
INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

Recibido: 26/11/2015 ----- Aceptado: 10/02/2016 ---- Publicado: 15/03/2016

**“THIS IS THE BEST ARGUMENT YOU CAN PUT FORWARD
AGAINST WOMEN:”
THE FILM *FURROWS* (1951) AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL FOR THE
STUDY OF GENDER VIOLENCE**

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ABSTRACT:

Gender violence is one of the most extreme consequences of inequality between men and women in society. In this sense, movies, as a means of mass communication, are able to pass on certain discourses that can stimulate certain ideas about masculinity and femininity. In order to approach in the classroom the mechanisms perpetuating this hierarchy and justifying violence, this article proposes the analysis of the film *Furrows* (Nieves Conde, 1951). By the study of female characters and their relationship with the historic, political and social context of Franco's dictatorship, this paper promotes the incorporation of strategies allowing students to identify the discourses supporting those aggressions. In this movie, violence against women acts as a reproof and deterrent for behavior that flouts the traditional gender roles fomented by the State and the Church. The movie becomes an ideal pedagogical tool for the study of the responsibility of moviemaking in the transmission of values and beliefs.

KEY WORDS: Gender – Violence – Women – Cinema – Education – Franco's dictatorship – Inequality

**“ESTE ES EL MEJOR ARGUMENTO QUE SE PUEDE ESGRIMIR
CONTRA LAS MUJERES”:
LA PELÍCULA *SURCOS* (1951) COMO HERRAMIENTA
PEDAGÓGICA PARA EL ESTUDIO DE LA VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO**

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RESUMEN:

La violencia de género es una de las consecuencias más extremas de la desigualdad entre hombres y mujeres en la sociedad. En ese sentido, el cine, como medio de comunicación social, tiene la capacidad de transmitir discursos que pueden estimular determinadas ideas sobre la feminidad o la masculinidad. Con el fin de poder estudiar en el aula los mecanismos que perpetúan esta jerarquía y avalan la violencia, este artículo se propone analizar la película *Surcos* (Nieves Conde, 1951). A partir de los personajes femeninos del filme y su relación con el contexto histórico, político y social de la dictadura franquista se pretende fomentar la incorporación de estrategias que permitan la identificación por parte del alumnado de los discursos que amparan las agresiones. En esta cinta, la violencia contra las mujeres se presenta como un espectáculo aleccionador que funciona como instrumento represor de los comportamientos que no se adhieren a los roles tradicionales de género fomentados por el Estado y la Iglesia. La obra se presenta como una herramienta pedagógica ideal para abordar la responsabilidad del cine en la transmisión de valores y creencias.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Género – Violencia – Mujeres – Cine – Educación – Franquismo - Desigualdad

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender violence is the ultimate expression of inequality between men and women. In the preamble to the Organic Law 1/2004 on Integral Protection Measures against Gender Violence, one of the most advanced in this field in Europe, it is described as "the most brutal symbol" of differential treatment according to gender. Such attacks are identified as those directed against women "by the very fact of being". This definition, and the enactment of the law, are the result of awareness in Spanish society that male violence is a public nature that goes beyond the walls of home. The contribution of the feminist movement to the visibility of this structural violence, which does not distinguish social class, religion or nationality, has been instrumental throughout the twentieth century. Since movies as a means of social communication can act as transmitters of certain values, it is essential to promote media education which recognizes elements of symbolic violence. Therefore, this article proposes the film *Furrows* (1951), directed by José Antonio Nieves Conde, as a teaching tool to address how the hierarchical relationships on the screen and their connection with the submission of women are naturalized. Franco's dictatorship, like other totalitarian regimes, exercised what Berthier called "indirect propaganda" (1990, p. 33), ie the transmission of social and cultural paradigms through films and other forms of fiction. It is particularly interesting to apply this idea to the prevailing sex-gender system at the end of the Civil War to understand some of the mechanisms the state used to articulate society according to the national catholic model. As it arose in a political context in which a clear gender differentiation was promoted, the film reveals the influence of the power groups. Hence and from its historical significance comes its interest to the class.

The mass media have been in the crosshairs of discourse broadcasting that puts women in an inferior position. One of the theoretical bases of its power is the analogy established by Lauretis between the concepts of gender and ideology provided by Althusser. According to this reasoning, the author notes that films, as a "cinematic apparatus", can be considered a social technology in allusion to Foucault for its influence on the construction and reproduction of models of femininity and masculinity. As Lauretis reminds, the staging of the genre "is its construction" (1987, p. 3), which means that cultural production –among which are films– has not been confined only to show action guidelines but, in doing so, it is endorsing certain regulatory identities and settling concrete models. Thus, violence by men on celluloid works acts as a tool to identify the boundaries and redirect attitudes considered "deviant".

If I mentioned before the concept of "indirect advertising" which is in line with the newly exposed postulates on the ways to impose power, I now wish to refer to the ecological framework of Heise (1998) to introduce the relationship between cinema and gender violence. From the study of Belsky (1980) on child abuse, this author identified the elements that influence violence against women at various levels. Of the four layers she established², ranging from the intimate sphere to the social system, the one that is especially relevant is the one called "*macro-system*". This includes the different beliefs and discourses circulating through society and justifying and encouraging violence against women.

Indeed, from the studies reviewed by Heise, the academy identifies two main factors of the macrosystem that have been associated with violence. The first one is the model of masculinity prevailing in certain societies, in which males are identified as such by the authority and force they exert on others. To this element Heise added a sex-gender system in which the roles of men and women are clearly defined. To support his theory, he cites several lines of research suggesting that acceptance of rigid gender roles, either at social or individual level, increases the likelihood of aggression. It is convenient to have this framework as a reference because, on the one hand, the dictatorship was based on masculine values extolling the cult of violence as a sign of virility and, on the other hand, it boosted the return to traditional femininity, in which women were wives and mothers (Cenarro, 2011).

Despite having received the emblem of film of "national interest" that led to public subsidies, *Furrows* was not well received in 1951 by those who held the civil and religious power, and particularly by the Catholic Church that called it immoral and dangerous (Fernández Sirvent, 2000). This is largely due to bitterness and despair in which the filmmaker portrayed the rural exodus. The film tells the arrival at Lavapiés, a district of Madrid, of a family from the countryside. Their struggle to integrate into

² The first layer would be the one relating to the personal trajectory of the victim and the attacker. Right next comes the "microsystem", which corresponds to the framework in which the attacks take place, for instance, at the heart of a family. The "microsystem" in which the social structures, such as the networks of friends, the neighborhood or the work environment, are framed would include these two levels and stay under the last layer, which the author calls "macrosystem".

a hostile environment is the theme of the film. Madrid is presented as a place where moral values seem to be diluted for the sake of survival and the only thing that is left is the failure of returning. Therefore, defeated by the vicissitudes that have even claimed the life of a child, the Pérez decide to return ashamed to where they came from. Nieves Conde, who had been assigned to the Phalanx, and even served as provincial party chief in Segovia, showed with this work his disappointment with the drift of Franco's dictatorship. Despite this disagreement with the established power on issues of migration, the film follows the precepts of Franco in regard to the clear division of gender roles.

As regards the female population, after years of the Republic and the Civil War, when women played roles comparable to those of some men, the conservative and labor sectors agreed in their desire to return home. In order to submit women, a legislative and ecclesiastical machinery was activated. Thus, the Labor Law (1938) established that the State "will free married women from the workshop and the factory." This legal system confined women to their home, to field work and to the hardest work. Not only were they held in the private space, but the regime and the Church defended marriage as the only viable option for a woman's life under the dictatorship. Thus, Franco said in the Charter of the Spanish: "*The State recognizes and protects the family as the natural and fundamental institution of society, with rights and duties superior to any previous positive human law. Marriage will be one and indivisible*". (1945, art. 22).

In this process of hierarchy and domination of men over women during Franco's dictatorship, the words of the founder of the Phalanx, Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, echoed. In his speech in Extremadura, delivered at Don Benito in 1935, he defended selflessness as a virtue of women, which allowed them to accept "a life of submission, service". His sister Pilar Primo de Rivera, who would lead, as head of the Women's Section, the indoctrination of women as faithful servants of males during Franco's regime, clinched these considerations in 1938³. Not only did she claim that "[the] real duty of women to their homeland is to form families", but she also stated that they were "the true complement of men" and that women could not compete with men because they could never meet men's level. Likewise, from the Women's Section, she spread well-known instructions to all corners of Spain for the good wife to accept her position of inferiority.

2. OBJECTIVES

This article proposes the analysis of the sex-gender system of Franco's regime, from the presentation of female characters in the film *Furrows*, so it can be used in the classroom to promote critical thinking by students. As a teaching tool for media education, this study aims to present the elements to reflect on the different layers that influence gender violence and, specifically, the influence of the macrosystem in

³ This article was published in the newspaper *Arriba*, in Buenos Aires, on November 26, 1938. It has been quoted in Balletbó, Arna (1982), "women under the dictatorship", *Leviatán: a journal of socialist thinking*. Madrid, Pablo Iglesias Foundation, II Era, n. 8 June 1982, pp 96-97.

delivering speeches. The selection of a film from Franco's dictatorship can relate more clearly the elements of the screen to the interest of the regime to impose a hierarchy between men and women. Besides making it possible to address the specificities of this historical period, this piece of research aims to lay the grounds for students to be able to analyze the latest cultural productions. Being aware of the mechanisms contributing to the naturalization of inequality is a first step towards a more egalitarian society.

3. METHODOLOGY

This piece of research has an interdisciplinary approach that adds theories from different areas of study. First, it relies on gender studies, mainly in relation to film criticism, though it also draws on psychology. Also, being a film set in Franco's dictatorship, historical texts are cited, as well as current literature relating to that period and, in particular, to the history of women. The methodology is based on a film analysis that integrates these perspectives so that they can relate the movie to the historical, political and social context in which it arises. Since our aim is to teach how to deconstruct the hierarchical relationships between men and women and the identification of gender violence as a tool of control, the study focuses on the analysis of four female models portrayed in the film. Each one can address the situation of the group to which it belongs, while urging students to recognize different ways that supposedly justify gender violence.

4. DISCUSSION

The female characters of the film of the early years of Franco's regime fall into two categories: the "good woman" and the "bad woman" (Berthier, 1990). The mother of the family and the future bride are the main models of the former group, while unmarried women who reject marriage, including prostitutes, are also included in the latter group. In the film *Furrows* we could observe a similar philosophy, although subject to the standards (or lack thereof) of urban space. Among the young women living in the city who begin a relationship with the sons of the Perez family are the exemplary Rosario and the femme fatale, Pili. They represent competing models who may reintegrate the young groom to society or, on the contrary, "cause" his ruin. Among the rural women who come to Madrid are the mother of the Perez family, who will be punished for her husband for having subverted the hierarchy in marriage, and the unmarried daughter, Tonia, who ends up tarnishing the family honor as she is deceived by a wealthy man. In the movies of the forties, and it could be extended to this film of the early fifties, it was common that the ancestor and the marriageable girl would play the role of good women. In this case, they have gone astray and are therefore victims of a "corrective" violence imposed by the husband and father. Among the causes of this departure from what is morally right, we can find their arrival in the city, a place where women typically enjoy greater freedom (Council, 1998). This point is difficult to prove, since the film does not show life in the village. After this initial presentation, each of these characters is to be individually analyzed to have a broader view of how these models worked.

4.1. Rosario, the exemplary woman

Being a faithful follower of Franco's values as regards the relations between men and women, Rosario is presented as a woman who knows what her role in society is and how she must behave submissive to her boyfriend and her father. It is the young girl who helps Manolo, the son of the Perez family, when, after losing all the merchandise he was selling at the fair, he begins to lead a bad life on the street. He lives in a slum on the outskirts of the city, an area in which, as in an idyllic village, the harmony being absent in the big city reigns (Bloch-Robin, 2014). It is in this place in the borders where the woman who best embodies standardizing femininity emerges. There is an aesthetic detail that demonstrates this quality and differentiates it from other women: she is the only blonde.

Among the elements that Nieves Conde used to illustrate her conforming to the rules is the scene in which she thinks she should go to sleep to the house of the neighbor due to the "idle gossiping" about her sharing her house with a man who is not a member of the family. Even more representative is the moment she meets her future father and she warns him that she and her boyfriend love each other "but as intended by God." That is, they do not have sex before marriage, in accordance with the requirements of the Church. She not only shows an interest in preserving her honor, but she also accepts and promotes the sexual division of labor. Thus, she immediately released her boyfriend's father from the housework and takes on those tasks. Despite being in a strange house, she is ready to wash the dishes so they can go to parties in the neighborhood. She is not a victim of domestic violence since she is supposedly aware of her position in society. The film does not need to submit her but, on the contrary, the movie extols her exemplary behavior, as opposed to the others'. Her father taught her to respect men, as shown in the scene at the puppet theater.

In it, the parent staged an argument between a wife and her husband. Supposedly, the goal is to teach the country boy, Manolo, he can also make a living with this show. However, the fact that the father has selected that story to play it in front of his daughter and her boyfriend is presented as a lesson for the future couple -and for those who see it in the movie theater. In the show, she complains that her husband has wasted the money of wages and she suspects he is engaged in illegal activities as black marketeer. This generates her frustration and anger against him and she begins to insult him. At that moment, the husband, who does not answer the allegations on injury to the household economy, warns her that she is disrespecting him. After which, he says, "my honorable father said I had a powerful argument to convince you." Then he gets a stick and begins to beat her on the head while asking, "Have you been convinced that you owe me obedience?". Between laughter, and after pulling out the head of the other puppet, the husband tells the audience: "This is the best argument that can be enforced against women."

This scene contains the ideology of Franco's dictatorship on gender: they cannot ask for an explanation by the head of the household on his use of money or on his

activities or be punished for rebelling against authority. You can sense that this speech, which appears in the foreground of the screen, circulates among children who watch the show every day on the street. The hilarity diegetically shown by both youth -including the young girl, who never feels empathy-, coupled with the comic and child component involving the puppets, aims to reduce the drama of abuse and murder (remember she has been beheaded). It is significant that it is the father who speaks for the rag dolls, or that the male character alludes to the advice of his "honorable" father. It is a staging of the values of patriarchy, which in this case coincide with those of the regime. The characters who have seen and heard the advice of the puppet are shown in the film as an exemplary woman and a man: they have learned to behave as befits their kind.

In a wider radius, violence becomes a spectacle with hints to endorse the regime's authoritarianism and oppression. As Yuval-Davis (1997) has indicated, the abundance of images of the nation as a female figure is the symbolic Translation of settled ideas that view women as icons of the collective culture. In the Spanish context, one of the most obvious examples is precisely that of the iconographic representation of the Republic. Although in this case it is a puppet woman who received the beating, she could be embodying all of those who are excluded from power by Franco's regime, whether by gender or by political reasons or otherwise.

4.2. Pili, the femme fatale

Pili embodies the opposite model of Rosario, in a binary opposition that extols the "evil" of the former as compared to the "goodness" of the latter. Both are girlfriends of sons of the Perez family, but they do not have the same relationship with them. If Rosario boasted of her modesty, Pili does not care to challenge the morality of the time by kissing on the stairs of the front yard, going to bed with a man she is still not married to, smoking or entering male spaces such as barrooms. It is the city woman who receives the Perez family on their arrival in Madrid and, as such, she is not a good example for the farmer girls, since she embodies the stereotype of the femme fatale. She is sexy and men like her, men, being in love, come to be at her mercy to the point of losing their lives. The film builds her powerful body based on the gaze of others. Males praise her at various times of the film and Tonia looks admiringly as she undresses. This striptease, which takes place off screen, is shown only with the clothes that are thrown on the chair and with the expression of the daughter of Perez who, from the bed, is following closely her footsteps. In a sense, it is considered that contact with this woman perverts the seemingly innocent village girl. This scene is accompanied by a melody that reinforces the sense of wellbeing that produces this female nude.

The femme fatale is characterized by a body that provides her with power, although it is beyond her will (Doane, 1991). Since the nineteenth century, patriarchy has used this stereotype to channel its fear of feminism (idem) and the breakdown of the traditional social structure that would end male hegemony. The film, and especially the black movies of the forties, has been one of the technologies that most wings have given to this model. To Bernárdez et al. (2008), the development of this

prototype can be considered a form of violence against women since it feeds the fear that women may have access to the same positions as men, with the consequent loss of power for them. When trying to perpetuate this model, it promotes partnership between powerful women and danger, since they often bring disgrace to men who fall into their networks. Also, their behavior challenges the hierarchy that wants to subtract influence.

It is a subversive element that generates instability in the traditional patriarchal society, as it is not subject to their gender role, and therefore it is retaliated. This is done by her ex-boyfriend, the "*Mellao*", who deals with violence and contempt several times. Among them is the scene in which he jealously assaults her at the front yard for having used her influence to have Pepe Perez, her new boyfriend, get a job. The courtyard becomes the stage of a theater in which the hallways of the upper floors act as boxes. When Pili comes, the "*Mellao*" is waiting. He has realized that his boss no longer holds him in such high regard as before and imagined that it is due to her intermediation. He does not accept being rejected and to slaps the girl on her face. At that point, the camera pans up and down to show the witnesses of the aggression. They are mostly women, neighbors of the victim and children. Despite being a semi-open space, it is part of the house and therefore the home in which the married woman and the offspring should remain.

One of the witnesses urges Pili to defend herself but no one intervenes to protect her. Not even she confronts him. Comments of women are heard that say "*men now, let them blow off steam (...) He will have his reasons*". In the agitation at the courtyard, it is difficult to establish whether these words are ironic, and therefore disallowed the action of the male, or otherwise justify his behavior. Pili, after finding out that she is bleeding in the temple, all that she says is: "*this is going to cost you displeasure.*" To which he answers by kicking the bag in which she carried the tobacco she was going to sell. Cigarettes spread along the ground and all children, and some women, pounce on the goods, while Pili attempts to retrieve them. This sequence is a proof of the lack of solidarity among people struggling to survive in an unfavorable environment. Women do not come to comfort her nor do they show their support. The damage done by her former boyfriend is greater than if it were in the private space, because public humiliation is added to the physical pain and, if necessary, the consensus that she deserved it. According to the values of the regime, she should be punished for interfering in the affairs of men and for not keeping fidelity and respect for her boyfriend. The neighbors do not empathize with her because they believe that she is not a decent woman. Her behavior, beyond the standard of gender, wakes the rejection of society. The only support she gets is from Pepe, her boyfriend, who feels the attack is an affront to him.

At the end of the film, "*Mellao*" looks for her again and forces her to leave with him. When she refuses to accompany him, he replies: "If you wish so, sweetie. I'll give you a few slaps because that's the right thing to do and then, as two doves in love." He pushes her against the bed and threatens her to beat her or, as he says, that "the music starts." Symbolically, it could translate into a power struggle between the countryman and the man from the city, who ends up imposing himself by force.

When Pepe returns, wounded, the two men have a fight over the woman and work. The "*Mellao*" throws Pili down to prevent her from defending her boyfriend and kills the guy with a hit with a wrench on his head. She escapes and the murderer runs after her. Despite not having been married to this guy, he seems to act with the legitimacy of a husband. This reveals how the decision-making ability of Pili is called into question because a woman should be subject to a male. While the film portrays the "*Mellao*" as a violent man who is frustrated for losing his girlfriend and seeing his job prospects dwindling, Pili is considered in some way to have caused the death of Pepe. It is she who has helped him to have a risky job situation and, by falling in love with her, Pepe has earned the enmity of Pili's former partner and executioner. The transcending message is that the girl has been a bad influence on Pepe and that men from the city do not share their women or their job with the countrymen. The punishment of the femme fatale in this case is that she feels guilty for the death of Pepe or something worse, since she does not know what the "*Mellao*" will do to her when he catches her. So much so, that she does not appear at the funeral of her boyfriend, although the cause is unknown. It could be because she is unable to attend, either because she is badly injured or killed, or because she feels responsible for the tragic end. While she is the victim of both beatings from her former boyfriend and the loss of her boyfriend, the film finds her guilty.

4.3. The mother and wife

Being old, the mother of the Perez family is the only one in the film who is married and, as such, she does the housework and manages the family finances. However, she does not submit to her gender role, at least in the city, and tries to impose her authority over her husband's, thus subverting the precepts laid down by the political and religious establishment. Indeed, marriage did not include equality of conditions between the signees, since the married woman was legally and economically dependent on her husband. The precepts of Franco's regime in this area make direct reference to the Catholic doctrine, as the New Testament states that "[the] married women are subject⁴ to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church "(Ephesians 5.22 to 23).

In this framework defining gender roles, migration is a distorting element. The husband, deprived of his manhood provided by paid work outside his home, helps to arrange and clean the house. However, as soon as he receives a letter with a job offer, he blurts out to his wife: "I have a man's work and you're going to put on this apron. And you're going to get into the kitchen, which is your place." At that time, he is reminding his wife, and the public, which the traditional division of labor between men and women is. And he recovers the power under the law and the Catholic teaching to restore the hierarchy within the family. By the tone in which he makes this comment, we sense that a man's work is more important than a woman's.

However, this will not be the only scene in which they try to redirect a family

⁴ Depending on the translation, the terms "subject" or "submitted" can be used, an overtone that is not trivial.

situation that is getting out of the established framework. The mother has chosen not to tell her husband that her daughter Tonia is taking singing and dancing lessons defrayed by the local businessman, Don Roque, the "*Chamberlain*". Finally, this case shows that his sponsorship is simply a strategy to manipulate the girl and get her sexual services. This mechanism comes to light when she debuts at the neighborhood theater in front of an audience in which there are some troublemakers paid by this powerful man. After this public humiliation, the father discovers that his wife and daughter had not given him any account of this artistic activity and its relation to the "*Chamberlain*". The husband seems to feel bound to amend this behavior by force.

First, he assaults his wife in order to punish the supposed rebellion and relocate it in an inferior position. He who had been portrayed as a kind man, loses none of his goodness when beating her, as he has the approval of the other characters and the audience. She, however, is left alone to purge the sentence imposed by the patriarchy. The filmmaker does not take pity on the victim because she has acted beyond the rules to bypass the marital authority. After this assault, the woman whom she shares the flat with tells her indifferently "*on a similar occasion, my husband, God rest his soul, left me in bed for eight days.*" Her friend not only empathizes with her but warns her that it could have been worse. The symbolic violence expounded by Bourdieu (1990), according to which inequality rests on the consent of the subjected people, has one of its greatest expressions in this commentary. By showing respect for abusive husbands, she is naturalizing the hierarchy and justifying the mechanisms that served to settle it. Not only that, but the victim becomes guilty of her misfortune. Regardless of concern for the whereabouts of Tonia, the widow companion tells the mother: "*If anything happens to the girl, it's your fault.*" The woman begins to mourn and her friend starts laughing cruelly. This character suffers both the blows of her man and the accusations of her friend. The discourses of the time denied her the legitimacy to act behind the back of the head of the household and the repressive device has acted accordingly.

Although marriage was presented as the foundation of the family, among the women living under the regime there were discordant voices against the laws protecting this structure. Two years after the premiere of *Furrows*, in which the use of gender violence for the "*good*" family functioning is justified, Mercedes Formica published "*marital home*" in the newspaper *ABC*⁵. Being a Falangist of the earliest times, she could integrate her claims in the newspaper with the support of the director of the publication who ignored censorship. She wrote that the Civil Code in force at that time was "*unfair to women in most of the institutions*" and, specifically, when it came to violence, since it prevented the victim from remaining in the family home in the event of separation. This situation would force wives, who usually lacked their own resources as a result of the legislative framework, to live with their executioners, in some cases, even till their death. She extols "*the Christian family, essential for lasting*

⁵ The article was published in *ABC*, 7-XI-1953. It is collected in the book Aguado, Ana (1994), *Texts for the history of women in Spain*, Madrid: Cátedra, pp 388 and 389.

peace," but urges the legislator to defend the assaulted person and not the aggressor so that the social structure can "win in morality and good examples."

The media of the time somehow justified these attacks that were in line with the discourses of the regime, as analyzed by Nicolau Gómez (2013) from *The Case*. Thus a man "*deranged by jealousy*" committed the "most absurd crime" and killed his former girlfriend, who was "*a hopeful, simple and honest girl*," as stated in an article dated April 25, 1954, quoted by this author. These stories transmit the idea that the devotion of women also means accepting abuse with resignation (ibid). Pilar Primo de Rivera had already warned it when sentencing that, in the family, there should be "*absolute understanding for the bad qualities of others*" (1938), a message that urges women to accept stoically the treatment that their husbands or other men who are entitled to exercise their authority want to give them.

4.4. Tonia, the unmarried farmer

Unlike the three previous women, Tonia is the only one that does not maintain a sentimental relationship with any man, so she is subject to the men of her family. Upon their arrival in Madrid, she starts working in domestic service, which was presented as the only way for the girls of her condition who arrived from rural areas (Nicolau Gómez, 2013). She is seemingly innocent and will end up being deceived by a man who will not want to be engaged to her. Thus her honor and that of her relatives is mocked. She embodies the country woman who longed to move to the city to become one of the women in magazines that are posted on the walls of different rooms in the film. To this end, she said that once she had even thought about running away from the village. Madrid represents to her, as to immigrants arriving in the capital, the place where dreams come true. Hers is perhaps the most ambitious, because she wants to become a famous singer. Such was her desire to leave the village that she even renounced marriage, as explicit in these words: "I could have married well there, to a handsome some, but Pepe says that here ...". The end of the film, in which her honor has been outraged, refers to the idea that she should have accepted her fate and, above all, a husband of countryside. A girl of her condition cannot afford to dream. The grim message of the film is that the only way she has to get nearer her goal is to sell her body.

She has prepared to debut as a singer. Don Roque was infatuated with her, has financed her training at the singing school and bought her a dress. His purpose is simply to have sex with her. His arts have arranged all this network so that she finally falls into the trap. The girl, enraptured by her wish, comes to the show with the idea that it will be the beginning of victory. However, he has hired three guys to be responsible for breaking all her enthusiasm. With the stage name of "Tonia the farmer," a name that reveals her condition, she goes on stage before a packed theater. Rioters interrupted her sarcastically as she appears and do not cease to bother her during her song. They finally instigate the public to join them in their mockery and she, on the stage, looks at what has been her debut and cries. She is alone, facing a jocular crowd, among which are her grieving family members that cannot but feel her shame as their own. This scheme orchestrated by the

"*Chamberlain*" is a sign of psychological violence against a woman he wants to have sex with. Being humiliated by a theater laughing at her misfortune, she takes refuge in his arms. The drawings and the staging enhance the identification with her, but above all, with a grieving father who can do nothing to remedy her misery.

The camera then follows the suffering, and angry father. His son and his exemplary daughter-in-law accompany him in his grief. Needless to say, however, that the victim of this network is Tonia, she reappears on stage dressed in a gown with feathers, smoking and combed with a high bun. This appearance and attitude are away from what was considered moral at the time, so you can guess that she has become a "bad woman". She is in a flat of the big boss and everything suggests that she is prostituting. His father comes looking for her and, without a word, slaps her on her face. Immediately afterwards, he delivers her clothes, which is a metaphor to return to the "*good women*" and leave the miserable life provided by Don Roque. This sequence of events shows that the decisions made by women did not lead to fruition and it is the father who has to correct the situation. These acts show that both the girl and her mother are considered the property of the man. So the father has to make them return to the right path. Violence comes as a necessary evil to recover the established order. In the film Tonia and her mother are punished more harshly than the businessman. Women are defenseless against abuse. This helplessness is heightened if it is lower classes against the powerful, as on this occasion. In any case, these scenes show that the characters move in a man's world, in which men are the ones who solve the troubles and have the power to subjugate women.

Along these lines, Tonia's brother asks Don Roque to marry her. Marriage is presented as the only honorable choice for such an offense. The "*Chamberlain*" replies: "*Don't be a real hick. You're a collection of fools and you're the first one or do you think I gave you work on your pretty face. I liked Tonia, but now I don't care.*" With these words, the chief reveals that he made fun not only of her but also of his. Don Roque humiliates him by saying they have been very naive and he has only hired him because he wanted his sister. The body of rural women is the currency in industrial transactions of men in the city. They not only are not considered the most disadvantaged people in this network, but they are presented as participants in the misfortune of men. No character, except the mother, sympathizes with her. On the contrary, they accused her of having created a problem with the black marketeer. Not only public humiliation but also prostitution, to which she has been called by deception, can be considered forms of violence here.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This analysis reveals how Nieves Conde puts cinema at the service of Franco's regime to fix the position of women in the family and in society. To do so, he doubtlessly punishes his female characters as they walk away from normative behavior. Violence becomes a sobering spectacle intended to discourage any disobedience. For this, he uses the theatrical space that guides the other characters

to look at aggression or the humiliated person⁶ so that the damage is amplified. This mechanism, which in some cases involves a break in the diegesis, can interfere in the process of making the viewer or spectator identify with the characters.

This pedagogical approach can lead to a discussion about the rules to which women were subjected during Franco's regime and the responsibility to be attributed to men to exercise control over them. This analysis also makes it possible to address how the treatment of gender violence has evolved in the cinema and the validity of certain stereotypes. In addition to these issues, the class can also work on the relationship between women and space. So, this staging of gender roles merges with the imaginability that Nieves Conde assigns to the countryside and the city. The city, played by Pili, corrupts both the single girl and the mother of the family. It will therefore be necessary to return to the village. One of the sons of the Perez family has been killed for his associating with a femme fatale, while the other is sensed to make progress together with the commendable Rosario. The female characters thus acquired a symbolic value: they embody the danger of Madrid or the bucolic and moral shelter of the outskirts of the big city, the only stronghold for immigration.

It should be emphasized that this is a study based on the environment and not on the reception. The fact that this film meets an objective of social control, promoted by different sectors of the Spanish society of the fifties, does not necessarily imply that it obtained satisfactory results. Furthermore, although this article starts from the detailed study of the female characters in order to insert the film in its historical context, in-depth analysis of masculinity would be complementary and necessary. The fact of watching how its gender is constructed and studying violence from the perspective of the person who does it, delving into the reasons which encourage the characters to do so and how their actions in the narrative are exploited, would allow a more complex insight of the sex-gender system that Nieves Conde brings to the screen. There could also be an analysis of the existence of subversive traits such as greater freedom enjoyed by women in the city or tenderness as a virtue in men, so the chiaroscuro of gender identity comes to light, even during periods of tight control by the state and the Church. Not only, but a comparative analysis with contemporary works would facilitate the understanding of how discourses go in the macrosystem and reveal elements relating to the evolution of this problem and social awareness.

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⁶ I wish to thank Nancy Berthier for this opportune remark.

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