CANADA 150 FILMED

LE CANADA 150 AU CINÉMA

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ALMODÓVAR'S *JULIETA* AND MUNRO'S JULIET – BEYOND CULTURES

Abstract

Alice Munro's Juliet is a mosaic-like portrait of a woman developed in the course of three stories, perhaps intentionally not presented chronologically in the *Runaway* collection – "Chance," "Soon" and "Silence". Juliet is a very specific type of character both for Munro and Almodóvar for they both explore family relationships, and personal and unspoken tragedies buried under mounds of daily-life events. This paper has two objectives, both of which surpass a mere comparison and contrast of the literary original and Pedro Almodóvar's film "Julieta". The first objective is to reveal the universal motivations in the two characters that go beyond the cultures that they operate in. The second objective is to describe the nature of domesticity in the context of personal freedom and family relationships, as well as gender roles, all in the context of the two cultures examined by Munro and Almodóvar, respectively. Both the literary and film protagonists – Juliet who grows up, matures and eventually grows old in Canada, and Julieta who Almodóvar molds against the Spanish conservative and patriarchal culture– have, at the core of their portraits, the exploration of the nature of personal freedom and choice colliding with familiar, social and other expectations.

Keywords

literary analysis, film analysis, domesticity, short fiction, narrative, Alice Munro, Pedro Almodóvar.

1. Introduction

This paper deals with Alice Munro's three short stories about one particular character, and a film directed by Pedro Almodóvar inspired by those stories. These

narrative discourses, therefore, are examined as structures that are re-configured in the process of reception, but also structures that ultimately require a closure of sorts. David Herman in "How Stories Make Us Smarter" (2003) comments that "narrative is a resource for closure" (5) – an instrument that structures a particular experience in such a strategic way that enables comprehension. That does not, however, imply that narratives 'bring closure' – narrative discourses, be their ending "unfinished" or "unfinishable" (Herman 2003: 5), present only a starting point in the process of interpretation, and the ultimate accumulation of meaning that culminates in the reader's story. David Herman and Richard Walsh, respectively in *Story Logic* and *The Rhetoric of Fictionality*, propose that interpretation is a creation of an entirely novel cognitive structure (Herman 2004; Walsh 2007). This cognitive approach to narrative discourse analysis does not steer far from cultural analysis. Quite the contrary, it offers an insight into how the "interpretative community" (Herman 2007) plays the pivotal role in the process of interpretation. Moreover, how the afterthought that is interpretation, the story that emerges from the narrative discourse, is shaped not only by the context of its creation, but also by the context of its interpretation. Namely, the interpretative community can be defined as a group of readers sharing a similar cultural background (Herman 2007), or in Peter Stockwell's terms – what is created in the end, in the aftermath of the reading process, is not only a cognitive structure and a narrative derived from the discourse using the reader's available interpretative resources, but a cultural model as well (2005: 33). The story that is the result of the reader's applying all the available resources – educational, cultural and other– is as authentic as the author's discourse, and liable to a nuanced interpretation. In the same vein, it could be argued, genre transmutation, from literary to visual arts, is a cultural reconfiguration of the cognitive models offered by the original work. In his essay, David Herman notes that "narrative affords representational tools for addressing the problem of how to chunk the ongoing stream of experience into bounded, cognizable, and thus usable structures" (4). By framing narratives into a specific form – genre in the general sense – the content is additionally charged, inviting the recipient to expect a certain kind of experience.

The first objective of this paper, therefore, is to reveal the universal motivations in the two characters from the story and the film, and examine whether the culturally conditioned domesticity lies at the foot of their tragic mistakes. The second objective is to describe the nature of gender roles in the context of domesticity and family relationships in both the setting of the literary work and the film, all in the context of the two cultures examined by Munro and Almodóvar, respectively. Additionally, the paper will attempt to analyze from the rhetorical and cultural points of view how an interpretation of Alice Munro's short story trilogy revolving around Juliet, and Pedro Almodóvar's interpretation in the form of *Julieta* expose the influence of culture in the process of

reconfiguring the narrative discourse of the stores into the film. By discovering the mechanisms that guide the process of reception, and the 'reconfiguration' of the narrative discourse into story, it is possible to uncover the universals of a particular culture and contrast it with individual, feminine, space. The story is always a nuanced version of the narrative discourse, and Almodóvar's *Julieta* does not pretend to be faithful to the literary source – it takes on a life of its own, and uncovers what the literary source leaves floating somewhere in between the lines – a move typical of Munro. The expected result of the analyses driven by the two main objectives is to provide an interpretation of both works in terms of the interplay between the individual and the culture of domesticity. More precisely, the paper aims to illustrate how it is that political, economical or cultural restrictions pertaining to gender roles affect the individual's sense of ethics and morality which go beyond culture.

2. Juliet/Julieta and Domesticity

In *Transformations of Domesticity in Modern Women's Writing – Homelessness at Home* (2002), Thomas Foster deals with the cultural mapping of the domestic space, as well as gender relations and the cultural discourse by which domesticity is defined, made compulsory and enforced via political, economic and cultural mechanisms. Discussing modern women's writing, Foster notes that the domestic space may be defined as "a peculiarly feminine 'place'" (2002: 3). He draws upon the so called 'ideology of separate spheres' that pertains to the binary division between the public and the private, as well as the very division's complex role in the structuring of gender relations. Granted, neither Munro nor Almodóvar deal with the political aspects of domesticity directly in their respective works. However, whereas Munro addresses the matter of gender roles, societal and moral obligations and expectations, in his film Almodóvar presents an alternative version of the character's story by internalizing the present and potential gender issues therefore providing a story without a political or mutinous echo. In fact, it is exactly in the nuances pertaining to such matters as domesticity and gender that Munro's story resonates a voice that is subversive and diametrically opposed to that guiding the viewer through Almodóvar's, at times didactic, feature. Furthermore, Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows, the editors of *Feminism, Domesticity and Popular Culture* (2009) notice that the relationship between domesticity and second-wave feminism seems to be non-inclusive towards the traditional and patriarchal role of the "housewife" (1). Moreover, such a gender role that implies unpaid work and complete denunciation of personal desires professionally or personally, Gillis and Hollows notice, leads to the understanding of home, and the domestic space, as "a prison and a constraint" (2009: 1). The assumption behind this view of domesticity is that emancipation involves the denunciation of the traditional role. In that sense,

Munro's Juliet, the protagonist of the three stories, at the very beginning tackles the question of gender issues. Namely, following the story of her life from the moment when she leaves the small community in search of a better job opportunity, Juliet, a young woman at the time, encounters skepticism on the part of her male professors at the university counseling her that a career is an eccentric goal for a woman to pursue. On the other hand, Munro also presents a portrait of a family Juliet grows up in – a liberal and unconventional home. Initially, Juliet is supported in her pursuit of a better life, but it seems that the burden of her eccentric choice weighs down on her parents as they are left to struggle both with the rejection on the part of the traditional community. Even though Munro's Juliet seems content, for a certain period of time, to take on the responsibility for the domestic life, her ultimate rejection of it in the form of regressing and dissenting from the role of the mother potentially explains the source of the breaking point and the culmination of her depression, and the escalation into the extreme opposite of the traditional role. Almodóvar's Julieta, on the other hand, although the connection may go unnoticed at first glance, is visibly punished for attempting to re-create herself professionally. The tragic accident that is to be the cause of death of her fisherman partner occurs only after she has decided to start working again. Namely, in the film, Almodóvar connects three events – Julieta's return to work, her realization that she had been cheated on, and the accident. Moreover, the infidelity plays a very important part both in Munro's depiction of domestic space and Almodóvar's. The dread of leaving the domestic space is caused by concern that they would be betrayed by the husband. The idea is that their constant presence in the very home is somehow required if they are to maintain the love of another – the partner, or even the child. Both Juliet and Julieta fail to protect their mothers because leaving their home would basically imply allowing for the marriage to fall apart. The fear the protagonists feel is only amplified with the love affair they take notice of at their parental home. The character of the father, a former teacher and a charming man who turns into a farmer, resonates not only an autobiographical or biography inspired memory of Munro's, but stands as a deterrent to the daughters. The hero, the father-protector and friend, is either openly cheating or considering infidelity, and by extension, the idea becomes less of an irrational fear, but a realistic prospect. It is no wonder that after witnessing the loneliness and state of the mother, and the blatant display of affection of the father towards the maid, that Juliet and Julieta decide not to leave their new home again, even to see their dying mother for the last time.

Another question that Gillis and Hollows deal with in their study is "why quite so many popular female-centered texts are concerned with the desire to return home" (2009: 3). This is a question directly in relation to the wider importance of the domestic as well as personal space. In terms of the traditional culture, this space could be defined, from the female perspective, as an institution cre-

ated to restrict movement and provide the mechanisms for the perpetuation of patriarchy embodied in unpaid labor and the prioritization of the needs of male members. If the second-wave feminism strove to abolish the notion of feminine as exclusively emanated in the image of the housewife, then it is safe to assume that the backlash created a great divide in the sense of creating another binary opposition – that between domesticity and emancipation. The extreme version of this binary opposition would be that of an 'angel in the house', the traditional and complacent housewife, and the 'whore' who dissents from her designated position and is punished for her sin. Munro's Juliet is an example of the transitional period in which co-extensiveness and fluid borders between the areas of domestic and professional life do not yet exist. The voice of the mainstream discourse speaks through the mouth of Juliet's, and Julieta's, housekeeper at home. Morally rigid, zealously traditional and religious, Ailo is echoing the conservative and philistine views. Moreover, she does not shy away from imposing her point of view on Juliet. Ailo is the typical matron in the household – a role she excels in – and her authoritarian stance places Juliet into that of a child. Ironically, upon Eric's death, Juliet will regress, depressed and lost, into a child-like state from which she will never be given the opportunity to go back to being a mother to Penelope. The voice of Almodóvar's double for Ailo resonates with the same powerful cultural rigidity as that of the Canadian small town where the ideology of separate spheres still maintains the grip on the individual. Morality, then, is extracted from the values associated with the particular spheres so that the professional sphere, belonging to the public space – the masculine designated space – carries a particular kind of morality with it, much like the private and domestic sphere. Crista, Juliet's husband's former lover and friend, as well as Juliet's best friend, occupies a space that has fluid borders but is isolated herself. Her choice to be an artist, perceived as eccentric as contrasted to the community of fishermen and their housewives, and also known to be unmarried and receiving men while living alone is a redefinition of these spheres in itself – a definition of the feminine space. Gillis and Hollows speak about the change in perception of femininity and domesticity in the public and private domain as largely influenced by the typical portrayal of women in popular culture. Feminine qualities outside of the bedroom seem to be almost punishable by the cosmic police enforcing the moral justice through people such as Ailo.

Munro's Juliet and Almodóvar's Julieta may be seen as co-extensive, but the latter's narrative is a subjective and culturally shaped elaboration of the source. Undoubtedly, both women seem to reflect the same psychological profile, but Munro allows her Juliet to find her way out of grief after the tragic death of her husband by ultimately transforming herself into a celebrity television host. This transformation ejects Juliet from the domestic sphere. Actually, it ironically stands for her ultimate separation from it, but not from the domestic

space as a moral or literal prison, but the domestic space in the wider sense of the word – the space where she is also the mother to her daughter, as well as daughter to her mother. Juliet engages in multiple relationships with men that occasionally leave her heart-broken, and is patiently consoled by Penelope. However, Almodóvar completely disregards that possible aspect of Julieta. Ultimately, he envisions her with a man who, almost literally and certainly spiritually, saves her. Munro's Juliet is too guilt-ridden by that point in her life, or too cynical, to start a relationship. The two perspectives then, that of Munro who does not offer a happy ending at all costs but a cruel reminder that there are lines one does not cross and come back from; and that of Almodóvar, who instrumentalizes suffering in order to reach that domestic space in the wider sense – the family circle with ambiguous gender division. Both Juliet and Julieta suffer, undoubtedly; however, only Julieta is crippled by the pain. She is a mother before she is a lover, even if the discovery is belated. In order to bring the estranged mother and daughter, as compulsively as Munro rejects happy end at all costs, Almodóvar kills off one of the daughter's children so that the daughter who is a mother herself could understand the pain of separation from her mother's perspective. Almodóvar penchant for sentimental drama, though more satisfying than the dreary and chilling conclusion Munro proposes, reveals a strong desire to reestablish the connection. It also reveals a significant cultural difference, of which, granted, Almodóvar openly speaks in the foreword to *Julieta* (2016: xii). Whereas Munro seems to relate through her stories a wisdom coming from experience, Almodóvar shows faith, and his Julieta, unlike Juliet, goes through something much like an ordeal – she becomes a martyr, unable to stop suffering and potentially embracing it, which is culturally, and surely stereotypically, a feminine 'place'.

Similarly to the autobiographical stories in the *Dear Life* collection, Munro creates a parallel between women of different generations, backgrounds and life-paths. The painful irony that Munro uncovers is that tragic mistakes are committed on a daily basis and with the disturbing awareness of them potentially being ultimately irreparable. Correspondingly, Almodóvar's Julieta suffers tenaciously because of the circumstance, personal shortcomings and immaturity, as well as the inability to fully comprehend her own share in her daughter's unexpected departure. Both Juliet and Julieta abandon their mothers who at a certain moment become a psychological burden to them. Torn between their personal problems and uncertainties, in the moment of personal conflict, ironically, they both opt against temporarily leaving their familial space. The structure of Munro's three stories about Juliet seems to have the structure of a detective novel, figuratively speaking. Munro is unassuming in her storytelling to the extent that her stories, on the second look, stun both style and ingenuity-wise. As previously mentioned, and much in the way it happens in real life, on the conscious and unconscious levels, Munro reveals singularities and peculiarities

about the characters so that the big picture is only understandable in retrospect. In "Soon", Juliet contemplates whether she could have managed to visit her mother, remembering how frail she had been the last time she visited, and how she had been happy at the notion of seeing her daughter again. To the very end, neither Juliet nor Julieta are fully aware of their tragic mistake. Munro, of course, is and the motif is present in various other story collections, but most notably in *Dear Life*, which contains the four autobiographical stories – stories reminiscent of Juliet's narrative. In *Julieta*, Almodóvar's protagonist writes down her own life's story as if it were a letter to Antia. However, what Julieta ultimately does is try to make sense of the events that had transpired, and her own role in all of them. It is interesting how Almodóvar relates this to Alice Munro's own autobiographical writing in *Dear Life* – a story of abandonment which Munro closes with a profoundly honest and heartbreaking truth:

> We say of some things that they can't be forgiven, or that we will never forgive ourselves. But we do – we do it all the time. (Munro 2012: 319, "Dear Life")

This passage from the story "Dear Life" can be related to the idea that restrictions imposed by society are not entirely responsible for the erroneousness of personal choices for which widely acceptable excuses may be responsibility or duty towards family. Rather, it is in the personal choices guided by not only one's own sense of morality and ethics, as well as simply love, that particular negative societal practices can be revealed. What Munro ultimately suggests in the passage above, is that faced with conflicting desires and diverging choices, the responsibility falls exclusively on the individual. The complexity of motives directing one's choices may be discussed in terms of the long-term effects that the specific impositions and restrictions may have on an individual. Even selfishness and the lack of consideration for others may be interpreted as a defense mechanism of sorts by which the vicious circle of restrictions and boundaries is perpetuated in order for the individual to, on the one hand, enable themselves to function within a certain framework – the family, for example; and, on the other hand, disengage from other roles requiring a certain amount of energy and affecting performance in the former. Juliet does not seem to be able to function equally well as a daughter, wife and mother. Rather, once an excellent daughter, she becomes an acceptable wife. From the role of the wife, however, she fails to transition to the role of mother. Losing the, even virtual, protection from her father who seems to be engrossed in his new relationship, Juliet holds on to the figure of protector in her partner. By the time Penelope refuses to be her protector anymore, Juliet is left to her own, undeveloped, mechanisms for coping with everyday life. Almodóvar's Julieta does not go through a series of immature romantic affairs Juliet does. Nevertheless, she forces Antia into being not only her protector and take the role of the mother. Both Juliet and Julieta remain infantile, perhaps until the very end of their

unfinished narratives for they remain unaware of the gravity of their refusal of responsibility for their actions.

> But she had not protected Sara. When Sara had said, *soon I'll see Juliet*, Juliet had found no reply. Could it not have been managed? Why should it have been so difficult? Just to say *Yes*. To Sara it would have meant so much – to herself, surely, so little. But she had turned away, she had carried the tray to the kitchen, and there she washed and dried the cups and also the glass that had held grape soda. She had put everything away. (Munro 2016: 80, "Soon")

The theme of mothers and daughters is typical of Munro's work, and this specific similarity between the stories from the *Runaway* collection and her last collection, *Dear Life*, presents an important clue into how Canadian and Spanish cultures, embodied in her own and Almodóvar's work, treat domesticity and its significance in terms of the impact on the individual. Almodóvar cleverly takes Munro's pivotal cues and works through them by providing his own interpretation of what is possibly between the lines. Therefore, he provides an alternative ending to the story – an ending in which Julieta both learns more about her daughter's, perhaps religious, transformation, and receives a letter with news of her grandson's death. The letter comes unexpectedly while she lies in hospital – the culmination of Julieta's suffering. The scene in which distraught Julieta is hit by a car echoes the scene from the very beginning of the film when she decides not to make small talk with a visibly disturbed and lonely man, and meets her future partner soon afterwards. Julieta and her future partner observe a deer running towards the train, afraid that it might not be aware of how easily it could catch its death under it. The news of the man Julieta had refused to talk to committing suicide soon follows so that the deer scene could be understood as an omen – both in terms of the romantic relationship that is to ensue, and her own loneliness in old age. This guilt extends to her mother, husband and daughter. Whereas the film makes the connections between the mentioned scenes apparent, in the three stories, this omen could only be understood in retrospect. Julieta refuses to acknowledge the possibility that the severing of all ties with her daughter might be a finality for she is unable to fully grasp the scope of the malignant influence she has transferred to Antia. Juliet, however, is quite aware of the irreparable damage in the relationship. What oozes from Juliet's contemplation on the reasons for Penelope's leaving is not pessimism but an understanding that blood alone does not hold the bonds even inside the family.

> *And I could tell you plenty about what I've done wrong. But I think the reason may be something not so easily dug out. Something like purity in her nature. Yes. Some fineness and strictness and purity, some rock-hard honesty in her. My father used to say of someone he disliked, that he had no use for that person.*

> *Couldn't those words mean simply what they say? Penelope does not have a use for me.* (Munro 2016: 113, "Silence")

Almodóvar is forced to make Antia suffer so that she could fully understand her mother's position, but the director does not deal with the issues of the past in the same manner as Munro. Julieta is portrayed more as a suffocating mother, needy and clingy, but still the master of the domestic space. Julieta may not be the perfect housewife, but she never stirs away, formally, from the role. Juliet, on the other hand, does not refuse the role per se, but simply focuses on her own person and career thereby failing to perform. This seems incompatible with the culture Almodóvar is trying to place the stories in. Moreover, he finds the reason for Antia's leaving in her potentially being driven away by her lesbian partner – a girl Julieta believed to be her best childhood friend. The cult of the mother very strongly operates in the film and to the extent of Julieta being, gradually, relieved of the guilt. The mother is a martyr – she suffers because of either unintended wrong doing, or circumstance beyond herself. Juliet, on the other hand, does not get the same divine intervention that would reunite her with her daughter. Munro provides a staggeringly realistic and disturbing explanation that, simply, the mother and daughter have nothing between them left to repair because the opportunity when they still had a solid connection even if a disturbed one, immediately after Penelope leaves the sanctuary, is missed. Reuniting Julia and Penelope, after a decade of silence and unresolved issues, resentment and anger, would equal reuniting strangers who have no common ground. Ultimately, Juliet and Julieta uncover a tension resembling that between a realist and an optimist. Munro sees the tragic and unflinchingly approaches its anatomy. In fact, Munro resonates with the seemingly innocent or rational decisions that bring about catastrophes – she resonates with the excusable human nature and exposes the quality of the pain that her characters so stoically carry as their burden. Munro and Almodóvar both essentially deal with those dark corners of the mind, and the heart, but their objective seems to be radically different. Whereas Almodóvar cannot help but provide a closure and a soothing end, Munro does not even flinch at leaving the story hanging in the air. Munro realizes how the devastation of a hopeless life is not a remote possibility, and how anyone is able to live with guilt and loss – even a mother, regardless of her performance as one. Almodóvar's interpretation seeks hope and redemption, and aims to revitalize what has withered at all costs. Julieta's Antia reaches out and invites her mother back into her life, whereas Julia remains in silence – stoically going by her new life as an older woman, and almost at peace with the circumstance of her life.

> She keeps on hoping for a word from Penelope, but not in any strenuous way. She hopes as people who know better hope for undeserved blessings, spontaneous remissions, things of that sort. (Munro 2016: 113, "Silence")

3. Conclusion

The tension between Juliet and Julieta, embodied in the discrepancies between the story and the film, reveals the cultural biases. Munro's Juliet and by extension Penelope, have a tendency to make decisions one would deem rash, careless or inattentive, and their ultimate disregard for what has been termed domestic space and the roles typically associated with them uncover a culture nurturing individualistic values. Their personal choices and decisions are a reflection of a culture that encourages independence, but also, a determination to escape the provincial setting. Nevertheless, the drive behind the moral ambiguity, the difficult choices and the overall despair that ensues is not culture specific. Munro's Penelope does not punish her mother, Juliet, but rather creates her own space where she is sheltered from the influence she feels stifling. Penelope's space may well be interpreted as a return to the domestic where she finds personal fulfillment, but Munro does not attempt to be didactic on the matter. Julieta and Antia, however, are placed in an entirely different cultural setting – a patriarchal and traditional culture in which family is still a compact unit that restricts movement, and Almodóvar does not seem to see any room for the individual to completely sever ties with tradition. The interpretation of Penelope's mention in the context of a family of her own may have inspired Almodóvar to reject the possibility of the fluidity of the domestic space and roles that emanate from this traditional idea. Some of the other incompatibilities between the stories and the film include Almodóvar's Julieta bringing the father of her daughter home to meet the family – a concession on the part of Julieta that Juliet, willingly or unwillingly, does not make. Rather, Juliet's being unmarried remains controversial in her conservative hometown and haunts her father though not her directly. Ironically then, the conservative background both Juliet and Julieta attempt to escape ricochets in the form of their own daughter's trying to grab that very leash they had worked hard, internally, to free themselves of. Both Penelope and Antia seem to feel as if something vital, perhaps familial, is missing from their lives, and they reject their mothers as if they were the very corrupting factor. Juliet's and Julieta's abandonment of their respective sick mothers finds an excuse in the prioritizing of their own families and children, but they are fully aware of the cruelty of their conscious choice – Julieta, not more so than Juliet, but more dramatically, perhaps, which is unsurprising in the light of culture in which Almodóvar interprets the theme.

> That is what happens. You put it away for a little while, and now and again you look in the closet for something else and you remember, and you think, *soon*. Then it becomes something that is just there, in the closet, and other things get crowded in front of it and on top of it and finally you don't think about it at all. (Munro 2016: 38, "Chance")

Juliet, aware of her own past choices, and unconscious reasons that had driven her to make them, exonerates Penelope.

If it could be termed as omission, what Almodóvar omits to elaborate on pertains to Julieta's sexuality. Namely, whereas Munro's Juliet's involvement with men after Eric's death is a new cause of suffering for her, it seems culturally unacceptable or irredeemable for Julieta to have the same liberty. Also, Julieta seemingly refuses to bind herself to the house, against the uninvited advice of their housekeeper – the voice that echoes loudly not only in Juliet's housekeeper but in the provincial attitude towards her being unmarried and the effect it has on her parents' life. Both in Munro and Almodóvar, the voice of the housekeeper raises the question of tradition and individual choice. Fear of loss and loss itself, ironically, guide Juliet into making disastrous and irreparable mistakes. However, Juliet and Julieta, in ways respective of their alternative personal narratives, understand the burden of said mistakes and, in the light of their realization, understand their daughters' decisions to abandon them as well. Outwardly innocent in their seeking love and emotional stability, they become toxic to their daughters – they become the extreme of what their daughters want to avoid becoming. Unknowingly and unintentionally self-absorbed, the selfish choices Juliet and Julieta make are reciprocated by equally self-regarding choices of their daughters in abandoning them. The fact that Almodóvar chooses to regard pain as cathartic – an instrument for understanding others – may not be as optimistic as it is simply a return to pre-defined family space. Granted, the director does not dare provide the after-thought to the reunion, nor tackle the matter of estrangement and reconciliation for that would require a re-examination of an entirely new space – that occupied by the daughter and her family in relation to the mother. Almodóvar puts emphasis on empathy that had been lost in the past and brings it back into the picture through Antia's pain at the loss of her son. Munro's and Almodóvar's instrumentalization of pain differs in so much as it seems that Munro's distances are vaster and deeper, mirroring Canadian geography, metaphorically speaking. In Munro's version there is a profound understanding of the freedom of personal choice, and identification on the basis of personal experience.

> *My daughter went away without telling me good-bye and in fact she probably did not know then that she was going. She did not know it was for good. Then gradually, I believe, it dawned on her how much she wanted to stay away. It is just a way that she had found to manage her life.* (Munro 2016: 112, "Silence")

If Almodóvar utilizes profound pain and sadness to bring Antia back to her mother, Munro refuses to magically intervene – her characters are caught in a vicious circle of gender roles that visibly or less visibly bring about tragedies.

The domestic space for Munro is the axis around which women revolve, making choices they are forced to live with and stoically endure regardless of whether they consciously or unconsciously transgress against tradition.

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