

Feminist Ironic Montage to Dismantle Gender Essentialism

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Comparing *Woman's World* (María Luisa Bemberg, AR, 1972) and *Miss Universe in Peru* (Chaski Group, PE, 1982)¹

One day, out of the blue, Marina proposed to Isabel to write something together about two Latin American feminist documentaries, *Woman's World* (Original title: *El mundo de la mujer*, 15') and *Miss Universe in Peru* (Original title: *Miss Universo en el Perú*, 39'). Marina thought both works share epochal (thematic, political, and formal) similarities. Isabel felt the same to such a degree that, serendipitously, not long before receiving Marina's proposal, she had asked Alejandro Legaspi if he was influenced by *Woman's World* when he edited *Miss Universe in Peru*. Isabel thought that Legaspi could have had the chance of watching the short documentary in Montevideo or Buenos Aires before fleeing to Peru due to the dictatorship in Uruguay. The answer was no. Legaspi had never heard of *Women's World* before. Notwithstanding, we decided that a collaborative comparison of both films was worthwhile. After agreeing with the editors of *Framework*, we started working on it.

As for the similarities, both documentaries question the dualism imposed from a patriarchal gender structure in which women are assigned particular roles and obligations. *Woman's World* is an early María Luisa Bemberg film. She will go on to become the foremost female filmmaker in Argentina. This work, her opera prima as a director, responds straightforwardly to a feminist agenda. It was shot entirely at the Femimundo '72 trade fair, a commercial event focused on women as a fast-growing market, held in Buenos Aires in 1972. The small crew led by Bemberg captured footage in the exhibition halls. Once in the editing room, she created a vivid, humorous montage to reflect on the construction of a feminine identity based on traditional values of submission and service, and how capitalism has exacerbated this millenary oppression to take economic advantage of it. Emphasis is placed

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on the theme of the tyranny of beauty. For women forced to be the object of male desire, the beauty industry offers, in exchange for money, all kinds of devices that will make them more palatable: clothing, cosmetics, hairdressing, gymnastic equipment, and so on. The (self) objectification of women is a gold mine. And two birds are killed with one stone: social control and economic gain.

Coincidentally, *Miss Universe in Peru* is the first film of the Peruvian group Chaski, a film collective that follows the Third Cinema tradition.² The documentary is constructed around the opposition between two events celebrated in Lima in July 1982: the Miss Universe contest and the VI Congress of the Peruvian Confederation of Peasants. The television business that is the contest for the election of the most beautiful woman in the world imposes a global beauty canon, in addition to being a very lucrative enterprise. But *Miss Universe in Peru* not only denounces and ridicules the American contest, it puts forward a sour criticism of the matrix of domination and its propaganda tools, but also allows us to witness the political practice of organized women who resist the Western heteropatriarchal and capitalist mandate. In addition, the women represented in *Miss Universe in Peru* belong to all social classes, with the special participation of indigenous women, who, with a defiant gaze, challenge the manipulation attempted by corporate patriarchy. This is a significant difference vis-à-vis *Woman's World*, where we mostly see white middle-class women on screen.

Following a closer analysis, we realized that many other aspects of the filmmaking processes and the enunciative voice bear remarkable differences. María Luisa Bemberg, born in 1922, was from a very privileged background.³ She did not access formal education, and, like the women of her class, she was mostly prepared for marriage. However, her knowledge of foreign languages and the possibilities of travelling abroad granted her access to the feminist discussions that were taking place in the 1960s. She was an avid reader of French, Italian, and American feminist theory. Leonor Calvera (in Rodríguez and Ciriza) highlights that Bemberg and Gabriela Christeller, an Italian countess based in Argentina, “trafficked and translated—although in a less systematic and traditional way—the texts that in those years were produced by northern feminists”⁴ such as Margaret Mead, Betty Friedan, Kate Millet, and Shulamith Firestone.⁵

Bemberg was a pioneer in defining herself as a feminist in the Argentine public sphere. That was a bold move at the time, but her privilege facilitated it. Up to a certain point, she was protected from the possible negative consequences of this claim, and she took advantage of it to foster the feminist movement in Argentina. Her public statements on the oppression of women were fundamental to the constitution of the Argentine Feminist Union

(UFA), the organization she founded and in which she militated when she directed *Woman's World*. On the other hand, according to Leonor Calvera, the UFA was instrumental in Bemberg's path to finally becoming a filmmaker. The need for the group to have educational material encouraged her to direct her early short documentaries.⁶ But this early production is not as well known as her fictional films. Since the beginning of her cinematic career, as the screenwriter of *Crónica de una señora* (Raúl de la Torre, AR, 1971), she had been interested in showing on screen the problems of bourgeois women, like her. This focus on the search for freedom of upper-class women will be a constant of her feature fictions like *Señora de nadie* (María Luisa Bemberg, AR, 1982), *Camila* (María Luisa Bemberg, AR-ES, 1984), or *Yo, la peor de todas* (María Luisa Bemberg, AR, 1990).

Conversely, the Chaski group was more heterogeneous. Its founders were a woman, the Peruvian María Barea, and four men, the Swiss Stefan Kaspar, the Uruguayan Alejandro Legaspi, and the Peruvians Fernando Barreto and Fernando Espinoza. None of them were feminist activists, but they were in contact with Peruvian feminist organizations such as Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán and Movimiento Manuela Ramos and had worked with women's groups from the popular sectors in previous projects. Barea's first documentary as director, *Women of El Planeta* (María Barea, PE, 1981), focuses on the struggles of organizations of women dwellers of the slums of Lima. Racially and socially, the Chaski group's members were also diverse. They were united by their will to make oppositional cinema. Still, they had different degrees of political militancy and agendas, in addition to tremendously disparate personalities that made conflict an intrinsic part of the daily life of the collective.

Although *Miss Universe in Peru* is their first film as a group, almost all of them had previous film experience. The filming was carried out enthusiastically by all the members in the pre-production and production process. The original idea for the film is by María Barea. Her colleagues encouraged her to write a project that received funding from European social entities. The filming was hectic since they illegally entered the contest's venue, the Amauta Coliseum, posing as a foreign TV team with the Peruvian organizers and as Peruvian TV crew with the American organizers. Barea, an experienced filmmaker, was fundamental in the production stages but was excluded in the post-production phase. The group members, against Barea's will, decided that Stefan Kaspar and Alejandro Legaspi would carry out the montage. María Barea defined this moment in this way: "In Chaski I understood what is *Machismo-Leninismo*."⁷ We, thus, see that Bemberg, Barea, and the male members of Chaski had different relationships with feminism. Bemberg was an organized militant, Barea was not

a militant but a practitioner, and Chaski's members were, only theoretically, allies. This position allowed them to construct a feminist film text. However, their off-screen cinematic practice was, ironically, sexist.

The problem of the waves, the geopolitics of knowledge, and other academic distortions

In order to analyze the complex positionality of the above-mentioned filmmakers and to introduce these films to a potentially broader audience, we were tempted to state that *Woman's World* is a classic example of second wave feminism, and *Miss Universe in Peru* is a move towards what will be considered the third wave, in terms of diversification of the representation and the inclusion of intersectional analysis. But, after some reflection, we assessed that the metaphor of the waves only serves to explain Western feminism and its cultural products, and, even applied to that context, it is a highly imperfect metaphor.⁸

There are many drawbacks when working with the image of the feminist waves. First of all, it is a chronology underpinned by events that occurred in the Anglo-Saxon world—to name some: suffragism, the publication of iconic books (such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963), the Anita Hill case (1991), the #MeToo movement. This Western Centric periodization does not help to understand the specific practices of non-Western women, whose political ideas prefigured terms later popularized in the USA and Europe. For instance, the concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, was explicitly raised—but without giving it a name—by Domitila Chungara at the first UN world conference on women in Mexico in 1975. Or, to give another example, long before the term “kyriarchy” was coined by the feminist theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in 1992, (to refer to how the various systems of oppression—sexism, racism, classism, colonialism, ageism, etc.—are mutually reinforcing), Latin American, African, and Asian women were well aware of this reality through their own embodied experiences of the interconnected structures of domination and were acting politically in response.

That Crenshaw and Schüssler crystallized concepts that favored the political positioning of scholars and activists is very positive. Still, the brilliance of a well-developed theoretical tool should not make us forget that the practices of resistance to the intersectional and kyriarchal oppressions were already in place, turned into daily practices of dissidence by grassroots movements. Often their ideological underpinnings were already established and sometimes also analyzed, in writing, by Latin American intellectuals and filmmakers ignored by English language-centric feminist scholars. A rigorous geopolitical analysis of the creation

of emancipatory knowledge shows that theories and practices often spread from the bottom up. However, it is more challenging to trace and cite the knowledge production of subalternized groups, or non-English speaking thinkers, than that stemming from Western academe.

Furthermore, the wave, as a visual metaphor, emphasizes the discontinuities, which causes difficulty in understanding the links between the struggles of different generations and creates emotional distancing between them. We do not need to participate in an exhausting discovery of the wheel with each new generation but need to strengthen intergenerational ties, embracing the unavoidable tensions. Nevertheless, the metaphor of the waves works against a correct understanding of processes of long duration. Visualizing feminist history as waves conveys the sensation that women suddenly and almost opportunistically group together around specific causes, often mediatic judicial cases, such as the Anita Hill case, the Harvey Weinstein case, or more recently in Spain, the La manada rape case.⁹ This criterion is more journalistic than historical and transmits the false idea that women's struggles are almost accidents ignited by spontaneous generation. On the contrary, organized women have been carrying out counter-patriarchal practices globally in heterogeneous, imaginative, and culturally specific forms throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The variegated counter-patriarchal struggles within each wave should not be homogenized or reduced to hegemonic characterizations. For instance, the second wave is often considered white and middle and upper class. Its agenda is exemplified by issues such as the right over control of one's body, the sexual liberation of heterosexual women, or the right to economic independence. Although a thorough criticism of the centrality of white and middle- and upper-class women's priorities is healthy, questioning the entire feminist agenda of the sixties and seventies can be counterproductive. The consequence of this prism is, on the one hand, to overshadow the feminist and counter-patriarchal militancy of racialized and working-class women in that period. And, on the other hand, claiming that those demands were exclusively "middle class" delegitimizes rightful claims valid for any woman. The need for achieving economic independence, controlling reproduction, or enjoying sex is a priority for women in any circumstance, and currently, those basic conquests are under threat once again, as the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by the US Supreme Court has demonstrated.

Rather than use a conceptual framework that delegitimizes the struggles of white middle-class women, we should emphasize the diversity of the counter-patriarchal efforts at a global level, without relativizing the many and enormous intra-gender inequalities. Since the 1960s, and in some cases before, women of diverse social origins have organized themselves

to claim their rights in different ways. In some cases, women's agendas from the middle and popular classes coincided and sometimes they did not. But, in any case, these different movements coexisted chronologically, and physically met at the UN conference in Mexico in 1975. So, an inclusive definition of the second wave should incorporate the voices of subalternized women who had counter-patriarchal political practices, even if they did not define themselves as feminists. Or perhaps it is better to forget the waves metaphor altogether, however didactic it may seem.

Our intention is not to deny unequal access to rights and opportunities for subalternized women nor to relativize the existence of overlapping privileges. On the contrary, we are interested in analyzing all the complex onscreen mediation of the voice of women from the popular classes by white and middle- or upper-class filmmakers. However, we propose a framework of analysis that does not oppose groups of women legitimately fighting for different agendas without considering how these power dynamics worked in practice. Feminism was always hierarchical but also plural. If necessary, we are willing to take a step further and renounce the word feminism to refer to the myriad counter-patriarchal struggles that have taken place since the 1960s. Because in non-Western societies, that we are familiar with, many women fighting patriarchy in an avant-garde manner never considered themselves feminists.¹⁰ This concept seemed imported and alien to them, and we must not impose a label that they did not choose, even though their struggles and lives seem feminist to us, from a definition of feminism made from the present.¹¹

Even the films that make up the corpus of self-defined Latin American feminist films, chronologically coinciding with the second wave, problematize in their forms and contents both the concept of wave and the usual definition of the second wave as something that is exclusively white and middle class. As racialized ideologues such as Domitila Chungara¹² and Lélia Gonzalez¹³ —and some white women, for example, Heleieth Saffioti¹⁴— had been doing, Latin American feminist filmmakers were creating intersectional narratives based on their political practice. As said, María Luisa Bemberg, director of *Woman's World*, was one of the founders of Unión Feminista Argentina (UFA, Argentinian Feminist Union), a suprapartisan feminist organization that distributed the film on the alternative circuit. In that organization, there was a subdivision between “pure feminists” and feminists who also militated in political organizations of the left and for whom the analysis in terms of class was inseparable from gender analysis. There was also the participation of women of the popular sectors in the group, not only middle-class militants. Other films of the period, such as the duo *The double day* (Helena Solberg, US, 1975) and *Simply Jenny* (Helena Solberg, US,

1977) by Helena Solberg and the International Women's Film Project, inseparably interweave gender, race, and class in their analyses. The same goes for the films made by the collectives Cine Mujer in México and Colombia, and the Venezuelan Grupo Feminista Miércoles.¹⁵

Another issue that we are interested in highlighting is that those themes usually classified as “white and middle class,” such as beauty standards or heteropatriarchal sexual morality, are not alien to the lives of working-class women. Considering that the women of the popular classes were only interested in discussing physical survival is reductionist and ignores their psychological and experiential complexity. This paternalistic attitude makes essentialist assumptions of their priorities. The fact that they were frequently fighting starvation and, of course, feeding their children was a priority does not mean that they were unaware of the structural causes of inequality. Furthermore, the women and men of the popular classes also consumed mass media and were influenced by beauty standards and the incitement to consumerism imposed by them. There is proof that organized working-class women were aware of how this symbolic bombardment psychologically affected their communities.¹⁶ Consequently, they wanted to intervene in the public sphere to challenge this power imbalance. However, in the particular case of the cinematic medium before the popularization of digital technologies, only middle-class filmmakers who possessed the cultural capital and access to the means of production could make direct interventions. That is why women of the popular classes made films in alliance with filmmakers committed to their causes.

The preceding reflections on the geopolitics of feminist periodization gushed out haphazardly in heated conversations during our examination of *Woman's World* and *Miss Universe in Peru*. Still, we have referenced, arranged, and placed them early in this article to contextualize and frame the close film analyses in the next section.

On dramatic and situational irony in *Woman's World* and *Miss Universe in Peru*

Irony is a rhetorical technique aimed at persuading. Following the classical typological division of this art, *Woman's World* uses dramatic irony, “an expressive strategy found in aesthetic objects, and especially in storytelling.”¹⁷ María Luisa Bemberg builds an ironic situation through a witty montage full of humorous discrepancies. Since this is a constructed type of irony created in the editing room, the spectators are aware of it, but the on-screen characters are not. On a different note, the project of *Miss Universe in Peru* was devised by

María Barea using situational irony, which “is observable in the real world. . . . In situational irony, the circumstances effectively conspire to subvert or invert expectations in a paradoxically fitting fashion,”¹⁸ in this case, the celebration of two antagonistic events in the city of Lima at the same time: the Miss Universe contest and the congress of the Peruvian Confederation of Peasants. Moreover, many other situational oppositions appear throughout the film, mainly the abysmal differences between the American lavish lifestyle commercialized through the contest and the real situation of the disenfranchised majorities in Peru, but also the contestation by feminist groups brutally repressed by the police.

Before finding out that the studies on rhetoric had established various typologies of irony, we had already noticed this difference through the close analysis of both films. In a WhatsApp audio message dated December 13, 2021, Isabel says to Marina:

Hi, I was watching the films again, and I think the point is that we are faced with two different types of irony. In the case of Bemberg’s film, it is an irony explicitly constructed through the montage. In the case of Chaski’s film, the documentary is based on an idea that is itself ironic because it is contradictory. Two opposite events were taking place simultaneously in Lima. And Miss Universe is a contest with a rhetoric opposed to the practice of the Peruvian authorities towards women, not only towards peasant women but towards feminists who protest the contest. In *Miss Universe*, the irony is present in the political and social context itself. Hence, irony is present in both films, but it appears in different forms. One is a constructed irony and the other is a found irony, which simply has to be highlighted. Both are created through editing, but differently.

Marina responded by text: “I agree with everything you said. It is as if Bemberg wants to make a situation ironic, and the Chaskis want to show how ironic a situation is.” From that realization, and to narrow down the article’s subject matter, we decided to focus on the textual difference between the ironic dramatic montage and the ironic situational montage that structure *Woman’s World* and *Miss Universe in Peru*, respectively.

The Argentine documentary, as already exposed, uses exclusively footage captured within Femimundo ’72. This trade fair was publicized as “The International Exhibition of the Woman and Her World.” A closer look at this exhibition reveals that it was the synthesis of what feminists were combating. It was aimed at women but organized by men and had four pavilions that supposedly condensed all areas of female interest: fashion, food and home products, clothing accessories, and cosmetics. It is not by chance that, as soon as they learned of the event, months before it took place, the UFA members began to think of ways to intervene. Thus, *Woman’s World* is born from feminist militancy. Even though it was not produced collectively and was not a film strictly commissioned by the feminist organization, it had, among its objectives, to materialize and exemplify theories that the members of UFA

were discussing in its awareness-raising groups and other spaces.

Olga Donata Guerizoli Kempinska states: “If irony is manifested so often in feminist theoretical discourse (and certainly in its practices), it is, in part, also due to the pleasure of appropriating, by pretending, the words of the paternalistic male discourse which, at the same time, is violently rejected.”¹⁹ This is an adequate description for the impulse behind Bemberg's short film, which, especially through the soundtrack that is almost entirely extradiegetic, articulates ironic antitheses in which image and sound create "two levels of meaning, related to two levels of values,"²⁰ playfully conjugated to ridicule the patriarchal/capitalist marketing.

An example, among many, is a brief scene of less than half a minute of duration, in which we hear the first chords of *Ellens dritter Gesang* or *Ave Maria* by Franz Schubert (1825). This widely known sacred song exalts the Christian ideal still used to oppress women worldwide: pure, patient, selfless, pious. On-screen, we see a close shot of a woman lying on a surface that rotates in a way we do not yet understand. Due to the reduced perspective and depth of field, our attention is focused on her face. The model's immobility and fixed eyes turned upwards, added to the essentialist values evoked by the music for those who have a Christian background, make us believe that we are witnessing yet another earthly incarnation of the Virgin Mary. For the spectator, image and sound are apparently in tune. However, the harmony between image and sound begins to be shaken when a broader shot reveals a group of men and women observing the young woman who, we discover, lies on top of a red rotating bed. The public exposure of a private activity creates a gap between what is seen and heard. And this distance is aggravated given the characteristics of that particular type of furniture since a red, round, rotating bed evokes sex for pleasure out of wedlock.

But the ironic antithesis will still widen. *Woman's World* has two voice-over narrators, a male and a female. The female narrator is summoned in some moments of the documentary to recite excerpts from the Disney's version of the Cinderella story and from a book referenced in the credits as “LIBRO AZUL de ‘Para Ti’... (Blue Book of “For You”), “*Guía para saber cual es la mujer ideal para cada hombre, como debe hacer para conquistarlo y conservar el amor. . .*” (Guide to know who the ideal woman for each man is, how to conquer him and preserve love. . .).²¹ The sources of the excerpts that the narrators will read have been announced in a text preface at the beginning of the film. In this particular scene, the female narrator following the *Blue Book* advises women in an affected tone: “Take a lot of care of the home, because he loves order. You must be sensual, but not too much.” The mellow voice-over exacerbates the tone used in radio and television programs aimed at

female audiences back in the day, adding a new layer of irony. Although the narrator is not credited, she was likely a comrade who playfully collaborated in the humorous montage.²²

The moderated sensuality proposed by the voice-over does not find any correspondence in the image. What we watch is a model—a profession that does not exist without self-exposure—lying down on top of an overtly sexual rotating bed. A closer shot allows us to see the woman's face. Her eyes are turned up to the ceiling, replicating traditional Mary iconography as if she was talking to God in heaven. But her mouth denotes she is uncomfortable. Her overall facial expression is of boredom, discontent, and dissatisfaction. At the beginning of the scene, we read in her face docility and resignation, but she conveys almost hate at the end.

The two sound elements used, music and voice-over, are not delivering exactly the same message, a modest sensuality differs from virginity. Nevertheless, both are models imposed by the Judeo-Christian bourgeois gender ordering. Be pure like Mary, but do not reject the sexual advances of your husband. The visual element, the model, on her part, smiles forcibly when she realizes she is being filmed. She is silently, and perhaps unconsciously, resisting the double imposition, always within the limits allowed by her working conditions. She looks like she would like to be elsewhere, away from the male gaze. To close the sequence, a zoom-out situates an establishing shot of the woman on the bed and the voyeuristic public inside one of the exhibition's pavilions. In order to sell, capitalism objectifies Mary's descendants. The dramatic irony, built through the antithesis between image and sound, denounces the particular dimension that the millennial oppression of women in certain cultures acquires within the framework of capitalism. These contrasts are constructed in multiple different ways during the short film.

In a different type of ironic montage, in *Miss Universe in Peru*, the editing focuses on the multiple ironic situations that the organization of the Miss Universe contest generated in the city of Lima. Throughout the film, one of the main structural elements is close-ups of women from the popular classes who look at the camera breaking the fourth wall. From the bluish light that we see reflected on their faces, we know that these women are watching television. It is as if the television set itself is recording the viewers. Thus, all the footage captured from television that will appear on-screen throughout the documentary will dialogue with these viewers who return their inquisitive gaze to it. Their laconic countenances do not seem to approve of what they see on TV—except in the case of a girl who smiles at the performance of the Spanish singer and right-wing sex symbol Bertín Osborne.

María Barea did not randomly choose these screen-gazing women. They were

members of a grassroots organization of organized housewives from the shantytown El Planeta, with whom she had made her first film, *Women of El Planeta*. In a symbolically significant way, the last shot of *Miss Universe in Peru* is a close-up of the mother of Rosa Dueñas looking at the camera / TV. Dueñas was the leader of the Aurora Vivar Ladies Committee and one of the most charismatic heads of the movement of *ollas populares* (self-managed soup kitchens) of Lima. She still lives today and continues to run a kitchen in the neighborhood and only last year organized a community kitchen to feed the followers of Pedro Castillo, who had travelled to Lima to support his inauguration as president.

To exemplify the rhetorical use of situational irony through montage in *Miss Universe in Peru*, we have chosen a scene that opens with a shot of this type. A slum dweller girl (Ana Aranibar, Dueñas' daughter) looks at the camera. She is watching the TV broadcast of the Miss Universe parade through the streets of the city center. The misses ride on convertible cars, greeting the crowd. The footage that we watch is captured directly from a TV screen. We can appreciate the shape of the screen within the frame. It is not a recorded videotape. From a title that appears in yellow letters, PANTEL, we know that the broadcaster is Panamericana TV. Emulating the advertising cuts typical of the television medium, an abrupt cut shows us an ad for Lux soap starring the American actress Michele Pfeiffer. A brief cut re-inserts the close-up of the girl who watches TV. This reminds us that women not only watch the parade of the misses through the central streets of their city but the publicity that permanently accompanies this television show. Imported products, such as this soap, impose the beauty model represented by Pfeiffer whose Caucasian phenotype contrasts with the mixed-race features of the girl who looks at the TV. We are warned through the montage that publicity is imposing an inappropriate beauty model to women of color.

Moreover, interrupting the soap ad are inserted images of the police controlling the masses who have come to see the misses. This summates another layer of meaning. The violence exercised by capitalism and patriarchy is not only symbolic but material. A new cut brings us back to Pfeiffer, addressing Peruvian girls: "If you want to show off a beautiful and smooth complexion, you too use Lux soap." We see the brand's slogan: Lux, the soap for movie stars. The girl responds by returning a hieratic look, which seems full of skepticism, although it is probably only our subjective projection, favored by the rapid, contrasting Kuleshovian editing.

Through another cut, we return to the television broadcast of the parade. The voice-over of the Panamericana TV commentator highlights the presence of the authorities and the Civil Guard. He even warns us of the presence of a special security force, the Peruvian

Republican Guard, which in his words “gives an exceptional hierarchy nuance to this parade.” Meanwhile, we envision a center of Lima strongly protected by the State security forces of a third world country, such as Peru. The government had made a bet to bring a contest of enormous international coverage, seeking to project an image of peace and prosperity in a political moment of instability and institutional crisis, when there was an open war between the state and the Shining Path, a Maoist guerrilla group.

The tension in the militarized streets of Lima is communicated straightforwardly by the editing choices. As if trying to navigate this unbearable tension, the voice-over of the television announcer improvises a cloying essentialist speech about the respect that “the woman” deserves, pointing out that not only the Misses deserve respect but all women. And he adds that Miss Universe in Peru “can be a nice beginning of respect for what being a woman means, in general.” In ironic opposition to this absurd statement, the montage shows us the police violently repressing feminist militants who had come to protest against the objectification of women promoted by the contest.

The Chaski crew recorded the images of the repression. Still, for the montage, they also relied on black and white photographs, provided by press graphic reporters, of the police attacking with batons and arresting the women of the feminist organization Flora Tristán, who defend themselves with determination. They also insert talking-heads testimonies of the militants repressed by the police. The central situational irony of the montage is the contrast between the television rhetoric—Miss Universe as the beacon of a new era of respect for Peruvian women—and the reality of police brutality taking place in the streets of Lima against the actual Peruvian women.

Feminist ironic montage is used in different ways in *Woman’s World* and *Miss Universe in Peru* to dismantle gender essentialism. The capitalist/patriarchal mandate is contested making use of effective rhetorical devices—dramatic and situational types of irony—that reveal the ideological command as the joke it is. Although, sadly, often the joke is on women and gender dissidents.

A vindication of having fun writing collaborative film histories

In these times, when we hear scholars complaining all the time about their job, the process of writing this article has been a pleasure for us. Despite our cultural and idiomatic differences and asymmetries, thinking about these films together has enhanced our perceptive experience and analytical capacities. Although we have not strictly followed the surrealist technique of

the exquisite corpse, some of its features, such as trusting intuition and generating transpersonal and trans-egoic connections, have worked swimmingly.

Our work methodology includes egalitarian communication in Spanish and Portuguese, without the former (the language with more speakers) imposing itself over the latter. Afterwards, translation needed to be done into English. This step, although intrinsically colonial, also has contributed to new layers of meaning and often beautiful and unexpected findings. Paradoxically, the English scholarly register often makes for a less elitist final product. The desirable straightforwardness characteristic of the English language allows for a clarification of ideas, which, in turn, creates a more accessible language. Therefore, the translation to a dominant tongue has helped overcome the classist underpinnings of our own, not less imperialistic, mother tongues and their respective academic writing styles.

Our work collaboration is based on previous and ongoing processes, such as the foundation, with our colleague Elizabeth Ramírez-Soto, of the research network RAMA (Latin American Women's Audiovisual Research Network), and a firm base of mutual respect and appreciation. We are influenced by the collaborative practices of Latin American feminist filmmakers, theoreticians, and practitioners. We follow the steps of thinkers/activists like María Lugones, María Galindo, and Sueli Carnero. And filmmakers such as María Barea, María Luisa Bemberg, Helena Solberg, Nora de Izcue, Kitico Moreno, Teresa Trautman, Eulalia Carrizosa, Beatriz Palacios, Sara Gómez, Adélia Sampaio, Rosa Martha Fernández, Norma Bahia Pontes, Sara Bright, Mónica Vásquez, Josefina Jordán, Clara Riascos, Patricia Howell, Franca Donda, and Vera de Figueiredo, among others. The outcome of this collaborative process—the article in your hands, an imperfect patchwork that could have been more polished—illustrates its making. We could have continued working on it if we had had more time and space. This is just a humble, enjoyable attempt to think and write together about the films we love and study. Having fun while writing collaborative film histories of collaborative film processes is a privilege.

Notes

1 The documentaries are available online: *El mundo de la mujer* <https://vimeo.com/14196200> and *Miss Universo en el Perú* <https://vimeo.com/92742300>

2 For more information about Chaski, see Sophia A. McClennen, “The theory and practice of the Peruvian Grupo Chaski,” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* no. 50 (2008).

3 For a recent review of Bemberg's work, see Julia Kratje and Marcela Visconti, *El cine de María Luisa Bemberg* (Mar del Plata: Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata, 2020).

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- 4 Eva Rodríguez Agüero and Alejandra Ciriza, “Viajes apasionados. Feminismos en la Argentina de los 60 y 70,” *Labrys, estudios feministas* 22 (July/December 2022): 8.
- 5 Rodríguez Agüero, 8.
- 6 Leonor Calvera, *Mujeres y Feminismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1990), 82.
- 7 Isabel Seguí, “Auteurism, *Machismo-Leninismo*, and Other Issues: Women’s Labor in Andean Oppositional Film Production,” *Feminist Media Histories* 4, no. 1 (2018): 29.
- 8 The use of the metaphor of the waves starts with an article by Martha Weinman Lear, “The Second Feminist Wave,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 1968.
- 9 La manada (the pack) case, refers to the gang rape of a eighteen-year-old woman in Pamplona (Spain) during the celebrations of San Fermín, in July 2016. The specifics of the case, and the fact that the perpetrators were found guilty of sexual abuse, not rape, in the first trial, raised an intense public debate around the definition of rape. After the first verdict, Spanish women took massively to the streets in support of the victim and demanding a new trial. In 2019, the Spanish Supreme Court found the men guilty of rape.
- 10 See, for instance, Margaret Randall, *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* (La Habana, Cuba: Casa de las Américas, 1978), 11; or Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí. *A invenção das mulheres: Construindo um sentido africano para os discursos ocidentais de gênero* (Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, 2021).
- 11 This is the point of view of the authors of this text. To situate ourselves, we are both racially white and socially middle class. Marina is Brazilian and Isabel was born in the Spanish state and resides in the United Kingdom. Our mother tongue is not English, and our whiteness is therefore relative from an Anglo-Saxon point of view but not in the Latin American context. Thus, we both enjoy class and race privileges. Isabel still enjoys a greater privilege since she is born and based in Europe.
- 12 Moema Viezzer and Domitila Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar. Testimonio de Domitila, una mujer de las minas de Bolivia* (México: Siglo XXI, 1977).
- 13 Lélia Gonzalez, *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editora, 2020).
- 14 Heleieth Saffioti, *A mulher na sociedade de classes* (Petrópolis, RJ: Editora Vozes, 1976).
- 15 For further reading on Cine-mujer Mexico, see Isabel Jiménez’s thesis *De cines y feminismos en América Latina: El Colectivo Cine Mujer en México (1975–1986)*, UNAM, 2018; and Elena Oroz, “Experiencias y prácticas feministas transnacionales en la primera etapa del colectivo mexicano Cine-Mujer (1975–1980),” in Sonia García López and Ana María López Carmona, *Contraculturas y subculturas en el cine latinoamericano y español contemporáneo (1975–2015)* (Valencia / Medellín: Tirant Lo Blanch / Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, 2018). For further reading on Cine-Mujer Colombia, see Paola Arboleda and Diana Osorio, *La presencia de la mujer en el cine colombiano* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2003); and Lorena Cervera, “Towards a Latin American Feminist Cinema: The Case of Cine-Mujer in Colombia,” *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 20 (2020): 150–165. For further reading on Grupo Feminista Miércoles, see “El c... de tu madre o la tuya que es mi comadre,” *Revista Venezolana de Estudios de la Mujer* 11, no 27 (2006): 20–42; and Lorena Cervera, “Militancy, feminism and cinema: The case of Grupo Feminista Miércoles,” *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 10, no. 2 (2022): 267–284.
- 16 See Isabel Seguí, “El cine según las amas de casa mineras: Agenda subalterna, performance y comunicación

política (Bolivia, 1971–1994),” *Estudios del ISHIR* 28 (2020).

17 James McDowell, *Irony in Film* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 4.

18 McDowell, 4.

19 Olga Donata Guerizoli Kempinska, “Ironia e discurso feminino,” *Revista Estudos Feministas* 22, no. 2 (2014): 468.

20 Kempinska, 467.

21 The only reference we have for this book is the one that appears in the credits of the film. We tried to find the reference to the original publication without success.

22 In this sense, it is impossible not to recall *Feminino plural* (Vera de Figueiredo: Brazil, 1976). In it, the disciplining voice, giving instructions on how young women should behave (“Obey, submissive, gentle and docile”), is a well-known historical feminist: Rose Marie Muraro.