

Almodóvar's Global Musical Marketplace

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On December 11, 2007 Pedro Almodóvar convened a news conference at the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid to celebrate the release of the double CD *B.S.O. Almodóvar* (Banda Sonora Original, original film score) during which he also announced the beginning of shooting for his seventeenth feature film, *Los abrazos rotos/Broken Embraces* (2009). Lest his audience fail to have noted the consistent imbrication of music and cinema, song and story in his body of work, the director called attention to this linkage in his words of introduction: “Las canciones en mis películas son parte esencial del guión . . . [T]ienen una función dramática y narrativa, son tan descriptivas como los colores, la luz, los decorados, o los diálogos” (The songs in my films are an essential part of the script. They have a dramatic and narrative function; they are as descriptive as the use of color, lighting, scenery or dialogue) (Almodóvar 2007). Rather than attempting to illustrate the accuracy of these comments, the goal of this chapter is to explore the global contours of the texts and contexts of the larger Almodovarian creative universe, focusing less on the films themselves than on what we might call the Almodóvar discography. Thus the Almodóvar I propose to study is not the film director contemporary of a Lars von Trier, Quentin Tarantino or Gus Van Sant but instead the musician-producer-transcultural impresario whose fellow practitioners are Ry Cooder, Paul Simon and David Byrne or even Almodóvar's own collaborator, Caetano Veloso. This model of the cultural entrepreneur also recalls the longstanding comparisons between Almodóvar and Andy Warhol, who in his multiple roles of “painter and sculptor, rock promoter, film producer, advertiser, starmaker and stargazer” is described by Juan A. Suárez as a “version of what Walter Benjamin called the ‘author as producer’: a cultural worker who acts not only on artistic content but on the cultural means of production” (2006: 217).¹

B.S.O. Almodóvar was, in fact, the third installment in the director's discographic corpus, initiated in 1997 with *Las canciones de Almodóvar* (Hispavox) and followed in



Figure 18.1 Cover of the CD *B.S.O. Almodóvar*. © El Deseo, S.A., S.L.U.

2002 by *Viva la tristeza* (Editions Milan Music). Not included in this list are the “official” soundtrack album releases that beginning with Ennio Morricone’s score for *¡Átame! / Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (1990) have garnered rising sales and since *La flor de mi secreto / The Flower of My Secret* (1995), the first collaboration between Almodóvar and composer Alberto Iglesias, positive critical attention and multiple award nominations for the latter.² In contrast to those “single-author” instrumental film scores, Almodóvar’s three CDs present compilations of songs heard in his films or otherwise suggestive of their affective soundscape. The first, *Las canciones de Almodóvar*, is a collection of some twenty-three songs featured in the director’s first twelve films, up to and including *La flor de mi secreto*; *B.S.O. Almodóvar* reproduces much of the material from *Canciones*, supplementing it with a selection that emphasizes songs from the more recent films through *Volver* (2006).

Viva la tristeza, in contrast, proposes a collection of thirteen songs from multiple sources and languages, only one of which, Caetano Veloso’s rendition of “Cucurrucucú paloma,” appears in his films. Almodóvar explains its contents as originating in the songs that “accompanied” him as he wrote the script for *Hable con ella / Talk to Her* (2002), coming to constitute, in his words, a kind of “secret, alternative soundtrack of *Talk to Her*” (Almodóvar 2002).

Such compilations or anthologies of songs or musical selections are not unknown in the recording industry and market, from the Billboard Top 40 from this or that decade of fond memory to the best loved romantic themes of all times—“not available in any store”—usually hawked on cable channels or via

infomercials. In such cases the arguments for grouping songs or pieces together are grounded in matters of chronological contiguity or thematic and/or generic similarities. In the case of the Almodóvar recordings, however, these criteria are absent. The rationale and appeal of his CDs depend instead on the eclectic character of the selections, their diverse generic and geographic origins and genealogies. From Miguel de Molina and Los Panchos to El Duo Dinámico and Chavela Vargas, Almodóvar and McNamara to Zarah Leander and Bola de Nieve or Alberto Pla and Estrella Morente, this musical diversity reflects in turn the analogous eclecticism of his filmic sources, a form of creative osmosis key to his visual and narrative invention that has become an identifying feature or trademark.³ It is this capacity for transforming disparate intertexts and influences into a singular artistic vision that seems to provide the justification for the release of song collections under the director's authorial signature when the music in question is neither the property of Almodóvar nor original to him.

Various critics have commented on the scope and function of songs and music in his films. Mark Allinson explores different aspects of the "eclectic bricolage" of Almodóvar's soundtracks (2001: 194–205). Alejandro Yarza has related the use of songs from different periods and sources to the director's kitsch or camp sensibility, classifying the Latin American boleros and Spanish pop numbers from the 1960s and 1970s deployed by the director as cultural remnants, "desechos de la historia" (bits of historical refuse), available for resignification in his cinema (1999: 69). Alberto Mira speaks, in contrast, to the historical potency of a repertory of Spanish-language song—cuplés, coplas, and boleros—closely identified with a gay subculture of the Francoist and immediate post-Franco periods that found in its rhythms and lyrics a means to express "la vida secreta de las emociones" (the secret life of emotions) (Mira 2004). Almodóvar's own comments stress instead the role of subjective taste and personal preferences over and above any kind of collective cultural (or sexual) identity: "Yo soy totalmente ecléctico. Tanto puedo usar un rock de última hora como un bolero, una canción de los Panchos, o un fragmento de música clásica. Es como un collage que coincide conmigo mismo, es muy sincero porque refleja la variedad de cosas que yo oigo durante todo el día" (I am completely eclectic. I can just as well use a contemporary rock song as a bolero by Los Panchos or a fragment of classical music. It's like a collage that coincides with who I am, it's very sincere because it reflects the variety of things I listen to all day long) (Vidal 1988: 105–6). Indeed, for Almodóvar, sincerity and intimacy seem to function as the key words, and values, in his use of music, held out as a promise of access to an interior world, both that of his characters and of the director himself. In this conception music provides a privileged entryway offered to spectators and listeners through songs that function as "una especie de voz en off musical que explica, desvela secretos" (a kind of musical voiceover that explains and reveals secrets) (Almodóvar 2007) or, in the case of *Viva la tristeza*, that "suited me and accompanied me with the efficiency and intensity of a secret lover" (Almodóvar 2002).

For all its relevance in biographical terms, this vision of music and song is decidedly partial, intended, it seems, to extricate music from its rootedness in external realities and/or the interference of extrinsic forces. In the same liner notes to *B.S.O.* Almodóvar establishes a strict contrast between his use of song in films and that of other directors more focused on the bottom line: “Aborrezco el modo con que frecuentemente se utilizan las canciones en el cine americano, meros elementos de marketing que no afectan ni intervienen en absoluto en la trama” (I hate the way American films frequently use songs as mere elements of marketing that don’t affect or intervene in the story in any substantive way) (2007). In denouncing the subordination of personal and artistic choice to commercial interests the director fails to acknowledge the role of the market in determining which songs a person will have the opportunity or occasion to hear “all day long.” Almodóvar cannot, though he may wish it, disconnect from those market forces that pre-select for us, shaping and directing the exercise of individual choice and personal taste.

All About World Music

In what follows I want to look at a series of specific musical selections and strategies deployed by Almodóvar in an attempt to understand the competing forces at play in both the production and reception of his films and his role as cultural producer. In a previous study I analyzed the privileged role granted to Latin American music and especially the bolero in his cinema (2005). Here I propose to consider the nature and function of his song repertoire more broadly with respect to another frame of reference, namely the phenomenon and corpus of “world music,” taken as a matrix and proxy for the workings of the current global and globalizing cultural marketplace in which Almodóvar’s films and recordings are produced and consumed. This desire to establish a wider critical context comes in response to the convergence of two significant developments in his creative practice: on the one hand, the expansion of Almodóvar’s customary thematic and textual geography in recent films such as *Todo sobre mi madre/ All About My Mother* (1999), *Volver* (2006), and *La piel que habito/ The Skin I Live In* (2011); and on the other, the pursuit of personally and commercially productive collaborations with three pan—or what we might term global—Latin singer/performers, Chavela Vargas, Caetano Veloso, and Concha Buika.

With regard to the films, a number of critics have remarked on what Marvin D’Lugo (2006: 100) terms the “geocultural realignments” prompted by *Todo sobre mi madre* in which the main action moves from the director’s home city and habitual film setting of Madrid to Barcelona and the characters’ destinies trace an extended narrative arc that embraces Galicia, Argentina, and Paris. A further expansion of the film’s geographic and affective orbit is signaled by the appearance of one of the Almodóvar discography’s greatest hits, “Tajabone” by Senegalese musician Ismaël Lô. In her reading of the film’s transnational thematics, Linda Craig (2010) links

the song to other visible manifestations of the African (or Afro-Caribbean) immigrant presence, as in the scene in a Barcelona square highlighted by Almodóvar for its “vitality . . . where twenty-five Dominican or African little girls are jumping rope” (Altares 1999: 140), which serves as background for the conversation between two of the protagonists.

In *Volver* the movement between the central family's origins in a Manchegan village and the multicultural Madrid neighborhood that is home to the protagonist Raimunda (Penélope Cruz) structures the narrative while the film's emotional core is anchored by another musical centerpiece, the Gardel–LePera tango “Volver.” As performed by Penélope Cruz with the voice of Estrella Morente the scene harkens back to Almodóvar's earlier love for lip-sync versions and adaptations, while the song itself effects a stylistic migration from the Argentine idiom of tango to flamenco-inflected bulerías. The song's music and lyrics thematize the re-encounter with a personal past as well as with a pan-Hispanic auditory culture that is the product of the longstanding circulation of mass-media entertainment forms across the Spanish-speaking world (D'Lugo 2008: 80).

For its part, *La piel que habito* incorporates a Brazilian subplot reminiscent of a soap opera involving the protagonist Robert Ledgard's (Antonio Banderas) family origins—illegitimate half brothers, a mother who passes for a housekeeper—that injects moments of anarchic energy to a clinically calibrated tale of revenge. Another song, in this case the Brazilian melody, “Pelo amor de amar” (For the love of loving; Jean Manzon and José Toledo), plays a key role; sung by Ledgard's young daughter (Ana Mena as the child Norma), it precipitates her mother's death and is subsequently reprised in Spanish by Concha Buika just before Norma's (Blanca Suárez) near rape.

Almodóvar's on- and off-screen musical alliances with Chavela Vargas and Caetano Veloso pre-date the introduction of these global, if largely Latin American, narrative subtexts in his films. Vargas is first heard in *Kika* (1993) singing “Luz de luna” (Alvaro Carrillo). Her bolero repertoire echoes through *Tacones lejanos / High Heels* (1991) in the version of the Agustín Lara's “Piensa en mí” voiced by Luz Casal and performed by Marisa Paredes. The director comments that he had the Spanish rock singer Casal model her performance on that of Vargas: “‘Piensa en mí’ is a very rhythmical song, but when Chavela sang it she took out all the rhythm and turned it into a *fado*, a genuine lament. That's the version I copied for *High Heels*” (Strauss 2006: 112). Vargas is featured in a television performance included in *La flor de mi secreto* where she sings one of her signature numbers, “El último trago” (José Alfredo Jiménez) to the emotionally bereft protagonist, Leo (Marisa Paredes). A third song, “Somos” (Mario Clavell) presides over the extended love scene between Víctor (Liberto Rabal) and Elena (Francesca Neri) in *Carne trémula / Live Flesh* (1997).

Caetano Veloso's collaborations with the director follow a similar pattern, with his voice preceding his on-screen appearance in the Almodóvar filmography. Veloso's haunting falsetto version of “Tonada de luna llena” (Simón Díaz), drawn



Figure 18.2 Caetano Veloso, with Jaques Morelenbaum on cello, performs “Cucurrucú paloma” in *Hable con ella* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2002; prod. El Deseo, S.A.). © El Deseo, S.A., S.L.U. © Miguel Bracho.

from his 1994 CD of Spanish standards, *Fina estampa*, introduces and lingers over the final credits of *La flor*. His “live” performance of “Cucurrucú paloma” (Tomás Méndez, Mexico, 1954), also featured on a later live version of *Fina estampa*, is the focus of a highly self-referential sequence in *Hable con ella* where the singer performs in the patio of a country house before a mixed audience composed of characters from the film and denizens of the larger, extratextual Almodóvar universe, including actresses Cecilia Roth and Marisa Paredes and the singer Martirio.

The newest member of the trio, who goes professionally by the single name Buika, was born in Mallorca of Equatorial Guinean parents and boasts a career and musical repertoire that spans American R&B, the Spanish copla, flamenco fusion, boleros, and Latin jazz. She makes her Almodóvar film debut in *La piel que habito* with the on-screen performance of fragments of two songs, the bolero “Se me hizo fácil” (Agustín Lara), and the Spanish version of the above-mentioned Brazilian song, “Por el amor de amar,” set in the context of wedding reception attended by Ledgard and his daughter.

It is these alliances and collaborations, grounded, as we shall, see in complex relationships of mutual identification and cross-promotion, emotional and economic affinities and artistic symbiosis, that distinguishes Almodóvar’s cultivation of Latin artists and music from what performance artist and cultural

critic Guillermo Gómez Peña wryly terms the “Buena Vista Social Club syndrome,” referring to the practice by western musicians and promoters of seeking out new (or rediscovering old) and unusual musical sounds and traditions in order to repackaging them for contemporary mainstream audiences (Taylor 2007: 126).

Indeed, such charges have frequently been made against the category of world music viewed as a commercial strategy and a form of cultural neo-colonialism. They are apparent in the definition offered by Deborah Pacini-Hernández of world music as:

a marketing term describing the products of musical cross- fertilization between the north—the US and Western Europe—and the south—primarily Africa and the Caribbean basin—which began appearing on the popular music landscape in the early 1980s [via] the emergence of new, interlocking commercial infrastructures established specifically to cultivate and nurture the appetites of First World listeners for exotic new sounds from the Third World (1993: 48–50).

Arguably, Almodóvar's most direct encounter with the broader world music corpus comes, as we have noted, in his inclusion of Ismaël Lô's “Tajabone” in the scene in *Todo sobre mi madre* in which the sorrowful mother Manuela (Cecilia Roth) arrives in Barcelona in search of her former husband and father of her dead son. Although we suppose at the beginning of the film that Manuela has spent many years settled in Madrid, her life is later shown to have been marked by a series of journeys, from her native Buenos Aires, to Barcelona and then Madrid, and from the Spanish capital to Galicia on the trail of her son's transplanted heart and then back to Barcelona. In this context it is useful to consider as well the itinerary followed by Lô's song before its arrival in Almodóvar's film. Largely unknown to Anglo-American audiences before *Todo sobre mi madre*, Lô had already garnered considerable success in France, especially following the 1990 release of his sixth album that included the single “Tajabone.” Indeed, Lô's professional biography, characterized by regular travel back and forth between Senegal and France and the musical fusion of Senegalese M'balax with elements of North American folk and blues that resulted in his being hailed as the “Senegalese Bob Dylan,” closely corresponds with the general understanding of the category of world music and world musicians.⁴ That combination of exoticism and familiarity is increasingly seen as necessary to produce the right note of “hybridity” which, Timothy Taylor notes, has become for western listeners the new guarantee of “authenticity” (2007: 140–1).

In contrast to the Latin American or even Italian, Portuguese, French, or English-language songs heard in Almodóvar's films, the meaning of the words to “Tajabone,” written in Wolof, is lost on the spectator-listener.⁵ Nevertheless, there are advantages for those who would make use of foreign musical traditions for their own ends, or so we are told by scholars who study the use of faux world music, choral pieces composed of made-up nonsense syllables in advertising spots

(Taylor 2007: 185). In the case of “Tajabone” in *Todo sobre mi madre* one could argue that the affective meaning of the song is transmitted without linguistic or cultural interference. Almodóvar confirms its efficacy in his notes to *Viva la tristeza*: “I didn’t know what the lyrics meant but from the moment I heard it, I knew that that song was the perfect cloak with which the city of Barcelona would cover and protect the broken woman played by Cecilia Roth” (2002). His comments stress its expressive role not only with respect to the grief-stricken Manuela but Barcelona itself. He continues: “When we were doing location work, I’d put that song on the cassette in the car and ask my assistant: ‘Look out the windows. Does this song suit this city?’ And it suited it very well” (Almodóvar 2002).

The association of the song with the city is telling. In his contribution to the Oxford Very Short Introduction series devoted to *World Music*, Phillip Bohlman signals the key role played by the city as a kind of cultural “entrepôt,” a depository or storage place but also marketplace or bazaar, the most “natural” and propitious setting for “the encounters with world music in a postmodern world” (2002: 133). While *Todo sobre mi madre* opens up the Almodóvar universe to an explicitly wider world beyond the Madrid–provincial town axis that structures the biographies of so many of his characters, it also seems to announce, belatedly, the full incorporation of Spain into a global circuit of people, products, capital, and culture. For the first time in an Almodóvar film, not only do we take measure of the immigrant presence in Spain, we hear its voices—even if we may not understand what they are saying. At the same time, as Almodóvar notes, the song “Tajabone” lends itself to the emotional needs of the film’s protagonist, covering and soothing the rough edges of her broken heart. This capacity, according to Taylor, is characteristic of “our globalized world” and its music: “[It] softens the edges of difference, making Others and their cultural forms desirable in new ways” (2007: 126). For Taylor, this cultural proximity and promiscuity is the product of our current media marketplace that makes a seemingly all-encompassing body of cultural offerings immediately and always available. It is that marketplace that has shaped Almodóvar’s exposure to this musical corpus and that he negotiates with increasing mastery in his role as cultural producer.

In analyzing the Almodóvar song corpus, however, the schematic geographical divide sketched in Pacini-Hernández’s definition requires a certain qualification. As John Connell and Chris Gibson, editors of the collection, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place*, suggest, in practice the classification of world music also depends on “the social, political and demographic position of certain minority groups in a particular country” (2003: 153). Thus they explain that reggae is rarely characterized as world music and that in the United States, with its significant Latino population, salsa is not considered world music whereas in the United Kingdom it is. In Spain, the status of the bolero, canción ranchera, or tango reflects not only the presence of recent immigrants but also the history of intercultural exchange with the nation’s former colonies. In the 1995 Spanish edition of Almodóvar’s interviews with Frédéric Strauss, Almodóvar perhaps surprisingly

emphasizes the unfamiliar if not foreign character of the Latin American songs heard in his films, while alluding to the historical and cultural asymmetries that have shaped musical relations between Spain and Latin America. The lack of knowledge of this corpus, he notes:

Es un poco injusto porque todos, desde Los Panchos en *La ley del deseo*, hasta Lucho Gatica en *Entre tinieblas*, Los hermanos Rosario en *Tacones lejanos*, o Chavela Vargas en las últimas, son autores de nuestra misma lengua y, aunque son de Hispanoamérica, deberían ser más conocidos aquí. Hay una especie de prejuicio contra ese tipo de música, que ha sido considerada durante mucho tiempo como antigua y demasiado sentimental. A mí es una música que me apasiona y estoy muy contento, además, de haber ayudado a que todos estos artistas hayan sido editados con bastante éxito. Ahora, en España, el bolero se mira de otro modo, incluso se ha puesto un poco de moda. España es muy injusta con los países de habla hispana, siente una especie de superioridad poca solidaria. En la celebración del quinto centenario del descubrimiento de América había mucha hipocresía. Las cosas las descubro de modo sentimental y es muy agradable ver después que eso funciona en el mercado, porque me parece que restablece la justicia (Strauss 1995: 126).⁶

(It's a little unfair because all of these artists, from Los Panchos in *The Law of Desire*, to Lucho Gatica in *Dark Habits*, Los Hermanos Rosario in *High Heels*, or Chavela Vargas in the more recent films, sing in our same language, and even if they are from Spanish America they should be better known here. There is a kind of prejudice against this type of music that for a long time has been considered old-fashioned and overly sentimental. For me it's a music that I'm passionate about and I'm very happy to have helped so that the work of all these artists has been reissued with some success. These days the bolero is seen in different way in Spain, it's even become somewhat fashionable. Spain is very unjust with Spanish-speaking countries, it feels a kind of superiority that is not very supportive. In the celebration of the 500 year anniversary of the discovery of America there was a good deal of hypocrisy. My discoveries come about in a sentimental way and it's good to see later that they function in the market because it seems that justice is reestablished.)

Almodóvar's comments are revealing on many levels. At first glance, the apparent amnesia regarding the longstanding presence of Latin American popular song in the twentieth-century Spanish cultural imaginary is striking. In their essays and personal testimonies writers such as Carmen Martín Gaité (1978; 1987) and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (1971; 2000) have documented the role of Latin American romantic ballads in the sentimental education of Spaniards under Franco. Studying the circulation and reception of Latin American music in Spain from Lorca to Almodóvar, Christopher Laferl affirms: "Ningún otro país ha incorporado la música latinoamericana en su propia cultura popular de una manera tan intensa como España, sin contar los países latinoamericanos mismos" (No other country has incorporated Latin American music in its own popular culture to such an intense degree as Spain, with the exception of Latin American

countries themselves) (2007: 139). One suspects that Almodóvar would express himself differently today, more than fifteen years after his declarations to Strauss. For the director who vowed to make films as if Franco never existed, perhaps this musical inheritance of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s was part of what needed to be forgotten but can now be recovered and acknowledged. His musical reconciliation with this auditory legacy is allegorized in *Volver*, in the scene mentioned earlier in which Raimunda decides to sing for the first time in many years, performing a version of the Gardel tango her mother taught her as a child. Thus is the history of Latin American music in Spain reinscribed into the intricate fabric of familial and popular memory.

Equally relevant for our discussion are the references to the broader political context. While denouncing anti-Latin American attitudes in Spain, Almodóvar once again seeks to disassociate his own motivations from external factors, in this case, the official observance of the Columbus centenary which highlighted Spain's continuing attempts to rewrite its five-century history with Latin America at a moment of increased Spanish economic investment in the region. Tellingly, the politically loaded word "discovery" recurs in a reference to the European "discovery" of America and his own discoveries of the corpus of Latin American song. Almodóvar once again stresses the personal and sentimental basis for his artistic choices but here the market is invoked as the potential source of a kind of justice or reparation for what is just the latest in a series of historical wrongs.

Caetano Veloso: Hearts, Minds, and Market Share

In moving to explore in greater depth the origins and development of Almodóvar's three key film and discographic collaborations for the insights they provide into the workings of his global musical imaginary I begin with Caetano Veloso. Certainly this particular case of cultural contact and exchange interjects its own destabilizing challenge to the unequal north-south axis postulated by Pacini-Hernández, while the career of the multifaceted Brazilian musician, composer, activist, and former political prisoner proposes a kind of counter-model to the geocultural paradigm evinced in the world music concept. Veloso's musical project is supported not only by his leading role in the 1960s Tropicália movement with its cosmopolitan fusion of Afro-Brazilian, European, and North American sources but also by Tropicália's links to the earlier avant-garde "antropofágica" tradition that calls for the assimilation and transformation of foreign influences and cultural artifacts, thus inverting the hegemonic dynamic of colonial cultural relations. In his study of the movement Christopher Dunn defines Veloso's role, along with that of fellow *tropicalista*, Gilberto Gil, as a "cultural mediator" (2001: 74), between the traditional left and the counterculture as well as African-centric movements inside and outside the country. Robert Stam goes further still in his evaluation of

Veloso's career, hailing the latter (and Gil) as "Orphic intellectuals," playing on Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual, "who write books in one moment and lead dancing crowds in another . . . [as] not only the performers of popular culture but also its theoreticians" (2008: 223).

Although no one would pretend to make similarly exalted claims for Almodóvar's role in recent Spanish cultural history, there are parallelisms and certain paradigmatic attitudes and practices shared by Veloso and Almodóvar that are worth exploring. These include: the ability to absorb and transform multiple cultural sources into highly personal forms of expressions; the delight in the role of showman and provocateur (one might compare Veloso's 1960s onstage persona, as a bushy-haired Brazilian Mick Jagger, with Almodóvar's performances in quilted bathrobe and fishnet stockings in the 1970s and early 1980s in his punk duo with Fanny McNamara); the insistent embrace of high and low—with high culture literary and musical references coming to predominate in recent years; a protean capacity for artistic and personal reinvention carried out in public over several decades; and the continued cultivation of fluid gender roles ("Caetano Veloso is the performing artist of his generation who most effectively articulated the complex construction of sexuality and gender presentation" [Braga-Pinto 2002: 197]). The mutual attractions and affinities seem clear. For Almodóvar Veloso's career provides a trajectory and a model to aspire to, of how to manage popular and commercial success (and the sometimes harsh criticism his very visible profile has engendered) while being taken seriously as a public figure. Indeed, if Warhol provided the inspiration for the punk/pop Almodóvar of the 1980s, Veloso seems to offer a more congenial and culturally compatible model for the more "serious" but equally daring Almodóvar of the mid-1990s on. And one should not underestimate the appeal of Brazil, not only in marketing terms, but also as a country whose history and culture fall outside the more troubled colonial-post-colonial narrative of Spain and Spanish-speaking America. Finally, another not negligible asset is the ability of each to open doors and grant cultural legitimacy to the other in their respective countries and national markets.

It is thus not surprising that Veloso makes his first "appearance" in an Almodóvar film in the wake of the 1994 release of his first Spanish-language CD, *Fina estampa*. The album was enormously successful—in a headline proclaiming "Brazil goes Latino," *Billboard* evoked a return to the 1940s when the tango and bolero were popular in Brazil and noted that the album had sold faster than any other release in Veloso's career (1994: 56)—and it led to a subsequent worldwide tour of the same name as well as a second CD, *Fina estampa ao vivo* (1995). Asked during the tour about the motivation behind his decision to sing in Spanish, Veloso offers a provocatively candid response: "I sing in Spanish to feel what it's like to be in someone else's skin. Or, as my manager says, to expand market share" (Solvik 2001: 96).

Veloso's crossover hit offers both similarities and differences with Almodóvar's own incursions into the repertoire. While centered on a similar nucleus of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican and Argentine boleros, tangos and rumbas from the 1930s,

1940s and 1950s, Veloso's CD takes its pan-Hispanic vocation perhaps more seriously, also including songs from Peru, Paraguay and Venezuela. Furthermore, the arrangements by cellist and producer Jaques Morelenbaum lend an art-music sensibility to the performances. What the efforts of both artists do seem to share is an elastic logic of artistic creation that sees no contradiction between music viewed as sincere personal expression and means of access to an interior state and as a bid for market success.

By his own testimony Almodóvar's relation to Brazilian culture is mediated by his friendship with Veloso: "La idea de Brazil va unida a la casa de Caetano, a ese ritmo tan agradable que tiene la vida a su alrededor. Yo me siento como un hermano más con Caetano, como si fuera mi hermano mayor" (The idea of Brazil for me is linked to Caetano's house, to that wonderful rhythm that life around him possesses. I feel like just another of his brothers, as if he were my older brother) (Almodovar fala sobre Caetano Veloso, undated). And yet when asked by Strauss about the relation between his friendship with Caetano and the inclusion of his live performance of "Cucurrucucú paloma" (which, we might recall, also appears on both *Fina estampa ao vivo* and *Viva la tristeza*) in *Hable con ella*, Almodóvar demurs: "had [the] work not been full of meaning for me I wouldn't have used [it]. The condition for me to include [it] in the film was that I be the first to cry . . . as I did the first time I heard Caetano's version of 'Cucurrucucú paloma.' It's a song of such moving tenderness that it almost becomes violent and it loses all relation to the version everybody knows" (Strauss 2006: 222–3). The collateral benefits of cross-promotion are in no way mutually exclusive with the goal of creating a deeply emotional experience rooted in the song performance that director and musician seek to reproduce in the spectator/listeners, and which Almodóvar paradoxically describes, erasing the traces of commercial or technological mediation, as a form of contact, "de corazón a corazón, de piel a piel, es decir, de ser humano a ser humano" (heart to heart, skin to skin, that is, human being to human being) (Almodóvar fala sobre Caetano Veloso, undated).

Chavela Vargas: Icon and Muse

A fundamental characteristic of the performances and performers that capture Almodóvar's attention, providing a common basis for the artistic and emotional synergies that link him to Veloso as well as to Chavela Vargas and Buika, is the practice of creating new and striking versions of familiar songs, or what we might call, borrowing from Marsha Kinder's chapter for this volume, "re-voicements." Almodóvar elaborates on this phenomenon in his blog:

I'm a great believer in versions, when they're performed by inspired, independent artists who consider them as new creations and adapt the original song to their own

gut feelings. . . . Songs travel an oblique, fortuitous road until they fit into my films. At times they've had to become the opposite of what they originally were in order for me to connect with them. That's the case with "Tonada de luna llena." "Tonada" is a Venezuelan cowboy song, a kind of indigenous country music by Simón Díaz, which would never have had any connection with my stories had it not been for the arrangements by Morelenbaum and the voice of Caetano Veloso [that] transmuted the original, making it into a kind of dark, surreal lullaby (Almodóvar 2008).

We noted earlier Almodóvar's appreciation of Vargas's unique form of musical alchemy when referring to her inspiration for the version of Agustín Lara's "Piensa en mí" heard in *Tacones lejanos*. Born in Costa Rica in 1919, Vargas first came to prominence in the 1950s in Mexico specializing in the classic national repertoire of composers Lara, José Alfredo Jiménez, Cuco Sánchez, and Tomás Méndez. Although very much attracted by the Mexican popular music of the time, the boisterous mariachi-based canción ranchera and the bohemian bolero with its stories of amorous suffering, Vargas early on demonstrated an ability to make the songs her own. Taking the stage in an androgynous wardrobe of ponchos and woven leather sandals and accompanied by a single guitar, her performances shocked traditionalists while attracting a diverse group of admirers from the high and low of Mexican society.⁷ Speaking of the impact of her performance style, Carlos Monsiváis notes: "No sólo fue su apariencia la que se saltaba las reglas establecidas, sino que musicalmente prescindió del mariachi, con lo que eliminó de las rancheras su carácter de fiesta y mostró al desnudo su profunda desolación" (It wasn't only her appearance that went against established practices but that she eliminated the mariachi accompaniment, which stripped the *rancheras* of their festive character and showed the profound desolation they contain in all its nakedness) (Rojo 2001: n. p.).

Like her onetime lover, the German-Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, the Costa Rican Vargas adopted a stylized version of folkloric Mexican dress in proposing a new way of embodying and expressing Mexican culture and identity through her persona and her art. In remaking national traditions via such personal stylings, the artist likewise opens those traditions to associations and affinities that render her work potentially more accessible to international audiences. As Monsiváis observes, "En este mundo globalizado . . . Chavela Vargas ha sabido expresar la desolación de las rancheras con la radical desnudez del blues (In this globalized world Chavela Vargas has been able to express the desolation of the *rancheras* with the radical nakedness of the blues) (Rojo 2001: n. p.). Invoking a similarly cross-cultural frame of comparison, Almodóvar compares Vargas to Billie Holiday and Edith Piaf (Strauss 2006: 112), not only because all three possess a unique and unmistakable style and sound but also, one surmises, for their seeming authenticity that invests each song with a form of emotional authority that leads listeners to believe that although they are singing the words of others they are always speaking about themselves, their tumultuous love lives and problems with alcohol.

That presumed autobiographical subtext also informs Vargas's on- and off-screen incorporation into the Almodóvar creative universe, via a notable convergence of two mythmaking tales of artistic failure and success. In their professional and personal journeys from the periphery (Costa Rica, La Mancha) to the cultural center (Mexico City, Madrid), their sexual dissidence and capacity for self-invention, Vargas and Almodóvar draw on similar archetypal tropes in molding and promoting their work and careers. It is thus only fitting that both would come to assume a starring role in each other's respective artistic biography.

Colm Tóibín's essay on Almodóvar, first published in *Vanity Fair* and subsequently included in his collection of essays, *Love in a Dark Time and Other Explorations of Gay Lives and Literature* (2001), offers an extended and poetically enhanced version of what has become a widely circulating narrative of Chavela Vargas's alcohol-fueled eclipse and subsequent re-emergence onto the international stage with Pedro Almodóvar cast in the role of her rediscoverer and redeemer. At the same time, the singer is recruited to play the role of elusive soul mate and muse in a coming-of-age tale of the filmmaker-to-be.⁸ As Tóibín tells it, Almodóvar's first encounter with Vargas's music coincided with his own arrival in Madrid:

There was a singer he came across then, on record and on the radio; he knew she lived in the city, and there was something about her gravelly voice, a raw, melodramatic energy, a sense of pain and hurt and infinite loss, that he wanted badly . . . The sheer force of her pride and solitude and sadness meant everything to this adolescent boy new in the city. The singer's name was Chavela Vargas and Pedro went everywhere in search of her, he asked everybody where she was, but she had gone. . . . Haunted by her songs, he kept looking for her but she had disappeared (2001: 234).

Forward thirty years, at a party for *le tout* Madrid, Tóibín goes looking for Pedro and finds him talking to the very woman "whose voice haunted him when he was a kid" (2001: 238):

[Chavela] gave up singing for twenty-five years during which she lived it up and lived it down in Mexico. . . . And then the woman whom Pedro calls the higher priestess of pain came back to Madrid. This was the only time, he says, when his fame was useful. He set about making Chavela famous all over again. He went with her to the smallest venues, introduced her, cajoled people to listen to her. He used her in his films, *Kika* and *Flower of My Secret*. Her voice is as expressive and precise as ever. Her face, Pedro says, is the face of a primitive god. And if you go into a music shop in Madrid now you will find all her old work re-issued and all her new work on sale. She is a star (2001: 238).

Other, Spanish-language sources offer equally hyperbolic accounts of Vargas's rediscovery and "resurrection" (Ponsford 1997: n. p.)—"Fue redescubierta por el cineasta español Pedro Almodóvar, en 1990, y resurgió como el Ave Fénix, (She was rediscovered by the Spanish film director Pedro Almodóvar in 1990 and was

reborn like the Phoenix) (Le Franc 2009: 29)—at the hands of Almodóvar, while the director himself has never made such claims. So widespread were such accounts that Vargas is moved to correct the record in her autobiography: “A veces la prensa y el público son injustos, y suponen que fue Pedro Almodóvar—mi Pedrito, a quien adoro—el que me llevó a España y el que me abrió de nuevo las puertas de Europa. No es verdad” (Sometimes the press and public are unjust and they imagine it was Pedro Almodóvar—my little Pedro, whom I adore—who brought me to Spain and reopened the doors of Europe to me. It is not true) (Vargas 2001: 39). Instead that role belonged to Manuel Arroyo, the Spanish editor and founder in the early 1970s of the anti-Francoist, English-language Turner bookstore in Madrid. It was Arroyo who convinced Vargas, who had stopped drinking by the early 1990s and was performing in a small venue on the outskirts of Mexico City, to return to Spain, where she had appeared briefly in 1970, and in 1993 she performed at the Sala Caracol in Madrid and later at the Lope de Vega Theater in Seville (Vargas 2001: 239–51). Despite the actual facts, the joined rebirth—redeemer myths clearly have more purchase both in Spain and across the Americas when attached to the dual celebrity of Vargas and Almodóvar. In this case, the starmaker role works both ways as Almodóvar lends his particular ultra modern cachet to the then octogenarian singer, aiding her to attract new audiences wherever the director's films are seen and heard, while Vargas and her music grant a kind of timeless emotional authenticity and gravitas to his work.

With so much attention devoted to the public narrative of mutual affection and admiration, it runs the risk of overshadowing the nature and impact of the singer's performances themselves. Interviewed in a 2002 filmed biography of Vargas, both Arroyo and Monsiváis return to the potency of her repertoire, as filtered through her particular interpretive genius. Monsiváis observes: “Ella mezcla boleros, canciones rancheras. De la mezcla surge algo que es su repertorio, muy muy espectacular en esa sensación de intimidad. Lo de Chavela ocurre a puertas adentro, cámara adentro” (She mixes boleros, canciones rancheras. Out of that mixture comes something that is her repertoire, something very very spectacular in the sensation of intimacy it produces. What Chavela does occurs in interiors, with the doors closed” (*Biografía* 2002). Characterizing Vargas's impact on younger Spanish audiences Arroyo also alludes to the emotive power (“la manera conmovedora”) of what he terms one of the most extraordinary repertoires in twentieth-century popular music, that she “lleva a un estadio más alto de interpretación” (carries to a higher level of interpretation) (*Biografía* 2002). Almodóvar's remarks in the film also echo this sense of private communication, of direct and personal address. When Chavela sings, he observes, “está cantando a ti, sólo a ti, y te está cantando sólo tu historia” (she is singing to you, only to you, and she is singing your personal history) (*Biografía* 2002). Almodóvar dramatizes this scenario of intimate communion between singer and listener in *La flor de mi secreto* when the desperate Leo, emerging from her apartment following a failed suicide attempt, takes temporary refuge in a neighborhood bar. As the owner switches channels on the

television set over the counter, the image of Vargas in her signature poncho, arms outstretched, singing “El último trago,” fills the screen. Grasping her glass of cognac, Leo lifts her head, recognizing her own condition in the words of the song. At once lover and fellow sufferer, Vargas speaks directly to Leo (“Tómame esta botella conmigo”/Share this bottle with me), giving voice to a ritual of solidarity in the face of recurring emotional hurt: “Nada me ha enseñado los años/siempre caigo en los mismos errores/Otra vez a brindar con extraños/y llorar por los mismos dolores” (The years have taught me nothing/I always fall into the same mistakes. Once again I end up drinking with strangers/and crying over the same sorrows). Regretting nothing, à la Piaf, while acknowledging the depths of her despair, Vargas’s performance functions as both an exorcism of pain and a shared exhortation to end a self-destructive love affair. As with Veloso’s performance in *Hable con ella* the message and meaning transcend the medium, or in this case, various media, establishing a form of immediate and personal connection.

At the heart of the unique interpretations and creative “versions” of a Vargas, or a Veloso or Buika, are their distinctive vocal style and character. From Bola de Nieve, heard at the end of *La ley del deseo*, to the boy sopranos of *La mala educación*/*Bad Education* (2004), Chavela Vargas to Nina Simone, included on *Viva la tristeza*, Almodóvar has always gravitated to uncanny and androgynous voices with the power to move and unsettle the listener. After responding with tears to Veloso’s performance of “Cucurrucucú paloma” in *Hable con ella* Marco (Darío Grandinetti) tells his lover Lydia (Rosario Flores), “that Caetano really makes my hair stand on end.” In register and texture, Vargas’s voice occupies the opposite end of the spectrum from that of Veloso, at least the Veloso of *Fina estampa* and Almodóvar’s films.⁹ Various characterized as raw and gravelly, gritty, hoarse, raspy or “aguardentosa” (the result of drinking *aguardiente*, what in English is called a whiskey voice), Vargas’s voice exemplifies Roland Barthes’s notion of a voice with “grain,” defined as “the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue” (1977: 182). In contrast to the conventional and learned codes and styles of musical performance, destined toward the expression and representation of inherited cultural value, grain conveys a form of surplus meaning and *jouissance* (Barthes 1977: 182–3). If the former are borne along on the flowing stream of the singer’s breath, the pleasure produced by a singer (and song) with grain is generated by physical organs of the mouth and throat, “the place where the phonic metal hardens . . . and explodes” (Barthes 1977: 183). In focusing on classical singing and opera, however, Barthes overlooks the cultural roots and connotations of the vocal styles practiced by singers such as Vargas and celebrated by Almodóvar in his films and recordings. Among singers of boleros, jazz and flamenco, for example, hybrid musical idioms that draw broadly on African, European and American traditions, the most prized voices give evidence of qualities that Néstor Leal associates with “voces mulatas” (mulatto voices): “cálidas, nasales, roncadas, pastosas” (warm, nasal, gravelly, mellow) (1992: 24). As Theo van Leeuwen reminds us, more generally, rough and gritty voices are taken to evoke not only a sense of materiality (and

sexuality) but also personal history as evidence of the toll taken by hard living, adversity or the simple effects of old age and as such function as bearers of a certain cultural and emotional authenticity (2009: 429).

In 2010, Chavela Vargas and Buika were chosen by the U.S. public radio network, NPR, as two of the world's "50 Great Voices," singers, the NPR website explains, "who've made their mark internationally and across history" (Blair 2010). The pairing of Vargas with a singer some fifty years her junior, in a diverse list ranging from Maria Callas and Nat King Cole to Celia Cruz and Youssou N'Dour (All 50 Great Voices 2011), is no coincidence. The NPR program segment devoted to "Buika: The Voice of Freedom," while stressing the origins of her distinctive voice in her singular life story, also highlights her relation with Vargas, cemented in the younger singer's 2009 CD, *El último trago*, largely devoted to covers of the former's work. In addition to the NPR piece, other articles call attention to Vargas's mentoring role. A 2010 feature in the *New York Times* on the occasion of the Spanish singer's U.S. tour cites Vargas, who speaks approvingly of her would-be protégée: "Buika has really developed as a singer. . . . She's added the influences of flamenco and other genres to my songs but the raspy roughness in her voice when she sings reminds me of myself" (Rohter 2010). Beyond the musical affinities, Vargas, with her open lesbian sexuality and outsider's success in her adopted culture, offers a reference point for the declaredly bisexual and ultra "cosmopolitan" Buika (Byram 2010) in the projection of a new paradigm of global Latin musical sensibility.

Buika: Synthesis and Synergies

Only the third singer to appear on-screen as herself in an Almodóvar film, following Vargas and Veloso, Buika performs two songs in *La piel que habito* that both allude to her own career trajectory, showcasing her versatility, while anchoring a key moment that brings together various strands in the plot. The setting is a wedding in Galicia attended by Dr. Ledgard together with his now twenty-year-old daughter, Norma, still recuperating years later from the effects of her mother's violent death. The singer's first number is a version of the Lara *ranchera*, "Se me hizo fácil," another touchstone of Chavela Vargas's repertoire, given an up-tempo remake as a Latin jazz dance number.

The original lyrics with their emphatic rejection of an unfaithful female lover ("Se me hizo fácil/borrar de mi memoria/a esa mujer a quien yo amaba tanto"—It was easy for me/to erase from my memory/that woman I loved so much) serve the gender-bending public images of both Vargas and Buika, who included this version in her 2009 CD. With its extended dance coda, the song performance brings the wedding guests to their feet, providing distraction and cover for Norma's exit to the garden where she will be raped, or nearly raped, by Vicente (Jan Cornet), thus putting in motion Ledgard's plan for surgical revenge.



Figure 18.3 Buika performs her version of Lara’s “Se me hizo fácil” in the wedding scene from *La piel que habito* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2011; prod. El Deseo, S.A.).

It is followed by a simple, unadorned version of the song “Por el amor de amar,” with solo piano accompaniment, last heard in Portuguese sung by the child Norma. As recounted in flashback by the housekeeper Marilia (Marisa Paredes), the girl’s mother jumped to her death when the song, which the mother had taught her daughter in earlier, happier times, awakened her from a drug-induced sleep as she recuperated from severe burns suffered in a car crash. Although neither Ledgard nor Norma seem to acknowledge its link to their past, the song reminds the spectator of the family’s tragic history and alerts us to the girl’s still fragile state. It also references the film’s Brazilian connection, this time in musical form. Similar to the case of “Volver,” the song interweaves family genealogy with broader cultural histories. First introduced in the 1961 film *Os Bandeirantes/The Pioneers*, by the French director Marcel Camus, best known for *Orfeu negro/Black Orpheus* (1959), the song, sung by Ellen de Lima, became a hit at the time.¹⁰ Buika’s version preserves the childlike lyricism of the minor key melody. With its wistful, introspective tone and affect it seems an unlikely choice for a wedding reception and appears more directed toward the spectators than the on-screen guests.

As in the cases of Veloso and Vargas, Buika’s collaborations with Almodóvar extend beyond the textual frame. Her first engagement with the director’s song corpus dates to September 13, 2008 during the Madrid “Noche en blanco” event devoted to “Canciones para Pedro” (Songs for Pedro). Organized by the Culture office of the Madrid city government, the “Noche en blanco” is an all-night cultural festival modeled on the original 2002 Parisian “Nuit blanche” that has subsequently spread under European Union sponsorship throughout the continent. Almodóvar reports he was delighted when city officials contacted him with the idea of a public

concert featuring his music and he insisted on the participation of Buika and Miguel Poveda (whose interpretation of the Concha Piquer classic, "A ciegas," is heard over the final credits of *Los abrazos rotos*) (2008). Held at the Matadero performance space, the first half of the concert featured selections from Alberto Iglesias's scores for Almodóvar's films performed by the Orquesta Nacional de España while the second half focused on songs by Buika and Poveda, including "Soy infeliz" (Ventura Romero) and "Puro teatro" (Catalino Curet Alonso), originally heard over the opening and closing scenes of *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios/Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988) as sung by Lola Beltrán and La Lupe, respectively, "Luz de luna," and "Se nos rompió el amor," the latter written for onetime Spanish child star Rocío Durcal and heard in a version by flamenco singers Bernarda and Fernanda de Utrera in *Kika* (Almodóvar 2008).

Although by the time of her 2010 U.S. tour, and following the release of *El último trago*, Buika's name had come to be associated with Almodóvar's in various publicity materials and publications, there were no claims for his having "discovered" or rediscovered her. Nevertheless, the Almodóvar brand coupled with her own eventful biography clearly added to her allure. Initially promoted, and self-promoting, as the standard bearer for a new, multicultural Spanish social and cultural reality (see her bilingual composition, "New Afro Spanish Generation," from her first album, *Buika*, 2006), following an earlier stretch working in Las Vegas as a Tina Turner imitator, Buika's career was taken in hand by celebrated producer/arranger Javier Limón. Limón is perhaps best known for the 2004 CD *Lagrimas negras* with flamenco singer Diego El Cigala and Cuban pianist Bebo Valdés, hailed by the PopMatters website as a "world music hit" (Levin 2008). Her second and third CDs, *Mi niña Lola* (2007) and *Niña de fuego* (2008), featuring pianist Chucho Valdés, son of Bebo, meld the corpus and style of flamenco-inflected copla—drawing on the singer's real-life roots growing up in a gypsy neighborhood of Palma de Mallorca—with the rhythms and instrumentation of Afro-Cuban jazz.

Extending their reach further into the pan-Latin repertoire, Buika and Limón turned next to the bolero and Chavela Vargas in a 2009 CD titled *El último trago*. Although the chronology is not clear, an article in the *New York Times* gives Almodóvar credit for the idea, with Buika praising the director's "astute career advice" and "exquisite taste of a great painter" (Rohter 2010). The director returns the favor, and then some, in his contribution to the liner notes:

Since the very first time, listening to Buika awakened a commotion with me, a mixture of intensity, emotion and wetness; a reaction close to the one Chavela Vargas inspires in me. . . . Buika is what the flamencos used to call a "long" singer. She can tackle any style while still be unique and moving. . . . Much like Chavela, Concha is able to make her audience feel completely exposed. Her songs transport us to a place where we are left face to face with our own love history, one in which our failures stand out the most. And, what's more, after listening to her sing, one is determined to keep making the same mistakes, because there are no rules, common sense, caution or regret in passion. . . . However, Concha Buika takes after many

artists besides Chavela and brings other sources of inspiration to her completely authentic Chavelian repertoire. Her voice reminds us of La Lupe's frenzy with sometimes a hint of Olga Guillot. She also flutters her hands and stands erect in front of the microphone like the great Lola Flores (Almodóvar 2009).

Almodóvar's characterization of Buika highlights the qualities he requires of all his musical inspirations: the ability to communicate intense emotion and a sense of authenticity while constructing an unique artistic signature from a range of multiple sources. This eclecticism and hybridity reaches its apotheosis in the case of Buika, her own multicultural origins and influences contributing to a performance that achieves a "rare fusion that honors all its sources" (Pareles 2007: n. p.). In her wide-ranging synthesis of earlier singers and traditions, the young Afro-Spanish singer offers a forward-looking model of musical authorship much in tune with Almodóvar's own creative practice and ambitions as both filmmaker and cultural producer.

Whatever the singer may have learned from her musician models and mentors, Tina Turner, Chavela Vargas and Javier Limón, it seems to be Almodóvar who has schooled her in the art of cross-promotion. In September 2011, coinciding with the worldwide distribution of the director's nineteenth feature, *La piel que habito*, Buika released her sixth CD, a two-disk anthology of greatest hits, titled *En mi piel*. Opening with "Por el amor de amar" and "Se me hizo fácil," the CD has been promoted by a "Making of" video on YouTube made up of footage, featuring Almodóvar, of the filming of the wedding performance scene from the film (2011). With Buika, Almodóvar's model of artistic collaboration points beyond the old technologies of musical recording and film to the multiplatform reality of the present-day global cultural marketplace.

Conclusions

In his role as cultural producer, as we have seen, Almodóvar does not shun the marketplace, as much as he might try to disavow its impact on his own artistic choices. Indeed the market itself, in the sense of a cosmopolitan setting for cultural encounter and exchange, evoked earlier in this essay by Phillip Bohlman, might serve as an overall metaphor for his film and discographic work. As a point of convergence for a host of geographically, culturally and generically diverse sounds, images, stories and discourses, Almodóvar's cinema and song collections refigure the marketplace as a kind of traditional "agora," at once bazaar and public square. In film and on record Almodóvar enlists the emotional potency of song and singers to mediate between the public and collective space made available by his cinema and the capacity for intimate communication and personal address. Songs travel, as the director himself observes, transported, in the first instance, along the

pathways established by what Pacini-Hernández (1993) describes as the commercial infrastructure of the contemporary music industry. But music also responds to the gravitational pull of personal biography (whether Almodóvar's and that of his artist collaborators, or our own) as a counter force, as Arjun Appadurai notes (1994: 83), that enables objects to move in and out of the commodity state.

Finally, in exploring this extra-filmic dimension of Almodóvar's creative oeuvre we also see evidence of the broader impact of his work very much along the lines of Benjamin's "author as producer," whose "products" transcend "their character as works" and have "an organizing function" marked by the ability "to induce other producers to produce" (1986: 233). In this regard Almodóvar might be said to function as a kind of global matrix figure, like Foucault's founders of discourse (1977: 131–2), whose influence derives not merely from the films he has directed but equally from his ability to enable the production of other varied authorial discourses.¹¹

Notes

- 1 In a 2012 lecture, Paul Julian Smith explores Almodóvar's and El Deseo's incursions into other media, including book publishing, television and the licensing of theatrical adaptations, in terms that would not be foreign to Warhol, as an instance of "brand extension."
- 2 Early scores by Movidia cohort Bernardo Bonnezzi for *Laberinto de pasiones / Labyrinth of Passion* (1982), *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto! / What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984), *Matador* (1986) and *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios / Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988) have been released as Bernardo Bonezzi, *Almodóvar Early Films*, Karonte, 2004. See also Ennio Morricone, *Atame*, BMG Ariola, 1989; and Ryuichi Sakamoto, *High Heels*, Polygram, 1992.
- 3 See the exploration of this range of cinematic sources in chapter 16, this volume.
- 4 In this regard the song also potentially references the Parisian experience of Esteban/Lola. On the broader cultural context and history of African music and musicians in Paris, see Winders (2006).
- 5 Allinson (2001: 98) and Craig (2010: 170–1) offer contrasting accounts of the meaning of the lyrics and context of the song in Senegalese Muslim culture but such arguments would seem to have limited relevance given the fact that neither Almodóvar nor the film's spectators have knowledge of those referents.
- 6 In this passage the English version of the Strauss book, which I include at the end of this note, eliminates some of Almodóvar's reflections on the historical and cultural dynamics of the relation between Spain and its former American colonies as well as the intersection of personal and artistic identifications and market factors, a key focus of this chapter. The English translation also shades some meanings in ways that do not reflect the spirit, if not the letter, of the Spanish. The translation in the main text is my own. What follows is the quotation from the English version of the book: "It's a little unfair because Los Panchos in *Law of Desire*, Lucho Gatica in *Dark Habits*, Los Hermanos Rosario in *High Heels* and Chavela Vargas in *Kika* all sing in Spanish and even

if these singers come from Spanish America they should have been discovered earlier. But there's a real prejudice against this type of music. In Spain, it's long been considered old-fashioned and over-sentimental. I'm happy to have helped these singers to be recognized artistically and commercially. People look at a singer of boleros in a different way now" (Strauss 2006: 112).

- 7 See the account of this period in Vargas's autobiography, published in Spain (2002).
- 8 Tóibín's account closely follows the retrospective logic of the gay (and not) artist's autobiography analyzed by Alberto Mira, chapter 4, this volume.
- 9 On Veloso's "feminine" voice, see Vernon (2009: 58–9).
- 10 An article in the Brazilian paper *O Globo* recounts that Brazilian singer Fernanda Cabral, long resident in Spain, was invited by composer Alberto Iglesias to teach the actress playing the child Norma, Ana Mena, to sing the song in Portuguese (Viana 2011). With regard to the affinities between Almodóvar and the director of *Black Orpheus*, some might argue that *La piel* indulges in a similarly exploitative projection of exotic Brazil in art cinema guise to an avid European and North American audience.
- 11 It is significant that Almodóvar is not the only Spanish film director to play the role of musical impresario. His contemporary Fernando Trueba, both through his films, the documentary *Calle 54* (2000) and the animated feature *Chico y Rita* (2010), and the production of some ten CDs, including the above-mentioned *Lagrimas negras*, has become deeply involved in the promotion of a similar pan-Latin (flamenco fusion, Afro-Caribbean dance music and jazz) repertoire. In concluding I would like to thank to Marvin D'Lugo for his thoughtful suggestions on this essay and for many conversations over the years on our shared obsessions with the acoustic imaginaries of Spanish-language cinema.

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