

 PRAGDA | SPANISH FILM CLUB

DISCUSSION GUIDE



MY EMPTINESS AND I (MI VACÍO Y YO)

A film by ADRIÁN SILVESTRE

Spain / 2022 / 98 min
Spanish with English subtitles

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country that film comes from. Learning about the filmmaker is also a relevant way to gain insight on the context in which the film was produced. You can learn more about Adrián Silvestre at <https://pragda.com/film/my-emptiness-and-i/>.

INTRODUCING THE FILM

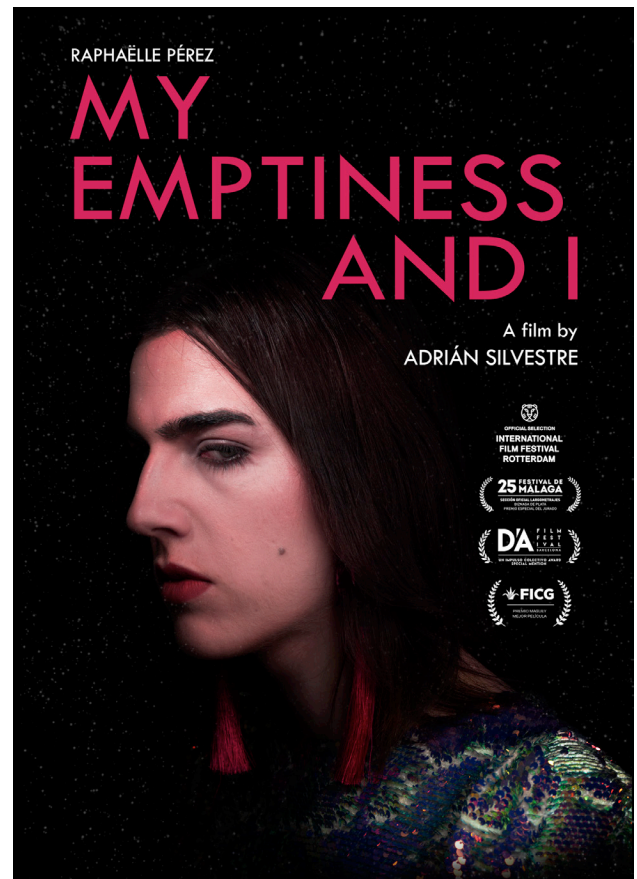
A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film's marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this synopsis for *My Emptiness and I*:

Director Adrián Silvestre partners with co-writer and lead actress Raphaëlle Pérez to create a colorful, layered portrait of a life in flux.

Working in a call center in Barcelona after relocating from France, sensitive dreamer Raphi works through her recent diagnosis of gender dysphoria. Through it all — embarrassing dates, adapting to the rhythms of a new life, candid conversations with an exuberant support group of multigenerational trans women — Raphi chases after an elusive image of modern love that continually shifts and surprises her.

With a star-making performance by Raphaëlle Pérez, this narrative feature debut is a romantic and illuminating story of one woman's transfeminine experience and an invigorating cinematic experience, destined to become a queer classic.

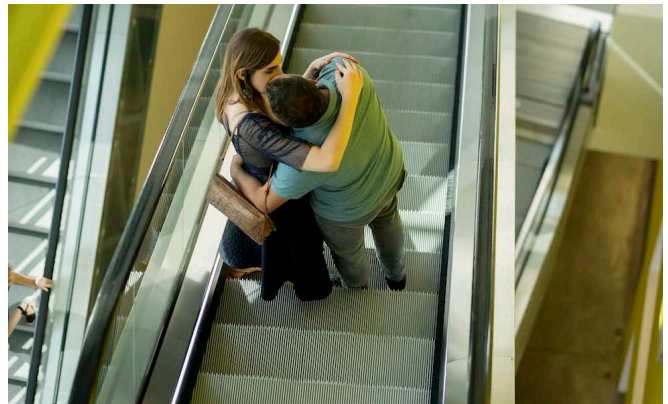
- > From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film?
From this same text, try to identify the main events of the film's plot and the socio-political context of the film.
- > Do you think that the film will have a political message? Cite specific language from the synopsis to support your answer.
- > How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- > Viewing the marketing materials alone (i.e., trailer, poster, and still images available at <https://pragda.com/film/my-emptiness-and-i/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

NARRATIVE

- > The audience's first interaction with Raphi comes in the form of her meeting with a psychologist. What was your first impression of Raphi? Describe her personality and physical appearance.
- > In what ways does Raphi begin to change after being diagnosed with gender dysphoria?
- > Although most of her dates end poorly, Raphi develops a slightly longer lasting relationship with Alberto. In what ways are they compatible? In what ways are they incompatible? Why did Alberto begin to avoid Raphi?
- > Speak on Raphi's relationships with those around her. How do her colleagues support her? Where does she find guidance as she considers gender reassignment surgery?
- > When Rapha is first approached by Carles to star in his play, why does she initially seem hesitant? What makes her change her mind?
- > After countless failed dates, Raphi finally seems to have found someone she can share a genuine connection with through Marc. How does their relationship differ from her prior dating experiences? How does Marc support her during her journey?
- > After avoiding Raphi for three months, Alberto reaches out to her, asking to go out on a date. Why do you think Raphi accepted his invitation? Does their relationship end during this meeting?
- > The film ends as Raphi enjoys the afterparty for her performance. In what ways does Raphi seem different? What do you think the future holds for Raphi?



CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- > Although *My Emptiness and I* is a narrative feature, the film contains a certain documentary aesthetic. What are some of the techniques used that give it this feel?
- > Analyze the use of lighting in *My Emptiness and I*. Does it appear natural? How is it used to engage with the audience?
- > Throughout the film, Raphi emphasizes her love for fashion. Consider the complexity of the costume design within *My Emptiness and I*. How does Raphi's style change as the film progresses? How do her outfits correlate with the various stages in her journey?
- > There are various moments within the film when characters discuss certain aspects of transgenderism within groups. How are these scenes shot? How does Adrián Silvestre frame the speaker in relation to those who listen?
- > Describe the use of dialogue within the film. At times, does it appear natural or heavily scripted? How is the dialogue used to effectively inform the viewer on topics of transgenderism?
- > Throughout the film, Raphi can be seen going on many dates. How are these dates captured through the camera? How does the camera portray the solitude or intimacy that Raphi feels during these scenes? Consider the use of space and positioning within each shot composition.

CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES *continued*

- Describe the color palette used within *My Emptiness and I*. Does it stand out? What would be the positives for using a more realistic color palette for a story like this?
- Although *My Emptiness and I* is fundamentally a fictitious narrative feature, all the characters within the film play versions of themselves. Naturally, this includes Raphi who in reality did study fashion in France and eventually immigrated to Barcelona. How does this element create a sense of truthfulness? How does it engage with the audience's perception of Raphi?
- *My Emptiness and I* was co-written by Raphi alongside Adrián Silvestre and Carlos Marques-Marcet. How much of this film do you believe was autobiographical? As a viewer, can you tell that the narrative was influenced by the actress' own experiences? What difficulties arise when trying to find a balance between reality and fiction?

THEMES

- Analyze the meeting that Raphi has with the psychologist at the start of the film. How does she treat Raphi? How does she influence Raphi's journey? Although Raphi does not directly seek a diagnosis and initially identifies as male, the psychologist still diagnoses Raphi with gender dysphoria through this meeting. What do you make of this?
- One of the principal themes of *My Emptiness and I* is Raphi's journey of self-discovery. How does she manage to come to terms with her identity and place in the world? Speak on the importance of remaining resilient when faced with adversity.
- Speak on Raphi's use of social media. How does her identity on platforms such as Tinder and Instagram reflect who she is? Do you believe that she carries a separate identity online? How does social media provide us with a way to express ourselves separate from reality?
- Throughout the film, Raphi engages with communities that help her embrace her identity while also comforting her through her challenges. Some of these groups include her colleagues, transgender support group, and her art studio. Speak on the importance of having a positive community in which one can openly express themselves. How can we learn to become more open to the advice and support that is offered by our friends?
- While Raphi struggles with her identity, she often looks to art as a facet to express what she cannot openly say or describe. In what ways can art be a form of self-expression and catharsis for artists and viewers alike? In what ways can art be therapeutic and contribute to mental well-being?
- When drinking with her colleagues, Raphi discusses the offer from Carles to star in his play. During this discussion she emphasizes her discontentment. She states that she is tired of being chosen for being trans, and that she feels limited by her status as a transgender woman. Speak on Rapha's desire to fit in. Why does she state that she feels like nothing more than an "image"?
- Raphi frequently struggles with different challenges when searching for love. What are some of the difficulties that transgender people may encounter when dating? Consider topics such as the fetishization and violence towards the transgender community.
- Although Raphi has a strong support system, her journey of self-discovery and the choices she makes ultimately revolve around her. How does Raphi learn to become more independent throughout the film? How does she develop a sense of confidence?
- When meeting with a surgeon, Raphi is told that the wait for her vaginoplasty would take at least three years. Why do you think the wait was so long? What does this tell us about the status of the medical system?

