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María llena eres

de
Luis Quinteros

traducción de
Vanessa Belén Alba

(fragmento en inglés)

Acting and succeeding so as not to survive, Maria Schneider's case.

This play by Luis Quinteros questions the manipulation of actresses in favor of directors' aesthetics desires. The voices in the text invite us, in a poetic mood, to think about masculine domination within film and drama industries. They show us the sexual violence executed against actresses in sets and rehearsal places. It is within the semantic speculation that we discover what the French actress Maria Schneider has to endure while she was filming the legendary film *Last Tango in Paris* by Bernardo Bertolucci.

This real fact is taken as a point of departure in a text where the women voices that make up the scene's universe are amplified. In this patriarchal world, it's hard to be a young woman and to be an artist. This professional position almost always implies danger. When being an actress, sex and body are crucial components. These are to be considered, for many actresses, the size of their talent. Most actresses are subdued to this reasoning, even those working in the most important artistic productions such as international films.

María, Ilena eres puts in evidence the physical and psychological violence executed for the sake of art. This play puts into question the masculine judgement and point of view by creating a polyphony of female voices that appear in the splitting games. María is the actress, she is a contemporary Red Riding Hood, she is the voice that questions chauvinism in *Tango* dance, and she is also the actress that breaks the fourth wall talking to the audience.

The text invites us all to bring to light a dark place in the scenic arts, it breaks the obliged silence and challenges the masculine complicity. Is it possible for a young actress to question the authorized word of a very important male figure in film industry?

The iconic case of the French actress, used as a trigger of this dramatic universe, came to light a few years ago and it showed how women are still being regulated by the masculine perspective in every single aspect, included those related to the art universe, even in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Luis Quinteros' play compel us to remember other actresses' allegations, in the national scope, that testified, in a greater or smaller extend, similar professional situations, testimonies that describe situations in which women were forced or manipulated in order to act scenes that push them into an uncomfortable position or, at the worst cases, that make them endure abuse, without being able to

revert the situation.

Seeking the possibility of looking at the ordinary and the particular element in women history, this play deconstructs *María's* name by playing with the poetic procedure of summarizing in one actress all the actresses, in one woman all women. On the other hand, departing from the virginal and emblematic name: *María*, the text poses the question regarding the religious and moral controlling aspects that the Church still exercises on the female body and its identity.

To be an actress and to obtain a role in some important director's film seems to have a price, this price can be paid with life, since many are forced by the circumstances to remain silent during a long time regarding the abuses they have suffered within the creative process.

Current events related to gender violence push us to assume that we are immerse in a society that is always legitimizing rape culture. That is to say, all women are potential victims of any sexual attack, I would say, in any scope, as long as we assist to the spectacularization of male importance, strength and domination as an ordinary seduction behaviour and as an aspect of being male. Rape is a social matter that concern us all. The difficulty to revert this situation lies in how it is accepted and naturalized when it is a male way and attitude.

This play suggests the perfect picture of an almost everyday rape situation expected in the relationship between a widower and a young actress portrayed in the film. What is not expected is the way in which aesthetic realism was built. In the famous films' back rooms such as the one mentioned in this play, it is revealed how cruel the procedures can be in the name of the art market and their idols' phallogentric cravings.

One of the hypotheses that makes Luis Quinteros' play work is to show how sinister beauty can be and how dark many creative procedures in the world of art can be. A world where women have always been under the tutelage of male look.

María, Ilena eres is one more aspect within the aesthetic and dramatic search guided by this director and playwright along with the theater Company *Ecléctica Teatro* in Córdoba, Argentina. During its trajectory, this company has looked into women lives looking for those singular voices, unheard and judged by traditionalist cultural parameters. They suggest thinking about what is female through thousands of subjective folds.

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María, llena eres

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Cast

María / Maria Schneider

Vanesa Belén Alba

Director and playwright

Luis Quinteros

Staff

lighting designer and costume designer

costume realization

photography

audiovisual assistance and dubbing

general production

audiovisual dramaturgy and sound

graphic design

Facundo Dominguez

Yanina Pastor

Diego Ruiz

Víctor Jasá

Ecléctica Teatro

Cristina Smargiassi

Cristina Smargiassi

The stage is the place for the casting, the audition, the test. It is the place with most both personal and fictional exposure.

The actress walks in the middle of the space as the audience gets into their seats. She seems to be rehearsing a sequence that is repeated once and again. In the back of the staging there is a projection of undergrounds around the world. The actress watches the projection as she rehearses.

MARÍA ACTRESS

Tom! Tom! I need to talk to you... You have to find somebody else for your movie... because you are taking advantage of me. Because you make me do things that I've never done before. Because you are wasting my time. Because you make me do whatever you want. The movie it's over! I am tired of being raped!¹

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The actress stops rehearsing, goes to the back of the staging with the back turned to the audience.

I can't. I can't do it. I am tired of repeating. Can you understand me? I can't.

The actress turns and speaks to the audience.

MARIA SCHNEIDER

I couldn't turn back the hands of time. It's impossible to go backwards. Days went on, minutes passed by, I started getting old, losing my vitality and beauty. I stopped being myself. Since that day, I've been cursed. Since that day I've been crying inside filled with rancor. I scourge myself with my own imaginary phallus then I'm dead again, one more time. I ennoble myself.

1 In the original Spanish version these lines are said in the Spanish variety Río de la Plata Spanish.

2 In the original Spanish version these lines are said in the Spanish variety Madrid Spanish.

3 In the original Spanish version these lines are said in English.

I run, I run, I run like in the movie. I spent my whole life running, running away from my fate. Sometimes I'm eager for going back as if I were running inside a train towards the last wagon while the machine pulls forwards at full speed. I can't. I lose the strength in my legs, I stretch my arms towards the past to undo it, my knees are shaking and finally I fall.

The actress falls.

... then I wake up.

The actress stands up with confusion as if she were waking up and speaks to the audience.

I always dream the same, even after being dead. The days went on, cloudy and sunny, the cycles kept spinning. The time went by naturally, the bus started on time, the train closed its doors and the plane took off... Life went on. Since that day I remain suspended, immaterial, frozen, my blood was frozen. But I kept on living because there was always an impulse, a reason that draw me back into the vital cycle again, however, forever wounded, lame, neglected, orphaned, tired of hating, I could only hide my limp as I walk.
Cut!

MARÍA, FROM TANGO

Tango is a couple's dance, an improvising dance, a sensual and complex dance with its own codes. The first rule is to walk around the dancing floor in a counter-clockwise direction. The man moves forward, he first moves his chest, then his knee and finally the foot. Showing the rhythm, suggesting to his partner, in an elegant and fine way, the movements and figures. The woman listens to and let herself be guided with absolute trust.

Milonga is the place where people do the *tango*, a dance floor made of wood with tables around. The invitation is made by an exchange of remote glances followed by consent expressed by a smooth nodding. Once this is done, both partners will meet in the dance floor.
—Maria Schneider, posthumous interview.

Clak!

MARIA SCHNEIDER

I've come because I cannot rest. I have returned because I cannot stop acting. Here I am to tell my version, my testimony. I hope I could be understood this time.

I didn't live much, I didn't get to be that old as it was expected. The poison spread though my body and I perish. I wasn't and I won't be worship, nor canonised, nor filled with grace, that I know. I will never stop being the girl from the movie.

Cut!

The actress talks to the audience. Looking to them in the eyes.

MARIA ACTRESS

I have the huge responsibility to interpret Maria Schneider... Do you know who she is? The Young actress of *Last Tango in Paris*... That's her, yes. The French actress that had the chance to make an impression in Bertolucci's film.

That's the fantasy we all actresses have. First, you start studying with any teacher people suggest, then, sheepishly, you go to castings and auditions; you try, you insist, you dare, you say: I want to be chosen! You desire: It has to be mine! You claim once and again: I came to this world for this and I need to prove it! It cannot be otherwise!

When the film premiered, I wasn't even born, but in the workshops and classes they said: "You have to watch to Marlon, he is the best Method actor". Then I started watching all his films once and again, and the interviews, I became obsessive, because I wanted to do it well, I was nineteen years old.

Before considering myself an actress, when I didn't know much. I thought that *Last Tango in Paris* was an Argentinian film about ruffians in Europe. For me, the word "tango" referred to that.

I am an actress and my name is *María*, like Maria the actress in the film. Both of us know about the desire to be chosen.