Devils and angels in almodóvar's talk to her

Robert Pippin

Abstract
dimension is actually “the typical.”[i] There would seem to be little typical about a world of comatose women, a barely sane, largely delusional male nurse, a woman bullfighter, and a rape that leads to a “rebirth” in a number of senses. But comatose women, the central figures in Almodóvar's Talk to Her, are, oddly, very familiar in that mythological genre closest to us: fairy tales. Both Snow White and Sleeping Beauty are comatose women who endure, “non-consensually” we must say, a male kiss, male sexual attention. (Siegfried's awakening kiss of Brunnhilde in the extraordinary third act of Siegfried should also be mentioned.)[ii] Someone apparently must manifest some act of faith, must believe that these corpse-like women are not dead, and believe it strongly enough to kiss them. Then there is a kind of inversion of these fairy tales in Kleist's story and Roehmer's film, “Die Marquise von O.” Here the kiss is actually a rape, but the rapist again emerges as some sort of Prince Charming after all (he had originally saved the Marquise from rape by a group of Russian soldiers), and there are echoes of that somewhat disturbing notion of reconciliation as well in the Almodóvar film. (Alicia, after all, does awaken.) In the Kleist story, a woman must place an ad in a newspaper asking her unknown rapist (she was drugged and asleep) and the father of her unborn child to come forward. He does eventually and the story ends with their marriage and with one of the most enigmatic lines in all of literature, as enigmatic, I think, as our complex reactions to Benigno’s act: the Marquise says that she would not have thought her new husband a devil if he had not first appeared as an angel, as if one person can be both devil and angel, that, to the
extent that one can be an angel, to that extent he also can be a devil.

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