

Professor Maria Delgado on *Seeing Red (La sangre en el ojo)*

Seeing Red (La sangre en el oro) picks up where Toia Bonino's 2017 film *Orione* ends, following Ale's younger brother Leo who is released after spending 14 years in prison, motivated solely by the urge to revenge his brother's death. In *Orione*, Ale's mother came from a place of reimagining: a place where she could construct another life for her son, where the act of baking a cake becomes a way of making sense of the violence in which Ale had become enmeshed. In *Seeing Red*, however, there is no reimagining for Leo beyond a primeval desire for vengeance.

The image of Leo floating in a pool may suggest tranquillity and calmness, but his voice is filled with rage and resentment. Leo is pushing 40, but his boasts, his posture, and his behaviour signal arrested growth. Leo is an angry boy trapped in the body of a man. He narrates a life where stealing is seen as mere mischief. He can't recognise its impact on those whose homes he invades. Leo shares his tips on whom to rob and when; how to stake out wealthy neighbourhoods to plan the best time for a break-in; and how crime escalates to feed a wild cocaine habit. Theft becomes, quite simply, a way of life.

Leo's vision is singular and inflexible, driven by the desperate void left by not having had the chance to say goodbye to his brother. Through the testimony of others – including Leo's daughter and Ale's ex-partner – the viewer sees the impact of Leo's singular vision. These women bear the scars of a corrosive masculinity that sees them as disposable, as casualties of the hermetic bubble in which Leo exists. Floating in a swimming pool on an inflatable rubber ring, Leo looks like a giant child: unable to grow up, unable to get out of the pool in which he appears almost trapped, endlessly floating without direction or purpose beyond the obsessive, all-pervasive need for revenge.

Bonino's film is crafted without Leo looking at the camera. He is always to one side, always partially captured, off-kilter and never quite present. Leo's absence is felt by his family. His 15-year-old daughter recalls him as never there. As Leo mourns Ale's absence, his daughter mourns his. Mobile phone cameras capture the traces of lives damaged by Ale's crimes but these figures are, in many ways, less present than Ale's ghost, hovering over everything Leo does. *Seeing Red* invites the viewer to watch, listen, and observe without rushing to judge, and to make their own decisions as Leo faces a future where he remains trapped by the past.

*Professor Maria Delgado is an academic, critic, curator
and advisor for the ICA film programme*