

SPECIAL ISSUE ON VIOLENCE AND COMMUNICATION [3/6]
Collective book “[SPECIAL ISSUE ON VIOLENCE AND COMMUNICATION](#)”

How to cite this article in bibliographies / References

AA Caballero Gálvez, FA Zurián Hernández (2016): “Violent and dangerous macho men. The figure of the male batterer in Almodóvar’s cinema”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 71, pp. 853 to 873.
<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/071/paper/1124/44en.html>
DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2016-1124en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2016-1124en)

Violent and dangerous macho men. The figure of the male batterer in Almodóvar’s cinema

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Abstracts

Introduction. Violence against women is an act performed by men to reaffirm their masculinity and impose their hegemony by force. This article presents the results of a study of gender-based violence in Almodóvar’s films, focused on the figure of the male batterer, not the victims, the female characters. **Methods.** The study is based on two complementary analytical models: 1) a model of visual semiotic analysis from the perspective of gender studies, and 2) the quantification of the types of abuses carried out by male characters in Almodóvar’s filmography, as well as the factors that define these archetypes. **Results and conclusions.** Within the amalgam of masculinities portrayed in Almodóvar’s films, there are different types of male characters who commit violence against women through harassment, rape and murder.

Keywords

Macho violence, masculinity, Almodóvar, machismo, patriarchy, Almodovarian cinema

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1. Introduction

Gender-based violence is a structural problem and, therefore, develops and takes place in the public sphere; it is something almost indisputable for most studies and research works on this type of violence. However, this fact is not so widespread within legal and even social frameworks. We believe that the implementation as well as the increasing interest in gender studies, by different scientific disciplines, has allowed us to understand and accept that this type of violence is intrinsically connected with the heteronormative and patriarchal structures that have prevailed in our society throughout its history. Even if we accept the structural basis of macho violence, we must bear in mind that the perpetuation of this type of violence occurs not only at home but also in institutions such as the school, the government and even religion, which are the places through which the principles of domination over women are consolidated.

The androcentric structure of patriarchy is in great part responsible of the fact that women's role in today's society is still secondary and that the murder of women has become widespread and accepted as part of the functions of men, partly, due to the narcotising effect of the media's news treatment of macho violence (Postigo Gómez & Jorge Alonso, 2015). As a result, only in a few occasions this type of violence has been interpreted from the perspective of men.

It is important to emphasise and insist that violence against women is not a recent phenomenon or a problem that has only occurred in the last one hundred years; instead it is a constant throughout the history of mankind. It is the first form of aggression employed systematically by humans to fulfil their immediate objectives and desires unrelated to basic and functional needs such as hunting, defence, and fights with opponents (Lorente Acosta, 2012). This remit us to the prehistory, where anthropologists have found remains of women with signs of extreme violence. Visual representations of violence against women were left on papyrus by Egyptians and on amphoras by the Greeks, who depicted scenes of the sacrifice of Polyxena (Molas Font, 2007). Greece's legacy is remarkable, particularly its mythology, where the abduction and rape of goddesses gives the Gods access to the Olympus. If we accept Greek mythology as the basis of our culture, we would accept that our culture is founded over misogyny and the abuse of women. In fact, there are film studies that highlight multiple mythological references in cinema, as it would be the case of the analogies between the male hero and the mythological story of the abduction of Persephone by Hades (Bou & Pérez, 2000), as well as the cinematic representations of the mythological stories of Pandora (who was sent by the gods as a punishment to men), the rape of Danae and Demeter's escape from the persecution of Poseidon (Bou, 2006).

If the assignment of sex and gender were different or if our culture was disassociated from the phallus and the penis (Butler, 2002), perhaps this systemic discrimination and violence would not had been inherited and the social order would be completely different. The transformation of history in terms of cultural nature and arbitrariness in favour of the male domination (Bourdieu, 2006) is not trivial; it has led to the hetero-normative imposition of the "naturalised", and thus "essentialised", difference between the masculine and feminine, which is ultimately based on contingency. Macho violence is interiorised in our culture and is present practically every day in the media. In fact, the artistic and cultural expressions in which gender-based violence is not represented, interpreted, denounced, and even promoted are rare (Caballero Gálvez, 2015). Cinema, just like literature and theatre, has been a good field to expose the different forms of violence faced by women in their

everyday lives, just for being biologically identified as females. It is necessary to stop representing gender only as a problem for women, in order to start representing violence against women as a performative act (Butler, 2002), and to pay greater attention to the male figure and, above all, to question and debate the historical reasons that have led to the supremacy of men over women.

It is not a women's problem and perhaps neither a men's problem, but instead a problem of society, the government and especially of the education system. Many of the research studies, campaigns and public policies on gender-based violence focus on the victim, i.e., on women as subjects to be protected. Similarly, much of the existing literature on the work of Pedro Almodóvar has focused on his female characters and actresses, the so called "Almodóvar's girls"; who are women with great charisma and personality, women who suffer but also fight back, and courageous women who are supportive of each other. But what about the men who drive women to despair and make them cry, suffer and run away? Perhaps it is time to stop focusing on why there are women who remain with their abusers and do not denounce them, and to start to also study, from a behavioural perspective, the mind of the men who believe that women are inferior beings who must comply and obey their demands to avoid being punished. This is why we consider that it is a necessity and a priority to study the construction of the masculine identity, as well as the factors and elements that defined it.

Pedro Almodóvar stands, in the European and world cinema, as one of the most prolific film directors in the representation of women, as victims of the patriarchal tradition of male domination. All of his protagonists are women who, in one way or another, try to fight, escape or break free from the machismo that subjugates them. But in this case, Almodóvar's filmography not only gives visibility to women, but also portrays a great amalgam of masculinities that range from sensitive men to the rudeness of the "Iberian men" and the aggressiveness of the jealous and woman-beater husband. As Lehman (1993: 5) points out, "Almodóvar invests in the predominant cultural paradigm within which the bodies of women are exposed and the bodies of men are hidden and protected".

Some studies have accused several of Almodóvar's works of justifying, trivialising and not explicitly denouncing gender-based violence (for example, Aguilar, 1998), as it would be the case of *Kika* (1993) and *Matador* (1986), from the perspective of the victim. This article examines gender-based violence in Almodóvar's films, not from the perspective of the victim, the female characters, but from the perspective of the male batterer. The study is guided by the following research questions: what types of violence is committed against women by male characters in Almodóvar's films? What are the factors that define the archetype of the batterer in Almodóvar's films? Does Almodóvar's filmography relies on one or several batterer archetypes? To answer these questions, the study applies content analysis on the male characters that represent the batterer within the twenty feature films directed by Pedro Almodóvar until 2016.

1.1. Masculinity: violence, aggression and testosterone

As Bourdieu points out in *Masculine Domination* (2000), the masculine force can be noted when it does not have to be justified: the androcentric vision is imposed as natural and does not need to be defined in discourses that aim to legitimise it. The social order works as a symbolic machine that tends to consolidate the male domination in which it is founded. Through violence, hegemonic masculinity protects its territory and shows its manhood. In the last years, the threats represented by

women and the greater visibility of homosexuals is resulting in increased homophobia, misogyny and violence against women.

Hegemonic masculinity is a definition in negative (Segal, 2007), not homosexual and of course, not feminine. At the same time, the degree of masculinity is marked by the level of strength and aggressiveness of men, whether it is towards women or other men (Connell, 2003). Although it is assumed that temperament and strength are the distinctive signs of the male batterer, and the basis of the stereotype present in the collective imaginary, not all men who abuse and beat women show their violent side in an explicit manner. The first objective of this research is to challenge the unique model of the batterer, and to study the different types of men who not only use their force and violence when abusing women. Masculinity is a layer through which the violent actions and ideologies of a culture are still being celebrated under the male domination in which the rage, obsessions, jealousy, insecurities and arrogance of men become everyday normality that does not require any justification or explanation.

According to Michael Kaufman (1989), every act of apparently individual violence is frame within a social context and, therefore, violence is a behaviour that is learnt from witnessing and experiencing violence in society. Men's violence is expressed through a triad that covers violence against women, against other men and against themselves. It is situated in a society that is based on patriarchal structures of authority, domination and control, disseminated across all social, economic, political and ideological activities. The repression of passivity and the accentuation of the active position favour the development of a personality with excessive aggression, which constitutes the norm of patriarchal societies. According to Kaufman's work, violence is a way of combating doubts about masculinity and imposing its hegemony by force.

2. Methods

There is a growing consensus in the social sciences around a "constructivist" view of identities, which understand them more as the result of a processes of filtering, selection and application of "identity markers" than as a "expression" of a previously forged unit (Laclau, 2005; Chai, 2001).

In this article, we take into account the considerations of the 'visual' semiotic proposed by Gonzalo Abril (2007: 26) to "act with a certain degree of rigour and complexity, and understand the configuration and structure of texts and focus on the power relations they involve, what Jameson (2002) terms their 'political unconscious'". Given the power that image has on the constitution of the identity, in our case, the representation of the "batterer", we must take into consideration the following analytical categories:

1. The context: since the cultural analysis can be interpreted as the study of the significant constitution and the social contextualisation of the symbolic forms (Thompson, 1998: 185).
2. The effects of the discourse: reflect on the effects of these films in their reception, or in our case, in their critical analysis.

3. The discourse: to interpret from a sender-subject to a receiver-subject perspective, since the objects are considered to be symbolic forms produced, built and used by a subject in order to direct them to one another.
4. In line with the theoretical framework of this research, we must bear in mind that gaze is dominated by the subjectification, where we can include their *scopic* power (Mulvey, 2001), which is intentional and, inherently, subjective.

For Jacques Aumont (2011), the image has three types of functions: symbolic, epistemic and aesthetic. It reflects the imaginary, a variegated repertoire of images shared by a society, the space of the objectifications of the collective imaginary that remits to the innovation and critical capacity of society, and to the systematic bias and distortion of the stereotype.

Based on the methodological analysis developed by Zurián and Caballero (2013), we propose a critical audiovisual analysis of the filmography of director Pedro Almodóvar that explicitly includes signs of macho violence against woman. Based on the understanding that women also suffer from the symbolic violence established in our society, we have opted for this kind of violence, since it allows us to analyse more specifically the male archetype represented by the characters who play the role of “batterer”. In this way, our sample will include all those films that depict violence from men towards women in any of its variations: physical and/or psychological.

The analysis focused on the identification of attitudes, behaviours and psychological traits that define the batterer characters and the specific types of violence that these characters inflict against female characters, as well as them elements that the director uses to capture it through dialogue and images in order to generate a model that responds to the research questions formulated in this article. To this end, we use an interdisciplinary method based on two complementary analytical models: a visual semiotics analytical model from the perspective of gender studies, and the quantification of the types of violence used by male characters in Almodóvar’s films, as well as the factors that define these archetypes present in Almodovarian cinema.

The analytical process followed to investigate the films of Pedro Almodóvar is structured around the following stages:

- Identification of the male batterer and abusive characters.
- Description of the scenes or sequences of violence against women.
- Identification of the different masculinities and their distinctive features, as well as the power and patriarchal structures in which they are framed.

3. Case study: the male batterer in Almodóvar’s cinema (1980-2016)

Pedro Almodóvar’s first feature film, *Pepi, Luci and Bom and Others Girls on the Heap* (1980), is presented as an ode to the hedonism experienced after the end of the long Francoist period. A musical and cinematographic orgy where social, sexual and cultural freedom dominates. The figure of the batterer in this film is embodied by Luci’s (Eva Siva) husband, a policeman (Félix Rotaeta) who rapes Pepi (Carmen Maura) at the start of the movie. In fact, the avenging of the raping of Pepi is the main storyline in the film. Although Pepi claims not to be affected by the rape as much as she is by the fact that it prevented her from enjoying the loss of her virginity, this first scene clearly shows the critical intentionality of the script which depicts women as objects (Beauvoir, 2000) for

the satisfaction of men (Mulvey, 1975). Pepi offers the policeman oral sex to avoid the fine for growing marijuana, but he continues abusing her and ends up penetrating her. Therefore, the apology of sexual freedom included in the first reading of the film is completely annulled by the masculine domination and force represented by the policeman (who, let's not forget, belongs to the Francoist police with all the connotations that it implies).

The policeman also rapes Charito, a neighbour of Luci, who is in love with the twin brother of the policeman, when she goes to search for Luci. Using deception (posing as his brother) and force, the policeman rapes Charito taking advantage of her vulnerability and fragility. The policeman is stereotyped following the “Manolo” model, understood as the Spanish man who chases Swedish blondes. A stereotype configured from different “hyper-masculine” elements such as: sexual voracity, men-to-men competition, fascism as a banner, and violence as a principle of force. In addition to committing rape, the policeman ridicules his own brother whenever he appears and the director introduces a classic Spanish double march, when the police begins his particular revenge, after realising his woman has abandoned.

On the one hand, Almodóvar depicts transgressive sexualities such as the sadomasochism of Luci and, on the other, openly denounces the relationship of domination and violence of heteronormative sexuality. The director makes the difference between the abuses suffered by Luci and by Bom (Olvido Gara, “Alaska”), another woman, from the beating received by Luci from the policeman. We interpret this beating as the repression of the system that punishes any act of rebellion or uprising (Foucault, 1975).

In *Labyrinth of Passion* (1982), Almodóvar continues to bet on rebel and sexually-liberated characters. The director simultaneously depicts the homosexuality of the male protagonist, Riza Niro (Imanol Arias), and the nymphomania of the female protagonist, Sexilia (Cecilia Roth), and explores the incestuous relationship between Queti (Marta Fernández Muro) and her father (Luis Ciges), which is described by the victim in the following way: “it is because my mother left us months ago, you know? And now I live only with my father, who is a bundle of nerves, and so he occasionally mistakes me for her, for my mother, and he forces himself on me.”

In the Spanish national Catholicism, the submission of women to their husband, father or any male member of the family was an unquestionable aspect. Queti obeys without putting any type of resistance to the overtones and abuses of her father, since “the symbolic violence is a form of power that is directly exerted on the bodies and, just like magic, without any physical coercion” (Bourdieu, 2000). In this film, this is the first time that we find, on the one hand, the relationship between batterer and disability, i.e., the father is depicted as an old man who has lost his mind after being abandoned by his wife and as a result mistakes his daughter with his wife, and then turns out to be a rapist.

Dark Habits (1983) apparently does not integrate any male batterer character, and that is because they are all dead. In first place, the deceased husband of the Marques (Mary Carrillo) who, during a conversation with the Abbess Julia (Julieta Serrano), is described as a “Monster and a fascist”, which can be confirmed in the male model promoted by the Francoist regime, since the fascist regime promoted the “most perfect virility” following the model described by George L. Mosse (1995), the

controller of the body, sexuality and any other type of “abnormality”. Hence, the Marques sees the death of her husband as a liberation for both her and her daughter. Here the batterer is once again a husband and a father. In this way, the director shows us that if a man is an abuser as a husband, he is also an abuser as a father.

Secondly, perhaps not as explicitly as the Marquis, Yolanda’s addict and also deceased boyfriend can also be considered a batterer man because in his first scene he throws Yolanda’s bag to the ground and because he writes to her: “Yolanda, don’t you feel so important, you’re just a whim of mine. Sometimes, you give me the impression of you realise what is going on and I hate you for that. [...] One day you will get tired and leave me, and that’s why I must take revenge before you go. You’re the highest price I have had to pay for heroin.” He blames Yolanda for his death, and that is why he also writes in the dairy: “I am dead. Yolanda made me kill myself”. In this case, we see the figure of the batterer as a victim of himself; he thinks she must be punished for leaving him, that she cannot abandon him, even after he is dead. In addition to the previous two male figures we cannot forget that the background of *Dark Habits* is religion, one of major institutions to perpetuate patriarchy and gender inequalities.

In *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984), the male batterer is easily identifiable from the first scene in which he appears. Almodóvar once again explores physical violence and the archetype represented by the policeman in his first feature through the character of Antonio (Ángel de Andrés López), who is not a policeman, but embodies all the characteristics that define an abuser: violent, jealous, misogynist and rapist. A man who despises all women, but his mother and his former female German boss. He conceives women as an object to his service and pleasure. In his first scene he asks his wife Gloria (Carmen Maura) to iron his shirt, to bring him a beer, to serve him dinner and to make love to him, even if she does not want to.

The protagonist despises anything that comes from Gloria, like her cleaning and her cooking. He does not allow her to make friends with a female prostitute who is also her neighbour, and whom he constantly calls as a “whore”. He thinks people may “mistake” her wife for the prostitute. This situation entails two ideas that the film shows: first of all, he does not want her to work: “I don’t want you go out to work, I do not know how the hell to make you understand.” The second idea has to do with honour and decency, and again this part of the legacy of Francoism and the archetype of the Spanish male of the transition. “The historical treatment of women in Spain has left them with a crude choice between the roles of mother and prostitute, a paradox that Almodóvar’s films recognise (retrospectively, for an older generation) and also challenge (for the new Spanish women)” (Allison, 2003). In a first physical confrontation, Antonio takes Gloria by her wrist and reproaches her: “I won’t let you talk like this about my mother! I am the boss here! And if you don’t like it, you know where the door is!” On the next second occasion, after she has been punished with a slap in the face, Gloria defends herself: “Don’t you dare touching me again”. The empowerment of women and their self-defence become a recurring theme throughout Almodóvar’s filmography.

His fifth feature film, *Matador* (1986), Almodóvar explores once again rape as one of the oldest expressions of macho violence: a female body exclusively to the disposal of the pleasure of men. The first images are scenes of macho violence and as Allison (2003: 105) recognises, the sadistic fantasy of Diego Montez (Nacho Martínez) cannot be more explicit: “he is masturbating, with their legs

framing the TV set”. The first lesson that Ángel (Antonio Banderas) receives from his master Diego Montez was: “Women should be treated as bulls, [you should] stand before them and corral them, without them noticing it”. Subsequently, Diego turns out to be a woman-killer; although he finds his counterpart in Maria Cardenal (Asumpta Serna), who is a man-killer: “I have right to defend myself from abusers like you.”

For Maria Cardenal, “men think that killing is a crime. Women, however, do not think so. That is why, all criminals have something feminine”. To what Diego responds: “and all female killers, have something masculine.” Extrapolating this dialogue to our sphere of interest and understanding masculinity as what is violent and above all as what is not feminine, Maria’s statement is a ridicule of the hegemonic masculinity, assuming that all criminals are feminine and, therefore, that to be a criminal and/or batterer is to be unmanly. Meanwhile, Diego’s response is a reaffirmation of the hegemonic male model based on violence: violent women = masculine women.

Based on the metaphor of the bullfighter as a killer, Almodóvar presents Ángel as an apprentice bullfighter who wants to be a real bullfighter, but who really wants to be a killer, according to Diego. Ángel is characterised as a shy and unstable guy who is overprotected by his mother Berta (Julieta Serrano), a fanatic follower of the Opus Dei that makes her son to feel ashamed of his psychotic impulses. On this occasion, the connection between the rapist and religion is inevitable, and is visually expressed through the oppression of his home. The first and only victim of Ángel is Eva Soler (Eva Cobo), who he tries to rape unsuccessfully after learning his lesson. His desire to become a killer are truncated by his phobia to blood, which makes him to turn himself to the police and confess his crime. Eva denies his story, which frustrates Ángel’s desires to become a dangerous criminal. Cornered and embarrassed by failing to consummate the rape, his credibility, not only as a killer, but as male body, is challenged, which feeds his impotence and this in turn his violence.

In *Law of Desire* (1987), we will focus on the violence inflicted on Tina (Carmen Maura), since, as mentioned in the methods section, our object of study are the men who abuse women for just being women. In this case, Tina, a transsexual woman, receives double discrimination, for being a woman and for being transsexual. When the police are searching her house, Tina is subjected to a physical assault. The policemen, who are a father (Fernando Guillén) and his son (Fernando Guillén Cuervo), begin to question her, being the youngest man the one who violently attacks Tina with a slap: “People like you don’t deserve to live”, to what she responds: “and what do you think people like you, capable of hitting a defenceless woman, deserve?”. When the police question her gender identity, “You are not a woman”, she responds with a punch and says: “guess now you will accuse me of abuse a policeman.”

This is not the only act of aggression received by Tina. At the end of the film, she falls in love with Antonio Benítez (Antonio Banderas), who stalks her brother, film director Pablo Quintero (Eusebio Poncela). Tina tries to escape from Antonio after he finds out about her brother. When she asks him not to touch her, Antonio slaps her in the face and leaves her unconscious, and then wakes her up with water from a vase, threatening her with a gun and holding her against her will until the arrival of her brother. In this film, therefore, we can identify two abusers: the policeman and the psychopath Antonio Benítez.

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown (1988) includes Iván (Fernando Guillén) and his son Carlos (Antonio Banderas). Neither of them abuse their wives, but both of them are unfaithful. Iván is presented as the antithesis of the batterer depicted so far in Almodóvar's filmography. He is a seductive handsome who flees from his responsibilities with three women: Pepa (Carmen Maura), Lucía (Julieta Serrano) and Paulina Morales (Kiti Mánver) who says to him: "you are weak, Iván". In the line of his father, Carlos is a stammering young man who falls in love with Candela (María Barranco), while his fiancée, Marisa (Rossy de Palma), lives in the same house.

In this film, the director shows a model of masculinity that is different from the rest of the male characters examined so far. This character is stripped off any power structure and is dependent of women, as Ana (Ana Leza) points it out: "I have said it to him, that motorbike won't be mounted by any another pussy. He's got me sick and tired. Look, I am planning to set up a business, earn money and buy the motorbike from him and then I will leave him! What do I need a guy for if I have the motorbike?" In addition to this pair of men formed by Iván and his son Antonio, as models of a type of masculinity unrelated to violence and strength, the film includes a taxi driver (Guillermo Montesinos) who acknowledges that "men also cry", which places him even further away from the archetype of the male batterer.

The figure of the aggressor returns strongly in *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (1989) through Ricky (Antonio Banderas) who leaves a psychiatric hospital in order to kidnap Marina Osorio (Victoria Abril), a porn actress who tries to steer her career in another direction by working horror cinema by the hand of director Máximo Espejo (Francisco Rabal), which is also obsessed with her. Both men are presented as disabled: Ricky suffers from psychological disorders, and Máximo is an old man in a wheelchair who wants to make his last masterpiece: *Fantasma de medianoche* ("Midnight Ghost"). While Marina can control Máximo due to his physical disability and can reproach him his lustful looks and insinuations, Ricky, just like the *Midnight Ghost* (Leroix, 1910), takes Marina hostage until he manages to make her fall in love with him. The violence in the film is "hyperbolically explicit", a parody of the violence inherent in heteronormative relationships of patriarchal society, considering that the character of Ricky, the violent macho, is a combination of psychotic symptoms and of what Freud considers a normal male behaviour.

Ricky is portrayed as a predator who stalks his victim by following the dialectic of the horror film genre, like Norman Bates from *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) and the murderer from *The Vampire of Düsseldorf* (1931). In this film we can see the logic of patriarchy, where male power uses all its strength and sadism to victimise women, ironically, in the name of love. A direct criticism to romantic love and the dynamics of power of heteronormativity (Wu, 2005). Although these rigid structures of the love in heterosexual relations tremble with Ricky's past, because his sexual relations with the female director of the psychiatric hospital gave him certain privileges during his confinement: which is a formula that he later applies in his relationship with Marina. Apart from a criticism of the instinctual violence of patriarchy, the film represents a satirical twist to the politically incorrect subgenres based on men's voyeurism and the sadistic excitation (Allison, 2003:102).

On *High Heels* (1991), Becky (Marisa Paredes) and her daughter Rebecca (Victoria Abril) compete for the love of a man, Manuel (Féodor Atkine), who is portrayed as the antithesis of Judge Domínguez / *Femme Letal* (Miguel Bosé). Manuel, in addition to being macho and conservative, is

an unfaithful male. *Femme Letal*, the transvestite persona of Judge Domínguez, takes advantage of Rebeca's trust to have sex with her, and he imposes his male strength to get it. On the one hand, we can describe *Femme Letal* as a rapist, since he ignores the woman's desire, however, the director shows that Rebeca's pleasure fully overshadows the man's desire, which represents post-feminist empowerment (Gorton & Garde-Hansen, 2013).

Kika (1993), one of the director's most controversial films due to its long rape scene (over eight minutes), includes two male abusers represented by murderer Nicholas Pierce (Peter Coyote) and rapist Pablo "Paul Bazzo" (Santiago Lajusticia). The director reveals his inspiration for the character of Nicholas through the sketch with Doña Paquita (Francisca Caballero): "William Burroughs, for example, shot his wife and Luis Althusser strangled hers." To what Doña Paquita responds: "What a horror! I do not know them. They are neither Spanish, right?" "as if sexist crimes did not occur in the Spanish society. This interview suggests the involvement of Nicholas in the murder of his wife, Rafaela. This was not his only crime, as he later kills Susana (Bibiana Fernández) and Andrea "Scarface" (Victoria Abril), after she unmasks him.

Andrea "Scarface", who suffers the consequences of her toxic relationship with Ramón (Álex Casanovas), inform us about the different macho crimes that happen in Spanish society through its show "The worst of the day": "the General of Artillery, A.F.A kills his wife and then commits suicide, after a discussion over the bad notes of their daughter. Their neighbours remember the General as a charming man." The TV show also includes a live interview with a victim, before being murdered live by her husband, Joaquín "the Portuguese" who also abused his daughter.

Pablo is defined by his sister Juana (Rosy of Palma) in the following way: "he is subnormal and as all subnormal people he liked fucking very much." As Juana narrates, Pablo, a former porn actor known as Paul Bazzo, not only raped her, but also his cousin Reme and a neighbour. After escaping from prison and hatching a robbery plan with his sister Jane, in which he gages her and beats her unconscious, he enters Kika's room (Verónica Forqué) and rapes her repeatedly until the police arrives and manages to remove him over her. After the rape, Andrea "Scarface" covers the news and asks a policeman (Jesús Bonilla) about what happened and he responds: "Nothing, a girl was raped." When Ramon goes home he asks Kika what happened and she resignedly confesses: "these things happen all the time and today it happened to me [...] If I drop my guard the little policeman and the other one would also fuck me several times". This is in reference to the three times Pablo fucked and her fragility against the three men. Kika's reflection, as well as the cases announced by Andrea Caracortada ("Scarface"), make us understand the film as a complaint to the impunity of rape and abuse, as well as assassinations, especially due to the laughable performance of the police and the trivialisation of what happened to Kika by the people around her.

The Flower of My Secret (1995) presents Paco (Imanol Arias), a soldier in a special mission in Bosnia, and married with Leo Macias (Marisa Paredes), a writer whose literary creativity enters in crisis due to the stormy relationship with her and who eventually finds shelter in someone completely opposite to her husband, Ángel (Juan Echanove), a sensitive man that even writes a romantic novel under the pseudonym of Leo, Amanda Gris, to help her continue her literary career, and eventually win her heart. This is something that authors such as Gabilondo (2005: 296) have

termed “symmetrical masculinities” given that Ángel and Paco cannot express their feelings and sexual desires, two pseudo-ghosts that roam within the film.

Since it began, the Francoist past of Spain is a constant in the filmography of Pedro Almodóvar. *Live Flesh* (1997) begins with the declaration of the state of exception during the dictatorship (in the fiction film it is set in 1970): a situation that leads to the suspension of some civil rights (of the few that existed formally). Almodóvar presents the State as the ultimate responsible for the patriarchal hegemony that legitimates the supremacy of male values against women and any other gender identity that threatens the heteronormative regime. In this film, there are three characters of interest: Sancho (Pepe Sancho), David (Javier Bardem) and Victor Plaza (Liberto Rabal).

Sancho is a national policeman who lives obsessed with the idea that his woman, Clara (Ángela Molina), is unfaithful. He believes that alcohol is the only thing that can prevent him from killing his wife or even his lover, or as Sancho said to his mate David: “This is the only way to stop a woman from betraying you. Of course, she could also kill the man, but don’t know who he is, may is one of these, and to think that any of these idiots could be fucking my wife while I am working.” Clara’s split proposal makes him to hit her. Although she does not defend herself she does warn him: “One day I’m going to stop being afraid of you Sancho, and feel that that day is not too far away.” After David, Clara has an affair with Victor and decides to leave Sancho. He does not make it easy for her, as she has to throw lacquer in his eyes and shoot him in the leg to be able to escape. As noted by Lorente Acosta (2001: 87): “frustration is a factor that promotes aggression against women, regardless of whether it is generated by factors outside or inside the home, but just as it happens with alcohol, only the men who have established and assumed the patterns of domination and control in the bosom of a relationship carry out aggression against women.”

In the case of David, in the first part of the film he is presented as a protector of women, both of Clara, whom he defends in the conversations with her husband Sancho, and Elena (Francesca Neri), whom he protects from Victor. However, he eventually turns out to be a jealous and violent man. When Elena confesses to him that she had sex with Victor, David does not mistreat her, but collaborates with Sancho to kill the lover of Elena and Clara, Victor. As Gabilondo (2005: 296) points out, the character of David represents a castrated masculinity - paralysed from the waist down – that replaces the sadistic masculinity of Sancho.

Victor is a victim of the system, of the State. He is the son of a prostitute, living in a poor district, and unjustly imprisoned. He leaves prison as an orphan in search of revenge and the obsessive desire to get Elena back. In their first encounter, we learn that he met her one night but the intercourse was not consummated. When he gets out of prison, Clara introduces him to sex and he seeks Elena to consummate what was left unfinished in the past: “What bothered me the most that night was you calling me stupid and saying that I had no clue how to fuck. I swore that someday I would make you eat your words and the worst thing is that it was true. So I decided that one day when I got out of jail I would become the ‘best fucker in the world’. My plan was to spend a whole night with you, and during that night fuck you non-stop until I cut you in half, I would make you enjoy more than you ever dreamed of your whole life and, naturally, you would love me, but I would leave you and would never come back to you, even if you got on your knees and begged me to do so. That was my

revenge.” Victor feels his ego as a macho man is crushed, and this is what gives a reason to live, to prove to the victim that he is better than her and that he can have her whenever he wants.

After *Live Flesh* (1997), in which macho violence is a constant, apparently in *All About my Mother* (1999) there is no character that can be identified as one of the male archetypes defined so far. However, it is noteworthy that the film is framed within the work of the theatre play *A Streetcar named Desire* (Williams, 1947). The film shows some scenes of violence, like the abuse of Stanley (Carlos Lozano), a misogynist and violent Southern American, towards Stella (Candela Peña): “Stupid? I was already like that when we met, but let me remind you that my brutality was never a problem for you”. Nonetheless, the film does not show Stanley’s raping of Blanche, a character played in the film by Huma Rojo (Marisa Paredes).

Although, as mentioned, the film does not include a male archetype that fits the male, heterosexual and violent pattern, the figure of Lola (Toni Cantó) can be identified as a batterer. As Manuela (Cecilia Roth) says: “Lola has the worst of a man and the worst of a woman. [...] He spends the day wearing a microscopic bikini, fucking everything that moves and still made a scene if his woman wore a bikini or a miniskirt, the very bastard! How can he be so sexist with such pair of tits?”. He is a character that flees before giving any type of explanation to the women he has been involved with.

The complexity of the script of *Talk to Her* (2002) demands a more in-depth analysis of its male characters in order to consider some of the factors that lead us to identify violence. Dismissing the partners of Lydia González (Rosario Flores), both Marco Zuluaga (Darío Grandinetti) and the Bullfighter “El Niño de Valencia” (Adolfo Fernández), even considering the connotations of bullfighting within the imaginary of the Spanish male, the only character that can be identified as a batterer would be Benigno Martín (Javier Cámara), who does not mistreat but rapes Alicia (Leonor Watling).

Benigno does not fit the stereotype of the Iberian male who imposes his strength and power over women, and rather embodies female traits: he takes care of his mother until she dies and then takes care of Alicia. In addition, his sexuality is ambiguous, since he refuses to be defined as homosexual or heterosexual. In fact, his visit to the psychologist with the excuse of learning more about Alice (or, at least, about her environment) as well as some conversations with Marco suggest that Benigno has serious psychological problems. His obsession with the victim is what leads us to include him within the category of batterer characters. For Kinder (2005: 264), “only the Ballerina comes to life through acts of love, both verbal and physical [...] Although many people would call these acts ‘rape’, Benigno the maternal performs them as if they were part of his tragic devotion to his beloved [...]”. In this statement, the female author has not considered the fact that the ‘beloved’ has brain paralysis, is unconscious and defenceless, and that Benigno ‘the maternal’ has gone to the prison for this crime, where he eventually commits suicide, as many other batterers (Lorente Acosta, 2012). From our analysis we cannot defend the hypothesis that rape is an act of love and that it has beneficial effects on the victim (Freixas, 2014) and instead we have to highlight the abuse of power in such an act, which Almodóvar deflects and illustrates in the film through the metaphor of the *Shrinking Lover*, based in turn on the film *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (Matheson, 1957), avoiding the unpleasant image of the raping of a patient in a coma.

In the case of *Bad Education* (2004) we can clearly identify the batterer in the figure of father Manolo (Daniel Giménez Cacho), the alter ego in the fiction of D. Manuel Berenguer (Lluís Homar). He is mainly a paedophile who abuses his position of power within a boarding school, as Zahara (Gael García Bernal) reminds him: “A ten-year-old boy is not loved, is molested, is abused”. We include him in our analysis because he is responsible for the death of Ignacio (Francisco Boira), who is the process of sex reassignment. In the filming of *The Visit*, within *Bad Education*, father Manolo and the other priest kill Zahara by snapping his neck. This film also portrays religion as one of the institutions that perpetuate macho violence and hatred towards non-normative gender identities, such as transsexuality.

Rape and mistreatment once again take centre stage within the storyline of *Return* (2006). Paco (Antonio de la Torre) tries to rape the daughter of Raimunda (Penélope Cruz), Paula (Yohana Cobo): “I was in the kitchen, with my back towards him, and suddenly my dad threw himself over me. He was drunk, I yelled at him and asked him what was he doing and he told me he wasn’t my father. I pushed him back. He got back over me and hugged me again, and so I pushed him back again. He unfastened his pants, and kept on saying that it wasn’t bad and that he was not my father. I opened the drawer and picked up a knife, it threatened him but only to scare him away, but he didn’t stop. He said I didn’t have the courage to do it and threw himself over me. ‘What are you going to do mom?’”

Raimunda was also a victim of his father, as her mother Irene (Carmen Maura) narrates: “The evening of the fire you called to say that your father had abused you, that you got pregnant and that Paula is your daughter and your sister. I couldn’t believe it. How could such monstrosity have occurred in front of me while without me noticing it? Then it understood it all, I understood your silence, your estrangement, I understood that your father went to work to Venezuela, incapable of assuming the shame of what he had done. I understood that after you got married with Paco you came to Madrid and didn’t want to know anything about us.” Raimunda’s father embodies most of the aspects that we have identified from the different types of batterer characters: macho, rapist, unfaithful and coward, as Agustina (Blanca Portillo) describes him: “Your father was born to make the women who loved him suffer.”

In line with the last film analysed, in *Broken Embraces* (2009) abuse once again becomes one of the central themes. Again, obsession drives Ernesto (José Luis Gómez) to watch over, control and assault Lena (Penélope Cruz). He takes advantage of his position of power as the boss of Lena and of its economic and family situation to possess her. When she tries to leave him, he punishes her by pushing her down the stairs, and then runs to help her: “Turn around my love, I’ll help you out, let me do it. Quiet, quiet, I’ll help you out. You might have got something broken. I’m going to remove your shoes so that you are more comfortable. I’ll take care of everything.” This is not the only time she is attacked: when she manages to escape with her lover, Mateo (Lluís Homar), he assaults her again, as Lena narrates: “We have fought really badly, at the end he ripped off my clothes and threw me naked onto the road.” His obsession drives him to kill her, causing a car accident when she is driving with Mateo. Ernesto represents, on the one hand, the figure of the fascist, conservative and patriarchal man whom we identify with the values imposed by the national Catholicism of the dictatorship, in contrast to Mateo, a sensitive and creative film director and writer. Two antagonistic masculinities within the great amalgam of existing masculinities (Kimmel, 2001).

The main batterer, in this case a rapist, that we can highlight in *The Skin I Live In* (2011) is Zeca (Roberto Álamo) who rapes Vera Cruz (Elena Anaya), who, in turn, is kidnapped by Robert Ledgard (Antonio Banderas). To rape her, he has previously tied down and assaulted his mother, Marilia (Marisa Paredes). This is another abuser, with psychological problems and a problematic past: he was abandoned by his mother and raised in the slums of Rio de Janeiro. In addition, he cannot contain his sexual appetite. In fact, he begins to lick Vera's body on the screen of the video surveillance the first time he sees her. The rape scene, which is comparable to *Kika's*, ends up when his other captor, Robert Ledgard, rescues her, even though this seems contradictory.

Long before, when Vera was Vicente (Jan Cornet) he tried to rape Robert Ledgard's daughter Norma (Blanca Suárez). That is why Robert abducts Vicente and subjects him to a vaginoplasty, and gradually transforms him, physically, into a woman called Vera (Zurian, 2013: 265). In the film, we see Vera but Vera calls herself Vicente after she escapes and talks to Cristina (Bárbara Lennie), the salesgirl (the script emphasises it is Vera's line): "I am Vicente. I just escaped... I was abducted... He switched my sex... I've had to kill two people to be able to escape. You have to help me" (Zurian, 2011: 284). Although, therefore, we could not consider Robert to be a batterer, since the aggression is against another man, not a woman, he undoubtedly embodies the features of the patriarchal man that believes that his will is the law and everything else is despicable.

Although *I'm So Excited!* (2013) is a carefree comedy, it also includes a male batterer character: Infante, a Mexican hitman (José María Yazpik). However, we will not include it within the archetypal model of the male batterer for the following reason: the only aggression he performs is when he slaps Norma Boss (Cecilia Roth) when she panics and begins to scream, which can be interpreted as a form of controlling and stopping her anxiety attack. However, Infante's words may indicate the contrary when pilot Benito Morón (Hugo Silva) tells him about his problems with his wife and Infante asks: "Haven't you considered killing her?", which is a question that Benito blames on his Latin American origin: "No, man, no! South Americans think that everything can be fixed with murder." Although his words reveal he is an abuser, he does not fall within our case study, which focuses on men who perform acts of physical or psychological violence against women.

Finally, in the case of *Julieta* (2016), its three male characters do not fit the stereotype of the batterer. However, we suspect that in Julieta's home (Emma Suárez / Adriana Ugarte), her father Samuel (Joaquín Notario) abuses his sick wife, Sara (Susi Sánchez), since he locks her up in her room while he has an affair with Sanáa (Mariam Bachir). Samuel and Xoan (Daniel Grao) fit the archetype of the man who is incapable of confessing his infidelities and assuming his responsibilities, which we have identified in the previous films. Lorenzo (Dario Grandinetti), however, is closer to the more sensitive characters, as part of what we might call a new masculinity liberated from patriarchal ties.

4. Results

After having analysed the twenty feature films of Pedro Almodóvar, Table 1 presents selected characters and relates them to the categories established in the configuration of the archetype of the batterer represented in Almodóvar's films. We discarded those characters that do not appear in the diegetic space. Thus, we ruled out *Dark Habits* (1983) and the movies that do not include male characters that do not fit any of the categories of abuse studied: *Women on the Verge of a Nervous*

Breakdown (1988), *High Heels* (1991), *The Flower of My Secret* (1995), *All About My Mother* (1999), *I'm So Excited!* (2013), and *Julieta* (2016). It is necessary to clarify that we have included the batterers of *Law of Desire* (1987), and *Bad Education* (2004), because while their victims were born as male, they died or were assaulted being women.

Table 1: Classification of woman-abusive male characters according to type of abuse.

Movies	Characters	Type of abuse			
		Murder	Assault	Rape	Harassment
<i>Pepi, Luci and Bom and Others Girls on the Heap</i> (1980)	Policeman		x	x	
<i>Labyrinth of Passion</i> (1982)	Father			x	x
<i>What Have I Done to Deserve This?</i> (1984)	Antonio		x	x	
<i>Matador</i> (1986)	Diego	x			
	Ángel			x	
<i>Law of Desire</i> (1987)	Young policeman		x		
	Antonio		x		
<i>Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!</i> (1990)	Ricky		x		x
<i>Kika</i> (1993)	Nicholas	x			
	Paul Bazzo		x	x	
	“El portugués”	x	x	x	
<i>Live Flesh</i> (1997)	Sancho	x	x		x
	Víctor				x
<i>Talk to Her</i> (2002)	Benigno			x	x
<i>Bad Education</i> (2004)	Manuel	x			
<i>Return</i> (2006)	Paco			x	
<i>Broken Embraces</i> (2009)	Ernesto	x	x		x
<i>The Skin I Live In</i> (2011)	Zeca		x	x	

Therefore, 65% of the feature films of Pedro Almodóvar include characters that fit the archetype of the male batterer. To answer the first research question: what type of violence against women is committed by the male characters in Almodóvar’s films? The results [1], based on 18 characters that commit more than one type of violence against women, are as follows: 33.3% are murderers; 55.5% are wife-batterers; 50% are rapists; and 33.3% harassers.

The study involved a second quantification [Table 2] according to the factors involved in the configuration of these characters, and therefore responds the second research question: what are the factors that define the archetype of the abuser in Almodóvar’s films?

Table 2: Classification of woman-abusive male according to their defining factors.

Movies	Characters	Factors		
		Machismo	Psychological	Rape
<i>Pepi, Luci and Bom and Others Girls on the Heap</i> (1980)	Policeman	x		x
<i>Labyrinth of Passion</i> (1982)	Father		x	x
<i>What Have I Done to Deserve This?</i> (1984)	Antonio	x		x
<i>Matador</i> (1986)	Diego	x	x	
	Ángel		x	x
<i>Law of Desire</i> (1987)	Young policeman	x		
	Antonio		x	
<i>Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!</i> (1990)	Ricky	x	x	
<i>Kika</i> (1993)	Nicholas	x	x	
	Paul Bazzo	x	x	x
	“El portugués”	x		x
<i>Live Flesh</i> (1997)	Sancho	x		
	Víctor	x	x	
<i>Talk to Her</i> (2002)	Benigno		x	x
<i>Bad Education</i> (2004)	Manuel	x	x	x
<i>Return</i> (2006)	Paco	x		x
<i>Broken Embraces</i> (2009)	Ernesto	x	x	
<i>The Skin I Live In</i> (2011)	Zeca	x	x	x

The results indicate that 77.7% of the characters respond to the ideology of machismo and, therefore, to the hegemonic model resulting from the patriarchal system; 66.6% respond to a motivation connected with a mental disability or a psychological trauma caused by family or religion, which drives them to abuse against women, and even to show a killer instinct; and finally, 55.5% respond to a sexual motivation, in connection with harassment and obsession.

Finally, with regards to the third research question: Does Almodovar’s filmography relies on one or several archetypes of the male batterer? The results indicate that there is not a unique fixed pattern that defines the male batterer in Almodóvar’s films, but instead we can differentiate three recurring stereotypes in Almodóvar’s films: 1) the Iberian male or “manolo”, who systematically abuses

women through physical aggression or domestic treatment; 2) the murderous psychopath whose ultimate goal is to end with the life of a woman, or one who suffers from psychological problems that drive him to mistreat women; and finally the most complex character 3) the “innocent” man who suffers from a disability or a trauma that drives him, mainly, to harass or rape women.

5. Conclusions

After having quantified the types of abuse against women and the factors that define the male characters under analysis, one of the first conclusions of this study is the reaffirmation of macho violence as structural violence based on the patriarchal system, as well as essentialist principles give men the power of dominance against women, who is doomed to subordination (Bourdieu, 2000). While Cohan and Hark (1993: 2) identify the male subjects in Almodovarian cinema with activity, voyeurism, sadism, fetishism and narrative progression, we add abuse and violence against women.

As reflected in the work of Almodóvar, this domination is supported by different power structures, responsible for the assimilation and perpetuation of such roles. One of the first aspects portrayed in his filmography is the fascist past of the Spanish State and its political and social system based on national Catholicism, in which women are relegated to fulfilling the needs and wishes of their husbands. This system frames the archetype that we have identified as the first of the archetypes identifies in the results: 1) the Iberian male or “manolo”, who systematically mistreats women through physical aggression or domestic treatment. This archetype is embodied by several characters: the policeman in *Pepi, Luci and Bom and Others Girls on the Heap*; Antonio in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*; the young policeman in *Law of Desire*; the brief, but no less relevant, appearance of rapist and murderer Joaquín García “the Portuguese” in *Kika*; Sancho in *Live Flesh*; Paco in *Return* and Ernesto in *Broken Embraces*.

In the case of the second archetype the murderous psychopath whose purpose is to end with the life of a woman, we found two different models; on the one hand, Diego Montez in *Matador* and Nicholas in *Kika* respond to a same pattern: serial killers whose only motive is the hatred towards women. And on the other hand, Joaquin “the Portuguese” in *Kika*, Sancho in *Live Flesh*, and Ernesto in *Return*, who kill their wives when they realise their wives are going to leave them, when they announce that they want to be free and want to break up the relationship of submission (Calleja, 2015). The case of Manuel Berenguer in *Bad Education* is more complex, since he kills Ignacio for being a woman, for not having the male body he wanted and because his body has been replaced by the body of his brother Juan.

The third and last archetype, which has been termed as 3) the “innocent” male character that suffers from a mental disability or trauma that drives him, mainly, to harass and/or rape women, is evident also through different models: Ricky from *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* as well as Victor from *Live Flesh* respond to the same profile, two young handsome men who come out of their respective confinements with the objective of possessing their victims. Both plots are based on the *Phantom of the Opera*: men abduct and harass their victims until they fall in love with them. On the other hand, Paul Bazzo, from *Kika*, and Zeca, from *The Skin I Live In*, do not have a high IQ and have a strong sexual appetite that is only satiated through rape. Elderly men also fall in this category, like the

father from *Labyrinth of Passion* and Máximo, the film director from *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* Finally, the most complex case would be the character of Benigno from *Talk to Her*.

In the last case, the pressure exerted on masculinity to achieve the unachievable hegemonic model (Connel, 2008), as well as the demands imposed by the patriarchal regime on men, as individuals responsible for their wives and children, leads them to dump their frustration over women. Behind these acts portrayed by Almodóvar, especially rape, there is an ideology that turns women into the space where men are rebuilt (Sánchez-Alarcón, 2008), even when it is to kill themselves, as it is the case of Benigno who eventually commits suicide and Zeca who is killed while he rapes Vera. This is the essential difference between these characters and Ricky and Victor, who not only do not die, but also get the women they have harassed. However, we believe that there are different layers within the narrative of *Kika* and *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* that determine absolute criticism to the patriarchal system and an explicit conviction to men's mistreatment of women (Wu, 2005).

It is worth noting how some of the batterers in Almodovarian cinema not only use their privileged position as men, but also their position of power within the government structures, such as the police officers included in the films, and the institution that represents the family, in this case, the father figure. In the case of the police, in addition to the two policemen previously described, the director tends to recursively use this figure in his movies, stripping them off of all their authority or ridiculing them, as it would be the case of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988), *Matador* and *Kika*. In the case of the father, his presence tends to be harmful for women, as it would be the case of *Labyrinth of Passion* and *Return*, where instead of protecting them, the fathers rape their daughters. The police and the heteronormative family model are not the only patriarchal structures that we can identify as perpetrators of gender-based violence, in Almodóvar's films religion plays an important role in the repression of the men who eventually assault, rape or harass women. It would be the case of the pressure exerted by mothers on their children, as Antonio's mother in *Law of Desire*, Antonio's elderly mother in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, Ángel's sister in *Matador*, Benigno's constant memories about his mother in *Talk to Her*, and even Robert Ledgard's mother in *The Skin I Live In*. This is not only a question of pressure, but of blindness, as shown by the mother of Joaquin "the Portuguese" in *Kika*, who denies his son is a killer and a rapist, even after seeing audiovisual evidence.

On the other hand, there are others masculinities that are not characterised by their violence, but take advantage of their preponderant condition in romantic relations, such as Iván in *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, Paco in *The Flower of My Secret*, Manuel in *High heels*, Lola in *All about my Mother*, Samuel and Xoan in *Julieta*. There are also men, and even women like Lola, who lie to their women and shown their inability to empathise with the feelings of her female companions. As Oscar Pereira (2007: 8) points out: "In Almodovarian style, these traits are equivalent to an absolute lack of femininity, which is what characterises the true man (do not confuse with the heterosexual man)."

We cannot end this article without mentioning other masculinities of special relevance in Almodóvar's films, such as the transsexuals and transvestites who appear in his filmography, as well as other normative yet non-violent masculinities, which would be the case of Ángel in *The Flower of My Secret*, Marco Zuluaga in *Talk to Her*, and Lorenzo in *Julieta*. These men do not feel ashamed of

their sensitivity, tears and love for women. In Almodóvar's films men are the only one responsible for macho violence. They are the ones who mistreat, kill, assault, rape women, and make them suffer and cry. This man is also a victim of the patriarchal system and the heteronormative regime.

6. Note

[1] Most of the selected characters commit more than one type of abuse, i.e., they perform different types of attacks, or at the same time, their construction as batterer responds to more than one factor. For this reason, in this indicator the results exceeds 100%.

7. References

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How to cite this article in bibliographies / References

AA Caballero Gálvez, FA Zurián Hernández (2016): "Violent and dangerous macho men. The figure of the male batterer in Almodóvar's cinema". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 71, pp. 853 to 873.
<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/071/paper/1124/44en.html>
DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2016-1124en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2016-1124en)

Article received on 20 June 2016. Accepted on 24 August.
Published on 12 September 2016.