

FEMALE SUBJECTIVITIES FROM A DISTANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THREE FILMS OF THE 1980S AND 1990S BY LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN FILMMAKERS

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INTRODUCTION

The issues of exile, migration and their connections with culture and modes of representation have been explored in various academic studies, as has the relationship of these experiences with autobiographical narratives and with debates on identity and gender. Authors examining discourses on exile from the perspective of cultural studies have pointed out the gap that exists between exiles and their world, the construction of a fractured, complex subjectivity (Fernández Bravo, Garra-muño *et al.*, 2003), and the difficulty of reconciling individual and national identity after their displacement. In the case of cinema, particularly in the documentary genre, filmmakers in recent decades have begun constructing autobiographical narratives that explore their own condition as

exiles or emigrants (Renov, 2004). Some of these films, referred to as “returnee” documentaries or narratives, anticipated various strategies and techniques that would later be associated with the first-person documentary in countries such as Argentina and Chile (Piedras, 2016; Ramírez Soto, 2014). Moreover, feminist documentaries since the 1970s have tackled these themes to explore connections between the self and the community, the scope, political effects and criticism of realism, and experimentation with modes of storytelling (Mayer, 2011). This article analyses three films by Latin American women directors that represent different forms of exile and subjectivity: the Chilean film *Fragmentos de un diario inacabado* [Fragments from an Unfinished Diary] (Angelina Vázquez, 1983) and the Argentine films *Desembarcos: When Memory Speaks* (Desembarcos, un

taller de cine en Buenos Aires, Jeanine Meerapfel, 1989) and *A Wall of Silence* (Un muro de silencio, Lita Stantic, 1993).

The issues mentioned above are present in these three films in different ways. This article presents a comparative study of these films, as all three, whether in a documentary or fiction register, construct a distanced enunciative position that operates not only in geographical terms but also in terms of the identity of the subject and the processes of reflexivity this entails. All three are characterised by a transnational dimension, and by the presence of subjects and characters constructed on the basis of different forms of distancing and the articulation of an “outside” gaze, which is in turn implicated and multiplied in the narration. Moreover, all three films are closely connected to their political and social contexts, highlighting the circumstances of the dictatorships, exile, and the tensions between memory and erasure in processes of democratic transition.

Vázquez’s documentary deals with a different context from the two Argentine films, as the director made it while in exile from Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship. The director decided to return to her homeland in order to document the situation in the country by collecting a series of testimonies, at a time when the protests against the dictatorship were beginning to gain momentum and the country’s social fabric was gradually being rearticulated. During this period, several exiled Chilean filmmakers made films dealing with the social reality following the coup d’état,¹ establishing a cycle of Chilean films made in exile (Pick, 1987; Mouesca, 1988). Vázquez’s film shares several affinities with Meerapfel’s and somewhat fewer with Stantic’s, but it is interesting to compare the three productions from a regional perspective, considering a critical movement that emerged in the context of the political cinema of the era in question.

DESEMBARCOS. DEPICTIONS AND DISPLACEMENTS

Jeanine Meerapfel is a director who has yet to receive much scholarly attention and her filmography remains somewhat unknown in Argentina. In 1964, for personal reasons, she emigrated to Berlin, where she studied film and launched her career as a filmmaker. The daughter of German immigrants, she was born in Buenos Aires in 1943, and although based in Germany she has returned several times to her homeland to reflect on its recent history. Her work includes both documentaries and fiction films, many of which deal with stories about women who are forced to travel, and who in that process have to redefine their personal identities, family ties and sense of belonging.

Meerapfel began filming the documentary analysed here in 1986, in the context of a filmmaking workshop she held that year at the Goethe Institute in Buenos Aires. She would not complete it until 1989, due to certain obstacles to its production imposed by Argentina’s Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía.² The Goethe was an institution that contributed to the production and screening of non-fiction films in Argentina at that time (Margulis, 2017), in a context where it was very difficult to obtain funding for documentary production. The film is made up mainly of alternating sequences of the workshop and the production of the three short films that came out of it, as well as interviews conducted by the director with the workshop participants about their films and footage of protest marches by the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in 1986 and 1987, at the time the Argentine government was passing laws to protect the military from being brought to justice for their crimes during the dictatorship. The director’s voice-over threads these elements together with tracking shots of the streets of Buenos Aires and sequences of ships in the port.

The film begins with a voice-over that immediately places the spectator in the context, as

Meerapfel tells the story of a day in September 1976, when she was filming the sunset on a bridge with a colleague; they were approached by two men with machine guns because, it turned out, their camera was pointing in the direction of a police station. They were arrested and interrogated, and finally released; in those days, she explains, “it was quite possible to disappear for filming a sunset.” After this brief scene come the film’s opening credits, followed by a daytime sequence with shots of terraces, buildings and ships in Buenos Aires, to the sound of the director’s voice-over: “Buenos Aires, 1986. A film workshop with students who are going to make three short films about the fear that persisted after the military dictatorship.” The students descend from a ship and introduce themselves, giving their places of birth, their ages and why they decided to study cinema. The themes of the dictatorship and memory constitute the core of all three shorts made in the workshop and of the director’s interviews with the students. At the same time, the concept of travel, of displacement, is connected to this thematic core through metaphors for various concepts that will be described below.

First of all, however, it is important to highlight the different degrees of Meerapfel’s presence in her film. On the one hand, through her voice-over, but also through her presence on screen, she plays a recurring role in the footage of the rehearsals of the scenes of the short films, as well as in several of the interviews conducted with the workshop participants. In some of the interviews, we cut back and forth between close-ups of Meerapfel asking questions and the students answering them. In other scenes, she talks to the sound manager and director Alcides Chiesa, who himself had gone into exile in Germany in 1982, and who answers her questions about his experiences during the dictatorship. In these scenes, Meerapfel always shares the frame with Chiesa; in some of them, we are shown her expressions and reactions to Chiesa’s statements, while in

others she appears with her back to the camera while he is shown in profile. This reflects the director’s intention to position herself on the same level as Chiesa, both in generational (in opposition to the generation of young filmmakers) and discursive terms. Chiesa plays a key role in the narrative development, as during filming he reveals that he was arrested and tortured in the clandestine detention centre known as Pozo de Quilmes. Thus, in various scenes his presence becomes central, especially with respect to the film’s evocative and communicative intention. An example of this is a sequence where he discusses with students how to represent certain scenes in the short films dealing with situations in detention centres. Throughout this whole sequence, when the camera is on Chiesa, the director appears beside him, watching and listening. This sequence—and indeed, the film as a whole—could be classified as markedly reflexive according to the categories of documentary modes of representation proposed by Nichols (1997), as the representation of the historical world gives way to the theme of cinematic mediation. However, there is also a certain degree of performativity, insofar as it is possible to appreciate the impact that Chiesa’s statements have on Meerapfel, if only indirectly, in the way she is presented on screen (Image 1).

Image 1. Jeanine Meerapfel (left) and Alcides Chiesa (right) in *Desembarcos - When Memory Speaks* (Jeanine Meerapfel, 1986–1989)



THE FILM CONTAINS A SUCCESSION OF METAPHORS WITH IMAGES OF SHIPS AND MOVEMENT, IMPLYING AN INDIRECT EXPLORATION OF THE DIRECTOR'S IDENTITY GIVEN THE POWERFUL IMPACT THAT GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY HAS HAD ON HER (AND HER FAMILY'S) LIFE.

In this regard, it is worth considering some conceptualisations proposed by Pablo Piedras (2014) about the first-person documentary in Argentina. Piedras suggests that this categorisation “makes it possible to identify a broad group of works that incorporate some modulation of the filmmaker’s ‘self’ into their framework of meaning, as the manager and author of the audiovisual discourse” (2014: 22). In this way, the exposure and insertion of subjectivity as the main element of the narrative substantially changed the “epistemic position” of documentary discourses on reality, reformulating the communicative pacts between film and spectators. Piedras identifies three modes of representing the filmmaker’s intervention in the documentary, of which the “experience and alterity” mode is of particular interest to this study. This mode “produces a feedback loop between the filmmaker’s personal experience and the object of the discourse, with signs of contamination between the two levels” (2014: 78). This operation involves “connecting something associated with the filmmaker’s personal experience to the development of the other, of an instance initially alien to the subject but which, for various reasons, constructs and determines it, although it also goes beyond it” (2014: 79). Although Piedras argues that these modes have been systematic and recurrent in contemporary documentary since the turn of the millennium, he suggests that it is possible to find the first signs of their forms of expression and

modes of representation in the documentaries of the 1980s, made by Argentines living abroad or recently returned to the country whose motivation was “exile, emigration or a reencounter with their cultural, social, national and family origins” (2014: 46). From the perspective of this study, Meerapfel’s documentary thus constitutes a precursor to the “experience and alterity” mode of the first-person documentary. Meerapfel’s personal connection and involvement with the film’s theme, as well as with the various testimonies offered, is undeniable given the director’s family history and her own migration to Germany in her youth. At the same time, this experience extends beyond her and Meerapfel cedes the enunciative space to the workshop students through their testimonies, as well as to Chiesa, and also to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, in a series of speeches filmed by the director that are interspersed with the rest of the footage.

The film contains a succession of metaphors with images of ships and movement, implying an indirect exploration of the director’s identity given the powerful impact that geographical mobility has had on her (and her family’s) life. Various scenes feature footage of ships while Meerapfel’s voice-over recites something that makes a metaphor of what we have seen before and generates a new meaning based on the combination of the two moments. The director’s voice, together with the use of music, acquires a markedly poetic character. In general, the metaphors are allusions to travel in relation to the ship: at the beginning of the film, the director quotes a poem by Brazilian poet Thiago de Mello about ships; later in the film, immediately after a speech by Hebe de Bonafini (the leader of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo), the footage of the port shown at the beginning appears again, and the director says: “Boats are dawns; they sail from a spring of dark waters, but they always arrive from tomorrow. Some arrived earlier [...] there are some that did not arrive and sank in the infancy of the river.” This association

between the two scenes thus implies a connection between the ship and the victims of forced disappearances mentioned by Hebe in her speech. Significantly, the director asks the students about the meaning they attribute to the action of disembarking. Their answers vary, with associations such as “being able to make contact with concrete reality [...] immigration, arriving at... descending... touching ground... being able to talk again about things that we’d closed or locked up... finding a new story, emigrating to our own homeland.”

Disembarking or travelling thus takes the place of an agency that would involve coming into contact with a previously shuttered reality associated with the fight of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo to find their disappeared children, but also with the filmmaker’s exploration of her own changing identity. On the question of the nomadic subject and identity, Rossi Braidotti conceives the power of movement in relation to “a critical awareness that resists conforming to codified models of thought and behaviour” (Braidotti, 2004: 31). From this perspective, nomadism moves in the spaces between, on the frontiers of the structuring of space, and its power lies in its mobility. For Braidotti (2011: 273) “the nomadic or intensive horizon is a subjectivity [that is] multiple, not dualistic, interconnected [...] in a constant flux, not fixed.” Displacement therefore contains a power, as a kind of critical awareness capable of distancing from and returning to itself. This movement is also evident throughout the film, in its reflexive and self-conscious character, and in the presentation of the film itself as a process. The expression of an awareness of one’s own identity and its consequent mutations or shifts, along with situations of mobility such as exile, is also a key concept for the analysis of Vázquez’s film, which is discussed in the next section.

DISTANT GAZES(S): A CRITICAL STANCE

Angelina Vázquez made her first short film, *Crónica del salitre* [Chronicle of Saltpetre], in 1971, in the context of political documentary production in Chile during the presidency of Salvador Allende. In 1975, through contacts with a Finnish film studio she had done work for, she went into exile in Finland, where she spent most of her film career. *Fragmentos de un diario inacabado* was one of her last feature-length films. As the protests against the dictatorship began gaining strength in Chile in the early 1980s, Vázquez decided to return secretly to the country to film the situation of people in various sectors of society who represented the resistance against the Pinochet regime. Her aim was to establish “a kind of personal reflection on my experience of re-encountering the country [...] the everyday aspect of that explosion/violation represented by 11 September 1973 [...], the mood, the soul of Chile” (Pinto, 2012: 220). She managed to remain undercover in the country for two weeks before the intelligence services detected her presence and deported her again, and the filmmaker Pablo Perelman finished the film on the instructions she had left behind. In addition to documenting the Chilean reality ten years after the military coup, the director’s intention was to bear witness to the situation of the ones who had remained behind, working in opposition to the regime and at the same time living lives that had parallels with her exile. The director knew herself to be in an alternative position to those she sought to document, while her own situation as an exile allowed her to convey the experiences of her interviewees in a specific way.

In contrast to *Desembarcos* and other documentaries of the period, such as Marilú Mallet’s *Diario inacabado* (1982) (whose title and basic conception are similar to those of Vázquez’s project), at no point in *Fragmentos de un diario inacabado* does the director appear physically on screen. Her deportation is of course one reason for this,

but not the only one. Other documentaries she made in exile, such as *Dos años en Finlandia* (1975), never show her on screen either, although in the case of the 1975 film her voice can be heard in the voice-over narration and during the interviews. In *Fragmentos*, the voice-over narration is provided by an actress speaking in Finnish, highlighting Vázquez's distance from her native country and the distance of the film's enunciation, as its "authorial voice" inhabits a different body. It could be argued that this was a way of representing her subjectivity. Vázquez herself argues, in a conversation about the film:

Fragmentos de un diario inacabado is my unfinished diary, and, in this case, it is literally an unfinished diary because I came to Chile to make a film and I ended up having to leave the country, because I had entered secretly [...]. My personal vision... [is] not so personal, in the sense that I did not make myself a character, like the way Marilú exposed herself in her film, which I admire deeply, because I think she is very brave. Instead, I offered the personal nature of my reflection in the re-encounter with the landscape, with the people of my country, after eight years of being away. And in that process, I think that the people who shared it with me also grew, or felt they had grown. (Donoso Pinto, Ramírez Soto, 2016: 262-264).

The voice-over, present in the film and in the pages of Angelina's personal diary, is a specific, inherently subjective marker that gives the documentary a poetic cadence (Image 2), much like the Argentine film analysed above. [IMAGE 2] The close-ups show a personal diary and words written on paper under the day's date. Although the words are cut off, the voice-over fills in the sentences that we can read fragments of on screen, reciting them in a confessional tone. After this brief sequence, interspersed with shots of the streets of Santiago, the title *La situación* ["The Situation"] introduces the testimony of a woman who talks about the violence perpetrated by the military regime. Shots of newspaper cuttings are alternated



Image 2. Still-frame from the opening sequence of *Fragmentos de un diario inacabado* (Angelina Vázquez, 1983)

with intertitles detailing the arrest and murder of people in different parts of the country. The next scene, introduced with the title *Las estrategias de sobrevivencia. Olla común* ["Survival Strategies: Community Kitchen"], documents the daily work of a group of women responsible for community kitchens who are protesting because they are not receiving food. This is how the film's narrative is constructed, alternating testimonies of different individuals (introduced with intertitles showing their names over a black background) and their everyday environment while the voice-over reflects on the footage and some personal archival materials, such as photographs of the interviewees. Although the first two situations are not specific to one individual in particular, from the third testimony on the focus is on concrete experiences of fully named subjects who reveal the truth of what is happening in different sectors of the country: culture and theatre, music, the trade unions, and the relatives of the disappeared. These sequences consist mostly of medium shots of the people interviewed in different settings, in some cases with fades to black and close-ups of their

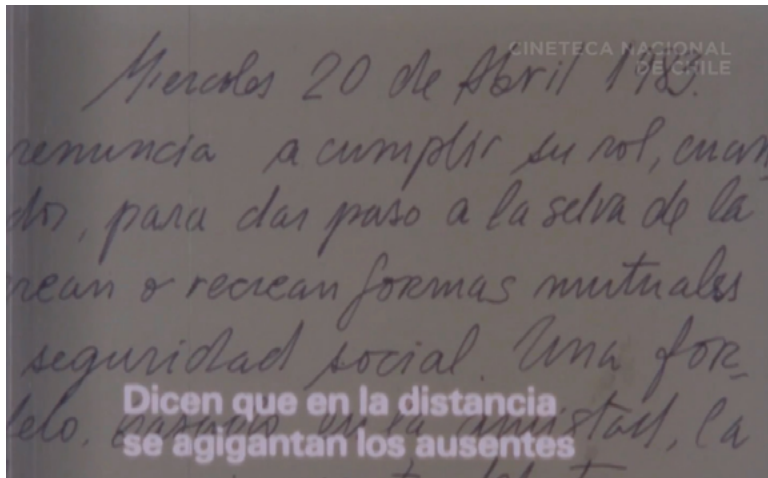


Image 3. Still-frame from the opening sequence of *Fragmentos de un diario inacabado* (Angelina Vázquez, 1983)

faces while they tell their stories. The testimonies possess a confessional quality, engaging with the spectators in what is almost a meditative state. Catalina Donoso Pinto (2018: 38) argues that these contributions function as a way of constructing the authorship of the film “based on multiple voices and experiences, and all of them are interchangeable with and connected to the director’s own experience as key pieces of her personal view of the country she left behind. One could propose an exercise to identify the way each individual stands in for and complements Vázquez’s missing presence.” This seems an accurate reading in the sense that Angelina’s distance from what forms part of the object of her discourse, due to her status as an exile and her deportation from the country, is at the same time what facilitates and enables the overlapping voices and the dialogues established between them, the director and the spectators. While it could thus be argued that the first person is fainter and less obvious than it is in Meerapfel’s documentary, it is activated and redefined through the contributions of the others and the changes these people undergo as a result of their participation in the film³ (Image 3).

Two of the testimonies featured in the film are of particular interest to this study. One is the testimony offered by Irma, the mother of Jorge

Müller Silva, a filmmaker who was arrested and disappeared in 1974. After a shot of her on a train singing with a folk music group and the appearance of the intertitle with her name, she talks about her grandson asking her why she played the guitar if she was a “grandmother”: this question and the testimony that follows it are key to understanding the construction of identity proposed in the film. Irma tells us: “Before my son disappeared, I was a well-heeled, common, wild middle-class homeowner who had cups of tea with friends and went to charity lunches and social gatherings. [...] After you lose someone you loved like your own life, you see things in a different

way, totally different.” Irma’s awakening emerges as a narrative arc throughout the sequence, upsetting certain preconceived ideas she harboured about her role as a mother and as a woman in society. Minutes after this reflexive moment, Irma confesses that her participation in the documentary prompted her to look at the photographs of her missing son for the first time in nine years. Some of these photographs are shown on screen while she speaks. This story of the change to Irma’s identity and the effect of the filming process on her life foregrounds her subjectivity and establishes a clear dialogue with Angelina’s.

A similar connection occurs later in the film with the testimony of the singer Isabel Aldunate. Isabel is first shown on screen singing in a café. The camera is positioned at the height of the tables, taking the point of view of the audience. After a brief excerpt from the concert, and the intertitle giving her name simply as “Isabel”, she is framed in a medium shot, with the camera slowly zooming in on her face. She introduces herself as a 33-year-old singer and lawyer, whose whole life “was interrupted on 11 September.” She explains: “At that time I had three children. For four or five years, my whole life was dedicated to looking after them [...] making meals, washing nappies. In a

way, it was a very unconscious time. When that period ended [...] I was faced with the necessity of having to come up with new projects; that was in 1978.” At this moment, pictures of Isabel singing in different contexts and settings alternate with photos of her with her children. She explains that she began singing in towns where everybody was out of work; she ended her relationship, separated twice and left “absolutely everything” behind. “I’d been locked up for years and I had to do it,” she says.

Once again, in Isabel’s story we find this reference to a personal awakening that prompted her to move away from the places she had once known, to emigrate from her former world. The stories of these two women revolve around an identity shift involving a move that is personal, confessional and internal, an idea that is absent from the rest of the testimonies in the film. They thus establish a close connection to Vázquez’s subjectivity, as each woman takes a critical, distanced view of her own identity.

THE TURNING POINT OF A WALL OF SILENCE

Different relationships and tensions between memory and subjectivity are also present in *A Wall of Silence*, the only film directed by Lita Stantic, who has had an extensive career as a producer. This feature film takes a highly original approach to the topic of the dictatorship in Argentina. On this point, Eseverri and Peña argue that the film represents “one of the milestones of post-dictatorial Argentine cinema, and a turning point in relation to the way Argentine films have constructed the memory of political militancy prior to the coup and state terrorism” (2013: 11). Two different spatio-temporal dynamics that run through the whole the film are presented right from the outset. One is related to the lives of a group of people in Buenos Aires, in 1990 and in 1976, and the other involves a fictional space-time (wi-

thin the fictional story depicted in the film). On the one hand, the story revolves around a project proposed by Kate Benson, a British filmmaker⁴ who travels to Argentina to shoot a film about the country’s last civic-military dictatorship based on a screenplay by Bruno, a leftist professor who wrote the work with reference to the experiences of a student of his called Silvia (named Ana in the film to be made by Benson) during those years.⁵ On the other hand, the film also follows Silvia in the present as she comes to terms with what happened to her under the dictatorship, after years of denying this part of her past. This layered spatiotemporal configuration establishes a distanced discursive construction from the beginning, as Stantic’s treatment of the past is based on a story-within-a-story device that subverts the monosemious approach that had characterised many of the realistic/naturalistic films made about the dictatorship in the previous decade (Cuarterolo, 2011).

The first time that the film’s metafictional narrative emerges is in one of the shots of a scene being filmed with the actors playing Ana and Julio, who are having a conversation about their lives under the dictatorship. The camera shows them both in a full shot that captures a half-finished set of a wall and door in the background. The presentation of the space in this way signals this as an essay film; although this information is not confirmed to the spectators, it accentuates the artificial nature of the film-within-a-film device. Julio enters the scene through the door and tells Ana to prepare a bag for him because he has to leave. After a pause, she replies: “They’re going to kill you.” We then hear someone off-camera shout “cut”, and Kate, the director, enters the shot and begins to offer them suggestions for their performance. To Julio, she explains: “You need to be convinced that your life is not in danger, to be able to go on.” Then the woman playing Ana asks her: “Does Ana feel guilty... for not being at Julio’s side in the fight?” Through these exchanges, the construc-



Image 4. Silvia and her daughter, María Elisa, in *A Wall of Silence* (Lita Stantic, 1993)



Image 5. Silvia and her daughter in the final scene of *A Wall of Silence* (Lita Stantic, 1993)

tion of both characters that the film is beginning to articulate—and which will be further developed in subsequent sequences—dismisses any notion that they are “ignorant” victims disconnected from their reality, as it is clear that they are aware of the gravity of the situation and the danger that Julio’s political involvement places him in. This perspective is reflected in the film’s first dialogues with Kate’s inquiring question about a former clandestine detention centre: “Did people know what was going on here?” Bruno replies: “If they didn’t know it, they suspected it.” The question will be answered categorically in the film’s final scene by the character of Silvia, who asserts that “everyone knew” (Image 4).

On the second occasion the metafictional narrative is presented, it is identified and transmuted with the cinematic image of the film itself. A subtitle in white letters reading “Buenos Aires, 1976” appears on screen while we see the characters Ana and Julio lying down in their room. From this moment on, the metafictional narrative alternates constantly and indistinguishably with the fiction narrative, telling the story from Ana’s point of view. This represents what could be described as another thematic shift: the film within the film (and *A Wall of Silence* itself) focuses not on Julio’s story, but on Ana/Silvia’s, on her situation

after Julio is abducted and her life after the dictatorship. The main issue expressed through this character, which functions as an allusion to the prevailing tension in Argentine society, revolves around her refusal to remember, and at the same time her inability to forget. Her reluctance to revisit her past is made clear from the beginning, as she refuses to meet Kate, who asks to interview her. The idea that “people didn’t want to talk about that subject” is reflected in various scenes throughout the film, underscoring Silvia’s condition as an “internal exile”: her estranged gaze and her way of inhabiting reality that is disconnected from her history. In the final scene with her daughter, in the same abandoned building shown at the beginning of the film, her ability to assert that “everyone knew” encapsulates her process of acknowledgement and understanding of her own past. After a long full shot of both characters from behind, the camera approaches them with a forward tracking shot (Image 5). [IMAGE 5] First, Silvia is shown in profile, followed by the daughter, who asks whether anyone knew what was going on in that place. After Silvia’s response, the camera moves into capture a close-up of her daughter’s gaze; then the image freezes and the film ends. This scene presents a journey between overlapping gazes, from the camera’s (Stantic’s) gaze to

Silvia's, and then concluding with her daughter's, the final character called upon to acknowledge the past. Drawing on the ideas of Laura Mulvey (1975) related to the system of gazes the converge in the cinematic apparatus (the camera's, the spectators' and the fictional characters'), it could be argued that the camera's—i.e., the director's—gaze in this film moves towards the female characters, whose gazes also intersect and alter their perceptions of themselves and reality.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, aspects of three Latin American films directed by women have been analysed, with attention to their methods of exploring the various forms of exile, migration, the trauma of dictatorships and the ways these elements are woven together with an autobiographical dimension and the configuration of female subjectivities. All three films depict an identity shift in both the directors and the subjects (real people and fictional characters) portrayed in them, based on the act of expressing in words what could not be spoken of or had been silenced. This shift is intimately intertwined with an indirect autobiographical investigation of the three directors: Jeanine Meerapfel's migration and return to a country in reconstruction after the collapse of the military junta, Angelina Vázquez's exile, and Lita Stantic's personal experiences of the dictatorship, on which several scenes and characters in her film are based. In this way, the multiple subjectivities present in the films—particularly those explored in this article—engage in dialogue and overlap with the subjectivities of the filmmakers.

All three films thus construct a distanced enunciative position by means of techniques involving high levels of reflexivity and estrangement. At the same time, they offer a number of innovations over previous political and social films that have dealt with the same subject matter.

An articulated analysis of these films constitutes a useful contribution to the development of comparative studies (Lusnich, 2011) of Latin American cinema, particularly by women filmmakers who began pursuing successful careers in Europe with the construction of their own particular techniques and themes. ■

NOTES

- 1 Examples include the films *Chile, no invoco tu nombre en vano* [Chile, I Don't Invoke Your Name in Vain] (Gaston Ancelovici, 1983), *Acta general de Chile* [Chile: A General Record] (Miguel Littin, 1986) and *En nombre de Dios* [In the Name of God] (Patricio Guzmán, 1987).
- 2 This data was provided by the Argentine film researcher Fernando Martín Peña, prior to the screening of the film in his program *Filmoteca, temas de Cine*, broadcast by the Argentina's public broadcaster, TV Pública.
- 3 In the article by Ramírez Soto (2014) quoted above, the author describes the film as a precursor to the current style of Chilean autobiographical documentaries, noting that unlike other Chilean films about returnees in the 1980s, Vázquez integrates her own experience of exile directly into its formal structure.
- 4 The construction of this character is related to the film's status as a co-production between Argentina, Mexico and the United Kingdom. In the words of the director herself, due to the fact that Argentina's Instituto Nacional de Cine had no loan program at that time, film projects depended entirely on the prospects of securing foreign funding (Eseverri and Peña, 2013).
- 5 On this point, it is important to keep in mind that although it is a fiction film, it has a strongly autobiographical quality, and the character of the British director functions as Stantic's alter ego. In addition, there is a shift in the temporal paradigm in this film, in a context where the politics of memory entered a period of crisis in Argentina in the 1990s compared to the previous decade and the pardons granted to the military.

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FEMALE SUBJECTIVITIES FROM A DISTANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THREE FILMS OF THE 1980S AND 1990S BY LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN FILMMAKERS

Abstract

This article offers a comparative analysis of three films directed by Latin American women filmmakers in the 1980s and early 1990s: *Fragmentos de un diario inacabado* [Fragments from an Unfinished Diary] (Angelina Vázquez, 1983), *Desembarcos - When Memory Speaks* (Desembarcos, un taller de cine en Buenos Aires, Jeanine Meerapfel, 1989) and *A Wall of Silence* (Un muro de silencio, Lita Stantic, 1993). Although the first two are documentaries and the third is a fiction film, all three explore various situations of exile, migration and the enunciation of the self in terms of female subjectivities. This enunciative position facilitates discourses and subversions of identity, which is constructed as multiple and defined to differing degrees in terms of gender through the establishment of intersubjective relationships between the protagonists (the directors themselves or their alter egos) and other significant characters in the story. The study examines the different levels of reflexivity present in the films, the authorial presence of the filmmakers and the forms of geographical, subjective and narrative distancing.

Key words

Latin American cinema; Autobiographical documentary; Exile; Identity; Gender studies.

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Article reference

Sabater, V. (2025). Female Subjectivities from a Distance: A Comparative Study of Three Films of the 1980s and 1990s by Latin American Women Filmmakers. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 39, 85-96.

SUBJETIVIDADES FEMENINAS DESDE LA DISTANCIA. UN EXAMEN COMPARADO DE TRES FILMS DE LAS DÉCADAS DE LOS OCHENTA Y NOVENTA DE CINEASTAS LATINOAMERICANAS

Resumen

En el presente trabajo, se analizan, de modo comparado, tres películas de las décadas de los ochenta y principios de los noventa dirigidas por cineastas latinoamericanas: *Fragmentos de un diario inacabado* (Angelina Vázquez, 1983), *Desembarcos (un taller de cine en Buenos Aires)* (Jeanine Meerapfel, 1989) y *Un muro de silencio* (Lita Stantic, 1993). Aunque las dos primeras consisten en documentales y la última es un film de ficción, los tres largometrajes abordan diversas situaciones de exilio, migración y enunciación del «yo», en cuanto a subjetividades femeninas. Este lugar enunciativo habilita discursos y fisuras sobre la identidad, que se constituye desde lo múltiple, y se define, en mayor o menor medida, en términos de género (*gender*) a través de la puesta en práctica de relaciones intersubjetivas entre los personajes protagónicos (las directoras o sus *alter ego*) y otras personas significativas dentro de la narración. En el escrito, se examinan los distintos grados de reflexividad presentes en los films, la presencia autoral de las cineastas y las formas que adquiere el distanciamiento en su concepción geográfica, subjetiva y narrativa.

Palabras clave

Cine latinoamericano; Documental autobiográfico; Exilio; Identidad; Estudios de género.

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Referencia de este artículo

Sabater, V. (2025). Subjetividades femeninas desde la distancia. Un examen comparado de tres films de las décadas de los ochenta y noventa de cineastas latinoamericanas. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 39, 85-96.

recibido/received: 31.05.2024 | aceptado/accepted: 16.11.2024

Edita / Published by



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ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB www.revistaatalante.com MAIL info@revistaatalante.com