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1-1-2006

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#### Repository Citation

Ochoa, D.J. (2006). Critiques of the "novela rosa": Martín Gaité, Almodóvar, and Etxebarria. *Letras Femeninas*, 32(1), 189-203.

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## Critiques of the *novela rosa*: Martín Gaité, Almodóvar, and Etxebarría

Debra J. Ochoa  
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At the end of the twentieth century, film director Pedro Almodóvar (b. 1949), in *La flor de mi secreto* (1995), and writer Lucía Etxebarría (b. 1966), in *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes, una novela rosa* (1998), continue to analyze the *novela rosa*, a project begun by Carmen Martín Gaité in *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) and *Usos amorosos de la postguerra* (1987). Martín Gaité argues that women of her generation were victims of the Francoist ideology found in popular romance novels. Like many others, including Franco's own daughter Carmen, she received a limited education that did not allow women to pursue a future other than marriage. Almodóvar critiques society's need to escape reality while erasing the assumption that women are the exclusive consumers of the *novela rosa*. In his 1995 film, *Ángel*, a journalist for *El País*, admits to enjoying what he calls *literatura sentimental*. Etxebarría exposes the detrimental effects of the genre's "happy ending" through her character Beatriz, who narrates the failure of her parents' marriage. Almodóvar and Etxebarría establish a criticism of the *novela rosa* at the end of the twentieth century.

In Spain the *novela rosa* finds its origins in the publication of popular literature of the nineteenth century with the *folletín* or serialized novel (Stanton 208). In *Sociología de la novela rosa* (1968), Andrés Amorós defines the *novela rosa* as "Sí, ese tipo de novelas que leen en el metro las chicas

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que reparten paquetes [...] y en las clases aburridas las estudiantes, y en sus casas casi todas las demás. Son novelas de bolsillo, baratas (unas 8 pesetas), cortas (unas 120 páginas), que se suelen publicar semanalmente, editadas en papel muy ordinario y con un dibujo atractivo en la portada” (11). Amorós investigates the formulaic characteristics of the *novela rosa*, with a focus on several novels by Corín Tellado.<sup>1</sup> He divides *Sociología de la novela rosa* into chapters according to the common traits in Corín Tellado’s works: *los héroes*, *el mundo*, *las cosas*, *amor todopoderoso*, *la novela*, and *los resortes ocultos*. The romanticized portrayals of courtship and marriage encourage the fantasies of the reading audience.

Amorós explains that there is a singular type of male hero that will save the young female protagonist. The romantic hero and heroine are “jóvenes, hermosos, apasionados. Parece milagro conocerlos en medio de toda nuestra pobreza, de toda nuestra tristeza, de la mediocridad, del dinero, de los días grises, el mal humor y el cansancio de vivir” (16). The male and female protagonists are idealized, attractive people onto whom the readers may project their desire. The male love interest inevitably is tall and strong, “de anchas espaldas y cintura breve, musculoso, delgado, de elegante porte, moreno, alto y fuerte, de músculos duros” (18). The heroine is always younger, smaller, and less privileged, emphasizing the hero’s power and stature, “Ella es frágil, bonita, sensible, esbelta, esbeltísima de cuerpo escultórico, aquel cuerpo de diosa mitológica” (18). Amorós observes how Tellado often repeats the word “esbelto” to underscore the demure figure of the female protagonist. The focus on the smaller stature of the female places women in a secondary category in comparison to the wealthy, established men who will enter their lives. Amorós does not acknowledge the political function of romance novels, which was to delimit societal behavior, paving the way for Martín Gaité to respond to this gap in criticism of the *novela rosa*.

According to Salvador Faura, romance novels during the Franco era “intended to expose Spaniards to a particular moral attitude that would further distance them from the sexual liberalism tolerated in some democratic nations” (47).<sup>2</sup> During the early postwar years, romance novels aimed to distract their readers from economic hardship. The dictatorship was equally controlling of what romance novelists could produce, avoiding any deviations from the *final feliz*. The successful writer was obligated to comply with the established story line, “to follow the demands of an audience that was exclusively used to a constrained literary discourse which did not challenge the status quo” (48).

In *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), Martín Gaité names Carmen de Icaza, author of *Cristina Guzmán profesora de idiomas* (1936), as the *portavoz* of the ideals of the *Sección femenina*. Martín Gaité explains:

Carmen de Icaza, portavoz literario de aquellos ideales, había escrito en su más famosa novela *Cristina Guzmán*, que todas las chicas casaderas leíamos sentadas a la camilla y muchos soldados llevaban en el macuto: ‘La vida sonríe a quien le sonríe, no a quien le hace mueca’, se trataba de sonreír por precepto, no porque se tuvieran ganas o se dejaran de tener; sus heroínas eran activas y prácticas, se sorbían las lágrimas, afrontaban cualquier calamidad sin una queja, mirando hacia un futuro orlado de nubes rosadas. (83)

The protagonist Cristina Guzmán’s optimism was a necessary façade to encourage trust in Franco’s plans for Spain. The *Sección femenina* reinforced women’s traditional responsibilities in order to prevent modernization in Spain.

Martín Gaité criticizes the *novela rosa* because of its deceptive nature. In *El cuarto de atrás*, C. is disappointed after reading *El amor catedrático* because of its clichéd ending.<sup>3</sup> In this novel, a young woman sets off to pursue a university degree, only to marry one of her professors before she finishes her studies. C. describes her reaction to the novel:

A mí el final me defraudó un poco, no me quedé muy convencida de que la chica esa hubiera acertado casándose con un hombre mucho más viejo que ella y maniático por añadidura . . . tanto ilusionarse con los estudios y desafiar a la sociedad que le impedía a una mujer realizarlos, para luego salir por ahí, en plan *happy end*, que a saber si sería o no tan *happy*, porque aquella chica se tuvo que sentir decepcionada tarde o temprano; además, ¿Por qué tenían que acabar todas las novelas cuando se casa la gente? (81)

The postwar era marked the emergence of Spanish women writers who would extend their novels beyond fairy-tale conclusions. In *Desde la ventana* (1987) Martín Gaité dedicates an entire essay to the *chica rara*, a female protagonist unlike the heroine of a *novela rosa*, who challenges the status quo. The *chica rara* is unique and viewed as “strange” because she cannot be categorized:

Precisamente lo innovador de *Nada* está en que Carmen Laforet ha delegado en Andrea para que mire y cuente lo que sucede a su alrededor, en que no la ha ideado como protagonista de novela a quien van a sucederle cosas, como sería de esperar, sino que la ha imbuido de las dotes del testigo. (98)

The main female character, Andrea, in Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945) does not follow a predetermined path leading to conformity. The innovation of *Nada* resides in the absence of a conclusion that assures the reader of a confirmation of patriarchal values. From *Nada* to current fiction, including Etxebarria's *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*, *la chica rara* functions to draw the readers' attention to societal problems rather than facilitating denial. The female protagonists voice the gender inequalities of society, "se atreverán a desafinar, a instalarse en la marginación y a pensar desde ella; van a ser conscientes de su excepcionalidad, viviéndola con una mezcla de impotencia y de orgullo" (100).

E.F. Stanton says of the *novela rosa*, "I will not deal with this genre in detail because it would probably bore most of my readers. Moreover, it is so similar to sentimental novels in other Western countries that it does not tell us much about Spanish popular culture" (207). Martín Gaité would challenge Stanton's opinion, because she sees the *novela rosa* as representative of the Franco era. For Martín Gaité, popular literature captures the ideology of an era in a way that is more honest and revealing than the "official" definitions issued by such Francoist organizations as the *Sección femenina*. In *Usos amorosos de la postguerra*, Martín Gaité poses the following questions: "Pero bueno, esa gente que iba a la guerra, que se aglomeraba en las iglesias y en las manifestaciones, ¿cómo era en realidad?, ¿cómo se relacionaba y se vestía, qué echaba de menos, con arreglo a qué cánones se amaba? Y sobre todo, ¿cuáles eran las normas que presidían su educación?" (11)

Martín Gaité explains how women fell victim to Cinderella fantasies that anesthetized them from the realities of life under a fascist regime:

Cuanto más desgraciadas se sintieran en la realidad, más necesitaban de aquella identificación con las heroínas inventadas por María Mercedes Ortoll, María Luisa Valdefrancos o Concha Linares Becarra, a las que cuando menos lo esperaban les llovía del cielo una ilusión que las hacía sentirse transfiguradas, distintas. El mago de esta alquimia, por supuesto, era siempre un hombre. (144)

Pessimism was to be avoided at all costs, because a negative portrayal of life was a direct critique of the dictator. Martín Gaité quotes the magazine *Medina*

Convienen los libros alentadores que levanten el ser a definitivos propósitos, que nos lleven a ser cada día mejores y que indiquen a hacer algo útil en el mundo; por el contrario, debemos huir de las lecturas pesimistas; es uno de los factores que más poderosamente influyen en el endurecimiento del espíritu. (148)

*La chica rara* and her descendents liberate themselves so that they may bare witness to their surroundings. In *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes, una novela rosa*, Etxebarría exposes the reality of an unhappy married couple, disappointed by their acceptance that the *final feliz* does not exist. Beatriz, the couple's daughter, rebels against prescribed definitions of gender and sexuality.

Lucía Etxebarría's first novel, *¡Aguanta esto! la historia de Kurt y Courtney* (1996), examines the tragic death of Kurt Cobain, lead singer of Nirvana, adding Cobain to the list of famous rock stars whose lives were cut short by violence, drugs, or alcohol. Etxebarría's interest in popular culture parallels Martín Gaité's intent to answer the question, ¿cómo eran en realidad?, for her own generation, *Generación X* or *Generación del Kronen*.<sup>4</sup> She brings to the forefront of her prose the "taboo" subjects of sexuality, crime, and unhappy marriages, all of which were ignored during Franco's reign. Critics including Kathryn Everly and Katja Carrillo Zeiter trace Etxebarría's efforts to redefine the meaning of femininity, which comprises women's experiences with relationships. *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* presents two discourses that counter-narrate the *novela rosa*: the failed marriage of Beatriz's parents and her relationships with two women, Mónica and Cat.

Katja Carrillo Zeiter reminds us that like Etxebarría's *Amor, prozac, curiosidad y dudas* (1997), the narrative of *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* begins with the end of a love story (43).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the subtitle, *una novela rosa*, the back cover adds *una novela sobre la supervivencia sentimental* (Redondo Goicoechea 113). Thus the reader is informed before opening the text that the novel does not confirm relationship success, but follows the protagonist's ability to survive its failure. Whereas Janice Radway demonstrates that the *novela rosa* validates tradition in that "the happy ending restores the status quo

in gender relations when the hero enfolds the heroine protectively in his arms” (81), Etxebarria does not intend to encourage readers’ illusions of romance.

The novel opens with Beatriz’s criticism of what her friend Mónica is reading, “No entiendo por qué lees esa basura” —le dije yo . . .” to which Mónica responds, “No me seas fascista cultural, anda. ¿Qué pretendes? ¿Que me pase el día entero leyendo a Dostoievski o algo así?” (13). Mónica’s use of the term “fascista nacional” parodies Spain’s history of censorship during the Franco era. Etxebarria writes to dismantle antiquated codes of femininity and masculinity, “Rosa es el color de los afectos. Azul el de los uniformes de trabajo. Monos de mecánico, trajes de azafata. Azul. Corbatas de ejecutivo, bolígrafos para hacer cuentas. Rosa. Cubiertas de novela romántica y cajas de bombones. Los hombres son racionales y las mujeres sentimentales” (214).

Etxebarria echoes Judith Butler’s concept of gender performance:

El concepto de género está sometido a manipulaciones sociales. Una convención impuesta. No asociada a factores biológicos. Nacer hombre o mujer no supone implicaciones de comportamiento irreversibles. Nos comportamos como tales por educación. Los roles sexuales se aprenden en función de los hábitos culturales. No son innatos. Las mujeres no son hembras porque lleven tacones. Los hombres no son machos por llevar corbata. (214)

Beatriz rebels against the rituals of her mother’s generation: “Se nace persona. Dos días después te perforan las orejas. Te ponen unos patucos rosas. Ya eres una niña. Vas a un colegio de niñas. Te visten con falda y coletitas. Cumples catorce años. Tu primer pintalabios. Ya eres una mujer. Cumples quince. Zapatos de tacón” (214). Society assumes certain preferences and tastes as natural: girls must wear pink and boys blue. Etxebarria and other members of the *nueva narrativa* write in order to resist the behavior codes that previous women were forced to follow.<sup>6</sup>

Mónica was Beatriz’s first love, and Beatriz recalls their friendship when she returns to Madrid after living abroad in Scotland with her girlfriend Cat. Beatriz looks back at her friendship with Mónica and realizes she truly desired Mónica in a sexual way:

[. . .] podría decir que opté por enamorarme de ella, quién sabe, porque las monjas y el mundo se habían encargado de repetirme una y

otra vez que yo no era una chica con todas las letras, sino una chica falsa, una farsante que se hacía pasar por tal. Y si no era una chica, si era algo así como una especie de alienígena infiltrado que no era él ni era ella, ¿por qué tenía entonces que enamorarme de un hombre y casarme y tener hijos si a mí no me apetecía? ¿Por qué no iba a enamorarme de quien a mí me diera la gana? (144)

Mónica is first introduced as *mona*, a pleasant-looking girl from a wealthy family who earns good grades. At first Mónica appears to follow traditional dating rituals when she meets her first boyfriend: “era un niño de los Jesuitas, que le pidió salir en la parada de autobús. Mónica le dio el sí por aquello de que el niño tenía quince años y lo de salir con un chico mayor que una, y además de los Jesuitas, siempre daba una cierta prestancia en el Sagrado Corazón” (106–107). However, as they mature, Beatriz and Mónica share a mutual disrespect for traditional behavior codes.

Their rebellion is fostered by their parents’ neglect and an awareness of the freedoms denied to the previous generation of young women. Beatriz states, “En medio de ese mundo pastel Mónica era la única que compartía conmigo aquella difusa impresión de desamparo y desarraigo, de haber crecido antes de tiempo” (124). Beatriz and Mónica realize, unlike their peers, that there are no “nubes de color rosado” and that they have the power to redefine what it means to be young women at the end of the century. The result is their embrace of an alternative culture that includes techno music, drugs, and transformation of their physical appearance to appear androgynous. Etxebarria reinvents the *novela rosa* and redefines what society associates with the feminine (Everly 307).

Beatriz’s ability to critique her mother’s life comes from the insight she gains through unconventional experiences. Her mother is a victim of the ideology that promised absolute fulfillment in marriage:

Mi madre ‘trabajaba’ (es un decir) en la Sección femenina enseñando cocina y organizando visitas caritativas a los barrios pobres. Y salía todas las tardes, con su tío o con su novio formadísimo, o con ambos, al hipódromo, al Gijón, al Chicote, al Café Comercial, a Llardy. Tenía el novio más guapo de Madrid y llevaba una vida digna de figurar en los ecos de sociedad. Era feliz, en suma. Nadie le había enseñado a aspirar a más. (158)



The beginning of Beatriz's parents' marriage is like a *novela rosa*, "Al cabo de un año, el día que ella cumplía los dieciocho, él, que ya rondaba la treinta y se confesaba cansado de aventurillas mundanas y deseoso de sentar cabeza con una mujer católica como Dios manda, se le declaró" (158). Their problem rests on the fact that they have received little instruction on how to cope with marital conflicts. Beatriz acknowledges her father's disappointments, "Él, que había imaginado niños correteando por la casa, uno o dos varoncitos que perpetuaran su nombre y una niña que heredara la belleza de la madre, se decepcionó al ver que aquellos niños no llegaban y se cansó pronto de ella, como un niño que, aburrido de jugar, relega para siempre a un rincón el cochecito por el que había suspirado tantos meses" (159). His wife is forced to tolerate his infidelities and pretends to be content.

Unlike Martín Gaité's generation, which had to complete social service in the *Sección femenina* before traveling abroad, Beatriz is free to study English and her parents support her plans to travel abroad. Beatriz's first sexual relationship is with Cat, a Scottish woman who supports herself as a waitress and chef in Edinburgh. The reference in the title "*cuerpos celestes*" describes how Beatriz is drawn to Mónica and later Cat, "Mundos todas nosotras, planetas que orbitamos en torno a una fuente básica de energía: el afecto, o su carencia. Órbita cementerio" (175). After Beatriz's return to Spain, the novel concludes with a sense of resignation: "Ni siquiera me siento con derecho a esperar nada de ella, y no cuento con nada que pueda prometerle. Y ahora, si lo pienso, no sé qué argumentos podría ofrecerle para rogarle que me hiciese una visita. Puede que ni siquiera sea digna de que Cat entre en mi casa. Pero una palabra suya bastará para sanarme" (265). This ending offers no resolution, unlike the formulaic romance novels. Carrillo Zeiter says of Etxebarria's work, "Lo perdido representa también la posibilidad de otra vida" (47). Loss is no longer a threat for protagonists like Beatriz, because she possesses the strength to learn from her experiences.

Protagonists like Beatriz are the literary granddaughters of *la chica rara* that first appeared during the early post-war in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>7</sup> Silvia Bermúdez says of Etxebarria's *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* and Laforet's *Nada* that both "address a fundamental question: what does it mean to be a Spanish young woman beyond the constraints of the models and social paradigms assigned by the historical moment?" (226) Pedro Almodóvar also addresses this question in many of his films.

Almodóvar's *La flor de mi secreto* takes its name from the protagonist Leo Macías's anthology of romance novels, published under the pseudonym Amanda Gris. Throughout the film the viewer learns of Leo's clandestine profession as a romance writer and of how she struggles professionally with the inability to fulfill her writing contract. Leo can not write of romance because she has begun to accept that her marriage has failed, and so for the first time in her life she begins to write of real life experiences. The transformation of her books from *rosa* to *negra* is symbolic of Leo's acceptance that her love for her husband Paco will not be reciprocated.<sup>8</sup>

Almodóvar plays with representations of reality throughout the film. The movie begins with a conversation between two doctors and a mother whose son is on a life support system. The physicians try to explain to the distraught mother the process of organ donation and how others could benefit by her son's organs. As viewers, we believe this is real until we see a man filming the scene and learn that the conversation was a skit performed by *PIDO* (*Plan Integral de la Donación de Órganos*). The serious issues of death and organ transplants contrast with the topic of *novela rosa*, an initial means of escape for Leo and other characters in the film.

Almodóvar introduces the audience to Leo in the next scene when we see her sleeping. Her nightstand is filled with pictures of her and her husband Paco, all romantic images. The camera pans down to a stack of novels on the floor, among them Djuna Barnes's *El bosque de la noche* and Juan José Millás's *Ella imagina*. These books are a source of inspiration for Leo, whom we see modifying a line from Millás's *Ella imagina* from "indefenso frente al acecho de la locura" to "indefensa." This phrase captures Leo's frantic state as she tries to write, occasionally pausing to remove a pair of leather boots. Almodóvar connects the first scene of the movie at the *Hotel Escuela Comunidad de Madrid* with Leo's initial scene when she calls her friend Betty, who is at the *PIDO* seminar.

Leo's poor emotional state is further emphasized when the camera returns to the medical seminar and we see a large notebook with a list of *sentimientos* and *comportamientos*: *pena, dolor, rabia, soledad, vacío, agresivo, búsqueda, apoyo, tristeza, resignación, pasividad*. Betty writes this list to describe to the seminar participants people's reactions towards organ donation; however, the words function on a different level establishing Leo's anxiety and isolation. After the seminar Leo finds Betty, who helps her take off the boots that the audience learns were a gift from her

husband. Leo writes addressing her husband:

Todos los días me pongo algo tuyo. . . Hoy me he puesto los botines que me regalaste hace dos años. ¿Recuerdas que por la noche tuviste que quitármelos, porque yo sola no podía? Al verlos esta mañana me he acordado de ti y me los he puesto en tu honor. Ahora me aprietan. A veces tu recuerdo, como estos botines, me oprime el corazón hasta impedirme respirar. Será mejor que me los quite. (16)

Almodóvar explains this scene in an interview with Frédéric Strauss: “Her fragility wasn’t born yesterday: years of solitude have led to years of fragility. I show this at the start of the film in a very simple way, Leo is wearing ankle boots which are too tight” (158). Almodóvar reworks the *novela rosa* by reversing the Cinderella reference. He creates a heroine in the process of removing her shoes rather than, as the Cinderella story goes, placing the perfect glass slipper on her foot. In addition, Leo finds help, or rescue, in a female friend, Betty, as opposed to a romantic connection with a male protagonist.

Betty encourages Leo to speak to her friend Ángel, journalist for *El País*, who may be a valuable professional contact for her. The conversation between Ángel and Leo is the means by which Almodóvar refutes the common assumption, as implied in Amorós’s *Sociología de la novela rosa*, that men do not enjoy romance novels. In Ángel’s office, he and Leo begin to speak about literature:

Ángel: ¿Qué autores le gustan?

Leo: Sobre todo mujeres. Aventureras, suicidas. Neuróticas . . . víctimas de sí mismas . . . Y de la sociedad de su época. Por ejemplo, Djuna Barnes, Jane Bowles, Dorothy Parker, Jean Rhys, Flanery O’Connor, Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton, Isak Dinesen, Janet Frame . . .

Ángel: A mí también me interesa la literatura femenina . . . ¿Qué opina de Amanda Gris? (45–46)

Leo responds defensively to this question, because no one but her husband and her friend Betty knows she is Amanda Gris:

Leo: ¿Cómo sabe que Amanda Gris es una mujer? . . .

Ángel: Por lo que veo no le gusta la literatura sentimental.

Leo: Sí. Pero no creo que la literatura a la que usted se refiere se ocupe lo más mínimo de los sentimientos. No hay dolor, ni desgarró. Sólo rutina, complacencia y sensiblería. (46)

Leo is sensitive because she is embarrassed that she writes romance novels to help support her family and maintain a comfortable lifestyle. Later in a conversation with her editors Alicia and Tomás, she defends her new writing style. Alicia chastises Leo for submitting *La cámara frigorífica*, based on a true murder story from Puerto Rico. Leo explains to Alicia this change from *novela rosa* to *novela negra* as part of her literary development, "Supongo que estoy evolucionando" (70). Alicia responds by explaining why people read romance novels:

Cuando alguien compra una novela nuestra quiere olvidarse de la sordidez en la que vive . . . soñar con un mundo mejor aunque sea mentira . . . ¿quién va a soñar con una gente que vive en un barrio miserable, sin trabajo, jubilados prematuros, auténticos muertos vivientes? ¡La realidad! ¡Bastante realidad tenemos cada una en nuestra casa! La realidad es para los periódicos y la televisión . . . y mira el resultado. Por culpa de ver y leer tanta realidad el país está a punto de explotar. ¡La realidad debería estar prohibida! (72)

Alicia's explanation reiterates Janice Radway's thesis in *Reading the Romance* (1984). In contemporary culture, whether in the United States or Spain, people desire to live vicariously through romantic heroes and heroines. In a questionnaire, Radway asks a group of women to rank the order of the three most important reasons for romance reading. The reasons include, "For simple relaxation," "Because reading is just for me; it is my time," and "To learn about faraway places and times" (61).<sup>9</sup> Radway's survey confirms that readers are continually drawn to romance novels because they provide an easy means of comfort.

Tomás, another editor, reminds Leo of the contract she signed with *Fascinación*, "Novela de amor y lujo, en escenarios cosmopolitas . . . sexo sugerente y sólo sugerido . . . deportes de invierno, sol radiante, urbanizaciones, subsecretarios, ministros, yuppies . . . Nada de política . . . ausencia de conciencia social . . . Hijos ilegítimos . . . eso sí final feliz" (75). Leo's inability to continue to produce romance novels stems from the fact that she herself no longer believes in them.

Leo directs her frustration toward the romantic genre by writing a negative review of Amanda Gris's *La flor de mi secreto*, and Ángel,

an adamant supporter of Gris's work, writes a positive review under the pseudonym Paqui Derma, or pachyderm. This detail is significant because it draws attention to Ángel, who is the antithesis of the stereotypical lead male protagonist. The choice of a character who is short and unattractive is Almodóvar's backlash to films that insist on model-like actors and actresses and the creation of fantasies. Almodóvar criticizes Hollywood films:

But there is, through the evocation of the romance novel, a veiled critique of the denial of reality. It's particularly relevant to movies from the American studios, which are becoming so infantile that they refuse to accept even the most basic realities such as the fact that people go to bed with each other. The public can bear this, but not the Motion Picture Association of America. (167)

As Almodóvar criticizes American films and the taste for romance, he also criticizes the history of the *novela rosa* in Spain. Although Almodóvar wants to make movies as if Franco never existed, he recognizes the role the *novela rosa* plays in Spain and the detrimental effects on many of its readers.<sup>10</sup>

Almodóvar's main female protagonist Leo remains alone at the end of the movie. However, she says to Ángel, "También tengo que aprender a vivir sin alcohol . . . sin Paco y sin alcohol . . . ¡y cuanto antes empiece mejor!" (146). Leo's efforts to seek a new life is the opposite of the romantic heroine who seeks only a love interest. Almodóvar explains, "La heroína rosa, por el contrario, al final de la novela siempre acaba acompañada, a veces mal acompañada, pero eso no importa. En la novela rosa la soledad es bonita al principio, pero al final está prohibida" (177). By the end of the film Leo frees herself from patriarchal myths and learns that solitude is not necessarily an unhappy ending.

Almodóvar, like Etxebarria and Martín Gaité, creates alternate endings to break the pattern of fiction that follow trite formulas to pacify their audiences. Leo, Beatriz, and all the *chicas raras* confront the realities of the dissolution of the patriarchal romance.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> These novels include *Eres una pecadora* (1966); *Semilla de odios* (1963); *Su traición y mi destino* (1966); *Barreras para el amor* (1966); *No debo quererte* (1966); *La condenada* (1966); *Un hombre ante mi puerta* (1965); *Sólo él la conoció* (1966); *Cruel desconfianza* (1966); and *Después de aquella noche* (1963) (Amorós 14).

<sup>2</sup> Faura lists several writers of *novela rosa*, including a few men: Trini de Figueroa, María Teresa Sese, María Adela Durango, María Teresa Largo, José Marzo, and Carlos Santander (47).

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that although Martín Gaité does not specify the author of *El amor catedrático*, it was a man, Gregorio Martínez Sierra.

<sup>4</sup> The latter *Generación del Kronen* makes reference to the success of José Ángel Mañas's *Historias del Kronen* (1994).

<sup>5</sup> Etxebarría's *De todo lo visible e invisible* (2001) also begins with the end of a love story.

<sup>6</sup> *Nueva narrativa* is the term Carmen Urioste uses to refer to the boom of Spanish women writers in the 1990s in her article, "Narrative of Spanish Women Writers of the Nineties: An Overview."

<sup>7</sup> In "La chica rara" Martín Gaité cites authors including herself whose characters are "strange": Natalia in Martín Gaité's *Entre visillos* (1958), Lena in Dolores Medio's *Nosotros los Rivero* (1953), Valba in Ana María Matute's *Los Abel* (1948), and Andrea in Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945).

<sup>8</sup> See José F. Colmeiro's article, "Del rosa al negro: subtextos culturales" for a close examination of literary genres in *La flor de mi secreto*.

<sup>9</sup> Table 2.1 To the question—"Which of the Following Best Describes Why You Read Romances?"—asked by Radway in her survey, the number of responses were as follows:

- a. To escape my daily problems (13)
- b. To learn about faraway places and times (19)
- c. For simple relaxation (33)
- d. Because I wish I had a romance like the heroine's (5)
- e. Because reading is just for me; it is my time (28)
- f. Because I like to read about the strong, virile heroes (4)
- g. Because reading is at least better than other forms of escape (5)
- h. Because romantic stories are never sad or depressing (10) (Radway 61)

<sup>10</sup> Almodóvar is quoted in an article by David Denby appearing in the *The New Yorker*, "My rebellion is to deny Franco . . . I refuse even his memory. I start everything I write with the idea, What if Franco had never existed?"

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