

# TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9  
7 P.M. • HUMANITIES  
QUADRANGLE  
LECTURE HALL

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM  
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.

# BAD EDUCATION



BAD EDUCATION—the 16th feature film from Pedro Almodóvar—holds the distinction of being the first film from Spain to open the Cannes Film Festival. After its 2004 debut, it was hailed by critics as “Almodóvar’s most fiendishly crafted, emotionally complicated film” (Lisa Kennedy), “an often surprising, sometimes upsetting, intricately woven masterwork” (Kirk Honeycutt), “an exercise in stylish, seductive, and cinematically self-referential finesse” (Geoff Pevere), “a marvelously dirty, ultimately heartbroken movie about, among other things, the instability of identities” (Wesley Morris), and a “gloriously feverish ode to what drives us to do things great and terrible” (Jami Bernard). The Spanish title—LA MALA EDUCACIÓN—can be translated as “bad education,” suggesting the traumas endured by the film’s Ignacio at a Catholic boarding school, but the phrase also means “bad conduct” or “misbehavior,” which in this film includes blackmail, deception, thievery, prostitution, drug addiction, sexual abuse, and murder.

No. 12  
SEASON 7

This metacinematic mystery originated with a short story by Almodóvar (entitled “La visita”) written in the early ‘70s, which he claims underwent 20 rewrites over three decades on its way to becoming a feature film. The film includes autobiographical elements from Almodóvar’s life, as well as references to his earlier work (including 1987’s LAW OF DESIRE, in which a transgender woman returns to her parochial school and encounters a predatory priest from her past). Within BAD EDUCATION, the central mystery is retold through another short story (also called “La visita”), an embellished memory, a film-within-a-film, and a confession. The film “has layers under layers, fictions within fictions,” noted David Ansen of this “tale about storytelling itself, the uses of art and artifice to make the unbearable bearable.”

In addition to Almodóvar’s signature embrace of melodrama, BAD EDUCATION takes stylistic cues from film noir and Hitchcock thrillers, announcing its influences with its Saul Bass-style opening credits accompanied by a Bernard Herrmann-inspired score by Alberto Iglesias. Most noticeably, the film references VERTIGO’s blurred and doubled identities and DOUBLE INDEMNITY’s erotically-charged criminal conspiracy. At the center of the action, of course, is a femme fatale, a figure Almodóvar defined as “a woman conscious of the power of seduction, cold-blooded, which means she doesn’t falter easily; she’s lost all scruples and she’s not interested in recovering them.” The femme fatale in BAD EDUCATION is played in a career-best performance by Mexican actor Gael García Bernal, who Almodóvar declares “follows in the footsteps of Barbara Stanwyck, Jane Greer, Jean Simmons, Joan Bennett, Ann Dvorak, Marie Windsor, Lizbeth Scott, Veronica Lake, and other curses in the form of women.” Bernal is a “transcendent dramatic chameleon” (says Stephen Holden) who embodies multiple characters in BAD EDUCATION, leading Carla Meyer to describe him as “irresistible, moving from gorgeous femme fatale in full drag to muscular male tart doing push-ups for onlookers while clad only in gym shorts.” Bernal prepared for the film by studying performances by screen legends like Stanwyck and Sara Montiel, as well as Almodóvar’s leading ladies Carmen Maura and Victoria Abril, but Bernal said the performance he most wished to emulate was Alain Delon as Ripley in PURPLE NOON (the earliest film adaptation of THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY).

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **PEDRO ALMODÓVAR**

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **JOSÉ LUIS ALCAINE**

PRODUCED BY **EL DESEO** (2004), 106 MINS.

STARRING **Gael García Bernal, Fele Martínez, Daniel Giménez Cacho, Lluís Homar, Francisco Maestre, Francisco Boira, and Juan Fernández**

Almodóvar’s first film set fully in the past, BAD EDUCATION takes place in three distinct years, each of which was significant in the history of modern Spain. Events at the boarding school take place in 1964, the year when compulsory education for children returned, giving priests much more day-to-day oversight of students in parochial schools. Events in Ignacio’s short story “La visita” take place in 1977, a year that saw Spain’s first free general election since before the Civil War. Production of the film-within-a-film LA VISITA takes place in 1980—the same year Almodóvar had a feature film released for the first time—a point by which the transition to democracy had become ripe for critique for “not delivering justice to those who suffered under the dictatorship and for allowing perpetrators to move on unscathed whilst victims were silenced or ignored” (Ana María Sánchez-Arce). As characters merge and diverge, Almodóvar makes explicit to his audience “the transformation of the ideologues of the old Francoist order of the 1960s into the new Conservatives” (Marvin D’Lugo).

**DID YOU KNOW:** ESA MUJER—THE FILM YOUNG IGNACIO AND ENRIQUE WATCH AT CINE OLYMPIO—STARS SARA MONTIEL AS A FORMER NUN WHO IS UNRECOGNIZED WHEN SHE RETURNS TO HER OLD CONVENT. ALMODÓVAR SAID OF THIS ICON OF SPANISH GAY CULTURE, “SHE WAS A STAR IN THE STYLE OF MAE WEST AND MARLENE DIETRICH, A PERSONALITY, A WAY OF BEING IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA THAT MADE HER DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHER STARS.”

**NEXT UP:** TREASURES RETURNS AFTER THE HOLIDAYS WITH A VINTAGE 35MM PRINT OF BRIAN DE PALMA’S **THE UNTOUCHABLES** (1987). FEDERAL AGENT ELIOT NESS (KEVIN COSTNER) HAND-PICKS A TEAM TO TAKE DOWN AL CAPONE (ROBERT DE NIRO) IN PROHIBITION CHICAGO, **FRIDAY, JANUARY 13 AT 7 P.M.**