

The Evaluation of the Spanish Movie *Contratiempo*: Thinking from the Female Perspective

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Abstract

Contratiempo, edited and directed by Oriol Paulo, is a Spanish thriller. Full of reversals and ups and downs regarding the plots, it is very popular with Chinese viewers, especially because of its innovative narrative form, complex structure, and clear perspectives. All the key plot twists are made by the discussion between two characters: the young entrepreneur Adrian and the prestigious lawyer Goodman. Generally, viewers focus on the eloquent function of the structure, however, I prefer to investigate this film from a female perspective, highlighting its nod to the dominant potency of female roles in films.

Keywords

Film Language; Women's Perspectives; Spanish Movie.

1. Relative Theories and Applicability

In 2006, Chinese writer Yu Dongye proposed to focus on the female roles in artworks by using “female perspective”, that is, to analyze the perception of artworks on women's identity “from the view of “female perspective (analyze women's perspective)” and that of “women in perspective (observe women using the perspective of other roles)” (Yu Dongye, 2006: 12).

In *Contratiempo*, Elvira, the key character who drives the development of the plot, and Laura, the murdered woman, who is quite essential to revealing the truth of the accident, are both women. Laura's narration of the case, which she did by disguising herself as the lawyer, Virginia Goodman, and Adrian's presentation of the case to exonerate himself, correspond to the “female perspective”, while the director's camera and the representation of the two women by the rest of the characters in it correspond to the “women in perspective”, providing a very suitable context for us to disintegrate the structure and plots of the film, using Yu's theory. Therefore, this text will analyze the film from a new perspective, taking into account the research results of Chinese and foreign scholars on the identity of women in literature from the “women's perspective”.

2. The Arguments and Analysis

2.1. The Denial of the Absolute Superiority Value of Male Artist Roles

To exaggerate the atmosphere of suspense, at the beginning the film is extremely restrained in the portrayal of possible witnesses, that is, it lightly traces the passerby and the parents of the murdered young man, Daniel. In particular, the father, although in Adrian's version, the meeting with the father of the dead man narrated by Laura, and the accentuated scenario of “throwing the lighter into the pond” when the father disguised as a journalist to pressure Adrian to confirm the truth, give the audience the impression that “the father of the deceased is carrying out a plan of revenge, and that of emphasizing the “uselessness” of the mother. In addition, the director uses the mother's narration to give insight into the actions the father takes to harass

Adrian. All three examples are used to emphasize the female perspective, negating the current narrative gimmick that abounds in cinemas and serials in the past, where women cannot materialize their worth without the redemption of men.

Zhang Jihong and Zhang Xuemin, literary scholars in China, have wielded two arguments, "female thoughts need male affirmation and guidance to have the convergent effect of overcoming the whole traditional culture" (Zhang Jihong, Zhang Xuemin, 2018: 6), and it is clear that this argument does not fit the logic of this film; another argument is that due to the advancement of ideas and the idea of gender equality, "there has been a "shift from the object of rights to the subject of rights" in literature" (Zhang Jihong, Zhang Xuemin, 2018: 6). As can be seen that Elvira, Daniel's mother, shifts from being the "object" repressed by the police, the young businessman Adrian and the defense lawyer Felix (all three characters are men), to the "subject" told by her husband, to the one who makes the police, Adrian and Felix be forced to confess the truth of what happened, to the one who mainly fulfills the couple's desire for revenge. She becomes the real mistress of the system of expression: she "breaks the attempts of several men from different professions to deprive their claims" (Yang Peng, 2019: 6)

Of course, as Elvira is not only a woman but also a mother, a wife, an actress, an employee, a fake lawyer, etc., she uses more than one identity to name the case and reveal the truth. But this is not inconsistent with the ideology in favor of feminism that the film symbolizes, where the process of "women going from being objects of power to being subjects of power" is expressed, because it is very clear when observing.

The version of the case narrated by Adrian that in the process of fabricating the case, pretending to excuse himself: among the stigmatized people, be it the bystander and be it Thomas, or the others who help him cover up the facts, there is not a single woman (except for the deceased Laura), which reflects a very strong and discriminatory male perspective. It is also in large part what makes him shudder when he discovers Elvira's identity and that she has forced him to confess everything. We see the shocking power of the female characters in both versions of Adrian and Elvira's narratives.

2.2. The Return of Feminine Characteristics in Terms of Professionalism

Moreover, Elvira's identity as a lawyer, a profession replete with sexual stereotypes, provides decisive support in her attempt in the execution to turn her own "speculation" into a "fact", which gives rise to a rich sense in terms of the professional selection of this character. Gender stereotypes in the profession, as an extension of social stereotypes in the field of trade, are a current social reality. Some relative theories state that, for women lawyers, professional gender stereotypes are the root cause of their discomfort in the workplace, rejection by professional ideologies, and even sexual harassment suffered. "This is a major impediment to the development of women in the legal profession" (Liang Daran, 2018: 3).

In the film, we can see short hair, a loose-fitting coat, and a gentleman's purse... Virginia is portrayed as a genderless figure, as the microcosm of the millions of women in the traditional professional field who sacrifice their femininity for the assent of society. Later, in the confession sequence, the "Virginia" (disguised by Elvira) stands in front of a window, takes off her short wig, puts on her glasses, and restores her makeup, returning to feminine identity and achieving the transformation from "the "unisexual" to the "feminine" (Zhang Xuemin; Ma Chao, 2016: 1), which again attacks the professional discrimination represented by Adrian strongly affirms women's capabilities.

3. Conclusion

The film denies the radical importance of men in the process of women's self-realization; it denies the necessity of male leadership for women to break away from traditional systems

while presenting the transformation of women from objects of power to subjects of power; it presents the transformation of women's roles from "unisexual" to "feminized". This film serves as a window through which we can observe the lives of others and presents to the public the struggle between the roles of men and women and transmits to all viewers, whether female or male, the repression felt by female roles, transforming them into responsibilities shared by both sexes in society. This the film reflects a great development in recent years of cinematic feminism and a social the theme that continues to be popular in recent years.

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