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Queer Motherhood: Deconstruction and Reconfiguration of Motherhood in *All About My Mother*

Almodóvar's film *All About My Mother*, despite the singularity and particularity of its very addressee, is actually a film about mothers, in the plural, or motherhood in general. Exemplified by its portrayal of the traditional heteronormative family as dysfunctional, this film refuses the conventional definition of motherhood, deconstructing and reconfiguring it. With reference to the performative nature of gendering, Almodóvar explores the parallel between the mother and the actress, which denaturalizes the social imperatives imposed on motherhood. In its place, he reconceptualizes motherhood as multiple, fluid, and intertextually constituted, as illustrated by the depictions of un-biological mutual mothering and communal mothering throughout the film. In this paper, I explore the potential of Almodóvar's radical re-envisioning of motherhood, in terms of how it enables an alternative affiliation that defies the homosocial-heteronormative inscriptions on motherhood. This reconfiguration parallels the progression of the three Esteban, arguably designed with respect to performativity, which signifies the dissolution of fatherhood and masculinity when repeatedly reconstituted by the heterosocial maternal influences. On this basis, I discuss this redefinition's further implications for rethinking womanhood, gender division, the community of care, and morality altogether.

I am currently a first-year graduate student at Duke University. I primarily work on 20th and 21st-century English, Chinese, and Italian literature and cinema through a comparative lens. My theoretical interests include feminist, queer, and affect theories, critical disability studies, and literary theory in general. Currently, I am working on the intellectual and political potentials of female friendship narratives, with a focus on queer affects and negative feelings.