
Nomadities: The filmmaking of Marilú Mallet, Valeria Sarmiento and Angelina Vázquez

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Edited by Elizabeth Ramírez-Soto and Catalina Donoso-Pinto
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Recovering the overshadowed participation of women in Latin American cinema is an urgent task. The volume *Nomadías*, edited by Elizabeth Ramírez and Catalina Donoso, takes up this work by carefully compiling several essays, interviews, and archive materials devoted to three Chilean women filmmakers: Marilú Mallet (1944), Valeria Sarmiento (1948) and Angelina Vázquez (1948).

Beyond their personal and artistic differences, a common event unites the three directors: the 11 September 1973 military coup d'état that overthrew Salvador Allende's government and forced the filmmakers, and many other Chileans, into exile. Following from the term 'nomadic subject', elaborated by the feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti, the compilers make, not metaphorical, but embodied use of this concept. They interpret the nomadic life and corpus of work of the filmmakers as: 1) 'a rebellion against the patriarchal discourses', 2) a reaction before the political 'ought to be' in the context of the Latin American left, 3) a contestation against the cinematographic genres, and 4) a negation to 'what is expected from Latin American cinema' (p.32). These four points define the radicalism of the cinematic practices of Mallet, Sarmiento and Vázquez.

The artists were able to free themselves from political, social and cultural conventions through the creation of personal, intimate and sophisticated filmic languages, based on an honest subjective search. The diverse formal and ideological quest of the three authors translates into cinematic products that subtly and efficiently portray the precarious balance in which women are located in a habitually hostile world, but also the intimate certainty they feel, and their determination. To communicate that complexity, Mallet, Sarmiento, and Vázquez overcome the ideological and formal boundaries established by patriarchal symbolic frames. They further reject external expectations regarding Latin American cinema—both Eurocentric and autochthonous—offering unexpected nomadic

readings on several topics, from space (public and private), to personal relations to national identity, and so on.

Given the manifest absence of female filmmakers in most histories of Latin American cinema, both continental and national, the book is proposed by its publishers not only as a collection of essays but as a 'rescue work.' For that, they translate an article by Brenda Longfellow published in 1984 about the feminist language of Marilú Mallet's docu-drama *Journal Inachevé* (*Unfinished Journal*, Canada, 1982), as well as a conversation by Zuzana M. Pick with Angelina Vázquez in 1981. The final part of the book comprises of an edited transcription of another conversation with Mallet and Vázquez carried out by the editors during the retrospective dedicated to the three filmmakers at Valdivia Film Festival in 2013, as well as an interview with Valeria Sarmiento by Ian Christie. The volume is completed with an impressive dossier that includes photographs, posters, and other documents.

While introducing these oral and archival pieces into the conversation, the bulk of the book is devoted to new essays presented through a rhythmic arrangement: three authors and three articles dedicated to each. In the first part on Marilú Mallet, in addition to the aforementioned classic article by Longfellow, José Miguel Palacios presents a personal piece that reflects Mallet's cinematic sensibility. Paola Margulis' essay interprets space and time in two Mallet films separated by more than twenty years, *Journal inachevé* and *La cueca sola* (Canada, 2003).

In the section on Valeria Sarmiento there is a piece by Valeria de los Ríos about the documentary *El hombre cuando es hombre* (*A Man, When He Is a Man*, Germany, 1982); an essay by Vania Barraza on Sarmiento's use of the melodramatic genre; and another by Monica Ríos on the utilization of the archives in two of her best-known feature films *Amelia Lopes O'Neill* (France, Switzerland, Spain, 1990) and *Secretos* (Chile, 2008).

In the third part of the book, Laura Senio Blair, after a biofilmographic review, discusses three films by Angelina Vázquez *Dos años en Finlandia* (Finland, 1975), *Así nace un desaparecido* (Finland, 1977) and *Gracias a la vida* (Finland, 1980). Alongside this, Elizabeth Ramírez offers an in-depth interpretation of the use of musical numbers as a radical aesthetic option in the documentary *Presencia Lejana* (Finland, 1982). The final piece is the conversation, mentioned above, of Vázquez with Zuzana M. Pick in Pesaro in 1981.

To conclude, I would like to emphasise the careful editing work of this volume. It conveys passion, critical sense and honesty. Elizabeth Ramírez and Catalina Donoso have edited this book in the same loving way in which Mallet, Sarmiento, and Vázquez produce their films. The volume is

also political in its aim. The compilers publically draw attention to the apparent disinterest that Chilean academic and cultural institutions have shown in Mallet, Sarmiento, and Vázquez, which is impossible to justify in light of the quality and importance of their work (p.27).

The structure of Ramirez and Donoso's book is beautifully balanced and the content absolutely relevant. Its rationale, quality, and rigor represent a step forward not only for the inclusion of women filmmakers in Chilean history, but also —I would like to think— for the ongoing collective process of reviewing and rewriting Latin American cinema history from a non-patriarchal point of view.