

DISCOURSE AND STYLE: ICÍAR BOLLAÍN'S GAZE IN *EVEN THE RAIN*

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INTRODUCTION

Images of the street, in an arid and barren place, a man looks with interest out a car window at a long line of Indigenous people. As he gets out of the car, he tries to make out the end of the line, but he cannot see it. A lot of applicants have come in response to the casting call. The crowd of people is huge. Costa approaches Sebastián, the man who just arrived in the car, and tells him off for making it an open casting call with no audition limit. So begins *Even the Rain* (También la lluvia, 2010), Icíar Bollaín's fifth film and the first with male protagonists. Her ten feature films to date have one thing in common: regardless of the gender of the main characters, they all deal with problems of inequality and social injustice.

Her second film begins in a similar way, with a desolate road in the middle of a desert, where someone watches from a car, only this time it is at a group of women of different ages and nationalities, most of them Latin American, who are wal-

king towards a village deep in Spain's rural heartland, with the aim of meeting single men. *Flowers from Another World* (Flores de otro mundo, 1999) tells a story already told many times before, about immigration in rural Spain and the complicated nature of relationships, with the distinction that on this occasion the director does it with her own gaze, which is fresh, powerful, even-handed, and complex, breaking with the stereotypes of female characters and the role they have traditionally been given in Spanish films. The story is told from the point of view of the four female protagonists: a Dominican, a Cuban and a Spaniard who are looking for a partner in a village in rural Spain, and the mother of one of the men in the village, who is wary of the *mestizo* Dominican, fearing that she will take advantage of her son.

In the film *Hello, Are You Alone?* (¿Hola, estás sola?, 1995), Bollaín tells the story of two young women looking for their place in the world. The female protagonists of this film are independent: they are not the girlfriends, lovers or friends of

male protagonists; in other words, they carry their own dramatic weight. As the director remarks, the story revolves around the desires, frustrations, sorrows and camaraderie of these women:

To my surprise and joy, because I wasn't looking for it, the adventures of Trini and Nina were praised by women scholars who study the image of women in film, or better still, of the voice of women in film. I had made a "women's" film (Bollaín, 2003a: 84).

This gaze, which she began to develop in her first two films, was consolidated in *Take My Eyes* (*Te doy mis ojos*, 2003), where violence perpetrated by men in couples is portrayed in a straight and open way, without laying blame, but showing the victims and their points of view and trying to humanise the circumstances. As a result of this perspective, the night of 31 January 2004 was a milestone in the history of Spanish cinema, as for the first time a film made by a woman swept the Goya Awards, winning Best Director, Best Film and Best Original Screenplay. The film won a total of seven awards out of nine nominations. Bollaín's innovative approach to filmmaking earned her these awards over other directors of the stature of Cesc Gay and Isabel Coixet, who were in running with the acclaimed films *In the City* (*En la ciudad*, 2003) and *My Life Without Me* (*Mi vida sin mí*, 2003), respectively. It is worth noting that two years later, Coixet had the privilege of winning the same trio of awards as Icíar with her film *The Secret Life of Words* (*La vida secreta de las palabras*, 2005). This recognition clearly reflected a highly original and unquestionably positive approach that is still evident in Spanish filmmaking today.

Bollaín's filmography eludes the emblematic labels that have become so necessary but are often unfair. She herself has pointed out that nobody describes directors with reference to their gender, social status, religious affiliation, sexual preference or personality, so why label her films and those made by other women directors as "women's cinema"? In filmmaking, a director's particular gaze is reflected in the fact that they are people and ar-

tists who have things to say about their point of view, their perspective, their idea of the world and of life, and that is what distinguishes their work. It is not women's cinema, or female cinema; it is necessary, unique cinema, which is just as important (or even more important these days), because it is a gaze that we have regrettably forgotten.

The director herself offers a reflection that underscores this idea:

It is the need to speak, in front, behind, above and below, to speak with our voice, not only about women, but about men, about children, about history, about the present and about the future. To speak with our voice, whatever it may be, because otherwise we are not there. To speak with humour, with drama, with irony, with rage, but to speak, to be there, to be, because a film's story, plot or action is not determined without female characters as it so often was before: it is the story of societies, it is our story that must be told with every voice possible (Bollaín, 2003a: 86).

Díaz suggests that the term "women's cinema" has a pejorative connotation, as it means differentiating between films made by men and films made by women and discriminating against the work of the latter (Díaz, 2016: 4). She concludes, quoting Castejón (2010), that "men's cinema" has never existed, and therefore the differentiation is unnecessary and erroneous.

Even the Rain explores the conflict represented by the European invasion of the Americas, reflected in a contemporary dispute over water and a public battle to prevent the privatisation of the utility, expressed through the structural device of a film within a film (metacinema). The film tells the story of a film crew made up of Spaniards and Latin Americans who arrive in Bolivia in the year 2000 to shoot a film about Columbus and the Spanish colonisation of the Americas. In that year, Bolivia was facing a severe economic crisis that led the government to attempt to privatise the country's water supply. The intense public outcry against this measure brought the country to

a standstill and the government imposed martial law to prevent further unrest. In *Even the Rain*, the film crew suffers the consequences of this situation, because Daniel (the Indigenous actor cast in the lead role in the film within the film) and the extras are all involved in a conflict that holds up production and ultimately forces the crew to leave. The purpose of this article is to analyse Icíar Bollaín's discourse in order to identify how her gaze and her style are expressed in this film, which is a rarity in her filmography because it is her first picture with male rather than female protagonists. The article also explores whether this distinction has a significant impact on her auteurial discourse and her filmmaking style.

A FOCUSED GAZE

The references in Icíar Bollaín's films are very clear, beginning with the influence of Ken Loach and the social realist filmmaking cultivated by both the British director and Bollaín's screenwriter husband, Paul Laverty, who has contributed as a writer on around ten of Loach's films and four of his wife's. It is the brand of realism as a movement for which Sánchez Noriega coined the term "realism of authenticity" (Sánchez Noriega, 2021: 154), focusing on how people operate, how they think and feel, with the virtue of tackling very different stories in terms of subject matter with a recognisable perspective and style. All these qualities, among many others, define Bollaín's skill as an auteur. As she herself describes it, "I like to understand what I know and to know what others think and feel... to be told a story I don't know as if I had lived it myself or from a new point of view" (Bollaín, 2003b: 91).

The gaze and the point of view are two of the basic principles available to the filmmaker, as Castellani (1996) suggests. The gaze is specific to the director and is comprises the basic characteristics of her personality, background, references, etc. The point of view, on the other hand, is establi-

THE IMPORTANCE OF BOLLAÍN'S STYLE IS DUE NOT TO HER GENDER BUT TO HER TALENT, BECAUSE SHE APPROACHES THE WORLD FROM HER OWN PERSONAL, UNIQUE POINT OF VIEW, AND BECAUSE SHE HAS A DIVERSE RANGE OF STORIES TO TELL, IN HER ROLE AS BOTH A SCREENWRITER AND A DIRECTOR, AS WELL AS IN HER COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO HER FILMS, WHEREBY SHE OVERSEES EVERY SINGLE STAGE OF PRODUCTION

shed through one or more characters, or it is external, acting as a direct observer (Aumont and Marie, 1990).

The question of the director's gender is not especially decisive provided that the professionals behind the camera can tell a story from within, seeking to express certain ideas that invite the spectator to reflect on aspects that go far beyond what we see on screen. The gaze of each director is fundamental because it can be studied to dissect the gender bias of the professional in question. However, point of view is also decisive, as the perspective that each one offers is presented in a different way.

Bollaín's gaze has become recognisable over the course of her filmography because "the social theme and female point of view is an element that stands out" (Barrenetxea Marañón, 2014: 454), although Díaz (2016: 6) once again emphasises that female and male directors organise their work from their own subjective experience as individuals and as filmmakers, rendering it impossible to speak of a female or male gaze. In Bollaín's first films, it is interesting to see the development of the stories from the point of view of the protagonists, not in a world of women, but in the real world where women have to struggle to find their place. The women in her first four films command

the action, deciding what to do and speaking up when those decisions are not respected. The point of view of her stories defines her gaze and makes her films recognisable, but it would be unfair to categorise her films based on this single quality, classifying them as films by women and for women, as a distinguishing feature. The importance of Bollaín's style is due not to her gender but to her talent, because she approaches the world from her own personal, unique point of view, and because she has a diverse range of stories to tell, in her role as both a screenwriter and a director, as well as in her comprehensive approach to her films, whereby she oversees every single stage of production. She happens to be a woman and, although this fact is critically important, her filmmaking and her films are not valuable for that reason; they are valuable because the language and techniques she uses are able to open a new window through which spectators are able to see themselves from a different perspective. As the filmmaker's own words suggest, her filmmaking reflects a skill that goes beyond a stereotypical direction: "I have always given much more importance to the word, to interpretation, to emotion, and in reality you can construct your story from the other side as well. And I never ignore that possibility; as long as you are aware of what your elements are and you make good use of them" (quoted in Hernández Miñano, Castellote Herranz and Martín Núñez, 2015: 71).

The release of *Even the Rain* represented a turning point in Iciar Bollaín's filmmaking career. She herself acknowledges that the film "is different, because it has more narration and more action, as well as my view of the characters" (quoted in Caballero Wangüemert, 2011: 366). Firstly, it is clear that the director is telling a story through her own eyes, and she does so in a recognisable, personal and cinematographically interesting way. Secondly, for the first time in her entire filmography, the main characters in her story are male while the female characters are relegated to the background.

Thirdly, whereas until now she had only written her own screenplays, this time she directed a story written and scripted entirely by her husband, Paul Laverty. And fourthly, this is the first time in her film career that she makes use of metacinema, which makes it possible for the duo of director and scriptwriter to intersperse the discourse with different moments in Bolivia's history: on the one hand, the Cochabamba Water War, and on the other, the Spanish colonisation of the Americas, which is represented by the production of the film within the film. The parallels between these two events is represented through metacinema, the film they are making, the film already made, the transitions between one and the other interspersed with the unfolding battle of the people for water rights, and by María, Sebastián's assistant director and one of the film's few female characters, who is filming a "making-of" for the film within the film. Although her role is a small one, she acts as a voice that criticises the situation the characters are facing. Moreover, this device serves the director as a reflection on Spanish colonisation and as a condemnation of the social injustice and widespread inequalities that the people are struggling against, as Barrenetxea Marañón (2014) suggests.

In the same interview cited above, Bollaín also argues that this film represents not just a change but a leap in her career and in her filmography, although an in-depth analysis would reveal that it is actually not so different, and she explains her discourse and style in the film and how it reflects her gaze.

FROM HISTORICAL TO CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION

From the outset, Iciar Bollaín and her screenwriter Paul Laverty outline the conflicts they intend to explore through three completely different themes: the making of a film, the Spanish colonisation of the Americas, and the Water War in Bolivia. This trio of asynchronous situations has not

been chosen merely at whim, as they are brought together in a way that invites viewer to reflect on them.

Vargas-Machuca points out the strategies present in the film:

Although, as noted above, this is a film within a film that can be approached from different angles, its greatest richness and appeal lies precisely in the fact that it is also a social drama with multiple critiques based on the parallel plots that are very successfully interwoven into one. (Vargas-Machuca, 2017: 175)

The device of metacinema has been used many times in film history by directors of different nationalities and in different genres, in films such as *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly, 1952) *8 ½* (Federico Fellini, 1963) *Day for Night* (La nuit américaine, François Truffaut, 1973) *Ed Wood* (Tim Burton, 1994) *Bowfinger* (Frank Oz, 1999), *Adaptation* (Spike Jonze, 2002), or more recently *Hail Caesar!* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 2015), *The Disaster Artist* (James Franco, 2017) and *Pain and Glory* (Dolor y gloria, Pedro Almodóvar, 2019).

The use of the film within a film device is not merely incidental to the diegetic universe of *Even the Rain*. It operates on two different levels: the first involves the character of María and the “making-of” the film, while the second involves moments from the film being made about the colonisation of the Americas, together with sequences showing that film being shot and edited. Both levels are established and positioned with a specific point of view, that of the native population at two different moments of historical significance: the present of the film’s story, and a historical past based on real events.

In the case of *Even the Rain*, the use of a film within a film device facilitates an exploration of conflict between nations and/or ethnic groups, an idea that is foregrounded throughout the film. A clear example of this is the scene where the three members of the film crew travel to the filming lo-



Image 1. *Even the Rain* (2010) Icíar Bollaín. Screenshot

cation. María begins recording the opinions of the film’s director (Sebastián) and producer (Costa), opinions that clearly reflect the cultural conflict between Europe and the Americas: Costa wants Indigenous people for extras but does not care where they come from; Sebastián complains that the indigenous Bolivian cast will not be faithful to his film’s Caribbean setting. Costa is also adamant that they need to cut costs, and Indigenous people are easier to convince when it comes to financial agreements. This makes it clear that exploitation is still going on, an idea that is reinforced in the following sequence, the first one showing a scene from the film within the film, where Columbus demands that the Indians pay tribute by filling a small bag with gold.

The “making-of” acts as a support and historical testimony to the events of the filming. This device is used to present the characters in the film within the film, such as Bartolomé de las Casas and Antonio Montesinos, played by Carlos Santos and Raúl Arévalo, respectively. These two characters were Dominican friars who were pioneers in the fight for the rights of Indigenous peoples. After the presentation of these two characters by their actors, which will be shown again in María’s recordings, the focus shifts to a contemporary conflict: the privatisation of water. This is no random historical transition, but a deliberate strategy that reveals a connection: the struggle for rights at two completely different historical moments, five centuries apart.

Another moment worth highlighting is the scene showing the rehearsal of one of Montesinos' sermons, which is clearly intended as an appeal by a voice of conscience from the past. In the scene, Bollaín focuses on both the friar's speech and a group of Bolivian labourers who are building a stage. The workers watch Montesinos' speech as silent spectators, inviting us to make an important comparison: again, the conflicts of the past are very much alive in the film's present, as the workers are paid poorly or are being exploited. Moreover, the scene that follows is once again related to the water conflict. In this case, Daniel, the actor playing the indigenous chief, is leading the fight against water privatisation, which he decries to a group of protesters. This makes him a moral point of reference, both in the story of the film being made and in the external story. Once again, the film within the film serves to connect the two moments in history.

The last time that this device is used and is linked again to the historical present is the scene in the film within the film where thirteen Indigenous people, including Hatuey (Daniel), are sacrificed. When they finish filming the scene, the police arrive to arrest Daniel. In fact, he has been arrested before, but Costa and Sebastián bribed the police to release him on the condition that he would be arrested again when they finished work on the film. Here, the director seeks to show another connection between past and present: no matter how hard the people fight, they are helpless against those who hold the power.

On the subject of the Water War, the film invites us to ponder the different events depicted, such as when security forces try to take over a well being dug by the locals (invoking the political discourse that defines water as a public good), the popular uprising against the government in res-



Images 2 and 3. *Even the Rain* (2010) Icíar Bollaín. Screenshot

ponse to the state of emergency decree, Costa helping to find Daniel's daughter, Belén, in the middle of the protests and, finally, the highly symbolic gift that Costa receives from Daniel: a small bottle of water. Virtually all of these events can be related to various scenes of the film within the film, facilitating comparison with the historical events it recounts: the present-day security forces constitute the equivalent of the Spanish conquistadors; the water conflict is comparable to the battle over gold; the conquistadors demand tribute from the natives, just as the Bolivian government demands taxes from the people for such a common and essential commodity as water. The demands of the natives both present and past give rise to armed conflict, between the villagers and the security forces in one case and between the natives and the conquistadors in the other. Both confrontations escalate to the point of violence. In the case of the historical narrative, thirteen natives are

burned at the stake, while in the case of the Water War, Belén is wounded. A major difference is that in the contemporary story, the water is ultimately returned to the people, as hinted at by the appearance of a priest who declares “the water belongs to you.” This character is a clear reference to the two figures of de las Casas and Montesinos mentioned above, which once again connects past and present through these three clerics who rail against the social injustices towards the needy.

THE CHARACTERS: CONFLICTING DISCOURSES

The development of Costa’s character in *Even the Rain* is one of the most significant in Icíar Bollaín’s filmography, with a character arc marked by a radical transformation. His personality is very different and much more unstable than the types of characters usually portrayed by the director in her stories, in addition to being the first lone male protagonist in her filmography, as mentioned above.

Every character has to spark the audience’s interest, as otherwise they will fail to connect with the audience and with the discourse. Narrative personalities need to be contradictory, and to have goals, conflicts and changes as the story unfolds. They need to evolve of the course of the story or they will be flat characters. In cinema, we tend to speak of a transformation between the first and the last time the character appears on screen, but we must bear in mind that characters usually change more than once; in fact, they usually undergo three changes, one for each corresponding act of the story, according to the Aristotelian division of Greek tragedy that has had such a big influence on the history of narrative theory in theatre, literature and film. But the most radical change can usually be identified by comparing the character’s different attitudes at the beginning and the end of the film. As McKee (2011: 447) argues, the real personality can only be expressed through the choices made in the face of dilemmas.

HER GAZE AND HER STYLE COMBINE TO PRODUCE HER EXPRESSION, WHICH IS REFLECTED IN THE WAY SHE TELLS HER STORIES, HOW SHE CONSTRUCTS THEM THROUGH LANGUAGE, AND THE CONCEPTUAL DEPTH OF HER DISCOURSE

In *Even the Rain*, Costa is a producer who makes his main motivation very clear from the first time he appears on screen: to save time and money, to make a film with a limited budget, in a location that is completely new to him (Bolivia). From the opening sequence we get a sense of his uncompromising attitude when he tries to send away the crowds of peasants who had come in response to the open casting call.

Sebastián, the director, is an apparently more flexible character, with a clear objective: to make a film about the colonisation of America. As he comes from a country with certain similarities to Bolivia, he has much more empathy for the locals. Indeed, he is the antithesis of Costa, and thus the two of them often come into conflict. Sebastián agrees to audition everyone who has come for the casting, despite the producer’s opinion. He also argues that they should use machinery to erect a large cross for the film, while Costa insists on saving money and getting the natives to do it. The viewer is thus confronted with a pair of personalities that are completely different but necessary for the successful completion of the film project.

Although he initially comes to the audition merely to accompany his daughter, Daniel ends up playing the main indigenous role in the film about the Spanish conquest and he is also one of the most important characters in the historical present. He is chosen for the role by Sebastián, contrary to the initial objections of Costa, who is aware that he could cause trouble for the production due to his hot temper.

Sánchez-Escalonilla (2008: 279) offers a definition of the hot-tempered character who tends to be led by their passions that best explains Daniel's character. Proof of this is his reaction when they try to send him away at the casting call, his opposition to the attempt to privatise the water, and his confrontations with the police. His attitude is a problem for the film within the film, as he gets himself punched in the face a few times and even ends up in prison. The character's motivation goes beyond playing his role in the film, as he wants to prevent the privatisation of the water, and to do so he leads the popular uprising against the government. The conflict is seemingly unrelated to the production of the film, but the two gradually intertwine as the characters and the plot develop.

The three characters mentioned above have a completely different character arc, but the one who changes the most is Costa, which unfolds slowly over the course of the story's three acts.

Images 4 and 5. *Even the Rain* (2010) Icíar Bollaín. Screenshot



At the beginning he is portrayed as a person who only cares about himself and his own goal, but gradually he becomes more involved with the locals. For example, we see him pondering thoughtfully while he watches Daniel speaking to the protesters in front of the water company, although this does not change his attitude; later, he has a conversation in English about the exploitative wages they are paying the natives, mistakenly believing that Costa does not understand the language. But finally, when Daniel's wife asks him to help their wounded daughter in the midst of the village uprising. Costa, after much hesitation, decides to go to her aid and saves her, an act that signifies a radical transformation.

Sebastián makes his priorities perfectly clear when he tells Costa that "the film comes first." They both know that Daniel is problematic for the filming, but this phrase describes the character perfectly. There are three dramatic moments

in particular that make his obsession clear. The first is when he wants to shoot a scene where the Indigenous women have to drown their children, which they refuse to do. Sebastián tries to convince them that nothing will happen to their children, and he is bewildered as to why he is unable to change their minds. The second is when Daniel is arrested by the police; Sebastián panics, believing his film is in jeopardy, until Costa calms him down by agreeing to bribe the authorities so that Daniel can finish the film, provided he can be arrested again when the filming is done. But what makes this character truly paradoxical is that although he positions himself as a champion of social justice, he does nothing to fight for a wage increase for the natives, he is surprised when they refuse to take part in dangerous scenes, and, when the uprising begins, he is not concer-

ned about the natives or the film crew; he wants to continue shooting the film in an area outside the conflict so that he can achieve his goal.

The supporting characters also shift between the historical present and the history they are filming, and although they do not have the importance of the main characters, they also undergo changes. Alberto (de las Casas), both in the present story and in the film they are making, positions himself with the Indigenous people. Juan (Montesinos), however, exhibits this inclination only when he is in character. As the conflict between the government and the people grows, both actors are keen to abandon the project, revealing that their claims of solidarity in either context were mere words. Alberto ends up forgetting his support for the natives and both abandon the film. The development of these characters, although not as important as Costa's, invites viewers to reflect on the contrast between the actors and the characters they play.

Finally, Antón (Columbus), who has drinking and family problems, is there "for the gold." However, he is very much a professional and gives no trouble on set. He seems to take no position in the conflict. If we equate him with Columbus as portrayed in the film within the film, he would not be on the natives' side. However, throughout the story he always appears resolute, and when the film crew express desires to abandon the production, he is the one who convinces them to stay. When he can no longer change the minds of those who want to leave, he nevertheless remains faithful to the project, and is thus an interesting character even though the changes he undergoes are almost imperceptible: despite his personal limitations, his motivations remain unwavering.

THE DISCURSIVE STYLE OF EVEN THE RAIN/ THE DISCURSIVE STYLE OF ICÍAR BOLAÍN

Bollaín's gaze is constructed out of a common discourse present in all her films. Her style is embedded in the limits of her gaze (her voice) as an au-

teur. Her gaze and her style combine to produce her expression, which is reflected in the way she tells her stories, how she constructs them through language, and the conceptual depth of her discourse.

When talking about discourse, it is worth referring to Chatman's classic book, originally published in 1980, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Chatman, 2021). Any discussion of expression invariably requires a discussion of voice, a concept often confused with point of view, which, as Chatman suggests, is always within the story (2021: 165), when it belongs to the character or accompanies the character as the limited third person "who is without personality or even presence, hence without motivation other than the purely theoretical one of constructing the narrative itself" (Chatman, 2021: 169). The narrative voice is always in the discourse, as it is the contribution that shapes the style from two perspectives, language and discourse. This last aspect is very distinctive in the film analysed, with respect to its form and content.

To tell the story, the screenwriter employs a set of dramatic devices that the director sets out and expresses in a cinematically valuable way, such as the aforementioned device of the film within the film, which Paszkiewicz (2012) defines as the intersection between social and epic cinema, and which operates here on three levels. The first is posited within the film, the one we watch as spectators (Bollaín's film), in the film they shoot about Spanish colonisation (Sebastián and Costa's film) and in the documentary that María is filming about the making of the film. Together, they form an articulation of the past with the present and a relationship between the historical struggle against the Spanish invasion and the contemporary battle against the privatisation of water. A social conflict is depicted in both the present of the film and the historical event represented in the film about the Spanish conquest, and these

two conflicts are interconnected on several occasions (Llorente, 2019).

During the script reading at the hotel, when Antón gets into the character of Columbus and constructs a scene and the other actors all follow him, some of the shots of him talking to the captain are treated visually like parts of a finished sequence. The visual form is that of Sebastián's film in terms of language, as a device within Bollaín's film. Columbus goes up to some of the hotel employees (who are Indigenous) and continues in role, in search of gold. A clash occurs here between the discourses of Sebastián's film and Bollaín's film, but also between the historical events of the Spanish invasion and the contemporary Water War. The director's gaze intersects with Sebastián's and with the gaze of history and imposes itself formally, appropriating it as a discourse.

The scene following this clash is when Sebastián decides to cast Daniel as Hatuey, and it is no coincidence that the device of metacinema is used for the first time immediately after this because it suggests a historical comparison between the past and the present of the film. This is the moment when Columbus explains to the natives the importance of the tribute they must pay to the Spanish crown. After this, we see María filming her "making-of" for the third time, but this time what we are shown is an interview with two of the actors in the film who express their commitment to social justice, although this will ultimately be revealed to be nothing more than words because at the moment of truth, when the Water War turns violent and they fear their lives are in danger, they will demand a ticket back home.

The second time this device is used follows Costa's confrontation with Daniel over the wages for extras. A group of natives are shown sifting the river for gold. Belén, Daniel's daughter, appears a second time here, when the Spaniards punish the native for not paying sufficient tribute. This scene is being shown at the screening of the first week of filming. Antón (Columbus) is watching the shots



Image 6. *Even the Rain* (2010) Iciar Bollaín. Screenshot

and Belén, accompanied by Costa, smiles when they look at each other. Daniel has come for his daughter and he exchanges a glance with Costa, who will subsequently seek him out to apologise to him. After a few transition shots of cars on a country road, we see Sebastián reading the script on the way to the film shoot; we then cut to the sequence he is reading, about an elderly Indigenous woman who is chased, captured and killed by a guard dog. Finally we cut back to Sebastián, who, affected by what he has read, closes the script.

A similar sequence is that of the crucifixion of Hatuey and his allies, who curses the invaders as he faces death. It is the same wooden cross that we see carried by a helicopter at the beginning of the film, when the film's title appears on screen. Just before they choose extras out of the long line of applicants at the casting, a parallel is drawn between the conquistadors of the past (Columbus forcing Hatuey to search for gold to pay in tribute) and the modern conquistadors (Sebastián and Costa).

A third device, mentioned above, is the use of black-and-white images seen through the viewfinder of María's camera, especially the first time she appears, in the car with Sebastián and Costa at the beginning of the film, because it is a scene that constitutes a statement of intent, as it shows them debating the veracity of their adaptation and the historical facts. This device makes María important as the character who realises the consequences of the water issue, when she discovers that Daniel's motivation is to dig a seven-kilo-



Images 7 and 8. *Even the Rain* (2010) Icíar Bollaín. Screenshot



metre ditch to bring water to the community, in the sequence containing the first reference to the Water War in the film. The conflicts of the characters are always present, such as when Sebastián worries about sending Daniel back to prison fearing that he might be killed, a fear he promptly forgets as soon as filming of the sequence of the execution is completed. Similarly, Alberto and Juan (the Dominican friars) do not hesitate to sacrifice their solidarity with the Indigenous people in order to ensure their safety and get out of the country as soon as possible. Meanwhile, Antón, who begins as the most disgraceful character, ultimately proves to be the most supportive of the locals and the most aware of the truth. Finally, Costa gradually develops a conscience, albeit with stops and starts, until Belén's accident, the climax of the film, when he risks his own life and goes to rescue her. This is the moment of greatest tension in the story. Costa initially tells Teresa, Belén's mother, that he will send someone else to look for her, but she will not give up. When Costa begins to relent, Sebastián refuses to let him go. Again, he says, the most important thing is the film. Teresa continues to insist, and again, Costa tells her: "I'll send someone later." When Costa finally agrees to help her, Sebastián tries again to stop him, saying: "This confrontation will be over and forgotten, but our film won't. Our film will last forever."

At this point, when Costa, after much hesitation, agrees to help Teresa, he resolves a moral and ethical conflict that reflects his transformation. They find Belén and take her to the hospital. While waiting, he decides to go to find Daniel, to

tell him what has happened, and he realises that the protest is over and the people have won. Costa seems to emerge as the hero-saviour in the face of the limits of Sebastián's moral discourse, which breaks down and contradicts itself on various occasions. The amoral character at the beginning ends up helping Teresa, Belén and Daniel, establishing a friendship that is sealed with the embrace at the end and the gift of the bottle of *Yaku* (water) in the last sequence, whereby the director demonstrates that characters can improve and learn from their experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of the gaze reveals that the discourse and style present in *Even the Rain* has elements of considerable value when the discourse is transformed into style and that Bollaín's gaze as a director, as a person, as a woman, is not undermined by the absence of female protagonists, but that she is capable of making similar points in stories with male characters. This means that her gaze, her point of view, transcends genders and types of stories. Her narrative voice, her artist's discourse and her distinct style emerge above all else, placing her in a unique and privileged position, as her reference is personal and her gaze, in which her style and her discourse converge, is something that she herself constantly discusses.

One aspect worth highlighting is the position from which the discourse is established, which can be referred to as the discursive distance. The discursive distance is the position adopted in the

story, the place from which the subject matter is observed, studied and analysed, and the actions organised to represent it. Bollaín's first four films maintained a discursive distance where the narrator acted as an observer, leaving spectators free to draw their own conclusions, without imposing value judgements as an artist. In contrast, *Even the Rain* establishes a new relationship in the director's filmography, because although she maintains the discursive distance (having become a hallmark of her work), she proposes a parallel that establishes a comparative relationship between two events, two subjects, two concepts that help us as spectators to understand the nature of the message and to create a clear critique in its construction. This is why *Even the Rain* represents an evolution in Bollaín's style, as this distance is cut down and reconfigured.

Even the Rain is a film that focuses on the tensions produced by social inequalities that form part of those aspects responsible for social conflict, such as immigration and its consequences, the discrimination and mistreatment of women, power relations, and cyclical phenomena resulting from human exploitation and capitalism. Indeed, this film could be described as a protest against social inequality. What makes this film original in Bollaín's filmography is the fact that it is told from the point of view of a group of men who come to realise that their convictions were wrong and that they must unlearn them. While the same discourse decrying inequality is present in all of the director's films, this time the struggle is not structured around gender, an issue that the director has never openly and intentionally highlighted in her films, but it is still the same theme as that of the feminist struggle. ■

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DISCOURSE AND STYLE: ICÍAR BOLLAIN'S GAZE IN *EVEN THE RAIN*

Abstract

Icíar Bollaín's filmography has come to constitute a necessary and profound oeuvre in Spanish cinema. Her films fit in various movements: social cinema, feminist cinema, and filmmaking with a personal style. In her directorial discourse, her distinct style and her particular view of the world converge in the filmmaking act. An analysis of *Even the Rain* (2010) reveals elements present in the discourse in the form of expressive devices that are common in filmmaking, but which are reworked and reconfigured to become features of her own style. The approach taken in this film represents a leap in her filmography. However, an in-depth analysis shows that the artist's gaze, far from being altered or blurred, is transformed and consolidated into a clear style and a discourse that transcends genres and labels.

Key words

Icíar Bollaín; Discourse; Style; Film Analysis; *Even the Rain*; Narrative gaze.

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DISCURSO Y ESTILO. LA MIRADA DE ICÍAR BOLLAIN EN TAMBIÉN LA LLUVIA

Resumen

El cine de Icíar Bollaín se ha convertido en una obra necesaria y profunda dentro del cine español. Sus películas se enmarcan dentro de diferentes frentes, del cine social, del cine con reivindicaciones feministas y de un cine con sello propio. En el discurso de la directora convergen su estilo diferenciado y su mirada hacia el mundo desde el hecho cinematográfico. Del análisis de *También la lluvia* (2010) se extraen elementos presentes en el discurso a modo de recursos expresivos comunes en el cine, pero renovados y reconfigurados, que ella convierte en elementos de su estilo. La película significa un salto en su filmografía por el enfoque planteado. No obstante, al analizarla a fondo, se descubre que la mirada de la artista lejos de cambiar, de desdibujarse, se transforma y se consolida en un estilo claro y en un discurso que sobrepasa los géneros y las etiquetas.

Palabras clave

Icíar Bollaín; Discurso; Estilo; Análisis cinematográfico; *También la lluvia*; Mirada narrativa.

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