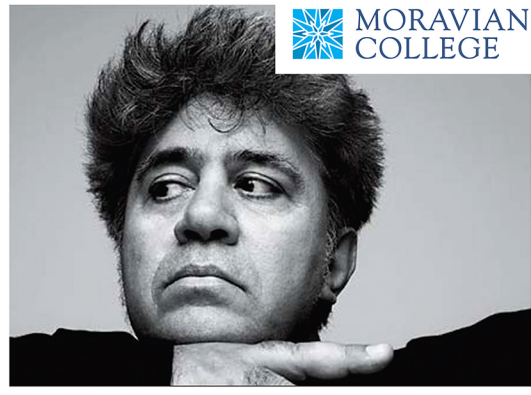


# family



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Since his emergence as a filmmaker in the late 1970's, director Pedro Almodóvar has relished his role as Spain's wild child. His irreverent and iconoclastic productions have defined a generation of Spanish filmmaking by exploring previously taboo issues like homosexuality and drug addiction. Although Almodóvar is best known for his unorthodox and at times radical aesthetic, his oeuvre is also concerned with the shifting definitions of family and nation in Spain's emerging post-dictatorship culture. I argue that a defining characteristic of Pedro Almodóvar's cinema, from his early productions onward, is his depiction of Spanish familial structure, which he portrays in a playful, and often ironic, manner. I examine Almodóvar's representation of traditional nuclear families, as well as the networks of friends and sexual partners that often serve as families for the characters in his films. In addition to his portrayal of interpersonal relationships, Almodóvar also plays with the idea of generic families in cinema. The director's references to film genre categories--Neorealism, melodrama, horror films, detective stories--constitute an essential part of Almodóvar's visual vocabulary.

# films



# of

# pedro almodóvar

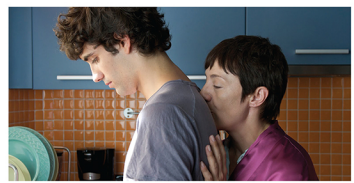
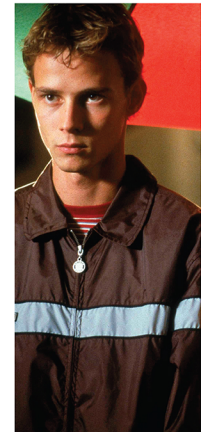


Almodóvar's work explores Spain's growth from Madrid's artistic revival following the death of Franco in 1975 to the present. His films all take place in contemporary Spain, a fact highlighted by his realistic depiction of the generational clashes and shifting values of the Spanish family. While most studies have examined Almodóvar's body of work through the lens of queer or feminist theory, few have focused on his treatment of the family as a whole. Almodóvar is perhaps best known for his depictions of gays and women, but his films also demand audiences to reexamine mainstream notions of family dynamics. Furthermore, I contend that Almodóvar's representation of the Spanish family reflects Spain's shifting sense of nationhood and national identity.

Nací en una mala época para España, pero muy buena para el cine.  
I was born at a bad time for Spain, but a really good one for cinema.  
--Pedro Almodóvar



Over the course of this project, I have chosen six films from his early (late 1970's and 1980's), middle (1990's), and late (2000-present) periods, with the intention of identifying trends and patterns regarding Almodóvar's treatment of familial relations. The films I have examined include *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (*What Have I Done to Deserve This?*) (1984), *¡Átame!* (*Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!*) (1989), *Carne trámula* (*Live Flesh*) (1997), *Todo sobre mi madre* (*All About My Mother*) (1999), *Volter* (2006), and his latest production, *Los abrazos rotos* (*Broken Embraces*) (2009). This study investigates a feature of Pedro Almodóvar's films that is usually overlooked, and has potential to shed light on a vital theme in his cinema.



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