**Women in Iberian Filmic Culture. A Feminist Approach to the Cinemas of Portugal and Spain**. *Edited by Elena Cordero-Hoyo and Begoña Soto-Vázquez, Bristol, UK / Chicago, USA, Intellect, 2020, 216 pp., ISBN 978-1-78938-171-9 (Paperback)*

This volume is a fruit of an international conference under the same title, held in Lisbon in 2017. Organised by Cinema and the World research group, it brings a refreshing overview of a patchy history of women’s contribution to the film industry on the Iberian Peninsula. Far from a traditional historical approach, this book aims to fill the gaps in existing knowledge by focusing on elements which often remained unacknowledged, invisible or not accounted for. Drawing on the similarities between Portugal and Spain (dictatorship, censorship, male-dominated film industry, relative isolation from the European cultural trends, and post-1970s arrival of democracies), Elena Cordero-Hoyo and Begoña Soto-Vázquez (joint by robust contributors) address the main challenges from the feminist perspective, skilfully evaluating women’s position within the Iberian film culture.

This alternative perspective on the Iberian film history questions the traditional concept of authorship, giving value to ‘different non-hegemonic professions within the process of film creation’ (p. 5).

The book is divided into four parts, each of which consists of three articles. Part one focuses on the presence of women in Iberian cinemas. In chapter one, Ana Catarina Pereira analyses the scarce presence of female directors in Portuguese fiction cinema, with just one full-length feature film directed by a woman during the dictatorial period of Estado Novo. The first fiction film directed by a Portuguese woman, *Thês dias sim Deus* by Bárbara Virgínia, 1945, had to wait over 30 years to see another feature film directed by a woman (1976). And even with the stronger female presence in Portuguese cinema in the 1980s (with Margarida Gil, Monique Rutler and Solveig Nordlund considered to be the first generation of female filmmakers in the country), the percentage of films directed by women never exceeded 17%.

In chapter two, Annette Scholz looks at the ‘invisible’ women of Spanish cinema, analysing the proportion of female contribution by department. Not surprisingly, the most prominent (about 50%) presence concentrates in the Technical-Aesthetic Group (costume design, makeup and hairdressing), whilst areas like cinematography, sound and musical composition are nearly entirely male-dominated. The number of women studying film in Spain and Portugal is significantly lower compared to most European countries, and so is the number of nominations for women in the history of Goya awards (no more than 4%). Saying that, the work of Isabel Coixet, Icíar Bollaín, Gracia Querejeta and Pilar Miró promise some hope.

Chapter three offers an in-depth analysis of *Thês dias sim Deus* by Bárbara Virgínia with Ricardo Veira Lisboa arguing that the film marks a moment of emancipation of Portuguese women.

Part two, ‘Killing the muse: Women as creator’, starts with Estela Vieira’s analysis of alternative ways to talk about gender violence and historical memory from the colonial past in the work of Margarida Cardoso (*A costa dos murmúrios*) and Isabel Coixet (*La Vida Secreta de las Palabras*). In both cases, violence is presented as omnipresent but invisible, and the female characters embody endurance and remembering. Vieira also interrogates the role of the spectator in the process while keeping the violence against women off the screen.

Following that, Katarzyna Paszkiewicz looks at the limits of transnational authorship in the cinema of Isabel Coixet. With most of her films shot in English and consumed internationally, Coixet is perceived as an example of an auteur filmmaker who turned herself into a commercial brand with her ambiguous relation with national identity and purposeful detachment from the ‘national filmmaker’ category. Analysing *Nadie quiere la noche* (2015), Paszkiewicz argues that Coixet does not necessarily offer a feminist version of auteurism based on ideals of female solidarity (p. 95).

In chapter six, Adriana Martins looks at the way Margarida Cardoso confronts Portugal’s colonial past. She compares *A costa de murmúrios* (2004) and *Yvonne Kane* (2014) to scrutinise the way Cardoso challenges the culture of silence during the regime. Adopting a female-gendered perspective, she discusses questions of gaze, individual and collective memory, archival footage and re-mediation of the past.

Part three addresses other cinematographic professions. Firstly, Begoña Soto-Vázquez introduces film criticism in Spanish silent cinema, while analysing the reasons for women’s invisibility in the industry. Women were the spectators, (script)writers (often working under a pseudonym), translators, adapters, essayists and teachers, but these roles were rarely accounted for as significant, effectively disappearing from the records.

We then move onto women in film censorship during the Portuguese dictatorship. Ana Bela Morais explores how censorship (and the female perspective within) impacted and shaped national cinema in Portugal. With the lack of uniform and concrete criteria and often subjective, arbitrary judgements, one of the most demanding censors, Mariana Rita Nova Goa was an intriguing figure within the patriarchal period of Estado Novo. Despite peer pressure, she was resistant to change and felt very strongly about maintaining moral control over the productions of the period.

The following article looks at costume designers in Portugal, a trade mostly occupied by women. Caterina Cucinotta scrutinises the definition of a filmmaker as anyone contributing to the creative process and contrasts it with the perception of the ‘secondary statuses’ of women in the film industry. She further suggests the existence of the ‘untold history’ since the existing literature focuses solely on (the few existing) female directors.

Following Barthes, Cucinotta suggests that fashion is a channel through which women can express their socio-sexual functions.

The final part of the book addresses historical memory and the gendered archive. First, Erica Faleiro Rodrigues targets women filmmakers in 1970s revolutionary Portugal. She analyses the work of Delgado (*Máscaras*; 1976), Nordlund (*A lei da Terra*; 1977), Cordeiro (*Trás-os-Montes*; 1976) and Serra (*O movimento das coisas*; 1979-85) – four non-fiction films made as part of a co-operative following the Carnation Revolution in 1974. Rodrigues analyses the female authorship prospects, career expectations of women directors as well as their international (however often short-lived) success.

Then, María Soliña Barreiro González explores themes of woman and landscape in Galician non-fiction cinema. In this fascinating analysis, a sense of nostalgia and longing is linked to the Galician history of (male) migration, with landscape representing motherhood and the loss. The idealised representation is created as an image of absence, where the landscape and the (waiting) mother function as a promise of return. This results in the ‘figure of widows of the living’ (p. 182), and a suspended hero in constant waiting, who ‘sacrifices present for the future’ (188) and can never ‘return to the real life they left behind’ (189).

In the final chapter, Elena Cordero-Hoyo explores the questions of Portuguese memory in the appropriation film *A toca do lobo* by Catarina Mourão, 2015. Cordero-Hoyo generously borrows from Laura Mulvey’s feminist analysis. Women as storytellers and memory keepers became the guardians of the ‘politics of intimacy’ (p. 198) with sources previously neglected by New Historicism (such as diaries, letters or home movies). By creating a dialogue between past and present in archive film, women filmmakers ‘challenge the hegemonic order’ and ‘reposition themselves from the margins to the centre of historical discourse’ (p. 201). Revising and recycling pre-existing materials (Mulvey’s ‘gleaning’), as well as the ability to edit them to construct own narrative, often with a perspective which is opposite to the originally intended (Debordian ‘detournement’ adopted by Mulvey) is what makes these films capable to become a powerful tool for liberation – finding old patriarchal documents and ‘working on them to tell a new feminist counter-history’ (p. 209).

What this book does particularly well is bringing together various perspectives which cover the less obvious aspect of women’s contribution to the Iberian film industry. Forming some unusual connections between disciplines which rarely feature in history books, and focusing on contributions which often happen in the background and remain unaccounted for, we are effectively presented with an alternative vision of female resistance (and persistence) and a difficult journey to the male-dominated field.

The apparent disproportion of methods and approaches some articles provide detailed statistical data, while others relied on textual analysis, comparative studies or participant interviews) paradoxically becomes the book’s strength.

*Women in Iberian Filmic Culture* is a refreshing read which appreciates the input generations of women had to shape the filmmaking industry on the Iberian Peninsula.