

## Lucrecia Martel

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## **Introduction**

Lucrecia Martel (b. 1966) is one of the best-known contemporary Latin American filmmakers. She is an innovative stylist who has gained worldwide recognition for her strange, oneiric, and sensorial feature films, which have won prizes at film festivals around the world. Martel has been seen as part of the wave of aesthetic experimentalism and shift away from previous forms of filmmaking in Argentina which came to be known in the early 2000s as the 'New Argentine Cinema' and early criticism of her work is often preoccupied with locating it within that trend, which was seen as intrinsically linked with the context of economic crisis in Argentina. Feminist perspectives on Martel's work were also amongst the first writings on her, later followed by a number of queer readings of her work. In addition, because of its formal innovations, critics of Martel's work have also paid sustained attention to aesthetic and cinematographic questions, especially around sound and the extra-visual senses, including touch and the haptic. Martel's first three features, *\*La ciénaga (2001)\**, *\*La niña santa (2004)\** and *\*La mujer sin cabeza (2008)\** are often referred to as the 'Salta Trilogy' and depict the life of the conservative middle classes in the provincial setting of Salta, Northwest Argentina, where Martel grew up. They have been read as critiquing gender, sexual, ethnic and class power structures, whilst questions of phenomenology, the body, the senses and the use of sound have also been to the fore. The more recent *\*Zama (2017)\** is a departure from the earlier

features in a number of respects: it is Martel's first literary adaptation (of Antonio di Benedetto's 1956 novel of the same name) the first of her features not to be set in Salta, and the first to have a male protagonist. Set in the colonial era, it is also Martel's first historical film. However, it shares certain aesthetic and thematic tendencies with the earlier films: early readings of *Zama* indicate that it will be read as an exploration of the colonial underpinnings of the racist, classist society examined in the earlier features. In addition, Martel has made a number of short films. Of these, *Rey Muerto* (1995) and *Nueva Argirópolis* (2010) have attracted the most critical attention.

## General Overviews

A number of critics have considered the totality of Martel's *oeuvre*, and the three monographs Barrenha Cristofolletti 2014, Martin 2016, and Gemünden 2019 share an emphasis on the sensorial aspects of Martel's films. Barrenha Cristofolletti sees these in particular in relation to autobiography, whereas Martin views them politically for their re-configuring of the relationship between spectator and film, and Gemünden sees in the sensorial a rupture with the temporality of dominant cinema.

Barrenha Cristofolletti, Natalia. *A experiência do cinema Lucrecia Martel: Resíduos do tempo e sons à beira da piscina*. Alameda Casa Editorial, 2014.

A reading of the Martel's first three features which argues that they are inspired by autobiographical memory and pays attention to the phenomenological and poetic dimensions to the recreation of personal memories.

Gemünden, Gerd. *Lucrecia Martel: A Poetics of the Senses*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019.

Gemünden looks at Martel's *oeuvre* and shows how her works challenge film's usual emphasis on the visual, paying attention to the use of experimental techniques of heightened realism. Gemünden aligns Martel's filmmaking methods with the work of other international directors who criticise the high speed of today's cinema. He argues that Martel's radical political critique forces viewers to rethink entitlement, race, class, and exploitation of indigenous peoples within Argentinian society.

Martin, Deborah. *The Cinema of Lucrecia Martel*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.

The first English-language study, which situates Martel's work in relation to trends in Argentine filmmaking, art house and horror cinema, bringing together hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches to film criticism. Through discussions of the interventions made by Martel's films in matters of class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and Argentine history, it argues that they are deeply political, showing how its creation of uncertainty and doubt allows for glimpses of alternative realities.

## Biographical Works

There is no formal biography of Martel, though Martin 2016 contains a short biographical section. Martel gives many interviews, in which she frequently talks about her home life growing up in Salta, and the influence of her early life and of members of her family on her filmmaking. Oubiña 2009 includes an important early interview as well as a brief biography. Martel discusses her early life and its effects on her filmmaking in Rangil 2007, and points to autobiographical elements of the scripts of *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa* in Wood 2006 and Guest 2009.

Guest, Haden. 2009. \*"Lucrecia Martel[<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/lucrecia-martel/>]"\*. *Bomb* 106 (Winter), 2009.

Useful, informative interview in which Martel discusses her upbringing, education, and the beginning of her film career.

Martin, Deborah. *The Cinema of Lucrecia Martel*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.

Contains a brief biographical overview (see pp. 2-3) of early life and career, detailing family background and studies.

Oubiña, David. *Estudio crítico sobre La ciénaga: entrevista a Lucrecia Martel*. Buenos Aires: Picnic Editorial, 2009.

This important study of *La ciénaga* contains an informative interview in which Martel discusses her early life and its influence on her filmmaking.

Rangil, Viviana. 'Lucrecia Martel'. In *Otro punto de vista: mujer y cine en Argentina*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2005, pp. 93-112

Contains an interview with Martel which discusses her background and family life, the social world of Salta in which she grew up, and the influence of religion and the loss of religious faith on her life and her filmmaking.

Wood, Jason. "Lucrecia Martel." In *Talking Movies: Contemporary World Filmmakers in Interview*. Jason Wood, 166–72. London: Wallflower, 2006.

In this interview Lucrecia Martel talks about the links between the plot and setting of *La niña santa* and her own experience growing up in Salta, Northwest Argentina.

### Collections of Critical Essays

There is no collection of critical essays devoted solely to the work of Martel, but Rangil 2007 contains a section of four essays on the director which deal with the films *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa*. Panozzo 2008 is a useful collection of short articles and reviews.

Panozzo, Marcelo, ed. *La propia voz: el cine sonoro de Lucrecia Martel*. Gijón: Festival Internacional de Gijón, 2008.

A useful collection of some important reviews of, and short articles on Martel's first three features, produced to accompany the Gijón Film Festival. Includes a brief piece by Pedro Almodóvar (whose production company El Deseo produced *La niña santa* and *La mujer sin cabeza*) on Martel's use of sound.

Rangil, Viviana, ed. *El cine argentino de hoy: entre el arte y la política*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2007.

A section of this book is devoted to essays on Martel's films *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa* (see pp. 137-220). The four essays included constitute a useful snapshot of early Martel criticism: those by Page, and Varas and Dash, debate the role of allegory in the films, whilst those by Jagoe and Cant, and Rangil, focus on the religious ideology, gender and the body.

### **Martel as Auteur**

Whilst Barrenha Christofolletti 2014, Martin 2016, and Gemünden 2019 (cited under \*General Overviews\*) suggest a certain auteurist impulse, tracing correspondences and meanings across the entirety of Martel's works, Slobodian 2012 and White 2015 deal with the question of Martel's own authorial persona, its construction and relation to the film texts.

Slobodian, Jennifer. "Analyzing the Woman Auteur: The Female/Feminist gazes of Isabel Coixet and Lucrecia Martel." *Comparatist* 36 (2012): 160-177.

Compares the – gendered and mediatized – authorial persona of Martel with that of Spain's Isabel Coixet, alongside a discussion of their films *La niña santa* and *The Secret Life of Words* (Coixet, 2005), both produced by the Almodóvar brothers' El Deseo Productions, arguing that both films create a distinctly feminine gaze. Contains useful analysis of colour and light in *La niña santa*.

White, Patricia. *Women's Cinema, World Cinema: Projecting Contemporary Feminisms*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Considers Martel and Iranian Samira Makhmalbaf as "world-class female auteurs" and the formation of female authorship alongside film festivals including Cannes. White argues that Martel's authorial persona comes to signify an ethical feminist practice. White analyses *La mujer sin cabeza* in detail, considering its feminist elements, showing how the film "re-casts" the European art film heroine, and how it constitutes a meditation on the director's own agency.

### **Martel and the "New Argentine Cinema"**

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several young, first time film directors – including Martel, Martín Rejtman, Adrián Caetano and Pablo Trapero – were deemed by critics and journalists to have initiated an ideological

and aesthetic break with previous forms of filmmaking in Argentina, and with the reigning tendency to deal in cinematic metaphors for the 1976-82 Argentine dictatorship. The work of these directors was labeled by critics and journalists as 'New Argentine Cinema', and Martel's work was seen as intrinsic to defining that cinema, a project which, into the late 2000s and 2010s, became somewhat less urgent as critics increasingly recognized the difficulty of producing unified accounts of a group of films and directors which were not bound together by any shared project, manifesto or aesthetic, and as directors once associated with the label made increasingly diverse work. However, the critical energy and excitement incited by the early work of Martel and her contemporaries generated some excellent early analyses of her work, including Aguilar 2008, which includes extended discussion of *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa*, as well as Andermann 2012, which probes the New Argentine Cinema category more critically, whilst also including illuminating analyses of Martel's first three features. Falicov 2007 examines the beginning of Martel's career in the context of contemporary developments in Argentine cinema, whilst Forcinito 2013 and Gundermann 2005 consider the politics of Martel's films alongside those of other key Argentine cinematic texts of the period.

Aguilar, Gonzalo. *New Argentine Film: Other Worlds*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Aguilar argues that the 'nomadic' narratives, and new approaches to casting and dialogue of Martel's first films are part of overall tendencies of the New Argentine Cinema. He contributes to what will become a key debate on Martel's filmmaking: the extent to which her films represent a circular and immutable universe, or whether they present opportunities for rupture. His discussion of intertextuality is also taken up by later critics. On Martel, pp. 84-7, 266-8, and *passim*.

Andermann, Jens. *New Argentine Cinema*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012.

Questions and probes the category of New Argentine Cinema critically. Analyses *La ciénaga* as part of a chapter on "dark ruralities" which undermine traditional and Romantic associations of the countryside. Argues that the temporal mode of stagnation and repetition in the Salta Trilogy represents a crisis of historical experience which can only be punctuated by accidents and miracles, such as those that feature in the films' narratives. On Martel, pp.77-82, 158-62, 164-5, and *passim*.

Falicov, Tamara. *The Cinematic Tango: Contemporary Argentine Film*. London: Wallflower, 2007.

Outlines the beginning of Martel's filmmaking career and includes a discussion of *La ciénaga*, within a broader discussion of the work of other directors associated with the NAC, the production contexts and aesthetic and thematic trends of their works. Argues that Martel's work has in common with that of contemporaries such as Lisandro Alonso, its focus on small stories and the everyday. On Martel, pp. 122-4 and *passim*.

Forcinito, Ana. "Lo invisible y lo invivible: el nuevo cine argentino de mujeres y sus huellas acústicas." *Chasqui* 42.1 (2013): 37-53.

Looks at Martel alongside women filmmakers contemporary to the NAC, though not necessarily always included in its canon. Compares *La ciénaga* to Albertina Carri's *Los rubios* (2003) and *La rabia* (2008) and María Victoria Menis's *El cielito* (2003), arguing that these films use sound to allude to worlds made invisible by marginalisation, particularly gendered and sexual marginalisation.

Gundermann, Christian. "The Stark Gaze of the New Argentine Cinema: Restoring Strangeness to the Object in the Perverse Age of Commodity Fetishism." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies: Travesía* 14.3 (2005): 241–261.

Compares *La ciénaga* to other key texts of the NAC, using a Deleuzian framework, arguing they contain 'loose objects' and 'sound objects', and showing how their distancing mechanisms contribute to an interruption of the flow of desire in late capitalism.

### Gender and Sexuality

Amongst the first critical studies to appear on Martel's filmmaking were a number of feminist readings of her work. Rangil 2005 considers Martel's emergent career and first films alongside those of her female contemporaries in Argentina. Early readings of films such as Forcinito 2006 and Aguilar 2008 prioritized the analysis of the female gaze in *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa*. Later, a number of queer readings such as Galt 2013, Rich 2013, Shaw 2013, and Martin 2016 reflected the oblique references to lesbian sexuality in the Salta Trilogy, and their multiple sites of desire. Criticism which links the work of Martel to that of other Argentine women filmmakers through discussions of its gender and sexual politics has also been published, such as Stites Mor 2007 and Martin 2017.

Forcinito, Ana. "Mirada cinematográfica y género sexual: mímica, erotismo y ambigüedad en Lucrecia Martel." *Chasqui* 35. 2 (2006): 109-30.

Early, rich, detailed feminist reading of *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa*, paying particular attention to gaze dynamics. Argues that the status of vision as site of power is itself undermined, and establishes the importance of that which is not seen in *La ciénaga*. Argues that in *La niña santa* the male gaze is appropriated ambivalently. Concludes that Martel creates female gazes which are partial, and use mimicry for subversion.

Galt, Rosalind. "Default Cinema: Queering Economic Crisis in Argentina and Beyond." *Screen* 54.1 (2013): 1-20.

Links the "queer sensibility" of Martel's work to that of Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul, arguing that these films evince a queer refusal to signify which can be linked to economic crisis. The article devotes most of its attention to another film that Galt groups alongside these: Diego Lerman's *Tan de repente* (2002).

Martin, Deborah. *The Cinema of Lucrecia Martel*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.

Brings together feminist and queer readings of Martel's features and the short film *Muta*. Argues that Martel's films have a preoccupation with constructions of femininity and female archetypes, and discusses queer abjection in *La ciénaga* and *La mujer sin cabeza*, as well as proposing a parodic, kitsch or camp excess in the films' citing of cinematic versions of femininity.

Martin, Deborah. "Planeta ciénaga: Lucrecia Martel and Contemporary Argentine Women's Filmmaking." In *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Production, Politics, Poetics*. Edited by Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw, 241–262. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017.

Situates Martel's work in relation to that of other Argentine women filmmakers including María Luisa Bemberg, Julia Solomonoff, and Albertina Carri, arguing for Bemberg's influence on Martel and Martel's on subsequent filmmaking, in terms of shared political and aesthetic projects.

Mayer, Sophie. "Dirty Pictures: Framing Pollution and Desire in 'New New Queer Cinema.'" In *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human*. Edited by Anat Pick and Guinevere Narraway, 145–161. New York: Berghahn, 2013.

Groups Martel's films with other "new New Queer" works by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Tsai Ming-liang, and Sarah Turner, arguing that they all privilege instances of pollution in narrative and through aesthetics. Argues that Martel's films are defined by their "politics of pollution", where pollution signals the permeability of boundaries and unrealized desires or desiring relationships manifest as boundary-crossing pollutants.

Rangil, Viviana. *Otro punto de vista: mujer y cine en Argentina*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2005.

Early consideration of *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa* alongside the work of two other emergent women directors: Julia Solomonoff and Paula Hernández, discussing similarities in their formation and arguing that they are united by their shared rejection of the Hollywood model. The interview deals with Martel's conceptualization of politics and political models of filmmaking, questions of sexuality in *La ciénaga* and Martel's attitudes to women's issues and feminism. On Martel, Hernández and Solomonoff, pp. 85-153.

Rich, B. Ruby. *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Understands Martel's films as part of a new queer Latin American cinema, alongside the work of directors such as Diego Lerman and Julián Hernández. Considers the lesbian elements of Martel's work as well as their broader engagement with desire, arguing that it is the films' "radical expansión of possibility" which contributes to their queerness. Argues that Martel's as well as Hernández's films are "assumptive" rather than "declarative" about same-sex desire.

Shaw, Deborah. "Sex, Texts and Money. Funding and Latin American Queer Cinema: The Cases of Martel's *La niña santa* and Puenzo's *XXY*." *Transnational Cinemas* 4.2 (2013): 165-84.

Argues that the progressive political agendas, in terms of gender and sexuality, of European funders are creating defiant female gazes in Latin American cinema and that *La niña santa*, as well as Puenzo's *XXY* are examples of this trend. Finds queerness in *La niña santa*'s creation of multiple sites of desire, as well as through its non-judgmental gaze on acts which would be harshly judged by orthodox feminism.

Stewart, Katy. "'Establishing the Female Gaze: Narrative Subversion in Lucrecia Martel's *La niña santa* and *La ciénaga*.'" *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 21.3 (2015): 205-19.

Builds on previous feminist analyses of Martel's first two features, analyzing their sound and visual aesthetics and examining how they create interstitial and contestatory spaces.

Stites Mor, Jessica. "Transgresión y responsabilidad: desplazamiento de los discursos feministas en cineastas argentinas desde María Luisa Bemberg hasta Lucrecia Martel." In *El cine argentino de hoy: entre el arte y la política*. Edited by Viviana Rangil, 137-153. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2007.

Argues that Argentine director María Luisa Bemberg's public presence, her feminism and her position on human rights issues in the context of Argentina's transition to democracy in the 1980s and 1990s, allowed her to create the artistic space for the work of Lucrecia Martel and that of contemporaries including Julia Solomonoff and Albertina Carri.

## The Body and the Senses

Questions of corporeality, and phenomenological readings, have been to the fore in critical work on Martel, which has frequently argued against hermeneutic readings of her work, seeing in it a counter to traditional narrative and visual epistemologies. Amado 2006 is an early discussion and Deleuzian reading which privileges the body. This approach is developed in Martins 2011, whilst Jagoe and Cant 2007 (cited under \*Religion\*) examines the effects of religious ideology on *La niña santa*'s representation of the body. A further strand, which pays attention to the senses and especially touch, is inaugurated by Ríos 2008, which argues for the decentralization of vision in the first two features. This approach, which also inflects the discussions of Martins and Jagoe and Cant, is taken up by Martin 2016.

Amado, Ana. "Velocidades, generaciones y utopías: a propósito de *La ciénaga*, de Lucrecia Martel." *ALCEU*, 6.12 (2006): 48-56.

Deleuzian reading which shows how the slowing of time in *La ciénaga* is expressed through attitudes of the body, and argues for the effects of the body on the narrative. The first piece of criticism to argue in detail for the symbolic and phenomenological importance of the young in the film, showing how their bodies move at a speed different to those of adults.



Martin, Deborah. *The Cinema of Lucrecia Martel*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.

Shows how the tactile qualities of Martel's work undermine dominant cinematic regimes and reconfigure the spectator-film relation. On touch and the senses, pp.19-22, 43-50, 72-76 and *passim*.

Martins, Laura. "En contra de contar historias. Cuerpos e imágenes hápticas en el cine argentino (Lisandro Alonso y Lucrecia Martel)." *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana* 73 (2011): 401-420.

Compares the films of Lucrecia Martel with those of her contemporary, Argentine filmmaker Lisandro Alonso, arguing that the work of both prioritises the place of the body in the film image, as well as the spectator's embodied experience, which it ultimately argues creates a new ontology of the spectator and image.

Ríos, Hugo. "La poética de los sentidos en los filmes de Lucrecia Martel." *Atenea* 28.2 (2008): 9-22.

Early discussion of the appeal made by the films of Martel to the sense of touch and generally to the extra-visual, including smell. Drawing on phenomenological film theories, the article analyses *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa*, arguing that the aesthetics of both films serve to 'de-centralise vision', and that the films shift the erotic away from narrative and character and towards the senses through the use of haptic codes.

## Religion

Several critical works deal with the presence of religious themes in Martel's work. Jagoe and Cant 2007 examines the effects of Catholic culture on the body, and Rangil 2007 does the same for femininity. Page 2009 looks at themes of and responses to the loss of religious faith..

Jagoe, Eva Lynn and John Cant. "Vibraciones encarnadas en *La niña santa* de Lucrecia Martel." In *El cine argentino de hoy: entre el arte y la política*. Edited by Viviana Rangil, 169-190. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2007.

Proposes *La niña santa* as a means of imagining a post-Catholic culture of the body, arguing that the film does this through a variety of means, including the creation of a fluid cinematic space, the open approach to narrative, and the appeal to all the senses. Offers a detailed analysis of the visual images, gaze dynamics and sound of the opening sequence.

Page, Joanna. "Folktales and Fabulation in Lucrecia Martel's Films." In *Latin American Popular Culture: Politics, Media, Affect*. Edited by Geoffrey Kantaris and Rory O'Bryen, 71-87. Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2013.

Argues that the interest in folktales and oral storytelling in Martel's films can be understood as a form of fabulation in Bergson's terms, i.e. as having the power to protect us from chance and mortality and

thus responds to a need to construct an alternative vision of the world following the loss of one's religious faith; understands this construction of alternative visions as inherently political.

Rangil, Viviana. "En busca de la salvación: sexualidad y religion en las películas de Lucrecia Martel." In *El cine argentino de hoy: entre el arte y la política*. Edited by Viviana Rangil, 209-220. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2007.

Argues that *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa* offer a social critique through their depiction of the Catholic Church and its ideology, which associates femininity with domesticity and salvation. Shows how the adolescents in *La niña santa* experience a total conflict between the Church's teachings and the reality of their bodies.

## Sound

Sound is as important in Martel's films as the visual, if not more so. Constantini 2007 contains Martel's own views about the corporeal effects of film sound while Russell 2008 argues that *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa* are 'designed for sound' and shows how they starve the eye to prioritize sound, drawing out the political and feminist import of this. Both Rapan 2007 and Greene 2012 devote detailed, shot-by-shot attention to sound design of *La ciénaga*, whilst Losada 2010 shows how the noise-scape of *La mujer sin cabeza* is related to the film's representation of class privilege. Mayer 2014 shows how the films' sound-design echoes thematic questions of pollution and boundary crossing.

Costantini, Gustavo. "Sound can touch your body." *Filmwaves* 33 (2007): 46-47.

Compilation of interviews and discussions with Martel, in which she discusses her approach to film sound, and the effects it can have on the viewer's body.

Greene, Liz. "Swamped in Sound: The Sound Image in Lucrecia Martel's *La ciénaga/The Swamp*." *Printed Project* 15 (2012): 53-60.

Offers a detailed, shot-by-shot breakdown of the sound design of the opening sequence of *La ciénaga*, arguing that it uses sound to communicate where conventional filmmaking might use visual means, and explores how sound is used to convey political meaning.

Losada, Matt. "Lucrecia Martel's *La mujer sin cabeza*: Cinematic Free Indirect Discourse, Noise-scape and the Distraction of the Middle Class." *Romance Notes* 50.3 (2010): 307-13.

Argues that the protagonist's psychological crisis, which is linked to an awareness of her class positioning, as well as comforting moments which allow her relief from her crisis/class positioning are expressed through the film's soundscape.

Mayer, Sophie. "*Gutta cavat lapidem*: The Sonorous Politics of Lucrecia Martel's Swimming Pools." In *The Cinema of the Swimming Pool*. Edited by Christopher Brown and Pam Hirsch, 191-202. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014.

Develops a brief discussion of the centrality of the swimming pool and water in Martel's first three features, and explores the sonic characteristics of the swimming pool which it equates with a suppressed feminine element. Characterises the pool as an 'acoustic mirror', a site of pollution, disruption and challenge to class, racial and sexual orders.

Rapan, E. "Sound Continuity and Tragedy in *La ciénaga*." Trans. G. Constantini. *Filmwaves* 33 (2007): 42-45.

Close analysis of the sound design of *La ciénaga* which explains how certain effects are created, proposing connections between certain sounds distributed throughout the film, and exploring sound's relationship to the image.

Russell, Dominique. \*'Lucrecia Martel: A Decidedly Polyphonic

Cinema[[www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/LMartelAudio/index.html](http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/LMartelAudio/index.html)]\*'. *Jump Cut* 50 (2008).

Examines ways in which *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa* are 'designed for sound', arguing that it is this that distinguishes Martel from her 'New Argentine' contemporaries. Discusses the thematization of sound in *La niña santa*. Argues that the centrality of sound in Martel constitutes a feminist/feminine overthrowing of the primacy of the visual.

## Animal Themes

With the exception of *La niña santa*, there is a strong animal presence in all Martel's feature films, as well as in her short film *Pescados*. Whilst Gutiérrez-Albilla 2013 and Martin 2016 both interpret these as undermining a traditional understanding of human subjectivity, O'Brien 2017 sees animals in the films as metaphors for marginalization and powerlessness. Bollington 2019 and Galt 2019 develop these perspectives on the political valence of the narratives' animals incorporating discussion of *Zama*, and arguing that the figuring of the animal is crucial to the anticolonial critique which the film effects.

Bollington, Lucy. \*'"Martel's Aquatic Zoopoetics[<http://www.thecine-files.com/lbollington/>]\*". *The Cine-Files* 14 (2019), 'Beast Fables'. Edited by Catherine Grant and Tracy Cox-Stanton.

Examines fish in Martel's work and argues that her films make use of animals in general and fish in particular to 'produce dehumanizations' in ways that foster a close scrutiny of the human and the modes of exclusion which characterize its communities.

Galt, Rosalind. 2019. \*'"Learning from a Llama and Other Fishy Tales: Anticolonial Aesthetics in Lucrecia Martel's *Zama*[<http://www.thecine-files.com/galt/>]\*". *The Cine-Files* 14 (2019), 'Beast Fables'. Edited by Catherine Grant and Tracy Cox-Stanton.

Draws on examples from *La ciénaga* and *La mujer sin cabeza* to argue that animals are always political in Martel's work, and argues that the animal appears in *Zama* as a way of instructing the viewer to direct her gaze to the margins, also acting as a means of rupturing diegetic space and thus undermining the seriousness of the (male-centered, colonial) narrative.

Gutiérrez-Albilla, Julián Daniel. 'Filming in the Feminine: Subjective Realism, Social Disintegration and Bodily Affection in Lucrecia Martel's *La ciénaga*'. In *Hispanic and Lusophone Women Filmmakers: Theory, Practice and Difference*. Edited by Parvati Nair and Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla, 215-228. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.

Argues that the film's fragmented narrative and lack of linearity contribute to its subjective realist style. Analyses the place of the body in the film and argues that it contains, through its figuring of bodies and characters, a drive to horizontality and movement toward the animal. Argues that the corporeal aspects of the film contribute to a radical expression of feminine or 'matrixial' subjectivity.

Martin, Deborah. *The Cinema of Lucrecia Martel*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.

Contains sections on the short films *Pescados* and *Muta* in which animals and animal imagery are central, arguing that both films destabilize the boundary between human and animal, figuring instances of 'becoming-animal'. See chapter 4 in particular.

O'Brien, Sarah. "Sticky Matter: The Persistence of Animals as Allegory in *La ciénaga* and *La mujer sin cabeza*." *Screen* 58.4 (2017): 458-476.

Argues for the allegorical importance of dead animals in the meaning construction of these films, as proxies for neglected children, the powerless, and the general descent and demise of the human characters.

### **Martel's Feature Films**

The scholarship on Martel's feature films is dominated by work on the Salta Trilogy, and within that, studies of *La ciénaga* and *La mujer sin cabeza* predominate.

#### **La ciénaga (2001)**

*La ciénaga* was Martel's first feature-length film and has been the subject of much critical acclaim, including early pieces such as Bernini and Choi 2001, and Monteagudo 2002. Both of these, whilst brief, contain important discussions of the film's radical negativity and figuring of desire, which would go on to inform later critics. The film's opening minutes have received some of the most detailed analysis of any of Martel's work (see Greene 2012 cited under \*Sound\*) for their formal experimentalism and the speed with which they establish an intense, disturbing atmosphere. Works by many critics, including Oubiña 2009 (which is probably the most comprehensive source on the film and includes an important interview with

the director) have approached the film through the structural inequalities and oppressions which it portrays, specifically those of gender, class and ethnicity; Varas and Dash 2007 reads these as representing allegorically the Argentine nation, and proposing a correction to androcentrist visions. There have been many comparisons with *La niña santa* which have often focused on the portrayal of female adolescence and more broadly of gender (see Forcinito 2006, cited under \*Gender and Sexuality\*), and feminist readings of the aesthetics of *La ciénaga* are common (see Russell 2008, cited under \*Sound\* and Gutiérrez Albilla 2013 cited under \*Animal Themes\*). Other important critical developments include Deleuzian readings (Amado 2006 cited under \*The Body and the Senses\*) and a focus on the body (Amado 2006 cited under \*The Body and the Senses\*, Martins 2007), and the child (Amado 2006 cited under \*The Body and the Senses\*, Dufays 2014).

Bernini, Emilio and Domin Choi. "*La ciénaga* o el arte de la infancia." *Kilómetro* 111.2 (2001): 151-152.

Brief but early and important discussion of *La ciénaga* establishes some important lines of enquiry which will be taken up in more detail by later critics, including distance from classical narrative established by the radical negativity and lack of transformation, the relationship of the film to allegorical structures, and the motif of the fall.

Dufays, Sophie. "From the Child Who Dies to the Adolescent Who Kills: Children's Perception and Melancholy in *La ciénaga* and *La rabia*." In *Screening Minors in Latin American Cinema*. Edited by Carolina Rocha and Georgia Seminet, 19-34. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

Considers *La ciénaga* alongside *La rabia* (2008), by Albertina Carri, an Argentine contemporary of Martel's, paying particular attention to their representation of children. Dufays argues that this representation runs counter to the traditional figuring of children in postdictatorship Argentine cinema, in that it doesn't use the child as an allegory of the nation's history.

Martins, Laura. "Bodies at Risk: On the State of Exception. Lucrecia Martel's *La ciénaga* (*The Swamp*)." In *Argentinean Cultural Production During the Neoliberal Years*. Edited by Carolina Rocha and Hugo Hortiguera, 205-215. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007.

Argues against many critics in pursuing the links between *La ciénaga* and Argentina's period of totalitarian military rule, arguing that bodies in the film bear the memory and mark of legitimized and normalized violence.

Monteagudo, Luciano. "Lucrecia Martel: Whispers at Siesta Time". In *New Argentine Cinema: Themes, Auteurs and Trends of Innovation*. Edited by Horacio Bernades, Diego Lerer, and Sergio Wolf, 69-78. Buenos Aires: Fipresci, 2002.

Short but important early discussion of *La ciénaga* discussing some of its key images and characteristics, including its use of polyphony and figuring of desire as 'a vital energy amidst the inertia and paralysis'. Followed by an interview with the director.

Oubiña, David. *Estudio crítico sobre La ciénaga: entrevista a Lucrecia Martel*. Buenos Aires: Picnic Editorial, 2009.

Attends comprehensively to the film's aesthetic modes, themes and meanings, its particular form of realism and its narrative structure, editing, and spatial organization. Explores gender, class, ethnicity, and desire. Also includes several review-excerpts, and an interview with the director. An English translation of some sections is published in Lema-Hincapié, Andrés, and Debra A. Castillo. 2015.

*Despite all adversities: Spanish-American queer cinema*. Albany: State U. of New York Press.

Varas, Patricia and Robert C. Dash. "Reimaginando la nación argentina: Lucrecia Martel y *La ciénaga*." In *El cine argentino de hoy: entre el arte y la política*. Edited by Viviana Rangil, 191-208. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2007.

Reads the family romance(s) portrayed in the film as a cultural allegory of the Argentine nation, paying attention to questions of racism and the position of indigenous people, and arguing that *La ciénaga* corrects the androcentric vision of national identity.

### *La niña santa* (2004)

There are fewer individual studies of *La niña santa*, which has often been studied alongside *La ciénaga*, possibly because the two films both deal clearly with female adolescence and family and thus lend themselves to joint analysis through a feminist or gender studies lens, and perhaps also because there were only three years between their release. See, for example, Forcinito 2006, Rangil 2005 and Stewart 2015 cited under \*Gender and Sexuality\*, Ríos 2008 under \*The Body and the Senses\*, and Russell 2008 and Mayer 2013 under \*Sound\*, all of which analyze these two films alongside one another. Another possible reason for the lack of individual attention to *La niña santa* compared with the other two Salta films is the fact that, unlike them, it does not pay sustained attention to relations *between* classes and ethnicities, perhaps leading some commentators to see it as less political than the other two films of the Salta Trilogy. Critical approaches to *La niña santa* have tended to combine feminist and phenomenological approaches to film, as in Jagoe and Cant 2007 cited under \*Religion\*, Martin 2011, and Godart 2016.

Godart, Caroline. "Lucrecia Martel and the Curious Body in *The Holy Girl*." In *The Dimensions of Difference: Space, Time and Bodies in Women's Cinema and Continental Philosophy*. Caroline Godart, 91-118. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.

Argues that, instead of appealing to us through identification, the film invites an embodied response, creating a regime akin to Bergson's 'intuition', and allowing for a form of non-hierarchical difference to emerge between spectator and characters.

Martin, Deborah. "Wholly Ambivalent Demon-Girl: Horror, The Uncanny and the Representation of Feminine Adolescence in Lucrecia Martel's *La niña santa*." *Tesserae* 17.1 (2011): 59-76.

Builds on the existing feminist criticism on the film and investigates the evocation of the uncanny in relation to the evocation of childhood and feminine adolescent development in patriarchal culture, and the film's relation to horror more broadly. Develops the phenomenological approach to the film initiated by Ríos 2008, and discusses queer readings.

### *La mujer sin cabeza* (2008)

Many critics detect in *La mujer sin cabeza* a slight shift of direction in Martel's *oeuvre*, despite the film's continued focus on the life of conservative middle class Salta families. Wolf 2008 for example contributes to the ongoing debate around possibilities for redemption or ideological rupture in Martel's films, arguing that these are in clearer evidence in *La mujer sin cabeza* than in her earlier features. *La mujer sin cabeza* has a clearer protagonist than do the previous films, and its narrative has clearer links to Argentine history. Much critical debate has, in fact, centered around the question of whether and how the film allegorises the historical and political realities of Argentina, including, but not limited to, the 1976-1982 dictatorship. Christofolletti Barrenha 2012 and Delgado 2013 read the film in relation to the 1970s period of military rule, while Sosa 2009 sees the ghosts in the film as referring at once to the disappeared of the military era and to the victims of 2000s neoliberalism, and Quirós 2010 examines closely images of the neoliberal 1990s Argentina in the film. Within a broader focus on class which has always been central to Martel criticism, *La mujer sin cabeza* criticism also ushers in a particular focus on representations of domestic servitude, as in Schwarzböck 2009, Vázquez 2015, and Shaw 2017. Broadly speaking, critics have taken their lead from the film's more explicit focus on class as a mechanism of oppression, but a number of works, including Zalcock 2014 and White 2015, have detected also a strong feminist critique in the film.

Christofolletti Barrenha, Natalia. "*La mujer sin cabeza* de Lucrecia Martel y el mecanismo del olvido en el pasado y el presente." *Revista Comunicación* 10.1 (2012): 643-652.

Explores the presentation of memory and forgetting in the film, as well as considering the film's relation to the horror genre, and to the Argentine horror of the dictatorship.

Delgado, Maria. "*La mujer sin cabeza/The Headless Woman*: Silence, Historical Memory and Metaphor." In *Spanish Cinema 1973–2010: Auteurism, Politics, Landscape and Memory*. Edited by María Delgado and Robin Fiddian, 195-211. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.

Considers the phenomenon of Spanish-Argentine co-productions and their shared tendency to focus on issues of historical memory and trauma. Reads *La mujer sin cabeza* as an example of such filmmaking, arguing that the film comments on both nations' haunting by the ghosts of their dictatorial pasts.

Quirós, Daniel. "La época está en desorden': reflexiones sobre la temporalidad en *Bolivia* de Adrián Caetano y *La mujer sin cabeza* de Lucrecia Martel." *A Contracorriente* 8.1 (2010): 230-58.

Responds to those critics who have seen in the film an allegory for the 1970s, by showing the importance of the neoliberal 1990s in the film's plot and mise-en-scène. Argues that through its unconventional temporality, the film critiques the dominant narratives of neoliberalism.

Schwarzböck, Silvia. "Los espantos." *Kilómetro* 111.8 (2009): 166-71.

Short but useful piece which pays particular attention to the film's representation of a culture of impunity, as well as to that of domestic service.

Sosa, Cecilia. "A counter-narrative of Argentine mourning." *Theory, Culture and Society* 26.7-8 (2009): 250-262.

Argues the *La mujer sin cabeza* 'countersigns' post-dictatorship forms of filmmaking in Argentina which have focused on memory and trauma in relation to the disappeared. Proposes that the film evokes processes of collective mourning and challenges blood ties as prioritized form of kinship. Considers how the film's entangled temporalities make it impossible to divorce the specters of the past with the lives of the socially excluded in present-day Argentina.

Vázquez, Karina Elizabeth. "La poética del enrarecimiento en *La mujer sin cabeza* de Lucrecia Martel." *Hispanic Research Journal* 16.1 (2015): 31-48.

Argues that *La mujer sin cabeza* uses Brechtian distancing as a way of confronting the spectator with the socially problematic persistence of domestic servitude and its connection with social and political power dynamics.

White, Patricia. *Women's Cinema, World Cinema: Projecting Contemporary Feminisms*. Patricia White, 48-55. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Sees the film's main character as a feminist response to the othering of women as beautiful muses in classical Hollywood and European art film and understands the film as both investigation of female subjectivity, and feminist critique of patriarchal complicity. Sees Martel's work as exploring micropolitics rather than national narratives but concedes that *La mujer sin cabeza* shows an awareness of its location in multiple histories of oppression and liberation.



Wolf, Sergio. "Que aparezca un accidente." In *La propia voz: el cine sonoro de Lucrecia Martel*. Edited by Marcelo Panozzo, 42-45. Gijón: Festival Internacional de Gijón, 2008.

Traces the importance of the accident across Martel's work and argues that the protagonist's car accident in *La mujer sin cabeza* represents an opening or moment of possibility which distinguishes this film from the previous two features which, Wolf argues, represent closed and immutable worlds.

Zalcock, Bev. "Judgment and the Disappeared Subject in *The Headless Woman*." In *A Critique of Judgment in Film and Television*. Edited by Silke Panse and Dennis Rothermel, 234-254. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Uses feminist psychoanalysis and semiotics to investigate possibilities of judgment in the film, arguing that the film both demands a judgment and obstructs it, paying attention to the construction of narrative and to questions of genre in the film. Contains a close reading of the third sequence of the film in which the protagonist crashes her car.

### *Zama* (2017)

Fewer academic articles have been published on *Zama*, Martel's adaptation of Antonio Di Benedetto's 1956 novel of the same name, because of its recent release date. However, its release gave rise to a number of very positive reviews, as in Allen 2018 and Bernini 2017, and interview-reviews such as Gemünden and Spitta 2018. The academic opinion which is beginning to form around *Zama* notes the continuities with Martel's earlier films through *Zama's* scrutiny of ethnic relations, and discusses the way the white colonial subject-protagonist is decentered and undermined by the film's narrative, sound and composition (Galt 2019 cited under \*Animal Themes\*). The emphasis on sound in Martel's work looks set to continue in discussions of *Zama*, which, like the earlier work prioritizes off-screen sound but also introduces a new sonic element, the Shepard Tone, as Rapan 2018 discusses. Almada 2017 does not constitute criticism in the strict sense – it is an account of the author's observations on set during the film's shooting – but will make interesting reading for anyone studying the film.

Allen, Esther. \*"The Crazy Euphoria of Lucrecia Martel's *Zama*[<https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/04/14/the-crazed-euphoria-of-lucrecia-martels-zama/>]"\*. *New York Review of Books*. April 14 2018.

Extended review by the translator of Benedetto's novel into English, which discusses the inception of the *Zama* project, and the adaptation process. Argues that the theme of indigenous people was addressed tacitly in Martel's earlier features but is dealt with more directly in *Zama*.

Almada, Selva. *El mono en el remolino: notas del rodaje de Zama de Lucrecia Martel*. Buenos Aires: Literatura Random House, 2017.

Observations on the shooting of *Zama* by the Argentine writer Selva Almada, who comments on such aspects as the casting and the relationships between the indigenous Qom actors and the other members of the cast and crew.

Bernini, Emilio. \*"El hundimiento: a propósito de *Zama* de Lucrecia

Martel[<http://mariaclaradiez.com/km111/el-hundimiento/>]\*. *Kilómetro III* 14-15 (2017).

Discussion of the operations and portrayal of colonial power in *Zama*, which argues that the film's politics resides in the cohabitation and relation of its protagonist to the social and ethnic others than surround him.

Gemünden, Gerd and Silvia Spitta. 'I Was Never Afraid: An Interview with Lucrecia Martel'. *Film Quarterly* 71.4 (2018): 33-40.

Excellent short introduction to *Zama* which draws comparisons with other recent Latin American films which subvert conventional representation of the colonial era, followed by interview in which Martel discusses the use of music, sound, digital technology and non-professional actors in *Zama*.

Rapan, Eleonora. 'Shepard Tones and Production of Meaning in Recent Films: Lucrecia Martel's *Zama* and Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*'. *The New Soundtrack* 8.2 (2018): 135-144.

Gives a history of the auditory illusion known as the Shepard Tone, and compares the way it features in *Zama* and in the films of Christopher Nolan, especially *Dunkirk* (2017)), arguing that the use of these tones in the films creates a new temporality which augments the sense of waiting they attempt to create.

### **Martel's Short Films**

Several of Martel's short films have received detailed critical attention, often by critics seeking to locate them in relation to the feature films. Selimović 2018 deals with Martel's early short *Rey Muerto*, showing how it lays the foundations of the Salta Trilogy. Lange-Churión 2012 and Martin 2016 both deal with *Nueva Argirópolis* and investigate the politics of indigeneity in this short film. *Pescados* is analyzed in-depth in Bollington 2019 (cited under \*Animal Themes\*), which discusses how the question of animality arises across the features.

Selimović, Inela. 'Sensorial Youths: Gender, Eroticism and Agency in Lucrecia Martel's *Rey muerto*'. In *New Visions of Adolescence in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*. Edited by Geoffrey Maguire and Rachel Randall, 81-98. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018.

Argues that this early short film lays the foundations for the later Salta Trilogy through its depiction of youth and use of transgressive, embodied and synesthetic visual forms.

Lange-Churi6n, Pedro. 'The Salta Trilogy: The Civilised Barbarism in Lucrecia Martel's Films'. *Contemporary Theatre Review* 22.4 (2012): 467-84.

Study of the way that discourses of civilization and barbarism, a binary established in Argentine thought by the work of 19<sup>th</sup> Century writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, inform the films of the Salta Trilogy. Pays particular attention also to *Nueva Argir6polis*, and questions of visibility and invisibility of the indigenous in the short film.

Martin, Deborah. 'Lucrecia Martel's *Nueva Argir6polis*: Rivers, Rumours and Resistance'. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 25.3 (2016): 449-65.

Analyses *Nueva Argir6polis*, explaining how this short film both inhabits yet contests the discourses of the modern nation state in particular through its representation of conflict between the state and indigenous groups. Discusses the film's relationship of subversive mimicry with Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's utopian tract of 1850, *Argir6polis*, which it pursues through a resignification of images of the river and the island. Considers language and translation in the film.