rosillo and Sánchez Sanz explore the uncanny through the score of *The Skin*

*I Live In* (2011), composed by Alberto Iglesias. They analyze how instrumentation, dissonance, and leitmotifs create an atmosphere of strangeness and trauma.

The volume concludes with an analysis of a less-explored facet: Almodóvar's relationship with pictorial art. Francisco Javier Amaya Flores (Junta de Extremadura) examines the filmmaker's personal incursions into painting, specifically focusing on his still lifes (*bodegones*). The text highlights the symbolic significance of flowers and fruits in the foreground or background of scenes in *Live Flesh* (1997), *Julieta* (2016), and *The Room Next Door* (2024), illustrating how his interest in painting informs a highly pictorial cinematic and photographic style.

In summary, the ten research articles in this special issue provide new perspectives that demonstrate the ongoing vitality of Almodovarian studies within the current Spanish academic landscape. The upcoming release of Almodóvar's new film, *Bitter Christmas*, in March 2026 will undoubtedly continue to stimulate academic interest.

This issue of *Fotocinema* was led by the Research Group "GECA: Gender, Aesthetics and Audiovisual Culture" (Complutense University of Madrid). Their commitment to Almodovarian scholarship will also culminate in the 2026 publication of the book *Almodóvar: Cinema as a Way of Life* (Editorial Fragua). This continued academic rigor proves that interest in Almodóvar's work is not waning but intensifying over time. Looking back to 2003, during the first international conference on Almodóvar in Cuenca, only one Spanish senior professor, Román Gubern, participated. His early academic endorsement of Almodóvar was visionary. Therefore, I wish to dedicate this monograph to the "master of masters," the esteemed Román Gubern, with profound affection, respect, and admiration.

## 2. References

Almodóvar, Pedro (2019). *Dolor y gloria* [*Pain and Glory*]. Reservoir Books.