

## **Review Essay: ¿Qué hay de material en la cultura? Recent monographs on Latin American literature, video, art, and aesthetics**

- Benezra, Karen. *Dematerialization: Art and Design in Latin America*. Oakland, CA: U of California P, 2020. 235 pp. ISBN 9780-5203-0706-3
- Graff Zivin, Erin. *Anarchaeologies: Reading as Misreading*. New York: Fordham UP, 2020. 193 pp. ISBN 9780-8232-8681-2
- Hoyos, Héctor. *Things with a History: Transcultural Materialism and The Literatures of Extraction in Contemporary Latin America*. New York: Columbia UP, 2019. 302 pp. ISBN 9780-2311-9305-4
- Procopio Furtado, Gustavo. *Documentary Filmmaking in Contemporary Brazil: Cinematic Archives of the Present*. New York: Oxford UP, 2019. 265 pp. ISBN 9780-1908-6705-8
- Schiwy, Freya. *The Open Invitation: Activist Video, Mexico, and the Politics of Affect*. Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 2019. 282 pp. ISBN 9780-8229-6574-9

*This review emerged out of an invitation to moderate a panel, ¿Qué hay de material en la cultura? Recent monographs on Latin American literature, video, art, and aesthetics, at the 2020 Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA). When the panel dematerialized in the early months of COVID-19, participants decided to migrate the discussion from the closed LASA platform to a DIY May 2020 Zoom open forum. Preparing for the panel, Karen Benezra's Dematerialization: Art and Design in Latin America, Gustavo Procopio Furtado's Documentary Filmmaking in Contemporary Brazil, Erin Graff Zivin's Anarchaeologies: Reading as Misreading, Freya Schiwy's The Open Invitation: Activist Video, Mexico, and the Politics of Affect, and Héctor Hoyos's Things with a History: Transcultural Materialism and The Literatures of Extraction in Contemporary Latin America kept me company during those first uncertain months of New York State's PAUSE and inter/national lockdown. Our May Zoom forum discussion was lively per my belief that moderators work best in moderation. Three years later, on the opposite side of the United States, I return to the material and materiality of these texts.*

The casual reader presented with the title of Benezra's impressive first monograph, *Dematerialization: Art and Design in Latin America*, might reasonably pose the question, "What is dematerialization?" Following the twentieth-century Argentinean artist-theorist Oscar Masotta (versus the US artist-theorist Lucy Lippard), Benezra provocatively writes against, around, through the false opposition of "materialism" and "dematerialization." Beginning with a chapter devoted to Masotta's praxis, Benezra offers a metaphoric establishing shot:

For Masotta, the work's materiality is neither opposed nor subordinated to language. Rather, the work's physical supports—whether in the thick paint of impastos or the electromagnetic waves of televisual transmission—stand as the logical site where history produces the forms through which it becomes legible. In this sense, I will argue that Masotta's writings on art elaborate a materialism of dematerialization. (30-31)

Chapter 2 considers the Mexican poet-critic Octavio Paz's writing that situates Marcel Duchamp as an "hermetic thinker" (63). Chapter 3 addresses Mexico City's Los Grupos (in particular, Proceso Pentágono and Taller de Arte e Ideología, a welcome remedy to Paz's aestheticism) and the collectivist, "cooperative organization" of artistic labor after the state's cooptation of public

art and culture industries (111). Chapter 4 takes up early cybernetics—Cybersyn, designed for Salvador Allender’s Popular Unity Government—which proto-valorized a design/system adaptive to social needs. All told, Benezra contends across continents, countries, examples that the materialism of dematerialization belies the “problem” of the subject enmeshed in a web of social relations.

While some might take issue with the ways in which Benezra’s examples do not always appear to be connected, the strength of this project remains its unrelenting and nuanced focus—by way of Masotta, ghosting the whole—on the dematerialization of art, architectural, and digital forms. Neither the widely accepted equation of art=life, nor that of art≠life are viable in Benezra’s argument about the relationship of art, industrial design, and capitalism. Rather, she convincingly contends that the status of the art object is eclipsed by the matter, or better put, the material/ity—ontologically split—of a range of media/mediums from the late 1960s onward. Benezra’s nuance, anything but immaterial, reenforces the hemispheric, indeed planetary, significance of her project’s keyword for any contemporary understanding of late, growing later capitalist ideology, in effect, offering a periodization of dematerialization as a mode of critical analysis, too.

Periodization and the exploration of two keywords—archive and documentary—equally propel the narrative arc of Furtado’s first monograph, *Documentary Filmmaking in Contemporary Brazil* which, as its title suggests, treats post-1985 Brazilian documentary projects. In the book’s introduction, Furtado systematically reviews and returns to the etymology and history of the archive and archivization, noting relative to his project’s generic focus, “The archive is also a useful concept for thinking about documentary filmmaking as a cultural practice that produces lasting records of the historic present, repurposes archival materials, and has a deeply rooted relationship with the idea of the document—the principle concern of the archive and a term laden with authoritative connotations of proof, record, and evidence” (4-5). In the three sections of six chapters that follow, Furtado remains focused on documentation—representation and power—in the theoretical, while also pragmatically demonstrating how an archive is built. Material here, then, is the stuff of the archive’s assemblage. Part I, structured as “a shot and reverse shot” (19), begins with a consideration of “contact films” or ethnographic documentaries emerging out of an “extractive archival logic” (53)—e.g., Humberto Mauro’s *O descobrimento do Brasil* (1936) or Werner Herzog’s *Ten Thousand Years Older* (2012). Furtado then turns to “reparative mediations” that examine destructive, loss, recovery, and continuity; the opposition of archival and corporeal memory, by Indigenous filmmakers—e.g., the work of the collective Video nas Aldeias.

In Part II of the project, Furtado offers an account of the relationship between evidence, capture, and law, especially on the margins or at the internal borders of the Brazilian city. A sizeable portion of Chapter Three is devoted to a discussion of José Padilha’s *Ônibus 174* (2002), itself a consideration of live footage of a nationally televised standoff between a bus hijacker and police, which consequently “repositions filmmaking in relation to existing conditions of visibility and forms of looking” (98). Furtado also considers Maria Augusta Ramos’s *Justiça* (2004) and *Juízo* (2007), which juxtaposes documentary film and juridical procedure’s processes of documentation, at times falling back on cinematic re-enactments. Chapter 4 focuses on films produced in and about Brasília’s capital city and modernization and development generally, including work by Adirely Queirós and Vladimir Carvalho that, according to Furtado, juxtapose “tactics of the invisible” and the hyper-visual city (117). While space does not permit me to attend to the level of detail and close reading offered in this project, a few examples discussed in the volume, including Queirós *Branco sai, preto fica* (2014) and Carvalho’s *A cidade é uma só?*

(2011), speak to the richness of Furtado's archive and method. The former, both a documentary and science fiction narrative, follows Marquim, a wheelchair-bound Afro-Brazilian, who clandestinely transmits via radio music and ideas; samples street sounds and stores them in a "luminous cylinder" that we later learn is a bomb (113). Eventually Marquim and the couch are in an open field where he sets the couch and its contents on fire—an arresting image featured on the monograph's cover. Marquim meets Dimas, a time-traveler, who is collecting evidence of the government's prior wrongs against the disenfranchised. *A cidade é uma só?* (2011) juxtaposes city planning and the memories of the film's central character, the folk singer Nancy Araújo, who reflects on the criminalization of poverty, the forced resettlement of workers accused of "invasions" in an earlier moment of Brazilian modernization. Like other films treated in Furtado's monograph, *A cidade é uma só?* Incorporates fabulation, namely the reenactment of the "discovery" of the unavailable or lost archival document.

Part III of Furtado's project considers the blurred borders of public/private, the resistance of contemporary Brazilian cinema to "authoritative generalizations" (145), building by way of example, too. Chapter 5 begins with a consideration of João Moreira Salles's *Santiago*, a film that incorporates home movies into its narrative to tell the partial story of a relationship between margins and center by way of re-centering domestic laborers. The family butler, Santiago Badariotti Merlo, lends his name to the project's title and narrates much of the film, but is also repeatedly censored by the filmmaker. Furtado's reading of work attentive to the obscured bodies of domestic workers continues in his examination of like Consuelo Lins' *Babás* (2010). The chapter includes a useful overview of the incorporation of home movies into film regarding the indexicality of family photography and movie making. Chapter 6 addresses several films, including Petra Costa's letter to her deceased sister, *Elena* (2012) that consider the "inheritance of postdictatorship memory," in short, the intimacies of personal and collective loss. Here and throughout this expansive and engaging study, Furtado demonstrates that Brazilian documentaries recalibrate the very archival function, serving as vehicles for and of the "de-archivization of documents and materials" (203).

If Furtado methodically walks us through a relationship between his text's keywords "documentary" and "archive," Hoyos's *Things with a History: Transcultural Materialism and The Literatures of Extraction in Contemporary Latin America* from its epigraph forward is about play (Hoyos, the punster), the development of the concept of "transcultural materialism" (Hoyos, theorist of immanence), and, in keeping with the ambition of writing a second monograph, the augmentation-expansion of prior readings by the author (Hoyos, the literary critic). The study's introduction offers "A Tale of Two Materialisms," as grounded in corporeal re/memory as Furtado's. Composed of contrapuntal notes, *Things with a History* opens with a new materialist rereading of Fernando Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, situating the latter explicitly (and possibly *Things with a History* implicitly) as exemplifying versus explaining transculturation and by extension transcultural materialism, as being attuned to the "agency of objects" (27). Flashing forward to post-Soviet Cuba, Hoyos examines Ponte's *Las comidas profundas* (1997) to discuss how food (or its scarcity) informs literature (in the Special Period). The turn to a more contemporary moment sets up *Things with a History* as being about periodization, too; more specifically, "the place of contemporary Latin American fiction with the profound material transformation of our times" (26). At the join of natural and human histories (literature, history, anthropology and beyond), new and historical materialisms, in the triangulation of Latin Americanism, World Literature, and materialism (sans modifier), a range of

post/contemporary literary texts, according to Hoyos, also speak language as “things.” Muses Hoyos: “Transcultural materialism is also a historicism. [...] One key difference with historical materialism is the scope of what counts as material [...] In slogan form, to Jameson’s ‘always historicize’ I add: ‘with things’” (30-31). *Things with a History* has two parts, “Objects,” which examines raw materials like rubber (silicone dolls and latex condoms in Ariel Magnus’s “Muñecas”), soil and particles (subatomic particles and rocks) in Blanca Wiethüchter’s *El jardín de Nora* (1998) and César Aira’s *El té de Dios* (2010), and corpses (cue the return of Bolaño in Hoyos’s analysis) and “Assemblages,” which covers (commodity) hyper/fetishism and ideologies of the digital, each across a range of work. Still, my summary does not do this monograph’s writing-thinking justice; Hoyos’s commitment to the craft of theory-criticism (as storytelling) shines through on every page of *Things with a History*. Food for further thought: More than once while reading this, I found myself laughing aloud.

In the five sections of *Anarchaeologies: Reading as Misreading*, Erin Graff Zivin challenges us, her readers, to consider the act of reading in just such terms. The Derridean inflected concept of “reading as misreading” infuses *Anarchaeologies* and offers the anarchic order of the volume’s equally persuasive attention to a prefix, “an,” and the keyword “anarchaeology.” From *Anarchaeologies*’s Introduction onward, it’s clear that the monograph isn’t Graff Zivin’s first rodeo. She writes, “No book is autonomous. Every book is open, exposed to the books that have preceded it” in reference to her own prior monographs and work in a range of genres and disciplines (9). The observation offers some context for the author’s highly original curation of narrative, film, and art-activism (primarily Argentinean) in the service of her broader attentions to the university’s, profession’s, and field’s compositions. Graff Zivin begins with an anecdote about readerly guilt and modesty, academic expectation, and false oppositions in circulation of so-called “elitist literary studies” and “politically committed cultural studies,” to posit that *Anarchaeologies* emerges out of the ruins of Latinamericanism, out of an interpretative practice “that would guard a kernel of nonidentity at the core of any identitarian claim.”

Further elaborating, she valorizes transgression, betrayal, impropriety, and error, following poststructuralist and deconstructive thought inseparable from her writing on the marrano (crypto-Jewish) subject. Perhaps befittingly then, a productive tension exists at the core of this project: universalized identitarian claims on deconstruction operate in sync with Graff Zivin’s further elaborations on “the idea of the marrano-as-metonym, the notion of a universal marrano subject that bears witness not to a secret that he keeps but rather to the secret that keeps him” (24). According to the author, anarchaeological reading depends upon the latter reconfigured as a critical sensibility and on a concept of “indisciplinary exposure”—the constant overexposure (like film) of genres and disciplines to one another in an effort to demonstrate each’s “constitutively defective” form and mutual imbrication, which she consistently argues in the volume (2-4).

The first section of Part I of *Anarchaeologies* delves further into the project’s conceptual and methodological keywords, including anarchaeologies by way of blindness, error, and equivocation, examining both Jacques Rancière’s formulation of literary misunderstanding and Juan José Saer’s *El entenado* (1983), focused on the modern subject’s quotidian experiences of misunderstanding. In section two, “Toward an Anarchaeological Latinamericanism,” Graff Zivin writes against an understanding of the archive or text that might fall back on the archaeological uncovering or disinterment of a text’s secret or truth. Instead Graff Zivin reinforces the ways in which the anarchaeological references what cannot be uncovered or disinterred.

In Part II of the project, she resists the “ethical turn” in critical studies, in particular the implicit opposition of the ethical and the political. In “Levinas in Latin America,” she focuses on theological, literary, political, and deconstructive modes of Latin American ethical thought, spotlighting work by Enrique Dussel, Mario Vargas Llosa, Oscar Del Barco, and the trio’s interlocutors. Part III “Violent Ethics,” takes as its starting point Levinas after Derrida, moving from the binding of Isaac (“Abraham’s Double Bind”) to Jorge Luis Borges’s “Kafka and his Precursors” (“Untimely Ethics: Deconstruction and Its Precursors”). Part IV “Political Thinking After Literature” begins with “The Metapolitics of Allegory,” which considers the haunting impact of Fredric Jameson’s writing on allegory and third world literature and César Arias’s *El congreso de literatura* (1997). It ends with “The Aesthetics and Politics of Error,” which humorously raises the banner high: “Todos Somos Erronistas” (131). Part V “Exposure and Indisciplinary” returns to the concepts of all of the previous sections to pose the question, would several of the project’s keywords bedrock a critique of the university? In the book’s conclusion and afterword, Graff Zivin periodizes *Anarchaeologies*, after *la marea rosada* and Trump’s election, in effect reinscribing the project—despite its ambitions to route around rote attentions to allegory—to be a kind of allegory of periodization, too—proposing a “passive university.” The results, never disappointing, re/generate questions regarding past and future oppositions from active/passive to reading/misreading.

Schiwy’s *The Open Invitation: Activist Video, Mexico, and the Politics of Affect*, returns our focus to media arts, even offering some overlap with Furtado’s *Documentary Filmmaking in Contemporary Brazil* in the project’s final consideration of “indigenous media’s *rescate cultural*” (184). Building (like Hoyos and Graff Zivin) on her own prior research about Indigenous media and decolonization, Schiwy begins with the 2006 occupation of Oaxaca City, contextualizing it as “one of the first widely video recorded social uprisings of the twenty-first century” (3). A cluster of questions first inform, then multiply, the stakes of the monograph. They include: “can the joy that today’s activist videos transmit be explained politically?” (4); “how, if at all, can the political be apprehended through activist video?” (11); and “[i]f activist video is a medium committed to reflecting what occurs before the lens, how can it make apprehensible what has not yet arrived?” (12). Schiwy is interested in stylistic choices made in the production of cinema and collaborative activist media from Southern Mexico (Oaxaca and Chiapas) at the beginning of the twenty-first century when La Comuna de Oaxaca and La Otra Campaña converged, against the backdrop of a larger assemblage of militant filmmaking and video movements in Indigenous languages in the Americas from the 1960s onward. Schiwy is not seeking answers per se, but is committed to the “prefigurative politics” of the question.

An intriguing observation fuels the project: recent work critical of globalized capitalism is mindful of earlier militant cinema, but in “mood, technology, genre, and style,” it significantly parts ways with the previous endeavors it sometimes even cites. Schiwy’s material encompasses *Compromiso cumplido* (2007), *Un poquito de tanta verdad* (2007), *Ya cayó* (2006), *El ratón vaquero* (2006), *Un tren muy grande que se llama la Otra Campaña* (2007), and *2501 mirantes* (2010), to name only a few of the films *The Open Invitation* engages as “mirrors, tinted with the hopes of those providing the footage and still photography, those editing and compiling the materials into particular narratives, and those viewing the films in search of information or inspiration” (15). Chapter One attends to video networks and networked activisms that present social change as transcending liberal democratic frameworks. Chapter Two, as its title suggests, examines community, the commune, modes of governance that privilege consensus (think

caracoles, forget “academic extractivism” [78]). Chapter Three tackles aesthetics head-on, dodging oppositions of modernist experimentalism and (social) realism. Writes Schiwy: “If [Philip] Rosen is right and if I am to understand him correctly, to keep telos open, to keep the future open, a gap between sign and referent must be signaled” (101). Chapter Four addresses rage, joy, and decolonial affect, offering observations on the role of humor in work treated therein. Schiwy finally risks in/conclusion, a maximal coda for this review’s own close: activist and collaborative film teaches us—among many things—that the short half-life of rage is eclipsed by joy’s longevity and the myriad pleasures of praxis-oriented doing/making.

Amy Sara Carroll, University of California, San Diego

### Review Essay: New Visibilities in Latin American Translation Studies

Cleary, Heather. *The Translator’s Visibility: Scenes from Contemporary Latin American Fiction*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2021. 183 pp. ISBN 9781-5013-7345-9

Gómez, Isabel C. *Cannibal Translation: Literary Reciprocity in Contemporary Latin America*. Chicago: Northwestern UP, 2023. 328 pp. ISBN 9780-8101-4595-5

Kripper, Denise. *Narratives of Mistranslation: Fictional Translators in Latin American Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2023. 132 pp. ISBN 9781-0320-1773-0

The notion of the translator’s invisibility has been a staple in modern translation studies since Lawrence Venuti first theorized it in his monumental book *The Translator’s Invisibility* (1995). For Venuti, invisibility describes the translator’s situation within U.S. and British literary cultures, referring to both the translator’s systemic marginalization and the entrenched cultural preference for “transparent” literary translations that mask their status as such. Invisible translation, Venuti argues, is linked to xenophobia, imperialism, and English-language hegemony. In contrast, these three much-anticipated monographs explore what happens when translation is rendered radically visible and when those who practice it take center stage.

Situated at the intersections of Latin American literary studies and translation studies, each book may be understood as departing from the following hypothesis: if the “culturally prescribed invisibility of the translator facilitates the naturalization of dominant ideologies,” as Heather Cleary puts it (16), then those same dominant ideologies become vulnerable in cases in which translation rises, conspicuously, to the surface. Attention paid to these scenes (Cleary), narratives (Kripper), or archives (Gómez) of visibility, urges a rereading of dominant translation tropes, world literature debates, and the historically shadowed place that translation has occupied. The three authors each approach these shared concerns in unique fashion, illuminating new points of arrival and future departure for the growing US academic field of Latin American translation studies.

Heather Cleary’s *The Translator’s Visibility: Scenes from Contemporary Latin America* (2021) directly calls out to the invisibility/visibility paradigm described above. Departing from the claim that “translation is never neutral” but “intrinsically political” (11), Cleary makes a compelling case for the need to examine the *mise en scene* of translation in “original” Latin American fictions. Translation, she writes, is “an essential lever in the negotiation of global relations of discursive authority and, by extension, of hegemonic ideologies” (11-12). It thus

makes sense to pay attention to the hand on the lever: the figure of the translator, who represents, “a point of friction” in this negotiation (11). From this foundation, Cleary homes in on novels from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico published at the turn of the twenty-first century that feature translation as a “principal element” (2), often by centering their narratives on translator-protagonists. Cleary is interested in how these texts “explicitly mobilize major tropes of translation theory to challenge notions of property and propriety” (2). In so doing, these materials urge a rereading of canonized translation theory and unsettle the power imbalances that undergird literary production in local, regional, and “world” dimensions.

Cleary’s introduction, “Against Propriety,” outlines her approach and contextualizes her contemporary corpus within a much longer Latin American history of translation. She traces a series of significant moments around translation’s discursive evolution: the treatment of Malintzin/La Malinche, one of Hernán Cortés’ interpreters during the Conquest of Mexico; the reappropriation of the colonizing epithet “cannibal” within 1920s Brazilian modernism and, then, its midcentury revitalization as an explicit Brazil-born translation theory; Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s *Facundo* (1845), and its nationalist argument that the Argentine “copy” become more like the European “original;” and the subversive, ludic reworkings of the center/periphery binary by figures like Jorge Luis Borges and Ricardo Piglia. Additionally, the so-called “Boom” of the 1960s was both a market phenomenon of Cold War surveillance interests and literary translation, and, as Cleary sees it, significant in that many of these novels also engage translation within their plots. The mid-1990s then spur another “boom”—of-sorts in translation narratives, penned in the context of neoliberal globalization and the “unchecked exploitation of human and natural resources” it continues to spawn (1). Both this historical tradition and this recent context scaffold Cleary’s understanding of her mid-1990s to early-2010s corpus, and I consider her detailing of this trajectory one of the book’s most valuable contributions.

Cleary is explicit in indicating that the novels she chose to examine “were selected for the way they engage certain key tropes of translation theory” (18). Accordingly, the chapters that follow are organized around these tropes: textual reproduction (Chapter 1), untranslatability (Chapter 2), the textual spaces of the translator (Chapter 3), and the physical spaces of the translator (Chapter 4). Chapters focus on two or three novels, covering works by Argentines César Aira, Salvador Benesdra, Pablo De Santis, Alan Pauls, Juan José Saer, and Graciela Safranchik; the Brazilian Luis Fernando Verissimo; and Mexicans Mario Bellatin, Valeria Luiselli, and Cristina Rivera Garza. Cleary treats these fictions as theory, situates them within a broader legacy by drawing on relevant precursors (like Borges’ iconic “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” [1938]), and uses them to reread the tropes in question. Chapter 1, for instance, discusses the gendered and biogenetic notions of textual reproduction, referencing theorists like Emily Apter, Harold Bloom, Lori Chamberlain, Haroldo de Campos, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and George Steiner. Cleary’s theoretical analysis reveals how these tropes either enforce translation as feminized “fidelity” to the masculine original or as carbon-copy cloning, both of which serve to bolster patriarchal arrangements of intellectual property. The novels selected by Cleary—Safranchik’s *El cangrejo* (1995), Aira’s *El congreso de literatura* (1999), and Verissimo’s *Borges e os orangotangos eternos* (2000)—each evoke canonical literary figures to then defy expectations for “fidelity” in favor of monstrous deviation and unrestrained repetition. Each chapter follows this theoretical and methodological approach, which points to a symbiotic contribution: Cleary demonstrates the productivity of reading Latin American translation narratives through canonized translation theory, which in turn demonstrates that translation studies scholars must pay attention to genres (like literary texts) not conventionally treated as theory. Moreover, by surfacing

translation theories produced in these Latin American texts, Cleary provides a model for challenging the overrepresentation of European and Anglo-American theories within translation studies.

*The Translator's Visibility* is thoroughly researched and beautifully written. The book is certainly informed by Cleary's own experiences as an accomplished translator of Latin American fiction, but the author is careful to maintain her critical distance. One noteworthy exception occurs in Cleary's discussion of translation experiments by Mario Bellatin. Her analysis ends with a consideration of how Bellatin's translators into English—David Shook, Jacob Steinberg, and Cleary herself—have creatively extended these games. In translating Bellatin's *El jardín de la señora Murakami* (2000), a pseudotranslation that plays with footnotes and glossing to "pass" as an actual translation, Cleary wrote a translator's note that insists on the novel's true existence as a translation and plainly alludes to Borges's "Pierre Menard" story. I appreciate this discussion because it shows how translators of these novels might translate "against propriety" and in tension with stable notions of originality and authorship. In the context of the book title directly playing on Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility*, I read this notion as a complement to Venuti's concept of "foreignizing" translation, as an ethical approach to literary translation that defies an imperialist, homogenizing impulse. Cleary's "against propriety" thus emerges as both a critical and creative stance that others may follow, to pay attention to and generate visible translations, and to situate the negotiations and movements of translation in the middle of the action.

Denise Kripper's *Narratives of Mistranslation: Fictional Translators in Latin American Literature* (2023) is centered on a similar topic: how translation appears in "original" works of Latin American fiction, with particular attention paid to translator protagonists, and focusing on the turn-of-the-millennium "boom" in translation narratives. Kripper distinguishes her study from those of others who have written on the topic in two primary ways. First, she engages a broader geographic scope; Argentine works are especially prominent, but she also incorporates examples from Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Peru while considering migration routes traveled by authors. Second, she conceptually organizes the book around cases of mistranslation. While mistranslation is conventionally understood as unintended translation error, a quality of "bad" translations, Kripper reexamines mistranslation as a productive, provocative, and purposeful creative practice that is "site-specific" to Latin America. From the textual space of the copy (marginalized, "invisible") and the cultural-geopolitical space of the periphery (marginalized, perhaps also "invisible"), writers make use of mistranslation to subvert power dynamics. From here, Kripper explores what happens when "translators purposefully betray authors, intentionally tamper with communication, deliberately deviate from the sources, and provocatively change meanings" (2).

The book is divided into five chapters, each of which examines two or three works of fiction in detail. Chapter 1 situates translation-centric works by Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and Rodolfo Walsh as fundamental precursors to Kripper's study. Challenging tropes of invisibility and subservience, these texts-read-as-theory underscore a Latin American tradition of visible, autonomous translation that guides Kripper's engagement with her contemporary corpus. Subsequent chapters engage mistranslation differently, stretching the category in exciting and productive ways. In Chapter 2, Kripper examines translator-protagonists in works by José Donoso, Carlos Fuentes, and Néstor Ponce that "mistranslate" established historical record, rewriting pivotal historical events. Chapter 3 considers how novels by Salvador Benesdra and Marcelo Cohen treat mistranslation (understood here as translation "error" or non-equivalency) as the result



of market pressures: the outsourcing of this work to cheaper alternatives or the purposeful mistranslation of texts to create more profitable products. Chapter 5 extends the concept of mistranslation to texts written in a language other than the one in which the action is presumed to take place, one manifestation of Rebecca L. Walkowitz's "born-translated" umbrella. Kripper shows how novels by Roberto Bolaño and Andrés Neuman destabilize the category of the original by engaging translation as a core mode of their composition.

I especially appreciate Kripper's work in Chapter 4, which reads María Sonia Cristoff's *Inclúyanme afuera* (2013) and Nadia Volonté's *Ambactus: (servidor)* (2017). Contextualizing her analysis within the gendered and patriarchal tropes that have long structured discourse around translation, Kripper traces how Volonté's and Cristoff's translator-protagonists "resist the expectation of female subordination" (73) and "rebel against their expected impartiality" (82) while working in epistemological spaces that often suggest objectivity. Kripper's reading of these silences is sharp and illuminating. For instance, formal elements, like fragmentation and ellipsis, are interpreted as "[making] room for other, often silenced, voices to be heard" (83). It is exciting to read this chapter in generative dialogue with Cleary's Chapter 1 and Gómez's Chapter 3; together, these contributions trace new methodologies for accounting for gendered and patriarchal dynamics around "reproductive" practice. While Kripper contextualizes these readings by referring to precursor texts with women translator-protagonists, what is missing from this chapter is a consideration of why the translator-protagonists featured in the main texts analyzed in her other chapters are exclusively men. Even Fuentes's short story (examined in Ch. 2), for instance, follows Jerónimo de Aguilar instead of Malintzin, and Aguilar's imagined narration reinforces the notion of the female interpreter as both treasonous and sexually deviant. Given Kripper's thoughtful readings of loud silences, her comments on this arrangement would have made for a fascinating contribution.

Kripper's work is exceptionally thorough, and her textual analyses consistently point to broader big-stakes claims, like, for instance, the questioning of "translation as a fluid transnational dialogue with communication as its ultimate goal" (2). Her approach also proposes instructive next steps. For one, Kripper is clear to highlight which of her studied texts have not yet been translated into English, and to underscore the importance of doing so. From this list, it seems to me that Walsh's "Nota al pie" (1954) and Volonté's *Ambactus (servidor)* (2017) are particularly urgent to translate. Second, Kripper's "site-specific" grounding to mistranslation is especially compelling. I see it, too, as inviting other scholars to consider how mistranslation may take place in distinct "site-specific" dimensions across Latin American spaces—from, say, Argentina to Cuba, where coloniality, and its effect on publishing power, operate markedly differently. Ultimately, what is certainly achieved across *Narratives of Mistranslation* is Kripper's goal: to demonstrate the urgency of revisiting cases of mistranslation to better account for histories, literary traditions, and cultural identities as phenomena of translation in themselves.

While much recent scholarship in Latin American translation studies focuses on novels, as Cleary and Kripper do, Isabel C. Gómez's *Cannibal Translation: Literary Reciprocity in Contemporary Latin America* (2023) centers poetry as the core textual locus of her study. The book proposes "cannibal translation" as an umbrella term uniting a range of creative-critical translation practices that "champion a decolonial positionality and enable the translator to invert power dynamics" (9). Gómez's term explicitly links these practices to the Brazilian tradition of cultural cannibalism, articulated in Oswald de Andrade's 1928 "Manifesto antropológico," and then as an explicit translation strategy among the Noigandres concrete poets of the 1950s and 1960s.

By extension, the concept provides new grounds for comparison that may illuminate an “intra-Latin American, South-South mutual readership” of these translation projects (10).

Gómez’s work is informed by extensive archival research. Through analysis of translator archives—a concept borrowed from María Constanza Guzmán Martínez, that emphasizes the analysis of translator letters, drafts, and paratexts to materially ground translator choices—she spotlights the “routes” traveled by this Brazil-born translation theory, mostly between Brazil and Mexico. From these archives, Gómez surfaces, labels, and defines a range of translation practices embedded within this pan-Latin American textual network. “Untranslation” and “porous prose,” for instance, are directly taken from Augusto de Campos’ writings, while “self-reflexive intersectional translation” is Gómez’s term in response to an archive-informed, materialist analysis of translations by Rosario Castellanos and Clarice Lispector. Other terms, and the translator archives that generate them, include “transcreation” and “laboratory of texts” (Haroldo de Campos), “poetic version” (Octavio Paz), “transspeak or transsay” (Héctor Olea), and “approximations” (José Emilio Pacheco). Pitched as an encounter between translation studies and world literature, Gómez’s book “reroutes a way into world literature” (17) through cannibal translation terms and projects, emphasizing reciprocity and nonassimilation. Because novels have received heightened attention in conversations around translation and world literature, I find Gómez’s approach especially groundbreaking. She not only centers poetry as the genre of choice for these translator-writers, but she also provides a new set of terms—produced within Latin America by Latin Americans—to differently account for their regional and world movements.

The book is divided into five chapters that primarily focus on inter-linguistic translations into Spanish and Portuguese, reading them in the context of their translators’ archives. Chapter 1 examines Augusto de Campos’ and Octavio Paz’s creatively “destructive” translations of poems by E.E. Cummings, read in counterpoint to the “invisible servility” emphasized by Cummings’ translators into European French and German. Chapter 2 discusses textual and archival encounters between Paz and Haroldo de Campos, especially around the collaborative transcreation *Transblanco* (1968). Gómez interprets their dialogues as shaping a decolonial, horizontal model of intra-Latin American reading. These early chapters play a crucial role in theorizing the geopolitical vectors of cannibal translation as a practice that stands in contrast to entrenched literary concepts (i.e., singular authorship) and translation tropes (i.e., servility). The groundwork laid here then allows Gómez to expand her arguments in the book’s second half.

Chapter 3 considers sexist criticisms of translations by Castellanos and Lispector as impetus to recover their purposeful, creative dimensions, in light of an intersectional awareness of their positionalities. This chapter includes fascinating observations around cannibal translation’s gendered dynamics, and is thus a must-cite in future scholarship that applies cannibal translation ideas. Gómez notes that “male translators could perform creative destruction, visibility, and intervention” (106), while similar choices by Castellanos and Lispector are read as “unconscious, erring, or immature” (108). More broadly, Gómez’s work here provides a methodological model for surfacing experimentation in historicist fashion, taking into account “who has the privilege of being unfinished, in process, or experimental” in a given era (135). Chapter 4 looks to Biblioteca Ayacucho in Venezuela and its project to translate Brazilian modernist works into Spanish. Gómez identifies an eclectic combination of translation strategies, promoted by editor Ángel Rama and translators like Héctor Olea, which share the goal of mobilizing translation as a tool for intra-Latin American decolonial pedagogy. Chapter 5 moves away from inter-linguistic translation to highlight heteronymous experiments by Augusto de Campos and José Emilio Pacheco. Gómez

reads these interventions, and the translation strategies undergirding them, as destabilizing and reimagining colonial relationships, especially as they circulate in world literature anthologies.

While these chapters span the mid-1950s through the 1990s, the conclusion considers how cannibal translation practices continue to circulate today. Gómez draws our attention to Cartonera publishing projects, which especially call for transcreative, collaborative editions, and the “contrapoemas” published by Augusto de Campos on his Instagram (@poetamenos), which expands cannibal translation to new readers. Gómez certainly could have identified contemporary poetry that fits under this category. Urayoán Noel’s *Transversal* (2021), which labels its poems “transcreations,” immediately comes to mind. But by expanding to new material forms, the author implicitly urges us, as her readers, to continue pushing cannibal translation in new directions. Accordingly, the book ends with a series of invitations, calling on readers to translate, to do so “improperly,” and to read translations attuned to the power dynamics behind them. This finish finds itself in satisfying bookend with Gómez’s “Thirteen Theses on Cannibal Translation” that opens the book. The two-page list plays with Walter Benjamin’s “The Critic’s Technique in Thirteen Theses” (1925-6) and also, I suspect, Emily Apter’s “Twenty Theses on Translation” from *The Translation Zone* (2006). In the context of her monograph, Gómez’s theses may be read as a cannibal translation in itself: digestive, attentive, open to creative reuse.

Each of these monographs demonstrates in convincing fashion that there is much to be gained in paying attention to moments in which translations and translators leave the shadows for the spotlight. These books may announce, advance, or project in fresh dimensions a “visibility” era for translation studies. Their authors diversify critical vocabularies in translation studies, forge new interdisciplinary paths, and expand maps while also pointing out the gaps. Moreover, Cleary, Kripper, and Gómez all ground their work with two pivotal ideas, which may be considered pillars of this visibility era: that translation is always political, and that originality is as much a fiction as it is a meaning-bearing concept. For the latter, each author engages Karen Emmerich’s absolute destabilizing of the term in *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* (2017). In so doing, these authors unite in proposing new reading itineraries for translations that contrast economic structures of consecration (wherein translation is a quality applied to texts deemed worthy of circulating in the world marketplace) and extraction (wherein translation enables a “pedagogy of the foreign” to benefit the imperialist center). Instead, they propose models anchored in relationality, reciprocity, and collaboration.

With these ideas in mind, it seems noteworthy that both Cleary and Kripper dedicate sections of their books to pedagogical applications. Cleary pens a Coda on teaching literary translations, while Kripper ends each chapter with an “In the Classroom” section that includes discussion questions. These components resolutely show that translation narratives are effective teaching tools; they are useful in engaging students in reflection around a practice that is otherwise still made invisible in mainstream spaces. Moreover, these choices to explicitly chart connections between literary criticism and pedagogy make sense given that many translators and readers of translation studies scholarship do teaching-centric work, in and beyond the university. Still, I have yet to see these types of pedagogical applications in other fields of literary studies. And given the still-marginalized status of translation studies within the academy, I am left with a mixed reaction to them.

It is possible, I suppose, to critique the geographic scope covered in these books—dominated by Argentine, Brazilian, and Mexican examples—and at least two previous reviewers of two of these monographs have done so. Of course, it should go without saying that these books

present a partial map because it would be impossible to account for every relevant text, author, or archive. Still, this anxiety for “complete coverage” exists and I highlight it because I see it as symptomatic of a broader tendency: to effectively treat Latin American translation studies as so marginal in itself that it can be completely covered in a single monograph. The books reviewed here challenge that reductive view and prove its inverse: that translation is fundamental to literary production, that it is never neutral or straightforward, and that we are only beginning to understand the field-shifts that may occur when we engage it seriously. In so doing, these books are rife with explicit and implicit invitations. It is up to us, as readers, to accept them or not.

Olivia Lott, Princeton University

### **Review Essay: Revisiting Urban Modernity in Early-Twentieth-Century Buenos Aires and Santiago**

Kefala, Eleni. *Buenos Aires across the Arts: Five and One Theses on Modernity, 1921-39*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2022. 253 pp. ISBN 9780-8299-4692-2

Gatica Mizala, Camila. *Modernity at the Movies: Cinema-Going in Buenos Aires and Santiago, 1915-1945*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2023. 251 pp. ISBN 9780-8229-4767-7

Eleni Kefala’s *Buenos Aires across the Arts: Five and One Theses on Modernity, 1921-39* and Camila Gatica Mizala’s *Modernity at the Movies: Cinema-Going in Buenos Aires and Santiago, 1915-1945* address different aspects of culture in early-twentieth-century South American cities, and they employ markedly different approaches. They nonetheless share a common strategy of viewing urban life through the lens of modernity, understood as a concept that marks an intersection of ideas, desires, and experiences. The artists and writers studied by Kefala, and the moviegoers and contributors to specialized cinema magazines studied by Gatica Mizala, constantly adapt ideas about modernity (their own, and the ones they are exposed to in places like cinemas) to their desires to be modern and their experiences in rapidly modernizing cities. Both books reconstruct these configurations of ideas, desires, and experiences, recuperating fragments of the historical past that resonate with the present. As the twentieth century recedes into the past, these books contribute to the ongoing project of understanding how the artistic experimentation and technological changes of the early twentieth century continue to come back to us, as Hal Foster might say, from the future, perpetually reconfigured in light of all that has changed since that time—but also everything that is perceived to endure.

The chapters of Kefala’s *Buenos Aires Across the Arts* study Jorge Luis Borges, Oliverio Girondo, José Agustín Ferreryra, Roberto Arlt, Xul Solar, and Horacio Coppola. Kefala extracts from the works of each figure a thesis on the modern city, and analyzes how their representations of urban space voice commentaries on modernity itself. She sets the theses in dialogue with each other, and with an array of prominent perspectives on modernity and modernization. In doing so, she produces a multifaceted vision of how Argentine artists and writers “navigate through the vicissitudes of the ‘modern,’” in a process that her book repeats as it reconstructs their standpoints, superimposing them at times and at others showing how they enter into conflict (4). Kefala’s own perspective is grounded in Zygmunt Bauman’s notion of liquid modernity: throughout the book, “[t]he main focus is the city of Buenos Aires as the liquid playground of Argentine modernity” (4). Her book studies how, at a moment when processes of rationalization, commodification,

abstraction, mass migration, and simulation (among others) had set urban life into crisis, Buenos Aires and its rapid transformations moved to the center of artistic production.

The first two theses are those of Borges and Girondo. In his poetry of the 1920s, Borges argues for an urban *criollismo* in which the suburban *orillas* of the modern city function as “a recuperative space within which national identity was reclaimed” (23). Kefala defines Borges’s thesis as utopian in the sense that it treats the suburban cityscape as a synecdoche for the national space where the changes wrought by modernization and mass European immigration might be overcome. Due to its general exclusion of the figure of the immigrant, Kefala describes Borges’s poetry as “a conservative but tactical stratagem to reconcile tradition with the modern and rehabilitate the immigrant-plagued Buenos Aires as an essentially *criollo* city” (33). Girondo’s poetry, in contrast, situates the urban subject in an atopian city that anticipates late capitalism and postmodernist notions of simulation and hyperreality. Similar to filmmakers like Dziga Vertov and Walter Ruttmann, Girondo sees urban life “with the relative neutrality of a camera lens,” writing poems that convert the dynamism of modern life into a *kinopoetics* that is interchangeably at work in Buenos Aires, Dakar, Biarritz, Paris, and all cities caught up in the accelerational tendencies of modernization (61). In Girondo, the *criollo* subject who is reconstituted in Borges is dissolved into this atopian spatial economy.

The next three chapters turn to Ferreyra, Arlt, and Xul Solar. Ferreyra’s 1927 silent film *Perdón viejita* presents a “melodramatic city, or *melotopia*” (63): its working-class and subaltern characters enter into morally perilous situations in bars and tenement houses (*conventillos*), and the melodrama form ultimately provides a relatively conservative means of mending a damaged social and moral fabric. As Kefala explains, Ferreyra’s film is notable for its championing of the urban proletariat, but it sacrifices that class’s “dissenting power [...] at the altar of melodrama” (93). Arlt, in contrast, offers no means of repairing what modernization has torn asunder: the dystopian city of his novels maps an “enlightened society turned inside out,” producing an image of the dark side of modernity that Kefala relates to works by Max Weber, Georg Simmel, the Frankfurt School, Enrique Dussel, and Aníbal Quijano, among others (101). Kefala opposes this disenchantment to the standpoint of Xul, whom she views in terms of the eutopian city—that is, the city as a place where the prospect of eudaimonia, or happiness, remains a real possibility. Setting Xul in dialogue with expressionist painting, Ernst Bloch, and Lewis Mumford, she argues that his approach is grounded in a humanist conviction that “spiritualism together with technology—what we could call ‘spiritualized geotechnic reconstruction’—can set the groundwork for personal happiness and fulfillment” (155).

The book’s final chapter turns to the photographer Coppola, whose *Buenos Aires 1936: visión fotográfica* demonstrates important affinities with German New Objectivity and the straight photography of Paul Strand. Coppola’s thesis of an objective city is the “one” thesis referenced in the book’s title: his photography synthesizes the “conflictive multitemporality of the modern *urbs*” and draws the other five theses together in an “objective, multitemporal, and pluriversal city” (160). In the short conclusion, Kefala briefly turns to the poetry of Alfonsina Storni, illustrating how her outsider perspective offers important contrasts with the male figures profiled in the preceding six chapters, but also echoes the bleak visions of modernity as a “maelstrom of change” privileged by everyone except Xul (191).

Gatica Mizala’s *Modernity at the Movies* focuses on moviegoing as a cultural practice undertaken by a collective urban subject. Her history of the reception of cinema “examines the practice of going to the movies in Santiago and Buenos Aires as a way of understanding how people experienced modernity in everyday life” (3). She studies how this collective experience is

registered in a corpus of more than sixty periodicals, mostly composed of magazines devoted specifically to cinema (such as *Boletín Cinematográfico* and *Écran* in Santiago, and *Cinegraf* and *Cine Argentino* in Buenos Aires), but also including newspapers and major magazines such as *Zig-Zag* and *Caras y Caretas*. She reconstructs the experiences of the cinemagoer out of these materials, moving back and forth from city to city and organizing each chapter around a theme related to moviegoing.

Chapter 1 studies the evolution of the spaces where movies were screened, from the converted theaters of early cinema to the massive dream palaces of the 1930s and 40s. She shows how evolving building standards and projection technologies addressed problems related to fire safety, ventilation, and sanitation, providing, in the best of cases, for immersive experiences in which audiences could “forget about the technological nature of cinema” and “project themselves onto the stories on the screen” (21). Chapter 2 focuses on the social composition of cinema audiences. By tracking fluctuations in prices and attendance, Gatica Mizala reconstructs the historical truth behind the truism that forms the chapter’s title: “Everyone Goes to the Movies.” She provides extensive historical data on viewership in both cities, drawing on discussions in periodicals regarding fair prices and highlighting a general consensus among distributors, exhibitors, and the public that cinema should be accessible to large swaths of society.

Chapter 3 addresses censorship and the role cinema played in the formation of modern citizens. The nature of cinema as mass entertainment caused municipal and national authorities to introduce different forms of regulation, with the aspiration to “keep society clean and moral” by harnessing cinema’s power to influence viewers’ minds (86). Gatica Mizala illustrates that Buenos Aires, often thought to be a more liberal city, shared much in common with Santiago with regard to censorship. Chapter 4 focuses on the experiences of moviegoers in cinemas that brought together the privacy conferred by dim lighting with the public experience of watching a film with others. To go to the movies was to see and be seen in a public space, or to share intimate moments with romantic partners in the darkness of the theater. But, as the periodicals frequently noted, moviegoers also enjoyed taking leave of everyone else, giving in to the cinematic illusion and forming strong affective connections with the figures on screen.

The fifth and final chapter studies language and translation. Gatica Mizala reconstructs prominent discussions of intertitles in silent cinema, and of subtitles and dubbing in early sound cinema. The chapter highlights how the introduction of sound led to growth in national film industries (more so in Argentina than in Chile), but that audiences also continued to gravitate toward English-language films with established Hollywood stars and subtitles (which, in general, were preferred to dubbing). It illustrates how the topic of the Spanish language and its various national dialects emerged at a pivotal time when Hollywood was trying to expand its presence in the Spanish-speaking world, while Latin American film industries were developing strategies for engaging with national and regional audiences.

Each book notably expands existing understandings of urban modernity in Buenos Aires (and Santiago). Kefala builds on decades of scholarship on major figures such as Borges, Gironde, Arlt, and Xul, and makes valuable contributions to our understanding of the lesser-studied Ferreyra and Coppola. Her thesis-based strategy allows her to compellingly weave together each chapter’s perspective and unearth important connections with key topics of research in urban modernity. Gatica Mizala’s treatment of moviegoing will also be valuable to scholars working across the arts, humanities, and social sciences. One might, for example, set her book in dialogue with prominent texts that register individuals’ experiences in the cinemas of the early twentieth century: those of Borges and Arlt (both of whom she cites), but also Horacio Quiroga, Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, and

others. Both books are furthermore a pleasure to read. Kefala's handling of Greek terminology, in the variations on *-topos* included in her chapter titles and elsewhere, adds depth to the analysis by revealing linguistic resonances that the reader might otherwise ignore. And Gatica Mizala has an excellent eye for detail, noting, for example, how cinemas in both cities would close in the summer due to the intense heat, and reconstructing extended debates regarding the closure of cinemas and the taking of hygienic measures during the 1918 flu pandemic.

One question that arises after reading both books has to do with how the ideas, desires, and experiences of urban modernity that are discussed in their pages are made to reference the early twentieth century, but also speak to the present. How do present-day experiences overlap with those of city dwellers a century ago, and what sorts of gulfs have formed between present and past? The question falls largely outside of Gatica Mizala's scope: she studies the practices of moviegoers who "were able to participate in an experience that was modern in itself," with the past tense "was" situating those experiences in the past (178). It would nonetheless be interesting to set her book in dialogue with practices of contemporary moviegoing, where, for example, the distractions generated by the smaller screens of smartphones constantly threaten the big-screen cinematic illusion. Kefala, for her part, approaches modernity in terms of an inclusive notion of liquidity that bridges the "then" of the 1920s and 30s and the present. This inclusivity allows her to organize her vision of Buenos Aires around those ideas and experiences of modernity that remain significant, or desirable, a century later; everything else, such as Ferreyra's melodramatic imagination or Arlt's disenchantment, tends to fall away from the liquid, pluriversal city that spans present and past. This is inevitable in the sense that any reconstruction of the past takes place in the present; but it also marks an important point of tension whenever categories such as "the modern" (or, indeed, "the contemporary") are made to address the present and encompass an ever-receding past.

Matt Johnson, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology

Bell, Lucy, Alex Flynn, and Patrick O'Hare. *Taking Form, Making Worlds: Cartonera Publishers in Latin America*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2022. 339 pp. ISBN 9781-4773-2495-0

In *Taking Form, Making Worlds: Cartonera Publishers in Latin America*, authors Lucy Bell, Alex Ungprateeb Flynn, and Patrick O'Hare define *cartoneras* as "a grassroots Latin American publishing movement that has grown from a single collective in Buenos Aires to hundreds of practitioners around the world" (8). Since its beginnings in 2003, the DIY spirit has driven the production of affordable cardboard-bound books in the publishing of marginal poets, voices from the peripheries, children's literature, Latin American canonical works, and Indigenous scholars. Cartoneras occupy a very specific niche in the cultural world: they are both material objects as well as a series of production processes. In this sense, the authors explore "the ways cartoneras shape and create new meaning, relations, and communities, giving rise to plural forms of living, being, and resisting that answer to the specific contexts in which they created" (12). They seek to answer outstanding questions within the field: how are these practices performed, sustained, and replicated? What is the relationship between content and form within a particular sociocultural space? What connects these different cartonera publishers and movements throughout Latin America beyond their shared use of materials?

No two cartoneras are alike, and the authors make a point of stressing the implicit heterogeneity of the movement. While cardboard seems to be the unifying factor among all of them, each cartonera publishing house holds its own unique relationship to that material. As the title of the book implies, these cartoneras are involved in making possible worlds of “new relations, meanings, and communities that emerge from these processes that in turn assemble alternative versions of the subjects, materials, and environments involved and stitch together through social fabrics” (266). Utilizing both close reading and an ethnographic practicum involving interviews and community participation, the authors combine resources from the areas of literature, material/bibliographic studies, and social anthropology to approach the subject of cartoneras from a social, cultural, and political perspective.

The authors worked closely with cartonera projects Dulcinéia Catadora in São Paulo, Catapoesia in Gouveia in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, and La Cartonera and La Rueda Cartonera from Guadalajara, Mexico. Working with diverse communities from similar, yet very different, backgrounds (particularly with the recent rise of far-right discourse in Brazil) necessitated a broadening of disciplinary backgrounds as well as an ethical respect for the “undisciplined, playful, and innovative” nature of cartoneras wielded for their practices of resistance (47). By uplifting the lived experience and knowledge of cultural workers operating within their own communities, the authors broaden that intellectual scope of the subject and its parts. Even the formal structure of the book reflects the various crucial elements in the assemblage of cartoneras, with each chapter scaffolded around a particular element of this ecosystem: “Histories,” “Methods,” “Texts,” “Encounters,” “Workshops,” and “Exhibitions.”

Perhaps the most prescient question that the authors broach is whether cartoneras are a political or an artistic movement. The radical restructuring of book production and circulation, and its involvement with community activists might convince readers of this movement as a sociopolitical one: all the way from the capture of material by recycling discarded cardboard, to its *copyleft* use of accessible materials and the publication of dissident work. While some cultural workers featured in the book might agree with the framing of cartoneras as a political intervention, there are equally strong responses that cement cartoneras as artistic/conceptual experiments—one in which the “play” aspect of art-making is extended to everyone. Many of the book makers and community organizers included in the book claim that the artistic element at play is a defining feature when it comes to drawing individuals into the practice. Far from constructing this movement as monolithic, the authors have demonstrated the plurality of perspectives and strategies of engagement involved in cartonera publishing.

One of the more striking elements of the text is its writing style that moves between a detached academic voice and the affective quality of a personal/subjective voice. Authors emerge as “I” speaking subjects, inserting themselves not as detached observants, but as actants within their host communities. This style helps dramatize the cultural politics of the broader cartonera movement, that of effacing hierarchical power structures with horizontal thinking, stressing processes over products, and people over ideas. The authors reckon their own positionality in the matter as academics from the Global North engaging with marginalized groups from the Global South. This project of expansion, not of exploitation, thus features moments in which community workers speak for themselves in the context of interviews. The interactions between authors and communities also reflect disagreements and intellectual confrontation: events that are welcomed as generative in the understanding of cartonera phenomenon. Perhaps the most prescient one in the book is the conflict of opposing definitions of “precarity.” Lifelong friendship between authors and organizers were forged, not as a consequence, but almost as a requisite for this kind of deep



scholarly engagement. Hopefully this approach marks a general trend moving away from an “objective” study of phenomena as an extractive study and towards a practice of amplifying marginalized voices. Much like the work of cartoneras, what moves social interaction is a desire to bring forth a new work through the love of everyday actions.

The editors of *Taking Form* claim it is the “first” comprehensive study on cartoneras. While the text *does* represent a significant addition to the seminal collection of essays *Akademia cartonera: a primer of Latin American cartonera publishers* = *Akademia cartonera: un ABC de las editoriales cartoneras en América Latina*, (ed. Ksenija Bilbija and Paloma Celis Carbajal Parallel Press, 2009), it focuses mainly on the partnered cartoneras (Dulcinea, Catapoesia, La Rueda, La Cartonera) with secondary attention to smaller editorial groups and organizers. I particularly appreciated the gesture of highlighting other organizers and intellectuals such as Lucy from Catapoesia and Paloma Celis Carbajal from the University of Michigan who are often overshadowed by the myth of cartoneras that surrounds the first group of Eloísa Cartonera and the figure of Washington Cucurto. The authors also connect the cartonera movement with other artistic practices such as *rasquachismo* Mexico along the lines of working class resourcefulness. However, the text only superficially mentions the relationship of other forms of unconventional publishing such as zines and underground comix in Latin America.

*Taking Form, Making Worlds* performs a crucial intervention in this study of cartoneras with its departure from what Drucker calls a “traditional object-centered approach” to book history and a move towards focusing on practices and networks. This approach marks a significant shift in current cartonera scholarship, expanding and addressing recent political events since the late eighties and how they have shaped cultural politics, particularly around the rise of fascist discourses in Latin America. This book will prove indispensable for scholars invested in Caribbean and Latin American studies, social anthropology and decolonial theory, as well as literary and book studies. Scholars of art activism and *literatura contestaria* will find this text illuminating. The work of Bell, Flynn, and O’Hare stands as an indispensable academic addition to the critical dialogue in the field.

Enrique Olivares Pesante, University of California, Los Angeles

Boffone, Trevor and Cristina Herrera. *Latinx Teens: U.S. Popular Culture on the Page, Stage, and Screen*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2022. 139 pp. ISBN 9780-8165-4275-8

*Latinx Teens* primes readers on key issues pertaining to Latinx teenagers’ representation in mainstream U.S. media. Its release marks Boffone and Herrera’s second collaboration, following the publication of their edited collection *Nerds, Goths, Geeks, and Freaks: Outsiders in Chicana and Latinx Young Adult Literature* with The University of Mississippi Press in 2020. In *Latinx Teens*, Boffone and Herrera build on their previous claims about depictions of Latinx adolescent identities in YA literature (see *Nerds*) and bridge these discussions with their respective work on social media youth cultures (see Boffone’s *Renegades: Digital Dance Cultures from Dubsmash to TikTok*) and empowered Latina nerdiness (see Herrera’s *ChicaNerds in Young Adult Literature: Brown and Nerdy*). In doing so, they explore how the perspectives of Latinx teenagers—both real and fictional—can be better accounted for in popular and scholarly discourse focused on adolescence, Latinx identity, and U.S. citizenship.

Across four chapters, *Latinx Teens* contemplates how “Latinx teenagers contribute to U.S. popular culture [and how] their identities and narratives offer a roadmap for understanding issues of representation, visibility, and the complexities of Latinidad” (6). To do this, each chapter features four case study analyses of a medium that narratively engages in some capacity with Latinx youth identity formation. The conclusion then elaborates on these analyses by offering real-world examples of Latinx teenagers whose activism shapes public attitudes towards their identity. In each case, Boffone and Herrera effectively combine textual analysis of primary sources with brief historical survey, pedagogical reflection, and recommendations for further reading and/or viewing, all of which provide a well-rounded introduction to how Latinx teenagers are underrepresented and understudied in the mainstream.

In the first half of the book, Boffone and Herrera explore recent developments in television and film that shape how Latinx teenagers’ lives, identities, and interpersonal relationships are narrativized in the late-2010s and early 2020s. They begin in chapter 1 by historicizing Latinxs’ underrepresentation in network television since the 1970s while also acknowledging teenage characters who, even when stereotypical, “did pave the way for an increase in Latinidad on TV” (22). Through case studies on series *Diary of a Future President* (2020), *On My Block* (2018-2021), *Party of Five* (2020), and *Love, Victor* (2020-2022), they discuss how streaming platforms have contributed to the quantity and quality of storylines depicting Latinx characters coming-of-age. By weaving textual analysis with critical discussion of the industry at-large, they demonstrate how “there has never been a better time for teenage Latinidad on the small screen” (41).

Relatedly, chapter 2 addresses contemporary films that foreground Latinx teen protagonists in nuanced ways. With their literature review, Boffone and Herrera build on the survey in chapter 1 of Latinx characters in U.S. television by reminding readers that Latinx actors are forced to navigate a racist and sexist film industry “which has seldom considered talented Latinx actors for more complicated roles” (46). They further analyze the limitations of legacy media stereotypes in their case studies of films that, as they contend, challenge industry conventions of how Latinx teenagers are erased and stereotyped on-screen. Their salient deep dives into Patricia Cardoso’s *Real Women Have Curves* (2002), Peter Sollett’s *Raising Victor Vargas* (2002), Aurora Guerrero’s *Mosquita y Mari* (2012), and Peter Ramsey, Bob Persichetti, and Rodney Rothman’s *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018) offer compelling observations on the need for Latinx leads whose stories address topics like anti-Blackness, queer relationships, and self-confidence.

In the last two chapters, the authors turn their attention off-screen to complex narratives about Latinx teens that, importantly, are also written by Latinx creatives. In chapter 3, they emphasize young adult literature’s relevance to Latinx adolescence by noting the “double exclusion” of Latinx authors from scholarship on children’s and young adult literature and of these genres from Latinx literary studies (68). Through their own case studies on Gabby Rivera’s *Juliet Takes a Breath* (2016), Elizabeth Acevedo’s *The Poet X* (2018), Benjamin Alire Sáenz’s *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012), and Adam Silvera’s *They Both Die at the End* (2017), they show how Latinx YA fiction validates Latinx teen identities. This takeaway forms a throughline into chapter 4’s argument regarding three-dimensional, Latinx teen characters in theatre. They propose that watching live theatre “offers countless possibilities to humanize the Latinx teen experience, and as a result, provokes social change” (93). Through discussion of *In the Heights*, *Swimming While Drowning*, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, and *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord*, they make clear how Latinx playwrights bring attention to issues like immigration, family conflict, and identity formation.

The broad coverage in *Latinx Teens* of Latinx teenagers' mediation in film, television, literature, and theatre makes it a great resource for scholars writing about mainstream representation, cultural citizenship, and coming-of-age narratives through an interdisciplinary, Latinx studies lens. With each case study, Boffone and Herrera convincingly underscore Latinx teen perspectives to be a persistent gap in the scholarship associated with that medium and mobilize a call to action that scholars from various disciplines address this area further in their own research. Additionally, their suggestions for future reading and viewing at the end of each chapter acknowledge texts not addressed by their case studies and encourage future expansions on the topics they do cover. Their presentation of relevant historical context, rich case studies, and related recommendations in compact, thematic chapters also makes it an excellent companion text for students, particularly those enrolled in survey courses. Boffone and Herrera note early on that they wrote *Latinx Teens* with potential classroom adoption in mind. They liken its organization to "a syllabus for a semester-long college course or a year-long high school course," making it useful for instructors and students researching Latinx adolescence (11). *Latinx Teens*' unique format, in addition to its contents, marks its contributions to current and future research on Latinx youth's visibility across contemporary, U.S. popular culture.

Katlin Marisol Sweeney-Romero, University of California, Davis

Bezerra, Lígia. *Everyday Consumption in Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Fiction*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 2022. 241 pp. ISBN 9781-6124-9758-7

The Brazilian economic boom that began in 2003 and lasted almost a decade expanded neoliberalism, marketing, and consumption. This shift spurred Brazilian fiction writers to reflect on the power of consumption over identity and social relations. Lígia Bezerra takes on this topic in *Everyday Consumption in Twenty-First-Century Brazilian Fiction* (2022), examining eight authors' works written from 2006 to 2015. Far from just being a measure of social status, purchasing power influences characters' relationships, values, emotions, worldviews, families, faith, and mental health. Each of the texts Bezerra studies shares a desire to defamiliarize the economic present through unexpected language, satire, allegory, fantasy, humor, and other literary techniques that help air anxieties about the grip of commodities on people's sense of self. Many of the characters Bezerra considers possess a self-centeredness that makes them unable to consider collective bargaining rights, community organizing, or other forms of solidarity.

The first chapter deals with desires for consumption that spiral into disaster. André Sant'Anna's *O Brasil é bom* (2014) and Fernando Bonassi's *Luxúria* (2015) disparage neoliberalism's effect on Brazil. As Bezerra observes, while at times their critiques are compelling, both books share a condescending quality in their representation of working-class Brazilians as irrational, animalistic, and incapable of solidarity in a neoliberal era. Bezerra investigates the repurposed commodities in these books, such as the boxes of tiles in *Luxúria* that were purchased to build a swimming pool, but that—in the absence of funds for completing the luxury project—take on the practical role of tables and chairs within the protagonist's home. The analysis of Sant'Anna's book includes a study of the story "Amando uns aos outros," which replicates the thoughts of characters who contemplate going on vacation while navigating the social pressure to purchase happiness in the form of a stereotypical vacation getaway.

The second chapter engages Zygmunt Bauman's theories articulated in *Liquid Modernity* and *Consuming Life*. For Bauman, in contemporary capitalist society, uncertainty marks people's sense of self and professional achievement, which leaves them feeling unsatisfied, as if there is always another goal that must be obtained. Given the overabundance of commodities, consumers feel they are one of those commodities that must differentiate itself to receive attention. Bezerra views Ricardo Lísias's *O livro dos mandarins* (2009) as a satire of neoliberalism in which the protagonist markets himself and his business ideals for personal gain. As is the case with Bezerra's reading of *Luxúria* and *O Brasil é bom*, she underscores that in *O livro dos mandarins* the critique of contemporary consumption falls somewhat flat. Bezerra posits that Bernardo Carvalho's *Reprodução* (2013) demystifies the baseless blather of prejudiced media posts, written by people with little knowledge of the subjects at hand, to reflect on the information overload, fragmentation, and oversimplification that characterize current media and marketing.

The third chapter, an analysis of three novels by Ana Paula Maia, emphasizes the underbelly of conspicuous consumption: the exploited laborers who make it possible. In her novels, Maia imagines scenarios in which the cycle of consumerism is suspended temporarily, thus drawing attention to its hold over people's lives. The novels focus on working class men who labor at a slaughterhouse, collect trash, cremate bodies, mine for coal, and remove dead animals from the road. Unlike the texts analyzed previously, Maia's novels have a utopian bent as she elaborates on interruptions in exploitative labor conditions. This chapter provides the most in-depth formal analysis of the texts in which aesthetic choices strengthen the critique of consumerism as well as of environmental devastation and cruelty to animals.

While all the chapters are well argued, the final two are the most engaging because they analyze novels that represent consumer culture with more complexity. Chapter four studies how characters in Daniel Galera's *Mãos de cavalo* (2006) and Michel Laub's *A maçã envenenada* (2013) toggle between awareness and unconsciousness of the influence of consumerism over their lives. The protagonist in *Mãos de cavalo* tends to visualize himself as the hero in an adventure film, thinking through the camera angles of shots as he goes about his everyday life. Using this example and others, Bezerra, in her most magnificent analysis, contends that the novel demonstrates the protagonist's oscillating awareness of and oblivion about the grip of consumer culture on his notion of masculinity.

Bezerra's fifth chapter interprets Marcus Vinícius Faustini's *Guia afetivo da periferia* (2009) as an affirmation of working-class Brazilians' ability to not be alienated or brainwashed by consumer capitalism. The protagonist reflects on the commodities that shaped his and his family's lives with keen awareness. He remembers flaunting the Coca-Cola bottle as a status symbol on his walk home from the store, putting designer labels in his inexpensive clothing to feign higher social status, and watching his mother gain weight from eating canned food that was made with profit, not nutrition, in mind. Bezerra expertly reveals how the protagonist uses his knowledge of elite culture to legitimize his consumption of popular culture while simultaneously questioning the binary between "high" and "low" culture.

References to everyday consumption abound in Brazilian prose and poetry. Oswald de Andrade's and Mário de Andrade's literature is peppered with brand names, which give their writing a defiantly colloquial quality. Countless songs, comics, and poems warn about multinational companies' neocolonial exploitation of Brazil, among the most famous being Décio Pignatari's 1957 concrete poem "Beba Coca Cola" in which the soda is unmasked as a cesspool. In Victor Giudice's farcical story "O arquivo" (1972), an alienated worker, who deferentially accepts increasingly exploitative work conditions that devastate his purchasing power, transforms

into a filing cabinet, thus completing his dehumanization. Bezerra's book updates this discussion for the early 2000s. Bezerra's writing is clear, and her selection of ten texts allows her to examine her topic from various angles with nimble engagement with theory. The book is essential reading for anyone interested in how literary references to commodities offer an opportunity for social critique, character development, and reflections on the mood of Brazil's recent past.

Sophia Beal, University of Minnesota

Bilbija, Ksenija. *Ni perversas ni traidoras: Ficciones de colaboración femenina en las dictaduras de Argentina y Chile*. Santiago, Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2022. 171 pp. ISBN 9789-5639-6177-5

En su libro *Ni perversas ni traidoras: Ficciones de colaboración femenina en las dictaduras de Argentina y Chile*, Ksenija Bilbija deconstruye con lucidez el uso del síndrome de Estocolmo, a saber el enamoramiento de la víctima de su captor, como marco que articula y explica la sobrevida y colaboración de la militante revolucionaria en la ficción reciente de Chile y Argentina. El síndrome como marco explicativo aparece utilizado por un conjunto de escritores como explicación del pasado, por una parte, y por otra, como forma de inserción en el mercado, con expectativas de alto rating. Bilbija identifica dicho fenómeno no solo en la narrativa—novelas y autobiografías—sino incluso en la primera serie argentina de Netflix cuyo título introduce el síndrome como parte integral de la identidad femenina: *Identidad Perdida. El síndrome de Estocolmo*. Esta perspectiva ficcional de impronta sexista, como señala la autora, revela no solo la mirada patriarcal y machista sobre las mujeres, en especial aquellas que participaron en organizaciones de izquierda y fueron detenidas, torturadas y abusadas sexualmente, sino también el deseo de los creadores de incorporar sus novelas y productos culturales al mercado neoliberal del libro y la serie de la TV global.

Bilbija realiza una reflexión iluminadora que muestra las falencias de todo un orden patriarcal social y discursivo que a través de las obras analizadas confirma que a la hora de contar la violenta y traumática historia reciente, la tergiversa y manipula al adoptar el síndrome de Estocolmo—que vende violencia, sexo y suspenso—, como la verdadera causa de que las mujeres que fueron presas políticas se enamoraran de sus captores y tuvieran relaciones íntimas con ellos. Esta situación se aborda como una traición a la ideología política y principios morales de estas militantes movidas por el propio deseo de avanzar en las diversas organizaciones por las que transitaban. La traición aparece como un elemento inherente a la identidad femenina portado por la sexualidad y el género y que la discursividad dominante reproduce y afirma. Para autores como Carlos Franz, Arturo Fontaine y Germán Marín en Chile y Miguel Bonasso, Abel Posse y Liliana Héker en Argentina, esta sería la explicación de que antiguas revolucionarias hubieran sobrevivido, manipulando a sus captores con estrategias de seducción y traicionándose no solo a sí mismas sino a muchos de sus compañeros, a quienes delataron y llevaron a la muerte. En esta ficcionalización de la historia política reciente, centrada específicamente en mujeres militantes emblemáticas de la izquierda en ambos países como Luz Arce y Marcia Alejandra Merino en Chile y Mercedes Carazo en Argentina, se las representa dominadas por el individualismo a ultranza, la competitividad y el deseo de reconocimiento. Dicha subjetividad femenina de corte neoliberal se revela en estos relatos en el cambio ideológico que sufren las revolucionarias al haberse pasado al

bando militar, adoptando su ideología autoritaria y mercantil hasta convertirse en colaboradoras, torturadoras y funcionarias a sueldo.

De este modo, el pasado y el trauma como parte constitutiva del legado del autoritarismo en ambos países se abordan desde el presente neoliberal y las formas contractuales que articulan las relaciones sociales e interpersonales en la sociedad de mercado. La historia nacional, por su parte, en estas ficciones se funda precisamente en la traición política cometida por militantes que se prestaron a colaborar sexual e intelectualmente con la dictadura. En este sentido, curiosamente y a contrario senso del discurso literario progresista, el relato aquí se coloca por detrás de los hechos históricos si pensamos en los sucesivos juicios a la junta en Argentina y las innumerables acciones, protestas y denuncias de ex militantes sobrevivientes en ambos países, cuyos testimonios han dejado evidencias de los abusos y violaciones a los DDHH como prácticas generizadas y sistemáticas en los centros de detención clandestinos de la dictadura, donde todas las presas políticas fueron violadas por guardias, torturadores u oficiales. La tortura, coerción, manipulación y completo dominio de sus captores hace imposible que estas relaciones íntimas fueran consentidas. La sospecha y la culpa, sin embargo, recae sobre estas nuevas Evas o Malinches como sureñas, por participar en política y haber desafiado las estructuras de la ley patriarcal y la misoginia que ordena sus respectivas sociedades.

La violación y el abuso sexual aparecen a través del síndrome por lo que se crean situaciones inverosímiles en que la mujer sometida sexualmente siente placer cuando es forzada por “un auténtico macho chileno” (74), produciéndose una subjetividad femenina ominosa, sin voluntad propia y servil que construye a estas mujeres como “villanas abyectas” (75). El último apartado es especialmente significativo en el libro ya que el análisis que presenta de la reciente novela argentina *Doble fondo* de Elsa Osario se plantea como una ficción feminista frente a la historia y la actuación de la famosa montonera Mercedes Carazo cambiando radicalmente su representación. Aquí la historia se corrige y se restituye la figura de la vilipendiada militante. La protagonista que la encarna aparece como una sobreviviente del abuso sexual y la tortura por razones políticas y de género, y el deseo de salvar a su hija también muestra su vulnerabilidad como madre cautiva. La obra dialoga con la novela *Carne de perra* de la chilena Fátima Sime, del segundo apartado, precisamente porque ambas autoras utilizan un marco de género feminista para representar las acciones de mujeres prisioneras que fueron violadas diariamente por torturadores sádicos y crueles. Ambas novelas presentan el síndrome de Estocolmo desde una posición crítica que hace hincapié en las condiciones de dominio y sumisión que condicionan las acciones de estas víctimas-prisioneras y la ausencia de autonomía en un momento de sus vidas.

Bernardita Llanos, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Delgado, Anjanette, ed. *Home in Florida: Latinx Writers and the Literature of Uprootedness*. Gainesville: University of Florida P, 2021. 253 pp. ISBN 9781-6834-0250-3

In this anthology of Latinx writers, the editor has created a collection with various takes on what it means to be uprooted and finding belonging in Florida. As we might expect, most authors included are of Cuban American background. Lest we assume that this experience of uprootedness is unique to the Cuban American experience, however, the editor masterfully included authors from other Latinx backgrounds, including areas of Latin America that are rarely considered in such

collections such as Panama and Argentina. The collection also includes writers in translation who may be little known in the United States.

By including such diverse Latinx writers we can see multiple perspectives in the experience of uprootedness as well as how the state of Florida in particular shapes the journey towards belonging. The introduction begins with an analysis of the word uprootedness and defines the uprooted as, “People, driven to uproot themselves by a variety of circumstances: violence, imprisonment, hunger, and sometimes, but much less often, by an act of nature” (1). The selections therefore focus on representing what Delgado terms the “turmoil-uproot-transplant-reroot process” and how this process impacts belonging for Latinxs in Florida. Another element of this process is generational, where one form of belonging is experienced by those recent arrivals who speak their native Latin American language and are still figuring out what this place will mean to them, and another form of belonging is experienced by the second generation or later who may speak more English than Spanish and may identify with American culture more than the culture of their ancestors.

Given that South Florida has been a central point of entry and settlement for many Latin Americans, it’s no surprise that many of the selections are set in Miami and other parts of Southern Florida. For instance, Patricia Engel’s story “La Ciudad Mágica” juxtaposes the experiences of working-class Latina immigrants in the upscale area of Coral Gables, who serve as nannies to white upper-middle class women while the latter gather to share their preferences of nannies by country, as if they were comparing products between general stores and Whole Foods. Meanwhile white businessmen bemoan how much the area has been ruined by all the Latinx immigrants while ordering empanadas at a Latinx bakery (11). She connects the immigrants’ experience of unbelonging to the second generation as she proclaims, “even if you were born in this country, even if you speak the language, you will always be an outsider; this country will never belong to you” (16).

For other authors their experience of uprootedness and belonging requires multiple stops and starts as depicted in Nilsa Ada Rivera’s epistolary piece “I Write to Mami About Florida.” Throughout her letters to her grandmother in Puerto Rico, she shares the hardships she endures in Miami, leading her to depart for Orlando, and later returning to Miami. After her constant moves however, she surprisingly concludes, “Slowly, I’m realizing Florida is my home too. Despite all the years of trying to leave, I’m still here, adapting, evolving, and surviving. The fight to survive and the constant evolution are common themes for almost everyone in Florida, a constant reinvention of who we are” (32).

Many of the authors also share their process of acculturation as they navigate what it will mean to be American. Honduran American writer Yaddyra Peralta shares how her family established new house rules as part of their process of acculturation including no longer speaking Spanish in her household: “This will help us become more American” (88). Meanwhile, Michael Garcia-Juelle’s “The Miami Underground and Nico,” demonstrates that more than one American culture one can assimilate into in Miami: “...you could live on the same middle-class suburban street a somebody, be born the same year, go to the same school, and be descendants of immigrants from the same country, but the way you’d walk, talk, and act would be totally different based on which vein of American culture the people around you tapped into...”, depicting how one of those American subcultures one can assimilate into is the underground drug culture of Miami (114).

Finally, many of the authors point to the uniqueness of location in finding a sense of home. Dainerys Machado Vento, for instance describes the process she calls “floridaness,” “by which we learn to bring home with us, set it down in a new place” (139), a process that we see occurring

repeatedly in Florida. While Argentinian writer, Javier Lentino, wonders whether one stops being a foreigner when one feels safe in a hospital. Feeling anxious about a surgical procedure in a Miami hospital, he begins to strangely feel at home, as he hears the doctors and nurses speak a mix of Spanish and English, while in the rest of the United States hospitals are usually alienating spaces for many Latinxs. In “Miami is Cuban” Raul Dopico vividly demonstrates how Miami can serve as the ultimate source of belonging for many Latinx groups. In this piece the author shares his experience of exile, leaving Cuba to Mexico, where he created a personal and professional life, yet never quite felt at home. It wasn’t until years later when he finally arrives to Miami, that he finds a sense of belonging.

As the above sample of selections I chose to highlight here demonstrate, this collection not only serves as a compendium of talented Latinx writers, but also illustrates the complex process of finding a sense of belonging, while highlighting the uniqueness of this process in Florida.

Elizabeth Garcia, University of Colorado at Denver

Garone Gravier, Marina (coord.). *Un hilo de tinta recorre América Latina: contribuciones para una historia del libro y la edición regional*. Córdoba, Argentina: Editorial Universitaria Villa María, 2022. 327 pp. ISBN 9789-8769-9734-8

Esta obra es una bitácora colectiva sobre las formas en que lo impreso ha ganado tracción como objeto de interés en América Latina. Es el resultado del trabajo colaborativo del Seminario Interdisciplinario de Bibliología (SIB-IIB-UNAM), coordinado por Marina Garone Gravier, y está compuesto por quince artículos distribuidos en cuatro partes organizadas cronológicamente, desde el siglo XVI hasta el presente. Por su naturaleza panorámica, constituye un recurso esencial para investigadoras e investigadores que quieran identificar continuidades y cambios en la historia impresa de varios países de la región. A la vez, su lenguaje y diversidad temática lo hacen un recurso pedagógico que introduce el campo multidisciplinar de los estudios sobre el libro y señala con claridad debates teóricos y metodológicos que se han producido en las últimas décadas. Este libro favorece futuras investigaciones transdisciplinarias al marcar hitos, vacíos y bibliografías esenciales para el diseño gráfico, la literatura, la bibliología, la sociología y la historia.

La primera parte, “Historias del libro, la imprenta y la tipografía antigua en América Latina”, contiene seis artículos. Para Marina Garone, autora del primero, contar la historia del alfabeto en América implica estudiar cómo indígenas de México y Perú aprendieron este tipo de escritura en escuelas de caligrafía para trabajar como copistas en ámbitos administrativos y religiosos durante la colonia. Los vestigios de sus obras tipográficas señalan la fuerza de la transculturación e incluso las resistencias que ejercieron contra el poder colonial. Por su parte, los trabajos de Daniel Enrique Silverman, Claudia Angélica Reyes, Dina Marques Pereira, Roberto Eduardo Osses y un segundo artículo de Garone se centran en las primeras imprentas en Argentina, Colombia, Brasil, Chile y Venezuela, respectivamente. Estos artículos historizan la llegada y uso de las imprentas en estos lugares, mientras en conjunto señalan la importancia de las comunidades religiosas para la historia impresa de la región e invitan a pensar en las condiciones materiales, políticas y sociales en las que circularon los primeros impresos. Esta sección abre preguntas sobre el aprendizaje de la escritura, desde escuelas indígenas de caligrafía hasta el autodidactismo de imprenteros mestizos (Garone), así como discusiones sobre qué definición de diseño gráfico enriquece el análisis de impresos del siglo XVIII (Silverman y Garone), cómo reimaginar las vidas



de tipógrafos y cajistas o la circulación de naipes y esquelas (Reyes y Osses) o el importante lugar de la censura y de las bibliotecas privadas en la consolidación de las culturas impresas de la época (Marques Pereira).

En la segunda parte, “Revoluciones tecnológicas al servicio de la producción editorial”, Luis Alejandro Blau, Héctor Morales y Aram Alejandro Mena conectan las realidades tecnológicas de la imprenta con el tipo de productos textuales y visuales que se crearon en el siglo XIX. Sea a través de una cartografía cronológica de imprentas en Uruguay (Blau Lima) o de una revisión de cómo la litografía favoreció la experimentación en México con la creación de calendarios, álbumes o revistas ilustradas (Mena Álvarez), estos artículos ofrecen una revisión de las máquinas que hicieron posibles cientos de impresos en la región. Los artículos insisten en la sostenida industrialización de las imprentas en áreas urbanas en el siglo XIX e introducen conceptos y líneas de tiempo básicas para continuar una historia de las imprentas en Latinoamérica.

La tercera sección, “Temas y problemas de la edición latinoamericana del siglo XX”, constituye uno de los apartados más estimulantes del libro. Presenta propuestas metodológicas para analizar las vanguardias tipográficas en México (Garone), hace un detenido recorrido por los antecedentes, corrientes y características de las editoriales cartoneras (Ruiz Chinchay) y cierra con una contundente propuesta de estudiar las historias del libro y la edición a través de los libros de artista (Silberleib). Esta sección evidencia, entre otras cosas, el lugar del Estado en las historias del libro en América Latina, la importancia del trabajo editorial colaborativo y la necesidad de entender el libro no solo como un medio sino como un objeto artístico que encapsula su propia conceptualización. Además, ofrece herramientas de interpretación de las materialidades radicales que se estudian, por ejemplo, en el caso de la distinción que propone Ruiz Chinchay entre cartoneras activas e inactivas y en los seis criterios de análisis de los libros de artista que expone Silberleib.

La última parte, “Perspectivas contemporáneas de las historias del libro y la edición en América Latina: tres casos”, ofrece panoramas sobre cómo se han estudiado el libro y otros impresos en Brasil, Argentina y Colombia. Ana Elisa Ribeiro, Beatriz C. Valinoti y Juan David Murillo Sandoval hacen un trabajo imprescindible de historiografía, en el que recorren diacrónicamente postulados metodológicos alrededor de lo impreso y registran las relaciones que se han sostenido con las corrientes teóricas europeas y estadounidenses desde la región. Además de hacer respectivas hipótesis sobre la historiografía de la cultura impresa en los tres países, insisten en la necesidad de conectar transnacionalmente los estudios del libro, estudiar las motivaciones detrás de los textos y buscar formas creativas de reconstruir los archivos de libreros y editores.

Resalto tres fortalezas de este proyecto. En lugar de privilegiar típicamente el siglo XIX en sus investigaciones, el libro propone una visión ampliada en tiempo, espacio y documentos que configuran el campo. Conectado con lo anterior, el texto es una invitación persuasiva a la creatividad académica y al constante cuestionamiento de los límites de estudio de la cultura impresa. Esta expansión del campo es patente en los llamados a incluir sostenidamente a Brasil en los estudios comparativos y en la historia impresa de la región (Pereira Araujo y Ribeiro), a acercarnos a los libros de artista para seguir pensando la edición como práctica y como arte (Silberleib) y a utilizar las humanidades digitales para registrar hallazgos investigativos (Blau Lima).

Aprovechando la polisemia de la palabra ‘hilo’, considero que esta obra funciona como una hebra textil que marca patrones de investigación sobre la cultura impresa en Latinoamérica, y en donde cada artículo construye un rico tejido de búsquedas y perspectivas sobre cómo estudiar lo impreso. Además, sus autoras y autores están atados por un proceso colaborativo de discusión y

colegaje e invitan permanentemente a la expansión de ese hilo comunicativo en Latinoamérica. Finalmente, el hilo de tinta que aparece desde el título hace evidentes tanto las materialidades como las conexiones transnacionales que una historia de la impresión en América Latina revela.

Gloria J. Morales Osorio, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Medeiros, Michelle. *Gender, Science, and Authority in Women's Travel Writing*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019. 212 pp. ISBN 978-1-4985-7975-9

In *Gender, Science, and Authority in Women's Travel Writing* Michelle Medeiros examines the writings of four transatlantic female travelers from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to reveal the strategies they employed to overcome gender constraints and participate in the production of knowledge. Medeiros provides a rich literary perspective on natural history discourse by analyzing the connections between travel, gender, authority, and science. She demonstrates that women employed creative means to contribute to intellectual enterprises. Indeed, Medeiros offers new insight into women's travel writing and transatlantic subjectivity to counter the gender stereotypes that have so often influenced our understanding of women's contributions. Medeiros's study is valuable because it ponders contemporary issues related to gender, representation, mobility, and globalization. Moreover, it adds to a small but growing body of scholarship that highlights the valuable contributions women made in natural history and travel narratives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Chapter one analyzes the writings of the celebrated British traveler Maria Graham and her ability to establish authority on both sides of the Atlantic as a transatlantic subject. Drawing on Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone, Medeiros shows that Graham capitalized on her imperialist identity to undermine her gendered condition and achieve mobility in pre- and post-independence Brazil. Medeiros argues that Graham deliberately deployed ironic self-deprecating language as a strategy to evade the constraints placed on her gender. She further notes that Graham leveraged more literary and "feminine" genres of writing in order to contribute scientific knowledge and establish her authority. A clear example comes from Graham's diary where she recorded her observation of the famous Tenerife dragon tree in dialogue with Alexander Humboldt's earlier account. Medeiros observes that while Graham expertly critiqued and updated Humboldt's narrative, she also purposefully diminished her own work and kept a low profile in her quest to participate in the "masculine" world of sciences. As further evidence, Medeiros discusses Graham's ability to feminize botany through religious discourse, while still challenging her male counterparts, and offers the chapter on the Bramble in *Scripture Herbal* as a poignant example. Although Medeiros briefly addresses how Graham's observations of the 1822 Valparaíso earthquake were received, given that those observations reverberated prominently in the geologic debate of the time, perhaps a more ample discussion is merited to flesh out Graham's ability to transcend gendered and genre boundaries.

Chapter two inverts the narrative of the civilized European exploring the untamed New World by examining Cuban Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's travel writings about Europe. In the first section Medeiros analyzes *Memorias*, an epistolary travel account that positions Gómez de Avellaneda as the observer and the European landscape as the observed, as a way to deconstruct the colonizer/colonized dichotomy employed by European male travelers in Latin America. She further posits that Gómez de Avellaneda adopted self-deprecating literary strategies and aligned

herself with British imperial authority so that she could make observations that go beyond the constraints of genre and gender. The second section addresses a later work detailing Gómez de Avellaneda's excursion to the Pyrenees that purposefully emphasized her European identity for the sake of increasing the appeal of her articles at home. The final section discusses "Álbum," the Cuban periodical publication for women that Gómez de Avellaneda edited. While the overt intent of the magazine was to discuss topics particular to women of the day, it subtly subverted the patriarchal agenda through a carefully calculated discourse that gave women access to scientific and intellectual knowledge. Medeiros argues that these narratives established the writer as a unique transatlantic subject with authority to disseminate knowledge and participate in public debates on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, this chapter illustrates that Gómez de Avellaneda skillfully leveraged the literary genres that her gender was limited to in order to gain notoriety as a public intellectual.

In the third chapter, Medeiros delves into the fascinating story of Nísia Floresta, a Brazilian traveler and educator who spent much of her life engaging with European intellectual circles. This chapter demonstrates that Floresta utilized natural history discourse to characterize both European and Brazilian nature and took advantage of her foreign identity to advocate for the role of women in society. Medeiros approaches Floresta's writings chronologically to show how the Brazilian gained authority as a transatlantic intellectual. That identity permitted her to challenge earlier travel accounts about Brazil and created an opening for her to advance women's education. Telling examples are found in Medeiros's analysis of Floresta's European travel, including her reading of the Grand Tour narrative as a feminizing journey and intellectual quest that embeds nature and civilization in a symbiotic relationship.

The final chapter describes the early twentieth century collaboration between the American Smithsonian curator Doris Cochran and the Brazilian scientist and suffragist Bertha Lutz. Of particular note is the binational archival research that underpins Medeiros's reading of Cochran's unpublished diary, "Just a minute, Miss," held at the Smithsonian, and the correspondence between the pair found in the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro. In this chapter, Medeiros delightfully deploys the tools of literary analysis to historical documents in a way that fleshes out a rich narrative that contributes layers of meaning to non-fictional texts. One particularly engaging example is Medeiros's interpretation of Cochran's report of her experience consuming a mango for the first time while in Brazil. Medeiros reads this anecdote as a way for Cochran to challenge her own hegemonic superiority and confer a more "feminized tone" to her narrative (156). Cochran's travel and research in Brazil conferred upon her the popular title of "Frog Lady," allowing her to blur gender lines and share science with the public.

Medeiros's study aptly describes the textual strategies women travelers employed to overcome limitations placed on their gender. She shows that women could achieve transatlantic subjectivity by leveraging mobility and their condition as women to achieve authority and prominence. She concludes that women's participation in science needs to be reevaluated to include their "less professional" contributions.

Cody C. Hanson, Indiana State University

Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Milena. *Las poetisas cubanas: Lo cubano, lo contemporáneo*. New York: Peter Lang, 2023. 216 pp. ISBN 9781-4331-8814-5

El volumen está constituido por ensayos cuyo tema específico es lo cubano o “las cubanías” en textos poéticos de escritoras isleñas decimonónicas, modernistas, postmodernistas y contemporáneas. En su selección, Milena Rodríguez ve la poesía como María Zambrano, una “especie peculiar de oxímoron” que consiste en “un abrirse del ser hacia adentro y hacia afuera”. Con su libro la autora intenta ampliar y modificar la visión que un texto canónico proyectó en la crítica cubana durante varias décadas. Frente a *Lo cubano en la poesía* de Cintio Vitier. (1958), Rodríguez agrega otros perfiles y parámetros de juicio, incluyendo, por ejemplo, la Avellaneda expulsada del canon literario de la isla en aquel ensayo. Y se centra en una escritura femenina que pone en práctica un modo de representación en el que el hecho de ser mujer intenta connotar— como indica Rosy Braidotti—“una fuerza política positiva y autoafirmativa”. En última instancia, se busca en las escritoras seleccionadas una poética que preserve el lugar de origen que se ha vuelto “puerto y puerta”—al decir de María Zambrano—, porque a él se llega y de él se parte para abrirse al mundo.

El primer ensayo analiza dos poesías para rescatar la cubanía de Avellaneda frente a quienes pusieron en cuestión su amor por la isla. “Al partir” fue escrito cuando la poeta deja Cuba en 1836. Rodríguez lo ve estructurado como un bolero: la poesía se vuelve el canto de adiós hacia un amor que se abandona y con él se inaugura “el discurso de la lejanía”. De “A un cocuyo”, escrito por la poeta cuando vuelve a Cuba en 1859, poco se ha ocupado la crítica, a pesar de que el insecto fue motivo reiterado a lo largo del siglo XIX. Rodríguez nota, en cambio, cómo para Avellaneda fue símbolo de una libertad que solo hallaba en su tierra natal. La introducción de concordancias evidencia su intento por recuperar una unidad perdida.

El segundo ensayo ahonda y amplía la duradera visión de la crítica española y cubana sobre Avellaneda. Ferrer del Río, por ejemplo, al comparar en 1875 la cubana con Carolina Coronado, repite la imagen “a la G. Sand” de Avellaneda; en modo similar, Martí, después de la muerte de la escritora, la masculiniza al llamarla “poeta” mientras ve en Luisa Pérez de Zambrana, una verdadera “poetisa”, la mejor poetisa americana. Rodríguez se interesa por esas dos “contrincantes” de Avellaneda e indaga sobre la opinión que ambas tenían sobre la misma.

“Modernismo y modernidades en los últimos poemas de Mercedes Matamoros” es un trabajo en el que Rodríguez polemiza con los juicios de Cintio Vitier, pues percibe en ellos un cierto sexismo crítico que redundaba negativamente en su valoración de la escritura femenina. Rodríguez se centra en los últimos poemarios de Matamoros que definen con mayor claridad los aspectos modernistas de una obra por mucho tiempo vista como carente de una orientación estético-poética. Y nota que Matamoros, adelantada de su época, manifiesta el clásico conflicto entre identidad genérica e identidad artística, pero elige la artística, a sabiendas de que el juicio de valor “público” le quitará a la autoría su condición de mujer.

Rodríguez considera que sexo y género no son conceptos previos a la escritura sino que se crean dentro de la misma. Tal es el caso de Alma Rubens un heterónimo creado por el periodista y poeta, provinciano y mulato, José Manuel Poveda, que atribuye veintitrés poemas publicados en revista y nunca en volumen, a una cubano-francesa de la que es “traductor” y “crítico”. Poveda encuentra en Rubens una válvula de escape para expresar su deseo de lo foráneo. En modo *sui generis*, crea un yo femenino, que se inserta “como real” en la corriente modernista con las mismas dificultades que tuvieron Delmira Agustini y Dulce M. Loynaz.

En la segunda parte del volumen que va de las vanguardias a la actualidad, un ensayo se centra en Lydia Cabrera, antropóloga y autora de *Cuentos negros de Cuba* (en francés, París 1936, y luego en español, Cuba 1940). En una selección estrictamente poética, Rodríguez justifica la inclusión de *Cuentos negros* apoyándose en lo que dijeron Carpentier y Zambrano. De hecho, la cosmogonía narrada y el folklore negro-criollo, se representan con imágenes fuertemente líricas que recuperan el ritmo de la isla y su espíritu burlón. En “Lo entrañable *versus* lo siniestro: Fina García Marruz corrige a Freud” Rodríguez atribuye a la poeta la voluntad de invertir el concepto freudiano de lo siniestro cuando usa con frecuencia el adjetivo “entrañable”. No advierto esta “voluntaria” intención. El concepto freudiano de *das unheimliche* encierra en sí, *heim*, la casa, y *heimisch*, lo natural, autóctono, entrañable. Fina, simplemente opta por el lado casero del mundo que puede haberse perdido en lo estático, lo desconocido, lo extraño que conllevan la modernidad y el exilio. Ella cumple una trayectoria para recuperar lo “mío”, en el fondo, Cuba misma. En otro trabajo, Rodríguez indaga sobre la única publicación conjunta de García Marruz y Cintio Vitier como poetas, *Viaje a Nicaragua*. Intenta establecer con claridad la autoría de los textos de ese volumen y se detiene en la dimensión visionaria de García Marruz, algo que la distingue de Vitier y Cardenal.

Al hablar del espacio y el tiempo en la poesía femenina cubana, Rodríguez señala cómo el motivo de lo propio, ligado a experiencias de una determinada época, se pierde en escritoras posteriores a Avellaneda, García Marruz y Loynaz, porque el mundo de afuera ha invadido el adentro empujando a muchos cubanos a abandonar la isla. Y al analizar la problemática del exilio en Nivaria Tejera y Magali Alabau, Rodríguez analiza los espacios “otros” vividos por las dos autoras, posicionándose con sensibilidad frente a esa vivencia que requiere particular cercanía. En otro ensayo Milena enfoca los fundamentos de la poética de Reina María Rodríguez, resumible en *El libro de las clientas* (una “costura otra”): al coser un texto de Mistral (“Todas íbamos a ser reinas”) con el propio (“Las brutas”) Reina María Rodríguez le agrega un giro agresivo y oscuro que anula el futuro y la apertura mistralianas.

El volumen de Milena Rodríguez, que constituye una enriquecedora contribución a la crítica feminista de América Latina, se cierra con un original y profundo artículo sobre los aspectos metapoéticos en la obra de Carilda Oliver Labra, Fina García Marruz, Reina María Rodríguez y Damaris Calderón. Allí se evidencian tanto las dificultades domésticas de la mujer que escribe, como la potencia que el acto y el instrumento con el que se escribe adquieren para cada una.

María Cecilia Graña, Universidad de Verona

Spagnoli, Fabian. *Una entrevista a Borges / An Interview with Borges*. Trans. Jillian Tamm. Introduction by Carlo Alberto Petrucci. Venezia: Damocle Edizioni. 44 pp. ISBN 9788-8321-6335-3

In 1980, 16-year-old aspiring journalist Fabian Spagnoli requested an interview with famed Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. With little time to prepare, Spagnoli arrived at the Borges household unsure of what to expect but excited for the opportunity to speak with one of Latin America’s most well-respected authors of the time. The result is *Una entrevista a Borges*, published for the first time more than forty years after it took place. Its subsequent translation into English makes the interview even more accessible for those interested in learning about Borges’s philosophies about life, literature, language, and what he calls “la declinación de la cultura” (18–

19), or “the decline of culture” (38–39) that defines contemporary society. Indeed, the interview effectively highlights an older Borges who is bereft of hope but who also still believes in the transformative power of literature.

*Una entrevista a Borges* begins with Carlo Alberto Petrucci’s introduction, which serves to contextualize and briefly summarize Spagnoli’s interview. Their conversation begins by Spagnoli telling Borges about his aspirations to become a journalist and his “intention of bringing together two generations” (27) (“tiene como objetivo reunir dos generaciones” 7). The tension between Spagnoli’s and Borges’s generations best defines the interview in a broader sense as Borges jokes about how, at eighty-one years old, he could easily be his great-grandfather. Borges even laments the end of his own generation by pointing out that his friends are all now dead, and it is evident that he feels like he can no longer relate to the people and city he once knew. In a particularly telling moment, Spagnoli asks Borges if the city “va rompiendo todo lo que quedaba hasta el momento” (“is tearing up everything that was left until now”), to which Borges responds with an emphatic, “Sí, claro” (8) (“That’s right” 28).

Spagnoli quickly deviates to asking Borges about his opinions on life, death, and the recurrent image of the labyrinth that appears throughout his literature. In reflecting on death, Borges states that the idea of death and the disappearance of his body is of great consolation. He even muses, “¿qué puede importarme lo que le sucede a este individuo tan efímero que se llama Borges?” (9) (“What can it matter to me what happens to this individual, so ephemeral, called ‘Borges’?” 29). This moment highlights an unequivocal intertextuality that the interview maintains with stories like “Borges y yo,” in which tension emerges between the mortal Borges, the person, with the immortal Borges, the author, and suggests that, even after his death, Borges will live on through his literature.

Spagnoli and Borges’s conversation on life and death allows for an easy segue into a new topic: reading, literature, and language. It is notable that even this discussion extends the overarching theme of the interview regarding the differences between older and newer generations, this time coupled with the modernization and commercialization of contemporary society. In this section of the interview, Borges bemoans the fact that young students only read what is required of them. It quickly becomes apparent that he equates this loss of reading with the commercialization of literature and the overall decline in society:

**FS.** Recién cuando hablábamos de los idiomas, caímos en que se habla inglés por una cuestión económica.

**B.** ¡Lo que es una lástima!

**FS.** Quiere decir que el mundo se ha ido materializando.

**B.** Porque si estudiaran inglés, la literatura inglesa es infinita, pero la gente no estudia *inglés*. Al estudiar inglés no piensan en... no sé... [...] piensan en negocios y piensan en el inglés de Hollywood, no en el inglés de Inglaterra (20).

**FS.** Just now when we were talking about languages, we mentioned that people speak English for economic reasons.

**B.** Which is a shame!

**FS.** This means that the world is becoming more materialistic.

**B.** Because if they studied English...English literature is infinite, but people don’t study *English*. When studying English they don’t think about...I don’t know... [...]

They think about business and about the English of Hollywood, not the English of England (40).

Borges's insistence that the study of languages is now for business and commercial purposes as opposed to literary opportunities is what leads him to espouse a very pessimistic view of the future and the decline of culture. It seems, then, that Borges is suggesting that the study of language and literature are foundational for a thriving society. Indeed, when Spagnoli asks Borges for some personal advice, Borges simply responds by telling him to read, study, and write (24; 44).

Spagnoli ends his interview by eliciting advice for younger generations. In true Borgesian fashion, he responds with a sardonic and self-deprecating, "Bueno, no, yo no puedo dar consejos: mi vida ha sido una serie de errores" (24) ("Well, no, I can't give advice, my life has been a series of mistakes" 44). This ending encapsulates all of Borges's literary corpus while offering a strong commentary on the state of our world and current literature. It suggests that not only is life a string of coincidences, but also that reading and writing are critical endeavors in society's never-ending pursuit of assigning meaning to a nonsensical world.

Borges's ideas throughout this interview are particularly relevant given the current literature that seeks to define the world amidst an ever-globalizing and chaotic society. Despite what Borges says, however, people throughout the world are, in fact, still reading, and are still heavily influenced by Borges and his literary corpus. Well-known authors like Michel Foucault, Umberto Eco, Paul Aster, and Haruki Murakami are all famously influenced by Borges, and even younger generations persist in their use of Borges's philosophies in order to explain the world. This phenomenon is particularly strong in contemporary Hispanic literatures, as shown in the works of Jorge Volpi, Roberto Bolaño, Andrés Neuman, Carlos Fonseca, Rosa Montero, and Mariana Enríquez, among others. This proves that while Borges, the man, may be gone, Borges, the author, lives on in the writers who continue to transform the world through their literature.

Rachel West, University of Virginia

Thornton, Niamh. *Tastemakers and Tastemaking: Mexico and Curated Screen Violence*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2020, 236 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-8112-8

The difficult subject of how violence and gender are portrayed on Mexican screens inspires the exploration of the curation and creation of taste in Niamh Thornton's latest book. Thornton is a prolific and insightful cultural critic who has consistently brought new perspectives and methods to the study of Mexican film, television, and visual culture in and beyond Mexico's borders, and her latest book is no exception. Drawing together seemingly disparate screen genres and media through the controversial theme of violence in Mexico, her book also builds on her previous wide-reaching work on issues as diverse as women in the Mexican Revolution, transnational cinema, Chicana screen productions, star studies and digital cinema. This volume gives insights into the politics of taste and curation, and the weight of critical reception in the success of screen productions in consistently unique ways, while demonstrating a notable awareness of the sensitivities and ethical issues involved in such a study.

The introduction and conclusion to the volume provide an incisive updating of Bourdieu's much cited and influential mediations on taste. Thornton sidesteps the binary high/low distinction between supposedly good and bad taste that Bourdieu both critiques and perpetuates by taking the

reader behind the scenes to reveal “who decides what is of value and how creatives in film and television produce work that intervenes in questions of taste” (1). By conflating violence with gender in the case studies chosen and paying close attention to works often dismissed as unworthy of serious academic study, she reveals the complex processes behind how onscreen representations confer value to the subjects they portray. Her own careful curation organizes these myriad screen productions around three pivotal eras in recent Mexican history: the gendered violence in the north of the country since the late 1990s, the commemoration of the Mexican Revolution beginning in 2010, and the violence associated with the drug trade up to the present. The book is also notable for its self-reflective account of the processes behind her own assessment of taste throughout the volume, with the discussion of her use of side-by-side videographic experiments being a particularly inventive and effective element of the analysis.

Beginning with the much-discussed and much-debated matter of the commemoration of Mexico’s independence and the Mexican Revolution in 2010 in Chapter One, she deftly interrogates the underlying politics and pressures involved in the curation of a film series by Nelson Carro at Mexico’s Cineteca Nacional. As in the other chapters, this project is framed in an international context, thus acknowledging the diversity and multiculturalism of Mexican society and suggesting that the organization of such commemorations has significance that transcends national borders. Chapter Three also focuses on cultural productions relating to the Mexican Revolution through an analysis of the varying critical reception of two film adaptations of Mariano Azuela’s novel *Los de abajo*, from 1939 and 1976, respectively. Thornton reveals how different political contexts and filmic approaches led to notably divergent critical responses to the films and how judgements around fidelity to the original in adaptations set up hierarchies of prestige and value.

Notions of prestige are also effectively mobilized in Chapter Two to consider how the films of Amat Escalante, which are often extremely violent, are rendered acceptable because of his status as an auteur who references global arthouse cinema. Rather than establishing another high/low binary through this observation, however, this chapter demonstrates how Escalante consciously plays with and contests ideas of prestige in his films, particularly with regard to *Los Bastardos* (2008) and *Heli* (2013). Chapters Four and Five consider how female actors’ bodies are valorized and racialized to an extent that their star personas overshadow their work. A particular strength of these chapters is their nuanced analysis of the critical reception of Kate del Castillo’s character in the transnational television series *La reina del sur* and Jennifer Lopez’s role in Chicano director Gregory Nava’s film *Bordertown* (2006).

One of the many strengths of the volume is Thornton’s recognition of the foundational work of screen scholars such as Dolores Tierney and Victoria Rúetalo on so-called “low culture” genre films, which is fruitfully interwoven with a careful consideration of diverse scholarly work on kitsch, gender and violence. This application of these different critical approaches to the consideration of issues of curation and criticism is, in itself, a unique and extremely important contribution to the study of taste and tastemakers, but it is the employment of videographic criticism that makes this volume particularly innovative and contemporary. Thornton’s skillful use of videographic criticism reveals the often hidden processes that lie behind the gatekeeping of taste, the curation of screen productions, and the creation of prestige and value. This is perhaps the most innovative element of this highly readable, groundbreaking and thought-provoking volume.

Catherine Leen, Trinity College Dublin



## FILM REVIEWS

*Corazón Azul*. Dir. Miguel Coyula. Cuba, 2021. Dur. 103 min.

*Corazón Azul* (2021), el más reciente largometraje de Miguel Coyula, sintetiza las corrientes dominantes en la reciente producción de cine distópico cubano. Constituye, además, una perfecta síntesis de las recurrentes obsesiones y estrategias creativas que se encuentran en el corpus del autor. Entre estas, destaca su posmoderno deleite por el pastiche, la amalgama de estilos propios de los cómics, la representación de mundos distópicos, la incursión en las estéticas de películas de serie B, la construcción de personajes psicológicamente dislocados y atormentados por una realidad alucinante de la que intentan escapar, y la creación de atmósferas sórdidas y góticas. Lejos de ser meros ejercicios de esteticismo, estos códigos en el cine de Coyula se movilizan con una intención política claramente definida. Coyula se perfila como un cineasta dedicado a responder a una realidad que, en su visión, está sofocando cada vez más la libertad individual. Sus universos distópicos se erigen como su manera de desvelar, a través del medio cinematográfico, lo que percibe en una realidad oscurecida por ideologías.

*Corazón azul* nos sumerge en una Cuba ucrónica a través de la reactivación de temas de ciencia ficción que catalizan una reflexión retrofuturista acerca del estado contemporáneo de la nación. A través de la imagería visual característica del autor y de una atmósfera de incertidumbre, caos, inseguridad y violencia omnipresentes, Coyula especula sobre una nación marcada por la pesadilla desatada por un gobierno totalitario que reduce al individuo a la condición de un residuo.

Los protagonistas son un grupo de jóvenes mutantes con habilidades sobrehumanas que viven en los márgenes de la sociedad, en oposición radical a las fuerzas políticas del país. Son el resultado de un proyecto de ingeniería genética llamado “el experimento Guevara” e impulsado por Fidel Castro con el objetivo de mejorar al ser humano —metáfora de la construcción del Hombre Nuevo— y salvar así la utopía.

La narrativa fragmentada se encuentra poblada de numerosas referencias intertextuales, inserciones documentales alteradas y juegos auto-reflexivos, que amalgaman realidad y ficción. El filme combina géneros y estilos diversos, desde la ciencia ficción hasta los noticiarios bélicos, el diseño expresionista, la actuación melodramática y las referencias surrealistas, todos al servicio de una narrativa elíptica y anárquica que propulsa la película en giros y vueltas inesperados. Los signos y señales que aparecen en la película son familiares para cualquiera con algún conocimiento de la historia de Cuba, pero también adquieren un significado universal en su representación de cualquier régimen autoritario.

El filme presenta una interpretación irreverente de íconos revolucionarios, como la imagen de Fidel Castro dirigiéndose a las masas o la foto de Korda del Che Guevara, y una deconstrucción de consignas políticas. Los expresidentes estadounidenses Barack Obama y Donald Trump, y el actual líder cubano Díaz Canel, hacen apariciones estelares, en ocasiones utilizando imágenes de archivo y en otras a través de declaraciones manipuladas. Un presentador de televisión cubano proporciona comentarios brechtianos a la acción en la pantalla, narrándonos cómo los experimentos genéticos han producido mutantes fallidos que han escapado del control gubernamental. La falla de este experimento, que se erige como una alegoría del fracaso del propio proyecto revolucionario, condena a estos seres a una vida oculta, controlada por fuerzas superiores que reprime cualquier forma de libertad en ellos.

La trama navega dentro del marco del enfrentamiento de estos individuos, quienes se han organizado en un grupo de resistencia contra el gobierno que intenta mantenerlos en la periferia de la sociedad, ocultos a los ojos del mundo. Paralelamente, se narra una historia de redención personal. Elena, uno de los personajes principales, deberá confrontar las consecuencias de descubrir la identidad de su padre. En un ambiente de total desequilibrio axiológico y de búsqueda desesperada de identidad, estos seres, hijos del fracaso, intentan desenmascarar a un régimen que ha mantenido a raya la realidad para poder salvarse.

Para subrayar el carácter apocalíptico de su película, Coyula emplea escenarios evocadores del fracaso y la ruina, como la central nuclear abandonada cerca de la ciudad de Cienfuegos (una imagen también recurrente en *La obra del siglo* de Carlos Quintela). En La Habana, donde tiene lugar gran parte de la historia, todo sugiere una atmósfera sombría y fantasmagórica, con chimeneas que escupen fuego y buitres que sobrevuelan el cielo. Estos símbolos de decadencia y degradación ambiental, que se convierten en un leitmotiv a lo largo de *Corazón Azul*, son el trasfondo de una historia que profundiza en los significados de la identidad, la pertenencia y la elección existencial entre el conformismo y la rebeldía.

La visión de Coyula solo se revela al final, en una narración plagada de vacíos y ambigüedades. En la última escena, el personaje llamado Caso #1 le dice a Elena que “no importa quiénes sean nuestros padres, lo importante es quiénes somos nosotros”. Esta idea, como un signo de interrogación, recorre todo el discurso de la película.

Santiago Juan-Navarro, Florida International University

*El Olvido que Seremos*. Dir. Fernando Trueba. Colombia, 2020. Dur. 136 min.

*El Olvido que Seremos*, dirigida por Fernando Rodríguez Trueba y adaptada por su hermano David Trueba, está basada en la novela homónima del escritor colombiano Héctor Joaquín Abad Faciolince. Trueba cautiva al observador con su narrativa conmovedora al describir la vida de Héctor Joaquín Abad Gómez, médico colombiano, profesor universitario, periodista y defensor de los derechos humanos. La película ofrece una mirada conmovedora de la vida y legado de este personaje académicamente excepcional, así como de los desafíos que enfrentó en la búsqueda de la justicia y la igualdad en medio de un país turbulento marcado por la violencia política bipartidista, el narcotráfico y el paramilitarismo.

La trama de *El Olvido que Seremos* se desarrolla en Medellín, Colombia, en la década de los años 70 y buena parte de los 80, un período tumultuoso en la historia del país marcado por la violencia política y social. En la era de los prominentes líderes del narcotráfico y los grupos paramilitares que, respaldados por sectores políticos y militares, silenciaban a aquellos individuos críticos del sistema. La película sigue la vida de Héctor Abad Gómez, un médico diligente que trabaja incansablemente para mejorar la salud pública y la calidad de vida de los menos afortunados. Héctor Abad Gómez es un personaje profundamente carismático y compasivo, y la película captura de manera brillante su lucha incansable por los derechos humanos básicos; sin embargo, a pesar de su don de gentes, sus declaraciones acerca de las condiciones de vida en las comunidades marginadas de Medellín, así como muchas de sus ideas políticas, generaron hostilidades entre sus colegas, compañeros de facultad y líderes de la época.

La narrativa de *El Olvido que Seremos* es emotiva y cautivante, guiándonos a través de los momentos clave en la vida de Héctor Abad Faciolince, desde su infancia hasta su adultez, destacando el papel de su padre como médico y activista político. A medida que la trama avanza, vemos cómo se enfrenta a desafíos personales y profesionales, incluyendo la oposición política y la violencia que para la época afectaba a Colombia. Sin embargo, el guion presenta ciertas limitaciones, ya que se centra en mantener una narrativa cinematográfica marcada por los valores familiares antioqueños, evitando deliberadamente adentrarse en temas políticos que, aunque abordados de manera sutil, habrían añadido una mayor profundidad a este retrato.

Uno de los aspectos más destacados de la película es la actuación de Javier Cámara en el papel de Héctor Abad Gómez. Cámara ofrece una actuación conmovedora y auténtica que da vida al personaje de manera excepcional. Captura la humanidad, la compasión y la pasión de Héctor Abad Gómez de manera notable, y su actuación es una de las razones por las que la película es tan poderosa y emotiva. El reparto en general es decisivo, con actores talentosos que aportan autenticidad a sus personajes. Además de Cámara, se encuentran Juan Pablo Urrego quien interpreta al hijo de Héctor Abad Gómez, Héctor Abad Faciolince, Nicolás Reyes Cano (Quiquín) y Patricia Tamayo (Cecilia Faciolince). La relación entre padre e hijo es uno de los aspectos más conmovedores de la película, y la química entre los dos actores, en etapas diferentes de la vida, es evidente durante toda la trama.

*El Olvido que Seremos* también se destaca por la importancia que le otorga a la educación y la salud pública como ejes de desarrollo en la sociedad colombiana. Héctor Abad Gómez dedicó gran parte de su vida a luchar por la igualdad en estos ámbitos que son un recordatorio de cómo un individuo comprometido puede tener un impacto significativo en la vida de sus coterráneos. La película aborda temas profundos como la justicia social, la violencia política y la pérdida de seres queridos; sin embargo, lo hace sin caer en el sensacionalismo o la manipulación emocional excesiva. La narrativa fluye de manera orgánica y nos lleva a reflexionar sobre estos temas sin imponer conclusiones simplistas. A través de la mirada cariñosa y llena de orgullo por su hijo, esta película rinde tributo a la memoria de su padre, quien como en una crónica de una muerte anunciada, fallece a manos de la Colombia retrógrada y corrupta. Nos presenta el amor inquebrantable que existe entre un padre y un hijo, reflejando este sentimiento mutuo de manera conmovedora. A pesar de los desafíos y amenazas que enfrentó debido a su activismo político de corte liberal considerado de izquierda por sus detractores, la película resalta su convicción de que su lucha política era necesaria para lograr un país más justo. A través del sugerente título que evoca el olvido, la película también plantea la preocupante cuestión del olvido histórico, no solo en lo que respecta a Héctor Abad, sino también en relación con numerosas figuras políticas que sacrificaron sus vidas en la búsqueda de una Colombia más equitativa en medio de un entorno político marcado por la violencia. La película insta al observador a recordar y honrar a aquellos que lucharon por la justicia y la igualdad, incluso cuando no solo el tiempo sino los intereses sesgados amenazan con borrar todo trazo de cambio.

En resumen, *El Olvido que Seremos* es una obra maestra del cine colombiano que toca el corazón y la mente de los espectadores. Obtuvo el premio a mejor cinta iberoamericana en los premios Goya y fue nominada en los Premios Ariel 2021, en México, como Mejor Película Iberoamericana. La película brilla en todos los aspectos técnicos, desde la dirección de Fernando Trueba hasta la actuación original de Javier Cámara y el enfoque conmovedor en la vida y el legado de Héctor Abad Gómez. La película retrata la vida de un hombre brillante que luchó por la justicia y la equidad en un periodo violento en la historia colombiana. *El Olvido que Seremos* es una obra que merece ser vista y apreciada, no solo como una película apasionante y reveladora de la historia

colombiana, sino también como un tributo a la persistencia del individuo en medio de la adversidad.

Luis Alfredo Velasco Guerrero, Universidad del Valle, Cali (Colombia)

**La Espera. Dir. Daniel Ross. Cuba. 2023. Dur. 81 min**

*La Espera*, by Guantánamo-based filmmaker Daniel Ross, was awarded the *Luciole d' Or* for Best Drama and Best Foreign Film at the Cannes World Film Festival in March of 2023. Ross is the first Cuban to receive this award. What makes this accolade more relevant and important are the circumstances surrounding the production and the innovative methods used for this independent film. When we reflect on Cuban films that have reached global praise, the conversation tends to revolve around Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Fresa y Chocolate* (1993) or *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (1968). This has cemented the idea that Cuban films capable of reaching a global audience tend to originate from Havana's ICAIC or EICTV. The success of these larger collective audiovisual organizations overshadow the lesser-known parts of Cuba and the desire of filmmakers to craft stories from marginalized regions of the island. Due to a lack of state support and the embargo's restriction on outside investment, many such filmmakers are forced to work on extremely small budgets. It is astonishing that Ross, with a budget of under \$100 (USD), was able to create a compelling feature-length film with only one camera and his friends' support. To reduce costs, the entire cast consisted of Ross's friends who had no prior acting experience, including his friend Regino Rodríguez Boti, an essential figure in the production of the film. Regino not only played the protagonist (also named Regino), but he also provided his own home for the majority of the scenes. Thanks to this collaborative spirit, Ross managed to create the first post-Covid Cuban drama that tells a compelling story of Cuban struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Ross' melancholic film, *La Espera*, viewers are immersed in the intimate story of Regino, a middle-aged widower residing in a post-Castro society in Guantánamo. Regino grapples with the loss of his wife and seeks meaning and solace in a province suppressed by the lack of basic resources and overshadowed by the proximity of the United States Naval Base. A central conflict within the film is when a Cuban vigilante group, *La Unidad*, places a death sentence on a dog in the care of Regino. *La Unidad* demands the execution of the dog because it crosses the border to the U.S. side of Guantánamo and returns well fed, an act perceived as a form of treason. This tragic incident is based on a true story that is known locally around Guantánamo that served as the inspiration for the film.

Aside from representing the current conditions of Cuba, the main theme of the film is Regino's mental struggles following the death of his wife. From this void, Regino emerges as a hopeless melancholic character, which is conveyed through facial expressions and representations of a monotonous life. This depressive state pushes him to attempt suicide numerous times throughout the film. The opening scene depicts a close-up of Regino suspended from a Hangman's noose. His friend rushes in to cut the rope and prevent Regino's suicide. In a society riddled by intense daily grievances, this innovative independent film argues that the protagonist must die to obtain inner peace. He survives the worst parts of the Special Period of Cuba and now must grieve the loss of his wife. The film meticulously paints a realistic, documentary-like view, of Cubans and the harsh conditions of their daily realities. When faced with these struggling conditions,

Cubans are forced into thinking of alternate ways of escaping: either death or migrating to the U.S. or to Spain in search of a better life.

Additionally, the film focuses on the extreme differences and tension between the Cuban side of Guantánamo and the U.S.-controlled Guantánamo Bay. The audience sees the extreme contrast between the rich and thriving U.S. occupied location and the poor and struggling province of Guantánamo. Ross shows the struggle of the Cuban side by featuring a slice of stale bread, cooked eggs in reused olive oil, and characters drinking alcohol as a substitute for dinner. The audience bears witness to the struggles of finding adequate food in a society that overcompensates with rum and an abundance of time. In the film, space and time become obsolete. Days are filled with the same activities and lack of opportunity for change, so Regino's death becomes the only means to break from this purgatorial cycle.

The only aspect that seems to bring Regino joy is the time spent with his friends. Two notable friends are an unnamed member of *La Unidad* and Moya, a spiritual elderly gentleman with an extremely skeletal physique. Moya is murdered one evening by *La Unidad* because he is seen with an old discharged rifle from the 1895 Spanish-American War. This was viewed as a threat. This death further intensifies Regino's anxiety attacks which debilitates him immensely. It is within this despair, which reflects many of the national feelings in Cuba, that Regino relies on a magical ritual of placing a glass of water under his bed to solve his issues. With miraculous success, his deceased wife appears, and they live intimate evenings that reinvigorate him. After many nights together, she fails to appear without warning. This pushes Regino to, once again, attempt to end his life. The final sequence of the film displays the protagonist drinking coffee in his garden and listening to an announcement of the threat of COVID-19 on the radio. After the announcement, the following shot shows Regino sitting on the toilet with a bundle of used face masks. The protagonist then proceeds to inhale the used face masks, making *La Espera* the first film to depict suicide by self-infection of the COVID-19 virus.

Despite the success the film has had on the global film festival circuit, there remains the ever-present issue of independent filmmakers in Cuba and the distribution of their films to a global audience. Currently, the only way to watch *La Espera* is to contact the director directly and to receive it in the form of a file on Google Drive. This complex and inefficient process leaves an important film that realistically captures the particular everyday horrors faced by Cubans during the COVID-19 pandemic out of reach for most of the viewing public. Thus, Ross' cinematic achievement loses its potential for global recognition and scholarly attention as a notable piece of historical and artistic value.

Jack Riordan, University of Texas at Austin