

## RESEÑA/REPORT

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**DIRECTORAS DE CINE EN ESPAÑA Y AMÉRICA LATINA.  
NUEVAS VOCES Y MIRADAS**

Pietsie Feenstra, Esther Gimeno Ugalde and Kathrin Saringen (eds.), in  
collaboration with Nina Fanning.  
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The objectives of the book *directoras de cine en España y América Latina* are to contribute to fill an (unfair) vacuum that hampers the history of Spanish and Latin American cinema and to encourage academic interest in female filmmakers. Rescuing from oblivion and recognizing the artistic quality of the work of the female directors is the main intent of this collective volume, arisen from the conference organized by the German Association of Hispanics in Passau in March 2011. Noting an increase in the number of female creators in the Spanish-speaking film industries during the late nineties and early 2000s, publishing companies have ventured to map and propose an analysis of their films in order to put this production in their historical context. This effort responds to a growing attention from the Hispanism, not only in the countries of origin of the artists but also in France or the United States, as the recent publications of *De cierta manera: cine y género en América Latina*, by Mulally and Soriano, or *Desenfocadas. Cineastas españolas y discursos de género*, by Zecchi.

In the opening pages, Pietsie Feenstra details what will be the roadmap for the total of eighteen authors involved in the project: it consists of "archiving", "making visible" and "staging" the works by female authors (p . 39). This statement, which follows in the wake of the feminist movement to claim a deserved and necessary assessment of these films, aptly starts with the development of a historical overview. In the chapter "(In)Visible Presences: female directors in the Spanish and Latin American cinema," Esther Gimeno Ugalde presented the results of extensive documentation that has allowed her to synthesize the evolution of the presence of women in Latin American industries and in the countries that welcomed them as immigrants or exiled. From the pioneers of silent films to the authors of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these pages are particularly useful to know the margins of official history, since the academy is not limited to cataloguing but also briefly explores the respective national contexts. Needless to stress that this volume focuses on the Spanish-speaking area, thus it does not include data from Brazil.

In order to comply with the stated mission, the book consists of a total of fifteen articles and an interview, arranged into three sections: "New voices and looks into the history of cinema", "New voices and looks into history and "Professional experience ". The first two parts are subdivided respectively into other sections covering issues such as otherness, body, h / History or violence. Regardless of this editorial classification, the published works really delve into broader issues, including race or social class. Extremely stimulating are the approaches that study the relationship between gender, nation and terrorism (see article on Yoyes), body, war and memory (see the analysis of *The Milk of Sorrow*, *The Secret Life of Words* or *Mujeres en pie de guerra*) or women and nature (see text on *La pasión de nuestra señora*), to mention just a few.

Another element that shows the coordination of this work is the reflection on differentiating elements of female authorship. It is noted in the introduction that this volume prefers to distance itself from the Anglo-Saxon and French feminist criticism on the grounds that it arose in a different historical and social context from the countries on which this work focuses. This opens the door to the admirable intention of finding a theoretical framework that is better suited to the production under analysis. This departure from the canonical texts, dragging the questioning of the article "*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*" by Laura Mulvey or the validity of the concept of female writing of Luce Irigaray, encourages some analysis that does not always take into account the gender of the author. The question of the existence of a feminine look and the occasional reluctance to gender studies place this book in an ambiguous space between the recognition of an inequality that is to be compensated and the denial of characteristic factors of the group that is staying on the sidelines.

Among the contributions that analyze in detail the impact of gender of the director in the cinematographic work and consider the existence of common elements in their respective works is that of Maria Carmi-Vela, the author of the book *Mujeres detrás de la cámara: entrevistas con cineastas españolas de la década de los 90* (2001). In her article she concludes that the Spanish filmmakers of the new millennium do not watch their characters from a position of power, but negotiate with Otherness in its broadest sense. In other studies included in this compilation, gender categories are questioned from breaking the male / female binary, whether rescuing the experimental film with a queer component of Maria Canas or analyzing the look of the characters on a subject intersex in *XXY* (2007).

In the process of investigating the distinctive elements in the work of female directors, a methodology comparing their proposals with those traditionally performed by men is used. Thus, the analysis of the film *Ladies' Night* (Tagliavini, 2003) shows that friendship between women can overcome the usual rivalry on the screen, while the study of female characters living in the two Perus taken respectively to the by scene by Claudia Llosa in *Madeinusa* (2006) and by her uncle, Mario Vargas Llosa, in the novel *Death in the Andes* (1993), shows an intention by the director to break stereotypes.

The complexity of female authorship and its impact on the screen is even evident in the responses of the female director Ines Paris in the interview that closes this volume. Having been president of the Spanish Association of Female Filmmakers and Audiovisual Media (CIMA) she recognizes that she sees the world from her experience as a woman but defends a creative individuality. She considers, however,

that it is still necessary to have a greater number of films by female directors to conduct a thorough analysis of the characteristics of their output.

The presence of professionals in the sector is just another point that has further reference in the manuscript. According to the data handled in the text, female directors represent between 7 and 10 percent of the total, at least in regard to Spanish cinema. While in the decades on which the study focuses women have progressively been incorporated into creative and management positions, this figure reveals (still) an inequality in the sector and in access to the power structure, such as movies or TV. We applaud the fact that the book avoids victimization to highlight this positive development, but sometimes it may fall into an excess of optimism.

This publication wishes to cover the varied female output, either from the fiction film, the short film, animation, the documentary and other nonfiction narrative forms such as video art. This range is consistent with the original purpose of encouraging diversity of approach, despite semiotics being dominant and, to a lesser extent, psychoanalysis. With regard to the objects of study chosen by those who have given life to this project, it is worth noting a timely interest in some of the nationally and / or internationally most recognized current Latin American female authors, such as the Peruvian Claudia Llosa, the Argentine Lucrecia Martel Lucia Puenzo, Albertina Carri, Anahi Berneri or Gabriela Tagliavini, and the Spanish Isabel Coixet, Iciar Bollaín, Ines Paris, Helena Taberna or Chus Gutiérrez.

It is equally right that this volume has collected the works of artists who have not had that impact, as in the case of Maria Cañas "*one of the most radical cultivators of films found in Spain: found footage.*" (Page 340), the Spanish documentary makers Carla Subirana (*Nadar*, 2008), Inma Jimenez (*La madre que los parió*, 2008), María Ruido (*La memoria interior*, 2002), Susana Koska (*Mujeres en pie de guerra*, 2004) and Ariadna Pujol (*Aguaviva*, 2006), besides the fiction filmmakers Isabel Gardela (*Tomándote*, 2000) and Teresa de Pelegri (*Seres queridos*, 2004). Also, it notes the attention paid to Hilda Hidalgo, a female director from Costa Rica, and to the successful Argentinean filmmaker Maria Luisa Bemberg, who was a precursor of the professionals that dominate much of the book.

How the filmmakers involved in integrating the experiences and contributions of women to history, in the broadest sense, is another of the issues that come to light in this 458-page book. Thus the violence exercised against women in armed conflicts, as well as their active partisanship, is a subject retaken by female directors. The fact of analyzing these films entails a double exercise by giving voice to subjects who did not have it, and by that I mean both the protagonists of such events as the female filmmakers who are interested in them. Similarly, the book studies the film treatment of gender violence in the relationships of couples. From the iconic *Take My Eyes* (2003) by Bollaín, this issue is related to the fact that the director is a woman and the mechanisms of identification with the characters are studied.

*Directoras de cine en España y América Latina* is useful to approach the work and concerns of some professionals who deserve to be recognized not only within their own national borders, but also abroad. This work, driven from the academic environment, is one of the best guarantees of their work and we hope it can inspire new and necessary studies and, of course, for women to consider filmmaking as a professional career.

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