

Emerging Filmmakers: Women in 19th Century Cinema

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Cinema made by women is a topic that, in general, little is known about and of which there are a numbers of prejudices. Starting in the late '70s, and in the context of the, by then, recently created gender studies and feminist theory, a growing specialization was detected in research that addressed the woman and her relation to cinema, in multiple dimensions and interests. One of the most developed areas of this activity was focused on the representation of women in classic Hollywood films, in analyzing the stereotypes created by a patriarchal culture and, in this way, making the invisible visible by discovering the mechanisms that naturalize the images and the meanings they carry. The analysis of classic cinema discourses took up a substantial part of the first cinematographic theories focuses on feminism, mainly, in North American and European cinema.

In the last decades, there have been a series of research projects on the participation of women in cinema and the creation of feminine imaginaries. Yet, there is little analysis on cinema production recently done by women on this side of the world. Despite an in-

teresting production, that has experienced a significant increase in the last several decades, little material has been published about what female filmmakers have carried out in Central and South American countries.

It is evident that feminist movements in the last few years have attracted more attention and discussion regarding the reality of women in general on a cultural and social level. Here, the audiovisual world has played a fundamental role in shedding light on these conflicts. Lest we forget that alongside the massive and powerful *#niunamenos* movement started in Argentina and which spread to different corners of the planet, from Hollywood's *#metoo* and *#timesup* hashtags went viral after being accompanied by testimonials and lawsuits by powerful women, and some men, of the entertainment industry. These massive events went from the headlines to around-the-dinner-table discussions and have caused today that even the most conservative communication media include some of these issues in their agenda. Clearly we are far from solving the inequality and gender violence issues in our societies, but it is irrefutable that as of late, discussion of these issues has taken on higher relevance in many public and private agendas.

This has also had an effect on the audiovisual and academic production of women. Inequality regarding opportunities, training and financing, together with allegations of poor management, discrimination and abuse have created an environment in which it is favorable, and very necessary, to reflect on the reality of

the activity and the production of women filmmakers in South America. Nevertheless, and although researchers interest in this area is growing, there is still scarce bibliography in Spanish about films made by women in Latin America. Therefore, being able to access data and analyze this production is without a doubt a contribution. It is one of the reasons that this publication edited in Madrid is so important and which is the fourth volume of the collection "Approaches to Hispanic Cultures" by the publishing house Iberoamericana-Vervuert, that proposes to analyze audiovisual communication themes and which in previous publications was exclusively oriented to Spanish cinema with a book dedicated to documentary, another to short films and one to the work of filmmaker Alber Ponte. With this in mind, we thus reveal a second value of this publication: the search for a broader perspective of this phenomenon, going way beyond the borders of the Iberian Peninsula. In this way, the book starts with a broad, and an editorial, perspective of cinema made by women showing the feminist side of the publication and providing some arguments



and guidelines for analyzing the rest of the texts. In this section, the editors ask the question: What is women's cinema? and they propose various approaches that go from being functional to later understanding the perspectives of analysis that come in the following chapters. Also in its introduction, the academic Deborah Shaw proposes a manifesto to study cinema made by women, putting emphasis on the relation between cinematographic production of women and its social, political and cultural contexts. This, which should be at the core of the analysis of any cinematographic work, is especially relevant in this case, given that -in a patriarchal context, like that of South American countries - women's cinema must overcome a series of particular difficulties for its production, distribution and diffusion, as well as having a tendency to be read in a specific way by critics and academics that have historically had a androcentric perspective of discourses.

The following part of the book is dedicated to the analysis of Spanish cinema and the participation of filmmakers have had in it using various formats. It starts with a text by Annette Scholz that shows, with a series of numbers and precise data, the minority participation of women both in the production as well as in film schools, detailing the areas of work in which women work who finally do enter the audiovisual industry. With this information in mind, the following chapters can be understood under a better contextualized perspective when addressing topics such the participation of female filmmakers in projects involving crowdfunding, independent documentaries and animated short films.

The second half of the book travels to Latin America to present a series of works written on the improvements and challenges of filmmakers in Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Paraguay and Chile. It is also important that, in several cases, researchers also inhabit the place which they describe, giving it a experienced perspective to the reality they depict. The introduction of this section by Ester Gimeno Ugalde proposes a general perspective of reality for emerging female filmmakers on the continent. This work is particularly relevant given that it not only allows to have a better idea of the audiovisual production of women in these countries -and also of that published in regards-, but because it also introduces a series of works and names that come as perspectives to follow and discover.

The next essays provide an overview to the diversity of the audiovisual production by women in South America, allowing also the debunking of the myth that cinema by women can be classified into a certain cinematographic genre. If anything is proven, it is that Latin American women are as interested in as many topics as there are ways to address such topics. It is not possible to define a "female filmmaker's theme" or a "female filmmakers aesthetic". The ever growing production shows that women filmmakers have a large diversity of content in their films and very varied perspectives on it. However, if somebody wants to recognize what hispanic women filmmakers have in common, he or she would have to point out certain limitations and challenges that are common to the reality of being women and making films

in South America.

The chapter on Chilean cinema is written by María Paz Peirano and Claudia Bossay, faculty members at the Institute on Comunicación e Imagen of the Universidad de Chile. The authors propose an interesting approach to current Chilean cinematography made by women, spotlighting not only the filmmakers but also, the incentives of film dissemination and promotion that have been supported by women in Chile.

The book also includes a DVD that contains short films and educational material to support teaching and analysis of this topic both in Europe as well as Latin America. Beyond the subtle differences that the authors of this book may have in regard to what is considered as "women films" -made by women, with feminist themes, with female starring roles- what they do seem to agree on is the relevance the cinema has for the production and normalization of social imaginaries. Thus, it is not irrelevant to reflect on who tells what and from where. The fact that, worldwide -and also in South America- cinema directed or written by women still does not make up beyond an average of twenty percent of total production puts not only the women involved in filmmaking at a disadvantage, but also all the audiences that we lose the chance to reach stories and experiences that have been scarcely addressed by cinema and that allow us to have more tools in order to understand each other, empathize and create a more complex and respectful society.

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