



SSIFF

NEW DIRECTORS
DONOSTIA ZINEMALDIA
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIÁN
2018

JOURNEY TO A MOTHER'S ROOM

Presskit

JOURNEY TO A MOTHER'S ROOM

SYNOPSIS

Leonor wants to leave home but she doesn't dare tell her mother. Estrella doesn't want her daughter to go, but she isn't able to keep her by her side. Mother and daughter will have to face a new time in their lives in which the world they share is wavering.

Drama | 94' | Spain | 2018 | 1.85 | DCP | Color | 5.1

A film by **Celia Rico Clavellino**.

Starring **Lola Dueñas & Anna Castillo**.

Produced by **Arcadia Motion Pictures & Amorós Producciones**.

Co-produced by **Pecado Films & Noodles Production** (France).

With participation of **RTVE, Canal Sur & Movistar+**.

With support of **ICAA, Junta de Andalucía, ICEC & CNC**.

Screenplay developed at the **Script Station Lab in the Berlinale Talents**.

Distributed by **Alfa Pictures**.

CAST

LOLA DUEÑAS

Best Actress winner in Cannes for *Volver*; Silver Shell winner for Best Actress for *Yo también* at San Sebastián International Film Festival; Goya Award winner for Best Actress for *Yo También* and *Mar Adentro*; Goya Award nominee for Best Supporting Actress for *No sé decir adiós* and *Volver*.

ANNA CASTILLO

Goya Award winner for Best New Actress for *El Olivo*, and Goya Award nominee for Best Supporting Actress for *La Llamada*.

PEDRO CASABLANC / SUSANA ABAITUA / MARISOL
MEMBRILLO / ADELFA CALVO / ANA MENA / MAICA
BARROSO / NOEMÍ HOPPER / SILVIA CASANOVA /
LUCÍA MUÑOZ

THE DIRECTOR

Considered an emerging talent in Spanish cinema by Variety magazine, **CELIA RICO CLAVELLINO** (Seville, 1982) has a degree in Audiovisual Communication and Literary Theory and Comparative Literature.

As a writer and director, her career debuted with the award-winning short film *Luisa no está en casa*, starring Asunción Balaguer and Fernando Guillén. The only Spanish film at the 2012 Biennale di Venezia, the short film has also been featured in festivals such as SEMINCI, The European Film Festival of Seville, the Malaga Film Festival or the Gijón Film Festival. It also participated in the Short Film Corner at the Cannes Film Festival, won a Gaudí Award for best short film and the award from the Col·legi de Directors de Catalunya.

Celia has worked as a First Assistant Director and Second Unit Director of Claudia Llosa's latest film, *Aloft* (Berlin

Film Festival, 2014). Celia has spent over a decade working in several film production companies such as Arcadia Motion Pictures (*Blancanieves*, *Blackthorn*) or Oberon Cinematogràfica (*The Milf of Sorrow*, *Childish Game*) among others, and co-wrote the feature film *Quatretondeta*, directed by Pol Rodríguez (Málaga Film Festival, 2016).

Celia currently teaches Film Directing at ESCAC (Barcelona) and is a collaborator on the film pedagogy project *Cinema en curs*. She has published the picture book *Celia se aburre* (Penguin Random House) and has worked as a screenwriter for the children's animated series *Mironins*, based on the work of Joan Miró, which she will co-direct in 2019.

Journey to a mother's room is her first feature film. The screenplay, which she wrote herself, participated in the prestigious Script Station Lab at the Berlinale Talents in 2015.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This story is inspired by a physical sensation I still remember as a daughter who once tore herself out of the nest: the comfortable warmth from my parent's brazier table that sheltered me from the cold. Or held me prisoner. It wasn't easy to get away from its tablecloth draped over my lap. I could have spent hours napping there, cozily ensconced while life was happening elsewhere, far away from the comforts of my parents' home.

This is an intimate family film about a necessary—though not always easy—step that is part and parcel of any parent-child relationship. Children always leave the nest. It's a fact of life, or so they say. And yet, there is no failsafe way to get started on this journey.

But this is a journey not only for those who leave. For when we do fly away, we leave a void among the four walls of the house that nobody is quite sure of how to fill. I would like to peek into that space to consider the long-distance relationship between a mother and a daughter. Many films

have dealt with the process of emancipation of young people in their quest for independence, but very few have explored the other side of this journey: the parents who are left behind.

Journey to a mother's room is a film about the family ties that constantly bind and divide us, that make us strong and, at the same time, so fragile. A film about attachment and distance between a mother and a daughter who are on a two-sided journey to discover the complexities of love.

Yasujiro Ozu said that the tragedy of life begins with the bond between parents and children. Loving well, without stifling the other and without losing one's self in another, might be one of the hardest parts of parent-child relationships. Cecil Day-Lewis wrote in a poem that selfhood begins with a walking away and love is proved in the letting go. This film endeavors to capture those delicate moments in life in which love is revealed through knowing when to walk away, through letting go.

//WRITING THE FILM

After Luisa is not home, I started writing little scenes about characters alone in their rooms in the wake of the things that I had explored formally and thematically in this short film. The home is always my starting point. For me, it is a space of protection and kindness, where we share things surrounded by the warmth of those closest to us. When there is nothing to share or a core of warmth and truthfulness is absent, it is easy to feel disoriented and bereft.

Some time later, I went back to those intimate scenes and decided to focus on one of them. In it, a mother called her daughter on the phone “just to talk”, looking for some warmth, a shared moment that eased the loneliness she felt in her home. Her daughter, busy with other matters, didn’t have time for her.

As a daughter, I felt bad when I re-read the scene. I live almost six hundred miles away from my parents, and the phone is an inescapable part of our relationship. Sometimes, it is hard to find the time to call them back, even

though I am aware that they are always there, waiting to pick up the phone the second they are needed. How does one correspond to this steadfastness?

This unease moved me to keep writing, to ask myself what expectations we often place on the relationship with our parents, on the relationships with our children. What we expect from them, and they from us. How much we think about others or about ourselves; when do we relent, or set boundaries; when are we necessary or expendable.

I went back to the phone call scene and put that mother and daughter back inside the family home. I started to move them around the rooms to set them out on a journey towards the intimate, contradictory territory of attachment. Through the daily actions of cohabitation, I wanted to portray the difficulty in finding the frail balance where independence does not equal loneliness and companionship does not equal dependence. In the conquest of these private and shared spaces is where most conflicts in mother-child

relationships happen. Natalia Ginzburg said that we must be but a starting point to our children, a springboard from which they can jump up.

I like to place characters at ordinary crossroads in which, with no certainty to hold fast to, they must choose –therefore, doubt– what is best and for whom. In the frame of mind of these (in)decisions, cracks and labyrinths open up and we might even come to realize that we do harbor wants and desires after all. Even though our fears are often quick to conceal them. Unconditional love does not necessarily make us stronger.

The writing process was permeated in its entirety by the question of how to live one’s life and handle love when it plants the seeds of fear in us. I will paraphrase Natalia Ginzburg’s thoughts on the upbringing of children again: *As parents, we ought to have an intimate relationship with our children, and yet never violently enmesh ourselves in their intimacy. We must find the right balance between silence and words.*

//MAKING THE FILM

Finding the right balance between silence and words was, indeed, one of the most beautiful and delicate tasks in the process of making and thinking this film, in the process of working with the actresses and trying to build an intimate –and almost mimetic– relationship between their characters.

At table reads we always discussed the little gestures that often accompany those very silences and words and contain our sincerest emotions, regardless of our awareness of them. We thought a lot about those gestures, which are both brave and cowardly, as are the words we often keep to ourselves in order to protect others and, sometimes, end up coming out and hurting those who were only trying to care for us.

As a filmmaker, I am interested in showing ordinary people in ordinary circumstances, in situations anyone could relate to. That is why I usually like simple films that, through minimal story, talk about the unpredictable course of life.

From the beginning, our process zeroed in on the simplest details, such as preparing a coffeepot first thing in the morning or buttoning up a pajama shirt at night. There are so many ways to screw shut a coffeepot or button up pajamas that life itself, in all its triumphs and disappointments, its mysteries and contradictions, could be contained between those two gestures.

But, in order to get the tone of the film right, each one of these gestures had to be carefully measured, since both mother and daughter find it hard to be honest for fear of worrying or disappointing each other. We wanted to build a climate of intense tenderness and mutual understanding and, at the same time, load it with naïve, clumsy lies with which they fail in their resolve to overprotect themselves. This meant working in two opposite directions: on the one hand, the actresses had to dive deep in the most intimate emotions of their characters and explore them to their utmost consequences. On the other hand, they had to take these emotions to their most minimal expression in order to hide them and pretend nothing is happening. Lola and Anna are two

extremely sensitive and intelligent actresses that have succeeded in creating something deep and delicate moving through the territory of subtlety. This is extremely intricate work, demanding both a control of emotions and their triggers as well as gestural precision.

During the shoot, they constantly went from being two independent characters (Estrella and Leonor) with separate personalities to merging into a mother-daughter dyad, as though they had built some sort of common sculpture out of an extremely vulnerable material that threatens to break if so much as a whiff of air touches it. I believe it was extremely valuable to work on the mother-daughter relationship through the physical sensation of being trapped on a couch, sitting under the tablecloth of a brazier table that might well have been an extension of the uterus: lying under the same blanket, they are two and one at the same time. How many times are we surprised to hear a phrase come out of our mouths that we've heard our mother say a thousand times? How often do we catch in ourselves a gesture common in our parents, or discover one in our children that used to belong only to us?

//MY MOTHER'S ROOM

Estrella is a seamstress, like my own mother. Sewing was a part of my childhood; I grew up surrounded by fabric, listening to the tireless clatter of a sewing machine and the incisive snipping of a pair of scissors. Thus, in a very natural way, my mother's trade was key in the creation of the character played by Lola Dueñas. My mother's own sewing machine is the one that appears in the film, and my mother herself was Lola Dueñas's sewing instructor in the process of preparing to play Estrella.

I asked my mother to teach Lola her trade; a traditional trade, almost extinct, that is carried out in the home. For a couple of months, Lola visited my mother's sewing room daily and learned to sew as if she'd been doing it forever. They spent so many hours sewing that a significant part of the film's costumes and props came out of that sewing room.

I would sometimes go in to share the process; I would offer myself as a model for taking

measurements or try on whatever it was they were putting together. Other times—most times, actually—I would spy on them unnoticed and watch the special relationship that was building between the two of them and a sewing machine. It went beyond a simple sewing course, it was a whole process of passing on a professional calling, tied to a mother's unconditional love. Lola made every effort to sew just like my mother was teaching her. And my mother made every effort to teach her in order to ensure that her daughter could make the film she had envisioned.

This is my first film and, as with every first time, I have discovered a great deal of things in the process of making it. Chantal Akerman said one must shoot a film in order to understand a screenplay. Estrella is a seamstress because I can't separate maternity from this trade, which I understand only as an act of creation and protection, as an act of generosity.

Through the years, my mother has made many dresses for me, almost with no need of taking measurements. I have worn many with

pride, but there are others which I didn't feel comfortable in or wasn't able to identify with, and which were left hanging in my closet.

I guess there are many different ways to say I love you, and we sometimes do so in our very own way, whether it be giving shape to a piece of fabric or making a film. As Xavier de Maistre wrote in *A journey around my room*—a title which, in part, has inspired the title of my film: *When I travel around my room I hardly do so in a straight line.*

Celia Rico Clavellino.

THE CREW

Scripwriter & Director	Celia Rico Clavellino
Producers	Josep Amorós & Ibon Cormenzana
Co-producers	Ignasi Estapé & Jérôme Vidal
Executive Producers	Sandra Tapia, Jose Alba, Celia Rico Clavellino & Mar Medir
Cinematography	Santiago Racaj
Film Editing	Fernando Franco
Production Design	Celia Rico Clavellino
Art Direction	Mireia Carles
Sound Designer & Editor	Albert Manera
Sound Recordist	Amanda Villavieja
Costume Design	Vinyet Escobar
Makeup & Hair Artist	Carmen Arbues
Casting Director	Rosa Estévez
Production Manager	Josep Amorós
Frist Assistant Director	Ana Hernando
Unit Production Manager	Álvaro Sánchez-Bustos

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

ARCADIA MOTION PICTURES

"Abracadabra" (2017) by Pablo Berger

"Aloft" (2014) by Claudia Llosa

"Blancanieves" (2012) by Pablo Berger

"Blackthorn" (2011) by Mateo Gil

AMORÓS PRODUCCIONES

"No me olvides" (2018) by Ferran Navarro-Beltrán

"La mujer judía" (2016) by Antoni Verdaguer

"Luisa no está en casa" (2012) by Celia Rico Clavellino

"Sevigné" (2004) by Marta Balletbò-Coll

In coproduction with:

PECADO FILMS

"Gernika" (2017) by Koldo Serra

"La noche que dejó de llover" (2008) by Alfonso Zarausa

NOODLES PRODUCTION (France)

"Nobody Wants the Night" (2015) by Isabel Coixet

"El muerto y ser feliz" (2012) by Javier Rebollo

"La mujer sin piano" (2010) by Javier Rebollo

"Petit Indi" (2009) by Marc Recha

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