

All the stories of domestic violence are similar: the gaze and art as liberating devices

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Abstract

Te doy mis ojos is the third long feature film from Icíar Bollaín (born in Spain, in 1967), and also a film on domestic and marital violence. In this study, the methodology used will not be the most common in film studies, in terms of identifying the director's influences, nor the detailed study of plans and techniques used neither the development of a careful analysis of image and sound. Instead, we propose a theoretical thought on the main objectives, values and ideas of the film, on a sociological dialogue with the gender elements presented. Highlighting those we consider to be the main features of a director's style, we will also study the presence of the same features in a contemporary European cinematography.

Keywords: Gender. Art. Circle. Violence. Identity.

Introduction

Initial plans of *Te doy mis ojos* evoke fear and discomfort. In short, the action begins in the middle of the night when a terrified woman pulls out some clothes of the closet and awakens her son; when both reach the wide avenue of the residential district, the two are voted to the indifference of the taxi and the people passing by; on the bus that will take them away, the child gets back to sleep while the mother, wearing slippers, tries to regain control of her breathing. The effect is caused by the global experience: the narration combined with the nervousness of a handy-cam and a melody suspended in monotone.

In the following days, Pilar's sister will pass by the house where it all started to recover some of her belongings. The viewer realizes then the central issue of this movie: *Te doy mis ojos* is a story of a terror lived through broken windows and crockery, dirty walls and medical certificates denouncing numerous fractures inflicted on the main character.

After the prologue, the scenes follow one another with great fluidity, on the right time of a story truthfully narrated and extended by the undesirable eternity. The love

that one day would have united the couple is overlapped by its antithesis, its abuse and domestic violence. The shelter and tranquillity expected in a home contrasts the drama scene and unhappiness, being the accessibility of the hermeneutical process reinforced by the progressive introduction of characters-type. Aurora is the Catholic mother who insists on the marriage vows professed by her daughter (“a woman is never better alone”), drawing up the archetype in brief strokes: widow in her 60’s, fur coat, blonde hair and high spray fixative, goody and assiduous caretaker of the deceased husband tomb. The opposition to traditional values is embodied in Anna’s figure, the postmodern sister which emphasizes the need for divorce in cases of absolute unrest, enumerating the effects of an unhealthy love: Pilar has several tendonitis, muscle pain, loss of vision in one eye and shifting of a kidney. Aware of the urgency of breaking the violence cycle, by means of financial independence, Ana will help her sister finding a job and motivating her to start a new life.

Due to the fact that this is a women’s film (from the female director, the co-screenwriter and the leading actresses) we wonder about the need for other women to take the same kind of role, so that more mimetic films of gender violence crimes are carried out and displayed. As Laura Mulvey appealed, in the 70s, with the publication of her most widely read and disputed article (*Visual pleasure and narrative cinema*), throughout this study we will try to grasp, in the film, an alternative gaze in a dominant cinema.

As this is a work of the early twenty-first century, premiered in 2003, it shows contemporary characters, easily identifiable at the daily life, of a city with the dimensions of Toledo (close to Madrid, with about 84,000 inhabitants). The dialogues are recognizable by those who listen, alternating the depth of some talks (from both the victim and the offenders), with lighter and humorous conversations between friends.

Due to its thematic universality, the film is still often quoted in workshops, academic programs or information sessions on gender violence. Winner of seven Goya awards (best film, best performing, best leading actress, best leading actor, best supporting actress, best original screenplay, best sound), two Plata shells at International Film Festival of San Sebastián (best actress and best actor) and six medals of Cinematographic Writers Circle (best film, best director, best actor, best actress, best original screenplay and best music), *Te doy mis ojos* was also well received by critics and academic studies, that have dedicated to it great attention from different areas such as film studies, but also sociology and feminist studies.

The undervaluation of the *mise-en-scène*

The women’s representation defines one of the dominant features, not just from *Te doy mis ojos*, but from the entire filmography of Icíar Bollaín: its characters pre-exist the plot, a likely consequence of the director’s experience as actress. In the film, the city

cathedral, the streets and walls are supporting the narrative's development, not pre-setting, however, the female figures. In this perspective, the city and the dichotomy tradition / contemporary are representative icons of the contrast between Antonio's chauvinism and brutality, the maternal submission and religiosity, Ana's definition and the ability to act, the complexity and the outcome of Pilar.

Nevertheless, anywhere in the world, Pilar would be the woman, confident in the human capacity for change and evolution, again believes and gives second chances. At Bollain's proposal, we clearly identify the romantic woman, sweet, submissive and passionate, able to give each part of her body to the mate: *Te doy mis brazos, mis piernas, mis espaldas, mi cuello, mi boca .../ I give you my arms, my legs, my back, my neck, my mouth...* And by this anthropological morphology, meddled in intimate scenes of return to passivity, the title's meaning is clarified. Returning to exercise absolute domination over his wife, Antonio requires her some donations. Pilar offers her eyes, ancient mirror of the soul, increasing her vulnerability in a gesture of love. Again moved away from her sister and everyone around her, she gives back her essence or way of seeing the world to the husband, making him the mediator between her and reality. Through this gesture, she transposes the limits of subservience raising in those who watch the need not to remain inactive, disinterested or silent.

Figure 1 – Still from *Te doy mis ojos* (minute 42), from the scene in which Pilar offers all the parts of her body to Antonio, in a metaphorical language which reflects the numerous compromises that she made him and will continue to make from that moment on



Icía Bollaín mimics, in turn, domestic violence as a crime started in the private sphere, which compels the complaint and transposition into the public sphere. Through the image, the filmmaker reconstructs the cycle studied by many experts who listed three successive stages in violent relationships. At this point, it is recalled, domestic and intimate partner violence are presented in *Alcipe Manual – For the care of women victims of violence*, organized by the Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV, 2010, p.26), as circular structures with different time and intensities:

- **Stage 1** – Increased tensions accumulated in daily life: The injuries and the perpetrator’s threats create, in the victim, a sense of imminent danger;
- **Stage 2** – Violent Attack: The abuser practices physical and psychological violence on the victim, increasing its frequency and intensity;
- **Stage 3** – Honeymoon: The attacker manifests care and attention with the victim, apologizing for the violence and promising to change behaviour.

Also according to APAV, it is in the systematic nature of this cycle that the difficulty of breaking ties between the victim and the aggressor lies. Since this is not the only reason for the persistence in the relationship, authors like Thomas N. Bradbury and Erika Lawrence (1999, p.181-209), quoted in the manual, understand that the emotional manipulation developed by the aggressor raises a constant scapegoating, subjugation and emotional dependence in the victim. Similarly, economic issues or the existence of children, the fear of reprisal and the lack of a social or familiar network (caused by the isolation which the perpetrator built) can contribute to the stagnation of a call for help: viewing marriage as a life project, in many cases, the victim does not even conjecture the possibility of an epilogue.

Summarizing all the above mentioned elements in Pilar, Icía Bollaín is no longer constrained to put her characters on a direct quotation process of numbers or statistics. However, the evocation of these in the film is subliminally, so we consider useful to establish a parallelism with a recent study on gender violence in the European Union (EU) released by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA). According to the numbers presented, 97 percent of the victims of sexual, physical or psychological violence, residing in EU countries, are women. Furthermore, a report in the weekly *Expresso* (March 4th, 2014), stated that one in three women has been or will be at some point in her life, victim of at least one episode of sexual, physical or psychological abuse. In the twelve months prior to the study, the paper reinforces that 3.7 million women living in the same geographical area had been subjected to sexual violence, and more than 13 million were victims of physical violence.

The cinematic approach of equivalent case studies that Icíar Bollaín proposes requires, nevertheless, a sensibility which transcends the rawness of numbers, as well as their socio-economic determinants. At this level, and from an aesthetic point of view, we consider that the director goes further beyond the stereotypes (wrong and often presented as mitigating) of the alcoholic abuser, unemployed, without any qualifications and / or resident in rural areas. Without any dramatization or miserabilism, frequent in similar works, the purpose is fulfilled in *Te doy mis ojos* for its easy understanding and circumstantial dialogues that, however, reach the viewer's interpellation while presenting imperious identity issues.

At this point, group therapy scenes for violent men, attended by Antonio, are particularly relevant to the designing of sociological profiles. On those moments the reasons presented by the aggressors are clarified, as well as a common and intergenerational view of the woman as a servant of man, in the kitchen and in bed. The testimonies of Antonio and his companions cut across fragments of a patriarchal discourse that defends the superiority of one gender over the other: the woman who does not understand her husband's fatigue at the end of a working day, his physical needs to have sex and a decently prepared dinner every evening.

Figures 2 and 3 – Group therapy with the aggressors was the starting point of the film, assumed by Icíar Bollaín in numerous interviews. Initially, the director just wanted to film a short docuficcional, similar to the scenes we have access in the long feature-film. At 28 and 29 minutes, the contrast between wide shots that reveal the misogynist atmosphere of the whole room, with close ups of Antonio's tense expressions





In the scenes mentioned, it should also be noted that, despite the presence of the actor / character, realism and documentary structure are dominant. The effect is assisted by essentially natural lighting used throughout the film, both in moving images captured inside and outside. Therefore, questioning the hybrid boundaries between fiction and documentary, the spectator is positioned towards an artistic object of value, impact and social effectiveness. The soundtrack, in turn, has a discreet presence throughout the film: the noises heard (the diegetic sound) are the everyday sounds, which makes the dramatic episodes even more raw.

With a rhythmic montage, medium or wide shots and quick camera movements, *Te doy mis ojos* is also, and for all these reasons, a work in which blur the boundaries between the *auteur* cinema and the antagonist industry, reflecting what we believe it constitutes a contemporary tendency to make films for the audience. In the European context, the twentieth century has corresponded, in terms of Cinema History, to the emergence of various cinematographies of their own authors. After this period, we are witnessing now the emergence of new proposals that will attenuate the distinction between directors who seek to follow a genealogy of the seventh art and directors working on other types of moving image, such as video art and advertising. This way, new perspectives and approaches to film production are revealed, taking influences and respecting the previous, but simultaneously keeping distance from tight boundaries. For this analysis, in close relationship with Bollaín's filmography, and for the reasons that we have been referring to, we would say that it is in this hybridity that the filmmaker is located.

The tendency is common to the contemporary Portuguese cinema. Apart from this blurring of boundaries between commercial and artistic cinema, there is a foray into new genres. After directors such as António de Macedo, Solveig Nordlund and Daniel Del-Negro have opened the difficult relationship of Portuguese cinema with science fiction and fantastic, it seems that less represented visions on the national scene can now be represented. Recent incursions from the duo Tiago Guedes and Frederico Serra by horror cinema (the film *Coisa ruim*, 2006), Rodrigo Areias by western (*Estrada de palha*, 2012), or from Edgar Pêra into a provocative and consistent experimentalism (from *Manual de evasão*, 1994 to *O barão*, 2011) are examples of a desirable dispersion of focus and new proposals.

This results in, among this new generation of Portuguese filmmakers, aesthetic currents and ways of disruptive filming, with very cared shots and a striking photographic concern, especially in the cases of Sandro Aguilar, Vicente Alves do Ó, João Pedro Rodrigues or the duo Guedes/Serra. Arises, moreover, a vast desire to reach out people and talk to them, not only through the films, but also through personal contact. We are witnessing a renewal of the film society spirit of the 50s, the meetings around movies and the talks that were extend all night long, about the initial idea of the film, the obstacles to the filmmaking, the creation of characters' process, or the message it was intended to convey. Fades out a certain egocentric tendency to make movies for the person himself, unintelligible or inscrutable. It is now welcome the public's interest, leaving the big city, realizing that outside the metropolitan area of Lisbon there are many film clubs, theatres and cultural associations open to the possibility of reveal national films.

The compulsion of the identification process

Back to *Te doy mis ojos*. Bearing in mind that Pilar is the kind of woman that quickly raises the identification, we suggest, at this stage of our analysis, revisiting feminist film theories initiated by Laura Mulvey in the 70's. For the author, the moving images captured and produced by men over nearly a century of film history, have been responsible for a voyeuristic, fetishist and male gaze of the male spectators (and female spectators also, by the generalization of the first). In the progressive development of the theory (here simplistically stated) by Annette Kuhn (1982), the reductive duality with which the filmmakers (especially in classic cinema or in genres such as *noir* and western) have directed their female characters – seductress or *femme fatale* versus holy and virtuous woman – would lead to the woman-spectator constantly needed to reverse her position, putting herself in the place of the male hero to better live the filmic experience.

The agreement between the authors, properly contextualized, can now be opposed to the increasing number of female filmmakers, like Icíar Bollaín, who take the direction of

feminist films. For these reasons, we may ask: is it possible to watch *Te doy mis ojos* from another point of view than the spectator-character-woman that, because of the statistics, it is (in the present moment), it would have already been or may be subject to this type of domestic violence? We believe that the answer is “no”, since it is through the eyes of Pilar that we offer our own eyes to Antonio and to the development of the action. It is through her testimony that we feel dilute the boundaries between love and manipulation dilute. It is with her body that we experience the role of the wife of a violent husband.

Te doy mis ojos presents thus as a realistic object, quasi-documentary, where social and gender concerns overlap the aestheticism of Icíar Bollaín. In the film, and as we mentioned above, the filmmaker essentially assumes the direction of actors, the working of characters-type and the denunciation of deep inequalities that, in the private sphere, dictate how difficult it can still be the female condition in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, the director uses art as a survival mechanism, giving it a central role in the plot. It is important to remember that is after starting work at the museum and to invest more in her education that Pilar regains self-esteem, gaining confidence and willingness to give up a small world where she is not happy. The beauty enables her new perspectives in terms not only visual, but mainly existentialists, of a future time in which she will see return to see with her own eyes. Art works thus as an opportunity to redefine reasons for human existence, echoing the view of Nietzsche enshrining its important role in the interpretation of life as well as the underlying pain and pleasure: “If we had not approved of the Arts and invented this sort of cult of the untrue and falsity of things now given us by science – an insight into delusion and error as conditions of intelligent and sentient existence would be quite unendurable”(NIETZSCHE, 1998, p.107 – Our translation).

As an aesthetic phenomenon, adds the philosopher, the existence becomes bearable through the repeated human possibility of concluding a poem, an object or a situation into their own hands. In the same sense, artists are those who permanently dedicate to this search, giving men the means to real observation (parallelism must be emphasized with the progressive autonomy and reconstruction of identity in Pilar). According to Nietzsche, only the artists, and especially the theatre actors, endowed men with:

eyes and ears to hear and see with some pleasure what everyone is in himself, what he experiences and aims at: it is only they who have taught us how to estimate the hero that is concealed in each of these common-place men, and the art of looking at ourselves from a distance as heroes, and as it were simplified and transfigured, — the art of ‘putting ourselves on the stage’ before ourselves (NIETZSCHE, 1998, p.78 – Our translation).

Pilar, as a character, performs an identical release process throughout the film, allowing the inspiration of the Renaissance masters. Those who watch the work of Bollaín can, in turn, perceive that individual experience as an incentive to the complaint and change, placing him or herself at the scene, replacing the character. And the philosopher concludes:

It is thus only that we get beyond some of the paltry details in ourselves. Without that art we should be nothing but foreground, and would live absolutely under the spell of the perspective which makes the closest and the commonest seem immensely large and like reality in itself (NIETZSCHE, 1998, p.78 – Our translation).

Taking into account the stated behavioural impact, it can be said that in *Te doy mis ojos*, inserting a pictorial image in another image (filmic) produces a dramaturgical intertextuality: the horror of reality as opposed to the liberating power of art. For this reason, when Pilar talks about the pictures that inspire her it is registered a suspension of diegetic time wattle at the time in which the paints have been produced. It is also suspended, in the same way, the tragedy of existence and the torture of the quotidian, establishing a connection between the story of the protagonist and the Greek mythology, for which is therefore necessary to understand the narrative and aesthetics function of the paintings introduced in the filmic text.

In the narrative, the first Pilar contacts with painting are produced at the time she meets her sister, in Toledo's Cathedral. After observing a wall where multiple images of bishops and cardinals, representing the hierarchical structure of a patriarchal church are exposed, Pilar holds up under *La dolorosa*, from Luis de Morales (1515-1586). When Ana comes closer, she uses humour to interpret the Virgin's expression, saying "has just realize that got out to the street wearing slippers". Alluding to the desperate sister escape early in the film, and being recognizable the similarities of resignation and suffering, Ana establishes the first analogy between the victim of domestic violence and the pictorial figures that will become central over the action. From that moment on, Pilar will be simultaneously a character in a movie and of several paintings.

Figure 4 – *La Dolorosa* (Luis de Morales, 1515 – 1586)¹



Her second contact with painting will be through El Greco, identified by the Museum guide where Pilar started working as an artist “wild, rebel, mystic and traveller” that from Italy would have received the colour education and from Spain would have assimilated sadness, violence, black and grey. When inserted in the film, through Pilar’s eyes, *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* – a painting of 1587 that is currently in the Church of St. Tomé, in Toledo – introduces a duality between the ground and death (the lower half of the painting), the light and heavenly peace (upper half). Signs of hope that Pilar can aspire to or, instead anticipate a tragic end? In other words, it will be her salvation hit by death or by the resurrection?

Figure 5 – *The burial of the Count of Orgaz* (El Greco, 1587)²



The two following paintings show the patriarchal structures of the Greco-Roman societies: man as the defining element on woman’s destination, and the latter as his possession. Assuming, in both cases, the hermeneutic function towards the masterpiece, Pilar shows a picture of the book that Antonio has offered her to the child, focusing at the representation of Orpheus and Eurydice’s myth by Rubens (1936-1937).

¹ Image from: <http://es.paperblog.com/luis-de-moralesmater-dolorosa-1570-1447173/>.

² Image from: <http://www.spanish-art.org/spanish-painting-el-entierro-del-conde-de-orgaz.html>.

Figure 6 – *Orpheus and Eurydice* (Rubens, 1636 – 1637). 196.5 x 247.5 cm. Museu del Prado (not exhibited)³



How she explains to the child (and to the spectators of the film), to escape the Aristeu shepherd and his attempt to harassment, Eurydice is bitten by a snake, eventually dying. Orpheus – hero of Thrace, son of god Apollo and the muse Calliope – then descends to hell trying to rescue her, playing lyre to Hades and Persephone that imposed him a condition: Eurydice will be released if he goes on a long way through a tunnel, followed by his beloved, but without being able to look back until they both see

daylight. Orpheus assent, cheerfully playing his instrument. Later, halfway through, he forgets about the agreement and wants to make sure that Eurydice is following him; the nymph fades away and Orpheus loses her forever. Juan listened to the mother carefully until Antonio gets home. To the spectator unaware of the myth, the interruption cannot anticipate the epilogue of Orpheus (or Antonio as a promoter of similar efforts in the recovery of the beloved). Like the conclusions suspended the previous interpretation, the end is again left open: Will Antonio's commitment be fruitless? Will Pilar fade on the mistrust and unhealthy jealousy of a man who insists on showing a constant need to have her around?

At the museum, the picture that Pilar displays towards an attentive audience reinforces the identification of the depicted mythological figures and her own character. Through a slide projected on the wall, tourists and visitors observe *Danaë receiving the Golden Rain*, from Tiziano (1553-1554), which will be gradually overlapped by the two-dimensional Pilar's image. It is this way that the status of osmosis or fusion of the female figures represented in both images is risen.)

³ Image consulted at: <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/orpheus-and-eurydice/07c9d839-8284-44bd-9c37-79585a88770f>.

Figure 7 – Still from *Te doy mis ojos*, at the moment Pilar presents her interpretation of the painting *Danaë receiving the Golden Rain*, from Tiziano (1553 – 1554). 29.8 x 181.2 cm, at Museu del Prado



By Pilar we learn that Danaë was the only daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos, whom the Delphic oracle had predicted death at the hands of a grandson. Fearful with the prediction, Acrisius decides to preserve her daughter's virginity, ordering to have her locked up in an underground chamber, in the company of a servant. But Zeus, enamoured of the young Danaë, decides to get to her transforming himself in a slimy golden rain. Through a slot, enters the chamber, fecund Danaë and, from that union, a child is born: the hero Perseus. Over the centuries, the myth has been invoked as a symbol of the absolute power of gold on human hearts and its ability to “open bolted doors”.

Years before, in 1527, Jan Gossaert Mabuse had also painted Danaë in what would become his most famous painting, now exposed in the Alte Pinakothek, in Munich. In the early twentieth century, Gustav Klimt recovers the myth, on an oil painting that is now part of the Würthle Gallery collection in Vienna. In the three representations, the sensual figure of Danaë is the passive recipient of a golden rain of divine origin: the lips and slitted legs, bared breasts and languid expression are interpretative of the sensual experience that she had been through. And which motivate the beholder's voyeurism.

Figures 8 e 9 – *Danaë* (Jan Gossaert Mabuse, 1527). 114,2 x 95,4 cm, at the Alte Pinakothek, in Munich, and *Danaë* (Gustav Klimt, 1907). 77 x 83 cm, at the Würthle Galery, in Viena⁴



It should be added that the prediction of the Delphic oracle was correct. According to the mythology re-narrated by the philosopher César Caius Brandão (2010), when he told about Dánae's pregnancy, Acrísio shed mother and son to the sea in a wooden chest. But Zeus calmed the sea currents, leading Dánae and Perseus to the Seriphus's island, where they are greeted by King Polydectes. Years later, when the king falls in love with Dánae, he faces the son's protective spirit, and he defies him. If Perseus could not decapitate the terrible Medusa (who instantly killed who stared at her), Polydectes would violate Dánae.

Assuming the role of the hero, Perseus fulfils the task in the certainty of having protected the physical integrity of his mother. However, returning to the island, he discovers that Polydectes has not respected his part of the agreement, having approached Dánae. Still holding the Medusa's head, the vengeance of the angry demigod would be merciless, transforming the king and his court in stones. Accompanied by his mother, Perseus returns to Argos, with the purpose of knowing the grandfather who, hearing rumours about this intention, decides to run away to Larissa. At the city, and presumably safe, Acrisius watches the Agones games, ignoring the participation of the Zeus' son in the competition.

⁴ Image from: <http://www.pinakothek.de/en/jan-gossaert-gen-mabuse/danae> and <http://www.klimt.com/en/gallery/women/details-klimt-danae-1907.dhtml>.

Inadvertently, the prophecy is then fulfilled, when Perseus throws a disc that victims Acrisius. Upset with the unconscious act, the young man abdicates the throne of Argos, to which he was entitled by succession, and leaves to Mycenae, which he will later rule.

Based on the conceptions myth of Perseus, Tiziano produced two very similar representations, one of which is currently exposed at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg and the other at the Prado Museum in Madrid (the image of the latter is the one used in the Icíar Bollaín's film). In both cases, the position of the female figure reveals desire, delivery and submission, on a new parallelism with the intimate scenes witnessed in *Te doy mis ojos*. As Pilar declares to her listeners at the museum, the explicit representation of Dánae's pleasure would be something censured, remaining hidden for several years in the private quarters of Philip II (who had ordered to paint it) and his successors. After centuries of darkness, the picture is finally shown to the world and placed at the museum. And again we seek anticipations: will Pilar's destination be a coincident transition of the darkness and possession of a despot to the visibility of a public space where she can be admired by all the gazes?

In this perspective, the gaze is the sense in which the victim is saved. Observing Art, Pilar identifies herself with those female figures that have experienced similar moments of pain and suffering, submitting themselves even to the supreme will of a deified male figure. Furthermore, transposing the reality supposedly fictional to the one which is experienced in different households, it is also through Iciar Bollaín's gaze that new equivalence and identification processes can be triggered, aiding possible contemporary victims of these new images, which are now in movement.

Thus, in the film, ethical and aesthetic issues tangle, by the moral and political decision of the director that tells the story of a woman, filming her gestures, her daily life, her weaknesses and strengths, her humanity. For these reasons, this can be considered a feminist work, if we recall of Chantal Akerman's statements when she assumes *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975) also as a feminist film. In 1977, in an interview to *Camera Obscura*, the Belgian filmmaker said that her originality was that, for the first time in the History of Cinema, there have been shown daily gestures of a woman: "They are the lowest in the hierarchy of film images... But more than the content, it's because of the style. If you choose to show a woman's gestures so precisely, it's because you love them. In some way you recognize those gestures that have always been denied and ignored" (AKERMAN, 1977, p.118).

Sparing no criticism to her peers, Akerman states there are rare cases in which a woman has enough confidence to deepen her own feelings, mainly choosing an obvious simplicity in terms of content:

They forget to look for formal ways to express what they are and what they want, their own rhythms, their own way of looking at things. A lot of women have unconscious contempt for their feelings. But I don't think I do. I have enough confidence in myself. So that's the other reason why I think it's a feminist film – not just what is said but *what* is shown and *how* it's shown.

By the numerous close-ups and medium shots of Pilar, focused on her terrified expressions and body language of someone living under pressure, we would say that Iciar Bollaín film also fulfills identical purposes to those set out by Akerman. The invisibility of the real woman quotidian becomes central at the plot.

Final considerations

After our analysis proposal, we would like to stress the sociological and pedagogical importance of this film, which can be applied to classes, training or clarification sessions with trainees and victims of domestic violence. Mimicking the process of surrender and no self-esteem of the main female character, as well as the main reasons quoted by the aggressors, *Te doy mis ojos* is the reflection of a society where equal rights, the stress management and a culture of peace are unfinished achievements. In this sense, through discussion and debate on the sharing of an experience (concept so dear to the feminist theories), the film holds an immense potential in terms of comprehension and identification of spectators, using the specific example.

To contemplate the evolution of Pilar's character throughout the narrative is thus to become aware of the importance of holding a "room of her own", using the metaphor of Virginia Woolf which elucidates the economic independence of every woman, coupled with an inviolable space where her identity can be established. In this regard, the entry into the labor market through a full beauty universe, impulse, creation and subjectivity, is reflected on the increase of Pilar's self-esteem.

Near the end, the therapeutic and reconstructive effect of an individual personality is almost, for a very difficult moment, delayed by Antonio, when he rips images of the book he has offered to Pilar. In a symbolic gesture that reveals the nakedness of Renaissance models, the male character tries to mock the supposedly free exposure of those "fat and shameless women", stressing his disdain and profound lack of any artistic value. The perversion he associates to the feminine is then transposed to Pilar in its final aggression, when Antonio rips off her dress and forces her to bow down naked on the porch: "Now all the neighbors can see you", he screams, in what he judges to be the highest ambition of a woman who begins to show her own will. What else would Pilar have wanted, beyond the languid glances and lewd displays of other men?

The climax that will enhance Pilar's redemption is achieved in the most dramatic scene of *Te doy mis ojos*. The dilemma "security of a marriage" versus "freedom of a divorce", common to countless victims of domestic violence, ends at the epiphany or final fatigue moment: the incongruity of a relationship where violence is dominant. Nevertheless, the decision will be supported by her sister and friends: "I have to look at myself", sustains Pilar, realizing what was the abandonment of her life and her own person, by submitting herself to others. Antonio, in turn, compels himself into the silence that settles in the room. He will be alone, in the marriage he destroyed.

In this perspective, Bollaín's film, like Akerman's, enables the desired alternative movement named by Laura Mulvey, contradicting the dominant order and the patriarchal society, towards the essentially female spectator. Centering their cameras in the usual place of invisibility (the real woman), both personalize experiences and obstacles drifted from a specific gender condition. In the two cases quoted, the defense of women's rights through a political art, was potentiated by women-filmmakers, thus Mulvey's appeal remains current, allowing us the following conclusion: if the female authorship is not significant of a feminist work, the probability is also higher. Thus, increasing the number of women to take leadership positions, both in industry and in film art, will correspond to an increase in the number of contestations to dominant values and to a misogynist aesthetics. The visibility assigned to the real woman will thus be multiplied both by the greater fluency in creating characters and also by the identification of female spectators.

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