

REVIEWS

Review Essay: New Approaches to Bodily Provocation in Hispanic Narratives

Masiello, Francine R. *The Senses of Democracy: Perception, Politics and Culture in Latin America*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2018. 309 pp. ISBN 9781-4773-1504-0

Risner, Jonathan. *Blood Circuits: Contemporary Argentine Horror Cinema*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2018. 248 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-7075-7

St-Georges, Charles. *Haunted Families and Temporal Normativity in Hispanic Horror Films: Troubling Timelines*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2018. 199 pp. ISBN 9781-4985-6335-2

Despite the relative divergence of the works considered here, a striking feature unifies Charles St-Georges' work on temporal and sexual normativity in Hispanic ghost horror, Risner's analysis of the Argentine horror cinema economy, and Masiello's extensive reflection on the sensory across two centuries of Latin American art, cinema and literature: the body. In St-Georges' work, the body, particularly female or queer body, is highlighted as a site for contestations of citizenship. By contrast, in *Blood Circuits* the horror genre itself provokes Risner's engagement with the body, given the affective nature of the genre, as written about by the likes of Carroll, Hills, and Hawkins etc. However, the body also proves a useful metaphor in Risner's identification of a parallel between the circulation of blood and the circular traffic in independent horror in urban Argentinian subcultures, as the relationship between content providers and audiences remains close and fluid. Finally, in Masiello's work, the body as sensory centre facilitates the author's investigations into the role of the arts, particularly literature, in the shaping of citizenship, in a way that prioritises the sensory over the affective.

Risner's *Blood Circuits* is simultaneously an analysis of a number of genre pieces, an analysis of independent horror filmmaking, and a portrait of film culture and consumption as a mode of secondary production. The Argentinian horror market, as Risner reminds us, is one that has seen many peaks and troughs in its short history. This study focuses on the industry's re-emergence, particularly as an underground film movement, in the 1990s and into the 2000s. However, Argentinian horror, perhaps more so than other examples of a new wave of Argentine genre cinema, has received virtually no official funding from the INCAA and predominantly circulates through small, independent film festivals, streaming websites, and pirate DVDs. As such *Blood Circuits*, even in its close readings of certain cinematic productions, also makes for a fascinating study of shadow and parallel markets, something rarely studied in relation to popular culture. Indeed, beneath its pop subject matter, gory title and bloody theoretical model, the monograph is a critique of the economy of media, and its formal and informal manifestations. The contemporary implications of genre filmmaking as subculture and secondary market, as Risner shows us, have prompted a tremendous amount of secondary production and cultural flows such as online fandom, bootlegging, and event and venue specialisation. In this sense, he also shows a charming amount of self-awareness that his very monograph is part of that secondary production and maintaining of momentum of film culture within the Argentinian manifestation of the horror genre.

The first and third chapters make for particularly interesting reading when considered as market analysis of genre cinema and its secondary productions in communities, now even more

numerous in the age of social media and video sharing platforms. Whilst the first chapter is an analysis of the horror market and its fan communities in Argentina, in “Cinematic Bodysnatching”, the third chapter, Risner offers up analysis of the phenomenon of Argentinian English-language horror cinema as something of an uncomfortable project in mimesis and an uncanny threat to the USA’s control over horror markets globally. The mimesis inherent in these English-language horror productions stems not only from the choice of language of the script but also in the reproduction of post-9/11 paranoia. Of course, paranoia also represents something of a common theme in contemporary Argentinian politics, particularly given the fixation on *inseguridad* in the neoliberal age, but this paranoia also functions reflexively, something ever more evident in the area of Trump’s US. The Latinx as bodysnatcher, and one incurring upon US film markets, particularly through platforms such as Netflix, makes this Argentinian horror subgenre’s evolution not entirely unlike the plot of a US classic creature feature and reflection on the “Red Menace” from which it takes its name. It is particularly fascinating, as Risner notes, that these films strive to obscure any trace of the *latinx* or *argentinidad*, situating their stories in universal but enclosed spaces such as a sterile hospital wing, or the apartment block. However, aside from this active and insurgent movement in Argentine national horror, Risner is keen to shy away from identifying the horror genre as somehow belonging to the English language, rejecting claims of pure mimesis, and instead interrelating Argentine horror as part of the same tradition as the likes of George Romero.

As evidenced in the other three chapters however, *Blood Circuits* it is not merely a study of media markets; it is also something of an academic love letter to what Julian Hanich called “the paradox of fear,” and what Risner terms the “pleasures” of horror. In the films analysed, this is particularly manifest in horror, and violent cinema more broadly, and its seduction use of violent spectacle, something that evokes visceral and sensuous pleasures, and enables a bounded experience of the dreadful and the deadly. However, Risner is keen to distance this deployment of spectacle from accusations that such spectacular violence represents something merely watched and watchable, display over theatrical absorption. Risner pointedly locates the spectacles within wider political narratives both in Argentinian history, particularly dictatorships, recalling some of the spectacular and visceral scenes of Sarmiento’s *Facundo* and Echeverría’s *El matadero*, and situating horror spectacle vis-à-vis recent global movements, including neoliberalism. The monograph offers detailed analysis of the “pleasures” of violent spectacle, particularly in rape-revenge dramas as progressive shifts in gender and queer visibility (e.g. *No moriré sola* and *La memoria del muerto*) and the spectacle as contestations to neoliberal economic policies in zombie films (in *Plaga zombie: Zona mutante*, 2001 and punk horror cinema more broadly).

Both horror fandom as a site of community building and the paradoxical and affective pleasures of terror provoked by horror make the human body and the social body a central tenet of Risner’s analysis. It is from these bodies that *Blood Circuits* derives its title and central metaphor. The rush of blood begot of terrible thrills, the gush of blood on screen, and the flow of culture and production, criticism and creation, make the circulation of blood fitting metaphor for the underground production of this still much maligned genre. *Blood Circuits* is undoubtedly an invaluable tool for students and scholars of genre cinema and of the economics of independent cinema. It is also a passionate tribute to those audiences hungry for blood and the filmmakers who keep the red stuff coming.

In contrast to the broad scope of Risner’s work, Charles St-Georges’ *Haunted Families and Temporal Normativity in Hispanic Horror Films: Troubling Timelines* offers a much tighter focus and closer textual readings. Across its five chapters, the book offers detailed analysis of various queered bodies and their relation to cinematic time in Rigoberto Castañeda’s *Kilómetro 31* (2006),

J. A. Bayona's *El orfanato* (2007), and Mauricio Brunetti's *Los inocentes* (2015), as well as brief analysis of Guillermo del Toro's *El espinazo del diablo* (2001) and *El laberinto del fauno* (2006). St-Georges engages the phantom in these contemporary Hispanic films as a means to interrupt that which he terms "temporal normativity."

By addressing "temporal normativity," St-Georges builds upon Doane's *Emergence of Cinematic Time* and Skoller's examination of avant-garde cinema in *Shadows, Spectres, Shards*. Both of these influences engaged Deleuze and the potential for transformation inherent in the movement of time. As such, "temporal normativity" is challenged by the spectre who refuses to depart or to change. However, St-Georges also encounters temporal subversion in women who refuse to *become* mothers and other bodies he identifies as queered in some way, and thus unable or unwilling to *become* part of a traditional family and in doing so achieve full citizenship. This aspect of resistance to temporal normativity brings us to the other major focus of *Haunted Families*, the family and social body. Normative temporalities are identified in relation to citizenship, nation building, and biopolitical normativities. This is particularly pertinent to his discussion of Bayona's and del Toro's Spanish Gothic films, in which the less literal spectre of Franco-ism looms large, with all of its Catholic conservatism and its implications for family units, and female and queer citizens. However, the childless woman as failing to properly inhabit time and thus a threat to Mexican prosperity through family ties is dealt with in depth in Chapter Three. Another troubling body to national discourse is presented in the raped body of a pregnant slave, later put to death in the Argentinian film, *Los inocentes*, affirming intersectional complexities in these female bodies as threats to temporal and/or racial normativity. As such, the monograph reveals temporality, citizenship, and sexually or racially "othered" bodies to be intrinsically linked in Hispanic ghost narratives, particularly as means to challenge Conservative and/or authoritarian biopolitical regimes.

The first chapter, whilst establishing these central issues of family and temporality, also briefly sets out similar challenges to those found in Risner's work. As in *Blood Circuits* we find a swift rebuttal of the notion that horror is little more than "cheap, sensation-based entertainment for the emotionally immature" (St-Georges, 11), despite later likening aspects of the horror industry to that of pornography (16). However, St-Georges' preoccupation is not strictly with finding new ways to engage horror, but here in asserting its historical link to Christian notions of death and the afterlife, and tensions between divine time and mortal time. This crisis of horror as linked to pornography, and the dominance of Christian narratives about death in Hispanic horror films leads St-Georges to delve into the Lacanian real, aligning the genre with both the sex drive and the death drive.

Chapters Two and Three both analyse *Kilómetro 31*. The former considers ways in which the myths of *La Llorona* and *La Malinche* are modernised whilst obscuring their indigenous identities and indigenous subjects more broadly. This chapter offers an interesting critique of erasure and realignment of historical and mythological subjects within a myth of white/mestizo modernity. The second of these two chapters focuses on the film, and horror more broadly, as a "body genre," the gender ring of space in modern Mexico, and the woman as *unheimlich* therein.

Chapter Four closely examines two ghost narratives from Spain, which St-Georges considers to be haunted by the national and social trauma of the Franco dictatorship, and its repressive ideology's impact on family and identities. This informs the critical focus on symbolic resistances to heteronormative narratives on the family which appear in both *El espinazo del diablo* and *El orfanato*. The appearance of orphanages in the narratives are highlighted as a counter to the notion of heterosexual Congress as the only virtuous, productive sexual act. In rejecting the

outcome of reproduction, the family model espoused by *hispanidad* is queered by the very existence of orphanages. The chapter also discusses the significance of HIV in *El orfanato*, a disease which St-Georges identifies as *unheimlich*, as a threat that stems from one's own blood and a sickness that is an inheritance from one's mother, as well as its inevitable social associations with homosexuality.

The final chapter continues with the preoccupation of blood in the discussion of HIV in *El orfanato*, but more explicitly engages the Gothic's concerns with heredity. In 2015's *Los inocentes*, St-Georges encounters crises in both foundational violences, highlighting Argentine genre cinema's intersections with Sarmiento's *Facundo*, and models of ideal families in citizenship. The right to family is of particular concern in the film given the *unheimlich* bodies of the pregnant slave and the disabled heir as threats to the white *hacendado* supremacy in the early Republic. As in the erasure of the indigenous in the Mexican film study by St-Georges, the analysis in this chapter revisits the crisis of undesirable histories unearthed in ghost narratives is able to resist temporal normativity. *Haunted Families* is likely to prove useful for scholars of gender and queer studies, perhaps even more so than for scholars of Hispanic genre cinema. It also offers fascinating engagement with both Freud and Lacan with regards to various normativities, be they gendered, sexual, racial, or temporal.

Masiello's *The Senses of Democracy* charts what the author describes as "sense work" in (predominantly Latin) American art and literature from Independence to the post-human turn. The work distinguishes what Masiello terms "sense work" from affect. In the introduction, Masiello asserts that the affective state ought to also "remind us of the material connection to the real" (8), which the author identifies as the sensory, as it is sensation that gives form to the effective state. And sensation, as Masiello illustrates, is particularly useful in thinking about the Latin American nation building project. Indeed, in any state or nation building project the imperative to "elevate the capabilities of the human body in order to support the mission of nations... and to train all citizens to proceed with the single ear and mind," the role of the sensory quickly becomes obvious (1). However, Masiello's monograph is particularly engaged with how these ideal sensory bodies or even subversive sense work emerge within national artistic projects and how this sense work has evolved since the independence movements of the nineteenth-century. The thesis situates this "sense work" across backdrops of national crisis and innovation, and queries how appeals to the senses and representation of the sensing bodies can be used to address societal shifts and shocks, particularly those which undermine claims to democracy. Sensory perception, in both its limits and its widest scope, according to Masiello, grounds and drives social change and cultural innovations throughout some two hundred years of American history.

Masiello identifies the sensible and sensory writings of Echeverría and Sarmiento in their decrying of the Rosas regime and similar deployments and appeals to the senses in the poetry of Chilean Raúl Zurita and painting of Guillermo Nuñez in excavating grief and trauma wrought by the Pinochet regime. Sense work, according to Masiello, is also engaged by women writers in novels calling for major social reforms, as the flavours and aromas of middle and upper-class domesticity, and indeed their slave or *campesino* counterparts were used to appeal to readers in such novels as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Matto de Turner's *Aves sin nido*. In this we might understand the utility of sense work, regarding both the painful and the pleasurable, in both memory and political work within the arts. Sense work and its manifestations in literature of the early independence of the Americas, thus reveals itself to be useful in engaging both abjection, in its various forms, and elitism, with links to nation building, be it through culture, commerce or letters.

In terms of the application of Masiello's thesis, it is difficult to overstate the breadth of her study. The first chapter as indicated above, focuses on early foundational writings of the Argentinian Republic, and their relation of their sense work to romantic influences of the error. However, this analysis is not restricted to Sarmiento or Esteban Echeverría, but more broadly considers the writing tradition from which they emerged, the impacts of dictatorship in sense work of the nineteenth-century, and even sense work's manifestations in the philosophy of Juan Bautista Alberdi. The second chapter is particularly gender-focused and tackles women's perceptions of emerging technologies of the industrial revolution. Once again, this chapter is not limited solely to literature but also engages women's letters and journalism, and their role in shaping perceptions of the age of invention. Masiello posits that nineteenth-century writing by women was particularly situated to frame technology in a humanitarian light, as the sensual quality of writing by those traditionally excluded from the literary canon had a particular capacity to connect industry with bodies and subjectivities. It is through this sensuality and call to the sensible that women's writing becomes especially useful for propagandising, particularly with regard to racial issues.

The third chapter, entitled "Collective Synaesthesia," makes a significant temporal leap to the twentieth-century, and begins to engage visual arts, specifically the worker Argentinian Xul Solar and print advertising. In the chapter's analysis of the Avant-garde and its synesthetic elements, Masiello invokes Robert Wiene's 1920 *Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, the emergence of horror cinema, and the genre's place in sensory and sensible as a form of indulgence and suspense, in a way that is comparable to the Avant-garde. The film serves as the chapter's central metaphor as an avant-garde resistance to the dehumanisation inherent in the rise of factory labour parallels that collision between "high-art" expressionism, the yearning for revelation, and the bald call to the sensory inherent in early German horror cinema. This tension between "high art" and "low thrills," particularly in its sensory manifestations is identified in the narratives of Robert Arlt, the visual work of Xul Solar, in contemporary advertisements for technological innovations. This chapter is grounded theoretically in a criticism of Guillermo de Torre's claim that the abandonment of narrative is necessary for both the sensory project and the project of modernism, and Benjamin's discussion of synaesthesia as a necessary part of intersubjective thinking.

The fourth chapter opens with a brief sensory reading of Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963), then proceeds to consider visual arts in post-dictatorship Chile and Argentina, and discusses Juan José Saer's novel, *Nadie nada nunca* (1980). The beginning of a disconnection between the sensory and the bodily in this chapter is aligned with the mass disappearances and unrelieved mourning of the 1970s and 80s, and foreshadows the conclusion, which proposes the possibility of sense work unanchored from bodies. By way of a conclusion, Masiello begins to investigate the link between language and matter that had been presupposed in earlier sense work, teasing sensory turns for the post-human age.

Senses of Democracy promises to be an essential book for anyone interested in bodily alternatives to affect theory, and to scholars of two centuries of Latin American literature, and as I have already discovered, the book is an invaluable tool in teaching nineteenth-century Latin American literature to undergraduate students.

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Review Essay: New Scholarship on the Life and Works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

Bergmann, Emilie L. and Stacey Schlau, eds. *The Routledge Research Companion to the Works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2017. 342 pp. ISBN 9781-4724-4407-3

More, Anna ed., Edith Grossman, trans. *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Selected Works* (Norton Critical Editions). New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton, 2016. 384 pp. ISBN 9780-3939-2016-1

Schmidhuber, Guillermo. *Familias paterna y materna de sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Mexico City: Centro de Estudios de Historia de México CARSON y Escribanía, 2016. 110 pp. ISBN: 9786-0797-3290-5

Sor Juana is on people's minds of late. A Netflix miniseries, *Juana Inés* has recently drawn US viewers to engage with her life and work. In the series, the colonial Mexican nun emerges as a lesbian and activist for indigenous rights. Produced in Mexico and shown there in 2016 on Canal Once, *Juana Inés* engendered a great deal of polemic for what scholars saw as the producers' lack of fidelity to what they perceive to be the facts of Sor Juana's life. The truth is that there are indeed still many gaps in our knowledge of Sor Juana's life and that of course functions as an invitation to fill them in whether that be through highly-speculative fictional representations or, in the academic world, new scholarly engagements with existing texts or the search for new historical documents.

Three recent publications attest to the continued vibrancy and relevance of Sor Juana studies today in both the US and Mexico and to these searches. Each book makes a distinct contribution, and each emerges from a different publishing sector and as such speak to diversified interest in her figure. In this regard, perhaps the most significant of the publications is the Norton, given that this commercial publication moves beyond the relatively small albeit passionate interest in Sor Juana in the academic world and into the wider and more lucrative milieu of an assigned text for undergraduate and high school students. It seems of signal importance, at least to this reviewer, that Sor Juana should be the subject of a Norton Anthology and that Anna More and Edith Grossman be the ones to bring it to fruition. Anna More, who wrote a game-changing book on Sor Juana's contemporary, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, has herein written and edited with the rigor and cogency that she brings to all her scholarship. Edith Grossman, who most recently translated the *Quijote* into English, is of that small group of translators whom readers will seek out for her work rather than encountering her purely because of their interest in the original text. (Norton has capitalized on her importance as a translator by bringing out an additional volume of the works with an introduction by the novelist Julia Álvarez). Grossman's translations capture Sor Juana's wit and style like never before in language that will appeal to a contemporary audience while at the same time somehow avoiding lapsing into anachronism. Seemingly, Grossman drew on More's expertise as a Sor Juana scholar to finesse her translations and the result is a profound engagement with Sor Juana's poetry that render into English the genius of her imagination and technique.

More's introduction makes the telling of Sor Juana's life accessible for a non-specialist audience without flattening out its biographical or intellectual complexities. She characterizes Sor Juana as an author who "sought innovation within a tradition rather than originality: with the great exception of 'First Dream,' Sor Juana works looked backward rather than forward" (xiv). Here, I would offer a slight disagreement to say the nun looked around her rather than backwards, offering

a profoundly skillful contemporary engagement with intellectual and literary trends in New Spain and pushing them to their limits. As with all Norton Critical Editions, the volume contains a series of secondary materials selected by the editor to offer context and analysis for the reader. Anna More has excelled here in the selection of texts, reflecting her own nuanced and erudite engagement with Sor Juana's works. I particularly loved the context section which begins with a selection from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* from whose pages Sor Juana drew the inspiration and knowledge for the mythological figures and scenes that populated her writings. Also included are the "Requerimiento" which helps us understand the tradition against which Sor Juana wrote her Lascasian-inflected *Loa al Divino Narciso* and an excerpt from St. Teresa of Avila's *Libro de su Vida*. As More rightly notes, despite the similarities between the two women who seized agency through the written word, Sor Juana both "appropriates and distances herself" (174) from Teresa's feminine discourse or what Alison Weber termed "the rhetoric of femininity." In sum, these carefully and creatively chosen texts offer an ample context that reflects Sor Juana's own kaleidoscopic interests and also provide important points of inflection. More also includes Sor Juana's *Vida*, written by the Spanish Jesuit Diego de Calleja with whom she maintained an epistolary friendship. This hagiographic text has perhaps been responsible for some of the deformation of the facts of Sor Juana's life, but it also evokes her in vivid and poetic language, helping to cement the nun and her works into the global literary imaginary.

In the historical contexts section, More presents the reader with some of the signal historical scholarship on Sor Juana and her world produced over the last few decades including selections from Asunción Lavrin's pivotal 1993 article, "Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Obediencia y autoridad en su entorno religioso" adroitly translated by Isabel Gómez who did the same for other materials in the volume, a section drawn from María Elena Martínez's *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*, one of the best books on race in the colonial period I have ever read, as well as a fascinating essay by the art historian, Charlene Villaseñor Black, commissioned for the Norton, on the famous and famously mysterious 17th- and 18th-century portraits of Sor Juana. In the "Critical Traditions" section we find a careful critical genealogy of how Sor Juana's works and the circumstances of her life have been received and analyzed beginning with Marcelino Meléndez y Pelayo (who praised Sor Juana despite deeming her era "a pedantic atmosphere of literary aberration" [233]), and including Irving Leonard on the baroque, Paz on the Neo-Platonism of the *Primero Sueño*, Stephanie Merrim's fundamental feminist intervention, Sabat's eloquent literary analysis (here her reflections on the love sonnets), and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel intricate engagement with Sor Juana's creole subjectivity. More's introductory paragraphs that precede each selection clearly delineate the contributions and, at times, limitations of each, although strangely she presents no such introduction for the excerpt from Paz's *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y las trampas de fe*. The last section of secondary materials is termed "Contemporary Influences" and here we find "Abjection and Ambiguity: Lesbian Desire in Bemberg's *Yo la peor de todas*," Emilie Bergmann's article on the Argentine director's 1995 film included in *¿Entiendes?* the groundbreaking volume on queer readings of Hispanic texts which Bergmann co-edited. In addition, More includes another article by Villaseñor, this time on representations of Sor Juana in Chicano/a art and an interview by Diana Taylor of the performance artist and now Mexican senator, Jesusa Rodríguez, on her creative engagement with the life and work of Sor Juana and from whose production the volume's cover photograph is drawn.

As More points out, the lack of a thorough historical record of Sor Juana's biography presents us with the difficulty of understanding some of the twists and turns that characterize her life, most acutely, we are unable to offer "a definitive reading of what are generally termed the

‘final years’ of Sor Juana’s life” (xvi). More felicitously and diplomatically encapsulates the debate that has arisen around these last years as a conflict between “an interior battle or a more forced and violent decision” (xvi). And she further characterizes the scholarly polarization that sees scholars divided into those who see Sor Juana as an “embattled precursor of women’s rights or as an example of the complex decisions wrought by the gulf between faith and secularism” (xvi). She points out wisely that it is indeed possible that Sor Juana had “both motives” but she cautions that all theories must be deemed speculative until further documents come to light (xvi).

In 2007, Emilie Bergmann and Stacey Schlauf published their *Approaches to Teaching Sor Juana* that has served as an invaluable resource for college teachers, both those specialist Sor Juana scholars and those college teachers who might be including selections of her work in survey courses on Latin American Literature or Women Studies. We can see their new co-edited volume as a companion to the previous one. It includes some of the same authors and privileges this time research over teaching but proves indispensable for both as I can personally attest. The Routledge Companion series purports to offer a comprehensive and expansive view of a particular field and the Sor Juana book lives up to this claim, offering 23 essays. The editors divided these into four categories: institutional contexts (political, economic, religious, intellectual, and legal); reception history; literary genres; and directions for future research. This wide-ranging distribution works very well in that it allows for a deep and wide approximation to Sor Juana’s work and life and permits the inclusion of essays that offer the reader access to the complex context of the New Spanish society in which Sor Juana produced her work, the ways in which Sor Juana has been viewed over the centuries and what this tells us about the significance of her work today, representations of the poet in contemporary society (an area of sorjuanismo that appeals greatly to current undergrads), the broad scope of her work and her mastery of so many poetic and prose styles, as well as a look to the future and an acknowledgement that there remains work left to be done. The editors, who individually and together have amassed a great deal of scholarly authority on the life and work of Sor Juana, reflect perceptively on the field and offer the volume as a corrective to what they, echoing More, describe as the “speculation and distortion” in which some studies have responded to the dearth of documents detailing her life (x).

The editors describe the volume as providing “a clear understanding of the research” on the topics that fall within the chapter rubrics as well as guiding the through literature reviews of Sor Juana scholarship. (It must be noted, however, that the least successful articles are those that go from one paraphrase of their literature review to the next. While they are definitely comprehensive and will surely be of utility to the student/scholar at times they make for less than scintillating reading). The end result is an indispensable overview of and critical engagement with both classic and cutting-edge scholarship. In addition, read together the essays offer an invaluable critical genealogy of the field of Sor Juana studies and map out fascinating critical evolutions. The editors have brought together a wide-ranging group of scholars in terms of discipline and focus. While many are literary scholars, their approaches range greatly. Scholars also represent a variety of generations, ranging from those who have established themselves as important voices in the field such as the editors, along with newer and innovative voices such as translation scholar Isabel Gómez and art historian J. Vanessa Lyon. Historians are included: Alejandro Cañeque does a great job inserting Sor Juana into a wider study on court culture via her participation in the magnificence of the viceregal court and art historian Lyon works on the portraits done of Sor Juana and how scholars have addressed them. The volume predominately features US-based scholars (myself included), but also includes contributions from Mexican and European scholars (two from the great French scholar Marie-Cécile Bénassy-Berling along with Mexican-based Guillermo Schmidhuber

and Martha Lilia Tenorio.) All essays include a section on suggestion for future research within the topic each author has broached, and it was heartening to see the future of the field outlined, at times, in creative and dynamic ways that suggest that new possibilities within Sor Juana studies remain far from exhausted. In addition, George Antony Thomas' entire essay addresses this area and he reflects thoughtfully on how understudied aspects of Sor Juana's canonical works offer new paths as wells drawing the reader's attention to little-studied works that demand further attention. Thomas also arrives at the conclusion that more Sor Juana works are likely to be discovered—most likely “laudatory or occasional verse” given the frequency with which she produced it—even as he deems unlikely the discovery of more thrilling writings such as her transatlantic correspondence (262). Thomas also explicitly identifies the need for more gender-focused scholarship as does Luis F. Avilés in his essay on her philosophical sonnets (174). While the question of gender might seem to be embedded in much Sor Juana scholarship, that is not always the case and I second these two scholars' calls for more explicit understanding of the gendered circumstances of the production of Sor Juana's works. I would add here that an engagement with the construction of masculinity in New Spanish society would also help us better understand the circumstances in which Sor Juana produced her works and the works themselves. Some Mexican scholars reject such an explicit focus on gender and most vehement among them is the prolific sorjuanista Alejandro Soriano Vallés who has recently unearthed additional materials (*Carta de Puebla, Carta de San Miguel*) pertaining to Sor Juana's relationship with the Bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz and author of the *Carta de Sor Filotea*. On his blog, he critiques Bergmann and Schlau's volume for what he identifies as a wholesale misinterpretation of documents pertaining to Sor Juana's life and work. He claims that some contributors only wish to “adoctrinar a sus lectores en el feminismo y en la ideología de género que mostrarles quién fue, según las evidencias históricas existentes, la poetisa mexicana.” In the same blog post he refers to the fact that his recent discoveries have proven that gender studies and “las especulaciones feministas” are nothing more than “una leyenda negra” in the context of Sor Juana studies. However, while some of the scholars in the book do assume a gender studies perspective, all take great care to contextualize their critical interventions within Sor Juana's historical period. As for Sor Juana's adherence to the Church, it appears to me that many of the same scholars' work takes direct or indirect influence from Asunción Lavrin's paradigm shifting article, “Unlike Sor Juana” where she affirms that while Sor Juana was a “devout Catholic and professed nun” there are “still elements in the religious works produced by other nuns—or about them—that are missing in her writings or set her apart from them” and that, overall, Sor Juana was an atypical nun who “would not write solely on religious topics but would let herself speak with many voices; the one who would challenge long-held attitudes on women's behavior with the power of her logic; the one who would allow her mind the total freedom of its own inquisitiveness” (80).

Both More and Bergmann and Schlau, as I mentioned earlier, dwell on the fact that speculation has haunted Sor Juana studies given the lack of biographical details available. There are only a handful of extant documents that shed meaningful light on the circumstances of Sor Juana's life as is sadly often the case with early modern female writers. Mexican scholars have, however, deeply enriched the field with documents that have shed light on a variety of aspects of Sor Juana's life and work. Into this essential corner of Sor Juana studies we find Guillermo Schmidhuber's recent contribution, a large and attractive volume presenting a series of archival documents that offer new information on Sor Juana's family on both her paternal and maternal sides. Fifty-seven of the 64 documents presented, transcribed, and discussed have not previously been published although some are only possibly connected to Sor Juana's family, and

Schmidhuber includes them as invitations for further research. Many of the included documents, nonetheless, flesh out details on Sor Juana's background and early life. In his preface to the volume Manuel Ramos Medina, the Mexican historian and director of the center that published the volume, describes them as enhancing the necessary context in which we must study Sor Juana and which is constituted by her family "en primer lugar" followed by the court and the convent (13). Ramos Medina explains how the book came into being in order to answer two specific and oft-debated questions: "el misterio y el origen familiar de Juana Ines de Asbaje, relacionado con su padre y a procedencia de sí mismo" and secondly, "despejar definitivamente la verdadera fecha de nacimiento de la monja, el 12 de noviembre de 1648" (13). In the first instance, we find out that instead of coming to the New World as a youth, Sor Juana's father, Pedro de Asuaje, was actually a child when he emigrated to Mexico with his widowed grandmother, his mother, an aunt, his younger brother and a servant. In Schmidhuber's edition, we are able to read a copy of the original document giving Sor Juana's great-grandmother permission to emigrate to New Spain from Las Palmas in the Canary Island owing to having "quedado muy pobre" following the death of her husband" (19). Given that her brother, Mexico City's "administrador de naipes," resided in New Spain, he had sent for her and other dependents so as to alleviate her poverty. Other documents such as that in which Doña Isabel seeks to bring her servant are included and transcribed. The documents also allow Schmidhuber to resolve the dispute around the spelling of Sor Juana's father's last name and to confirm that Sor Juana's spelling of her own name as "Asuaje" in the "libro de profesiones" in the convent of Santa Teresa la Antigua de Carmelitas Descalzas was the same one as used by her father. This discovery serves as a correction to Diego Calleja's spelling of Asbaje and to those who have chosen to follow his lead, including Amado Nervo whom the author blames for propagating the misspelling into the nineteenth century in his text "Juana de Asbaje." Mexico's "tradición anticlericalista liberal" refused to use her religious name and thus, thanks to Nervo's error, Sor Juana's name was wrongly spelled on modern currency, and on the "muro de honor con letras doradas en el Senado de la República" (34).

Archival discoveries such as Schmidhuber's add texture to what we know of Sor Juana's life and in the most significant cases illuminate important facets of her work and persona as was the case of the monumental discovery of the *Autodefensa* or *Carta de Monterrey* in 1980. These documents are not the only avenues of inquiry and understanding, however, as both the Norton and particularly the Routledge bear out. Rigorously researched and creatively interpreted literary studies can also bring Sor Juana's work to life and help promote understanding of the complex milieu in which she lived, wrote, and fulfilled her religious duties.

Stephanie Kirk, Washington University

Review Essay: The Matter of Poetry

Brown, Nathan. *The Limits of Fabrication: Materials Science, Materialist Poetics*. New York: Fordham UP, 2017. 296 pp. ISBN 9780-8232-7299-0.

Ledesma, Eduardo. *Radical Poetry: Aesthetics, Politics, Technology, and the Ibero-American Avant-Gardes, 1900-2015*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2016. 348 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-6201-1.

Weintraub, Scott. *Latin American Technopoetics: Scientific Explorations in New Media*. New York: Routledge, 2018. 153 pp. ISBN 9781-1383-2207-3.

Early in her 2013 study *Los muertos indóciles*, Cristina Rivera Garza inquires about the place of poetry in relation to contemporary warfare. Echoing Adorno, she asks what it means to write poetry in Mexico, or in some sense *from* Mexico, within the context of the extreme violence the country has experienced in recent years, during the so-called “drug war” waged in turn by transnational criminal organizations and government forces. Her native state of Tamaulipas stands as her primary example of the contemporary necropolis, with the 2010 unearthing of the bodies of seventy-two Central American migrants, executed by the foot soldiers of organized crime, just one illustration. But Rivera Garza also makes clear that, although her study is focused on writing from Mexico and the borderlands, the necropolitical situation she describes is global in scope, and indeed, that the question pertains to a particular technological situation: “En efecto, la muerte se extiende a menudo en los mismos territorios por donde avanzan, cual legión contemporánea, las conexiones de Internet. La sangre y las pantallas, confundidas” (19). The relation that Rivera Garza suggests between communications technology and contemporary warfare is uncontroversial enough, given the military origins of the Internet and the increasing involvement between tech companies and governmental agencies. She adds, however, a question of how writers relate to this nexus: “Si la escritura se pretende crítica del estado de las cosas, ¿cómo es posible, desde y con la escritura, desarticular la gramática del poder depredador del neoliberalismo exacerbado y sus mortales máquinas de guerra?” (19). To put it differently, and skewing the question a bit, if all of us—presidents and CEOs, generals and cartel bosses, poets and writers, and too many others to name—use the same digital tools to do our work, what kind of world are we making, in knowing collaboration or not, and how can we distinguish, within this activity, something identifiable as critique?

Three recently published books can contribute to answering this question. These are books whose domains overlap with Rivera Garza’s study of experimental poetics in the Americas, and they all address the relationship between poetry and technology—ultimately, therefore, the making, crafting, and manipulation of matter and world.

Of the three books, Eduardo Ledesma’s *Radical Poetry* covers the most ground, both geographically speaking and in terms of the time period covered. His study finds room for poets from Spanish-speaking Latin America, Spain and Catalonia, and Brazil, while simultaneously attending to the effects of diaspora, both within and beyond Ibero-America, on this wide-ranging body of poetry. Similarly, he is attentive to the historical dimension of poetic experimentation, tracing developments in contemporary poetics back to the early twentieth century. The unifying pole for Ledesma’s corpus is the avant-garde, and specifically its recurrence in moments of “intense technological and cultural change,” its radical nature (in the dual sense of “a departure from tradition and a return to the root”), and its tendency to remediate earlier experimental moments (4). As such, Ledesma draws together poetic energies that, while disperse in time and space, coalesce around some version of the imperative to make it new.

The organization of his book suggests that the avant-garde impulse returns cyclically. The reader thus finds three broad sections in which Ledesma guides us through three historical moments—roughly identified with the early twentieth-century “historical” avant-gardes, the social agitation and aesthetic experimentation of the sixties, and the rise of the internet and attendant digital technologies from the nineties onward. One important question this chronology raises, at least for this reader, is whether each of these periods can be understood as a “technocultural flashpoint” (4), especially since the decades stretching between any two periods covered here also certainly witnessed numerous changes in the technological landscape. I raise this point simply because it seems that, while the avant-garde does indeed emerge and return, in some sense, in the

periods identified by Ledesma, the relationship of these cultural moments with a particularly acute moment of technological innovation seems less clear.

That point aside, Ledesma's study aptly draws out the complexity that experimental poets in the twentieth century and beyond have found in their many dialogues with the technologies that surrounded them and conditioned, to some degree, their writing lives. The book thus usefully focuses on a series of relationships of tension between the poetic word and some outside force or medium. The first historical cycle focuses on language and image, the second on print and movement, and the third on poetry and a general communications ecology in which advertising occupies a privileged space.

The high points of Ledesma's study are his meticulous individual readings of the works he studies within these parameters. The close attention of his analyses often generates surprising results. To name just one example, early in his book, we find a detailed reading of José Juan Tablada's haiku "El chirimoyo." The reading draws on the history of engagement between Western poets and Chinese and Japanese poetic traditions, a history in which Tablada occupies an important place. The poem in question goes as follows:

La rama del chirimoyo
Se retuerce y habla:
Pareja de loros.

Taking into account Tablada's interest in the haiku form, as well as the inclusion of a yin-yang image of two parrots alongside the poem, Ledesma goes beyond the moment of revelation in the poem to argue that the poem asks us to consider how such revelation itself occurs in poetry: "the phenomenon of mimicry serves as a metaphor for the moment of poetic revelation (or reader recognition), when a possible meaning of the poem avails itself to the reader in a flash of insight. The poem is, among other things, *about* the sudden understanding of a riddle, or a poem" (43). Working to find meaning both within the world represented by the poem and in the poem itself in its own habitat (the page, the book, etc.), Ledesma often finds points where the two coincide.

Similar moments recur in the book's readings of varied contexts of poetic experimentation. In these contexts, Ledesma carefully draws together a multiplicity of historical forces, alongside conceptual and aesthetic positions, in order to read discrete textual objects. These readings build narratively, it seems, in each of the book's three sections, as writers in later historical moments return to their predecessors and remediate their experiments in new technological contexts. The result is a deep historical tracing of the roots of contemporary digital poetry. And it is in this latter category that Ledesma finds a convergence that is important for the relationship between poetry and technology today:

New media's capabilities to converge different platforms and combine text, image, sound, and movement have led to an intermedial poetry that engages all modes of communication, creating works of a previously unattainable technological complexity. [...] Digital poetry's promiscuous mix of disciplines bridges the divide between the two cultures (science and the humanities), representing, possibly, a return to the notion of *techné* that went beyond mere instrumentality to an understanding of technology as craft, as a complement to *poesis* (artistic creation). (285)

This convergence, in as much as it enfolds a long history of aesthetic experimentation, would thus represent the apotheosis of the avant-garde. The demand to readers that it issues would be to engage with this intermediality and the complexity of the many layers of communication involved in it.

Scott Weintraub's *Latin American Technopoetics*, while less concerned with tracing historical predecessors than in analyzing works in the present, begins in a place related to Ledesma's concluding remarks, at the intersection of science and the humanities:

The interdisciplinary approach employed in this book calls for a re-examination of the discursive frontiers that purport to separate scientific and artistic inquiry, and that also tend to privilege science's (alleged) sovereignty over art. In this study, I argue for the creation of a transdiscursive space in which to situate a certain strand of new media poetics in Latin America: as a new and perhaps powerful or enriching bridge between the sciences and the humanities. (2)

As such, Weintraub offers readings about works of poetry—or works that straddle the sometimes-vanishing line between poetry and the visual arts—that incorporate scientific practice or insight into their own functioning. He does so while also drawing out the aspects of such works that can model a form of contemporary thought informed simultaneously by the humanities and the sciences.

The poetic works that Weintraub studies incorporate a vast range of scientific and engineering practices. Robotics, visualization, algorithmic composition practices, and gene sequencing all find a place in his study. And these practices are placed—by, in varying degrees, both Weintraub and the poets themselves—in dialogue with important scientific concepts that reach far beyond the laboratory. Thus, for example, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's concept of autopoiesis underlies important insights in the book, and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle informs others. Weintraub successfully navigates a range of discourses, performing the very act of convergence between scientific and humanistic knowledge that his thesis advocates.

The works themselves seem to demand such treatment. A series of projects by Colombia-born artist Santiago Ortiz, which occupy the focus of the book's second chapter, certainly seem to require engagement with scientific discourse. Weintraub begins by analyzing Ortiz's "Textual Trees," a work from 2006 that rewrites a series of canonical poems according to an algorithm dependent on the length of specific words, before passing on to "esferas," which coincides partially with the focus on individual words but also pulls in readers to participate in creating "spheres" of associated concepts and definitions. The second half of the chapter presents a reading of a final work by Ortiz, "bacterias argentinas," in which the evolution of a linguistic system, complete with the elimination of those linguistic elements that cannot feed themselves. This "virtual biopolitics conceived within a linguistic ecosystem" tends toward the final "collapse of the system," which—given comments by Ortiz himself and the temporal proximity of this "Argentine" project to that country's economic crisis in the early 2000s—is sensibly read as a comment on the injustice and instability of neoliberal economic models (56-57). We can arrive at this point, however, only by seeking to understand how Ortiz uses practices and discourses common in the more quantitative disciplines.

Weintraub's interests point us to multiple arguments. One seeks to critique the computational nature of some work in the digital humanities, especially toward the early days of that field's founding, in favor of a form of inquiry driven more by aesthetic concerns. A corollary to this critique seems to be that we should attend more closely to the insights of the more traditional humanities in our understanding of knowledge production today. But another, more implicit argument seems to suggest that the humanities themselves also must engage with scientific discourses—at least when analyzing work that already contains an active dialogue in this direction. If for Ledesma contemporary digital poetic practices announce a convergence ("promiscuous mix of disciplines") that ultimately generates an emphasis on poetry as making, Weintraub seems to

paint a similar model in which the scholar recognizes what has already happened and is still happening: “while a rich conversation between the sciences and the arts has always existed, we have new tools and new motivation with which to approach the increasingly-visible interconnectedness of scientific and humanistic discourses” (123).

Nathan Brown’s *The Limits of Fabrication* also requires reading strategies that are attentive to both technology and poetics. His study posits that “poetry, as making, is a practice of material construction” (11) and can be read as a sort of material fabrication. The latter term, in fact, gives Brown the general category in which he reads a number of important poets from the modern, English-language American tradition.

The technoscientific context in which Brown reads poets like Charles Olson, Ronald Johnson, Christian Bök, Caroline Bergvall, and Shanxing Wang, is one marked by the appearance of nanotechnology. The emergence of this field of materials science, in which new sorts of macroscale materials are created at the atomic level, represents an important occasion to revisit distinctions between organic and inorganic materials. In the first part of his study, Brown does so by reviewing Heidegger’s tripartite division of beings into humans, animals, and things like stone, positing that nanotechnology’s capacity for complex interactions with the environment demands new modes of apprehending the latter category:

[A]s soon as we engage with objects and materials that would normally be deemed “non-living” yet exhibit precisely those traits of access to environmental stimuli and behavioral response which Heidegger considers proper to “life,” the terminations and distinctions [proposed by Heidegger] need to be reconsidered. (45)

With this revisionist intent in mind, Brown initiates a long, instructive discussion of the work of Charles Olson, before passing on to other figures associated with Black Mountain College, Buckminster Fuller primary among them, and then more contemporary poets that work self-consciously in the same tradition.

Brown’s chapter on Olson stands as a good example of his mode of reading. In this chapter, he is simultaneously attentive to the critical reception of Olson’s poetics and the relationship between his writings and the fabrication of materials. Brown argues that Olson conceives of a poetics that is simultaneously anti-vitalist and non-anthropocentric. That is, he does not ascribe “life” to the things of the world, but rather makes apparent that there is action and making outside of life: “recognizing the energy and motion constitutive of matter makes it possible to recognize that ‘life’ is not the necessary condition for a modality of being beyond inert fact” (69). This position is legible in Olson’s poems, Brown argues, where objects are arrayed as compositions and things accompany one another, not just as “a relational collective of diverse entities but by the entire history of their being together” (89). This attitude toward materials suggests a vision of matter as a rich field, historically striated and—now, increasingly—highly manipulated by humans marshalling advanced technology.

A key moment in the subsequent analyses of more contemporary poets comes in Brown’s exposition of the thesis of the “crystalline ancestry,” which proposes that natural selection among inorganic crystals constitutes the origin of life on Earth (153). What I find important in Brown’s discussion of this speculative possibility is how he draws out the creative action that emerges, independently of the thesis’s truth, from the collaboration between fields that study life and minerals. Thus the “collusion of molecular biology and crystallography, their chiasmatic coevolution, is of interest not only because of the scientific *knowledge* it produces but also because of the practices of *fabrication* it enables” (156). That is, the overlap or collaboration is itself

generative, not just of truth or insight, but of new kinds of matter. Something similar would hold for the investigations carried out by the poets that Brown reads.

Here also lies, perhaps, a way of thematizing the approaches to the scientific and humanistic disciplines present in the three books under consideration. In all three cases, there is a sense that poetry and technology are already intertwined. Whether it is a function of poets in dialogue with their technological milieu (Ledesma), of the incorporation of laboratory practices into their work (Weintraub), or of a common rubric of fabrication (Brown), the terms are understood to be inextricably connected, both in conceptual and material ways. How this understanding affects, or does not affect, the position of the poet and those interested in poetry in relation to an economic system premised on the expansion of technological innovation—this is less clear. Rivera Garza suggests that the proliferation of digital tools among poets itself threatens the distance necessary for critique. On the contrary, the three books reviewed here seem not to mourn that absence of distance, but rather present the imbrication of poetry and matter as one more fact of the world.

“How to disarticulate the grammar of the predatorial power of an extreme neoliberalism and its killer war machines?” This is a rendering in English of Rivera Garza’s question introduced at the outset of this review. If the aim is to discover or understand the “grammar” of this power, then each of the three books under review contributes something important, for each explores in detail how certain writers have engaged intensely with language as it intersects with an increasingly technological world. And if the aim is to work against that grammar of power, Brown’s general notion of “fabrication” seems most promising to me: fabrication not just of new materials and new linguistic arrangements, perhaps, but, in concert with such fabrication, new social relations around them.

Craig Epplin, Portland State University

Review Note: Noir Writing

Buenos Aires noir. Ed. Ernesto Mallo. Trans. John Washington and M. Cristina Lambert. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Akashic Books, 2017. 219 pp. ISBN 9781-6177-7522-4

São Paulo noir. Ed. Tony Bellotto. Trans. Clifford E. Landers. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Akashic Books, 2018. 269 pp. ISBN 9781-6177-5531-6

These two volumes are part of an extensive series of anthologies of noir narratives essentially organized in terms of major world cities; these two volumes on the third and second largest cities of Latin America join the volume on the largest Latin American city, Mexico City, published in 2010 and edited by Paco Ignacio Taibo II and Achy Obejas. Together the three are a nice set representative of Latin American megacities, cities that have certainly produced an enormous range of crime narratives in both real life and in fiction. Indeed, Tabio II is himself one of the major noir writers of Mexico City. Noir is loosely defined in the series to include anything having to do with crime, and especially criminal activity that transpires in the sadist nooks of the city. Since all three cities are both famous and notorious for their night life, it is not unexpected that such narratives are paradigmatically nocturnal in nature. Moreover, since it is clearly understood in Latin American society that crime is not a lamentable exception to an

otherwise godly city of man, but rather integral to the dynamic of that city, it is equally not surprising that so many of the stories have a distinctly sociohistorical/sociopolitical pathology associated with them. This does not mean that the stories are characterized by a dreary pamphleteering, to one degree or another implicit. Rather, many have a very nice grim turn to them, with often a deeply ironic texture woven from the encounter between aspirations of bourgeois decency and unrelentingly dastard human nature.

Although there is much to distinguish between the “feel” of *porteño* life in contrast to the “feel” of *paulistano* existence, both cities live by harsh mottos that serves readily as the germ of noir narratives. If Buenos Aires is agentalized in the saying “Buenos Aires me mata,” São Paulo is site for the cruel wisdom that “Em São Paulo, ninguém é inocente.” The approximately one dozen stories per city amply per the respective cities’ motto out. Many of the authors are well known novelists and short story writers, while some are jouranalists or exercise professions (such as lawyers) related to a specialized knowledge of the seemiest aspects of the city. Some have published widely (Marcelino Freire, Ferréz, Fernando Bonsassi in the case of São Paulo; Claudia Piñeiro, Alejandro Parisi, Enzo Maquero in the case of Buenos Aires, while others are receiving their first international exposure with these collections.

The stories are all uniformly excellent, as I have found to be the case with numerous other volumes in the series I have enjoyed, and the translations are first-rate. I don’t know if one can say there is any particularly deepening in an understanding of Argentine or Brazilian noir with one or the other of the volumes, but they are excellent readings and could well be used in courses on Latin American literature in English translation for the sociohistorical/sociopolitical dimensions they convey. A feature of all of the volumes in the series is a outline map of the city to mark where each story takes place, enhancing the added value of these volumes for courses on Latin American cities.

David William Foster, Arizona State University

Eltit, Diamela, *Sumar*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Planeta, 2018. 177 pp. ISBN: 9789-5699-4936-4.

Diamela Eltit, recent winner of Chile’s National Prize for Literature, has published her thirteenth and perhaps most unsettling novel, *Sumar*. Acclaimed for her stinging critiques of the market-run state, Eltit now turns to the question of mass assembly. This is a compact and brilliant account of the ways individuals are formed as subjects when they gather as collective bodies and when they assume, as protesters and marchers, a stance of social action in which the left- and right-positions are anything but clear. At the same time, *Sumar* is a novel about the ways people emerge as subjects under the pressures of a technological state, the ways they speak, think, and act under the influence of the cyberspace cloud. Between the cloud (the virtual communal space, at once invisible and global) and the protest march to the capital performed by street vendors and other marginal figures (on the roads, streets, and land), Eltit stages a recitative to call attention to the ways in which time and space, democratic protest and mob action, abjection and the search for power shape our experience in the world.

Eltit, who is known for her attention to bodies, drags the fleshiness of the sentient body to sustain the framework of fiction. This is perhaps an evocation of Viktor Schklovsky’s famous dictum that the task of literature was to work with the stoniness of stone, to show the human

experience vis a vis the effects of material objects. Just to name the stone isn't enough, both Schklovsky and Eltit would observe; rather, one must make the stone feel stony, bringing the experience of encounter close in so that it weighs on our imagination. This has been Eltit's trademark since the time of her first novel, *Lumpérica*, and it continues in her more recent books in which she shows us how her usually nameless characters bear pain and illness in their bodies, carrying the effects of violence. *Sumar*, in fact, begins with these affirmations: "No somos piadosas. Mi tocaya se afirma los riñones con las manos. Se me van a caer, dice, y después se ríe. Me imagino la fortaleza inamovible de sus riñones, el par que tiene. Existe una nube que se expande agobiada por la omnipotencia de su captura" (11). These initial sentences direct us to the whole of the book: How to make the body present through its weight and material form; and how to allow the other (interlocutor or reader) to receive the effects of the scene. Reference to a "cloud" stands in relation to these bodies: is it the ominous weight of nature pressing down upon us or perhaps a pathetic fallacy that links one's dark spirits to the overcast sky? Or is it technology's power containing us without our chance of release? Eltit structures her novel between the tensions of material and impalpable forms, between freedom and capture, and between the hard densities of the land and intangible abstractions of the virtual real; they entangle concepts of time and memory, mob action and progressive change. This is a world of street vendors and a protagonist-narrator who carries her four *nonatos* either in the womb or in her head. Together they invite us to reorganize the burden of memory and raise questions about the future.

A strange flood of proper names relieves the usual anonymity of the street vendors who crop up in Eltit's novels. Almost as if to echo James Joyce who famously asked in *Ulysses*, "What's in a name?", Eltit defines her characters by minor names from forgotten history: Casimiro Barrios, leader of the march and one of the principal characters, carries the name of an anarcho-socialist leader from early twentieth century Chile; Aurora Rojas, the narrator's name, alludes to the Red Dawn of communist revolution; Angela Munoz Arancibia, leader of a Chilean resistance movement from the 1910s, is also one of the marchers. Other names come in as secondary references: Eusapia Palladino, a spiritualist who toggled between reality and magic with her seances and translations; Malcolm McLean, a cargo engineer, who invented new modes of transporting goods; Ramon Mella, a leader of Dominican independence revolts against Spain. Linking all these figures is their capacity to resist boundaries of control, to leap between rational thought and spirit, to lead uprisings and protests, and to keep everything in movement. From this grand diversity, they add up to one.

Which brings me to the title: *Sumar*. In an epigraph to the novel, Eltit explains that the factory "Sumar," expropriated by Allende and given over to worker control, was the site of an arrest and abduction in the early weeks following the military coup in 1973. But *Sumar* also brings us to numbers, adding the isolated members of a group to reach a total; it speaks of sums that lead to the material, mass presence of protesters who unified march toward the city. From the countless names and innumerable stories that a single situation evokes, Eltit leads us to the totalizing drama that is the drive of the novel, merging the individuals so that they take formation as one.

Finally, *Sumar* is also an experiment in how to write a novel. Eltit alludes to the types of novels that can be written today: a serialized novel, a virtual novel, a novel that depends on the grammar of bodies, a novel that positions the family at its fulcrum. But Eltit's endeavor also announces a concept of atomicity, proposing the novel as an incessant realignment of codes. The four unborn children carried by the narrator offer us a key. *Nonato*: non-atomic, unformed, not yet completed in cell division and growth, signaling the "all or nothing" of combustibility that gives birth to a living experience or the birth of the novel itself. Without combustibility of forms, we are

left as the not-yet-borns. Nevertheless and through each chapter, *Sumar* outlines different materializations of life, all of which for better or worse will probably end in the cloud. Eltit asks us if the novel now resides in the crevice between between virtuality and the rock hard real of the present. She asks if we need to reawaken the past in order to have a chance at the future.

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Fischer, Carl. *Queering the Chilean Way: Cultures of Exceptionalism and Sexual Dissidence, 1965-2015*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 281 pp. ISBN 9781-2375-6385-9.

Queer Latin Americanist scholarship in the recent decade has preoccupied itself with the question of sexual difference and the translatability of that difference into our own familiar tongues (Sifuentes-Jáuregui, *The Avowal of Difference: Queer Latino American Narratives*, 2014; Domínguez Ruvalcaba, *Translating the Queer: Body Politics and Transnational Conversations*, 2016; Edwards, *Queer Argentina: Movement Towards the Closet in a Global Time*, 2017). What is gained from these studies is a new lexicon through which to speak about the embodiment of identities that not only reject the normative trajectories of sexuality in the national and collective imaginary; but also, and perhaps more pressing, to consider *how* sexual minorities are positioned at the center of discourses on modernity. Carl Fischer's recent book, *Queering the Chilean Way: Cultures of Exceptionalism and Sexual Dissidence, 1965-2015*, inserts itself into this line of thinking by analyzing the live wire that crosses the categories of "queerness," masculinity, and the Chilean state as the congealment of a political culture of exceptionalism, or as the author describes, "the Chilean way."

The book is thematically divided into five chapters, with an introduction that outlines the theoretical stakes of the study in relation to Chile's recent political, cultural, and social shifts from the mid-twentieth century to the recent. Each chapter carefully builds upon the author's central concern: the material exploitation and exclusion of a class of sexual subjects who are perceived as a threat to the success of Chile's economic exceptionalism (3). On one level, Fischer raises questions about our affective responsibility to account for sexual cultures in the construction of the national subject. On another, he demonstrates the necessity of bringing queer theory to bear on Latin American literary and cultural studies.

In the introductory chapter, Fischer paints a portrait of "the Chilean way" as the quotidian "rhetoric of the superlative, the unprecedented, and the extraordinary" (2). Beginning with the 2010 successful rescue of the trapped 33 miners as a contemporary signpost for Chile's prosperity and remarkable economic progress, the author names a culture of exceptionalism that glorifies a particular image of male triumph on one end, while actively excluding narratives about the labor of sexually and gender variant individuals who contribute to Chile's socio-political economies on the other. Fischer contends that the self-conception of Chilean political and economic institutions as exceptional depends on the spectacularization of a heterosexual masculinity to construct ideas of the family, labor, and the state. Queer subjects, however, throw the results of this nexus of gender, sexuality, and the state of exception into sharp relief. Fischer argues, "The rhetoric of exceptionalism is similar...to the discourse on homophobia: the desire to *distinguish oneself* from, and exert power over, queer subjects at the heart of homophobia is often imbricated in the imposition of heterosexual *conformity and normativity*" (7, emphasis in original). A queer approach to the critique of states of exceptionalism is by no means a new gesture. As the author

rightfully states, scholars of U.S. American studies have already begun to address traces of exceptionalism in queer terms (2). In this turn to U.S.-based queer scholarship, which contours most of the chapters, Fischer skillfully problematizes and extends the location of the “queer” in Latin American cultural discourses. Queerness, he contends, “is a phenomenon as evasive of the letter of the law as the state of exception is, and accordingly, it can undermine Chilean exceptionalism in much the same way that the latter must depend on the state of exception for its force” (10). This turn to queer theory as a necessary framework for thinking with sexual dissidence in Latin America is one of the strengths of this current study. Fischer does not invoke U.S. queer studies as something that can simply be applied onto Chile, but rather, he brings together seemingly disparate reading methods that enhance the critical vocabulary we use to describe and discuss sexual subject formation in Latin American literary and cultural studies.

Fischer’s corpus spans over fifty years of cultural production. The subsequent chapters elaborate upon the theoretical agenda outlined in the introduction through themes of monstrosity, utopianism, reproduction, the embodied performance of the *loca*, and the female body. Chapter 2 thinks through the aesthetic and economic implications of modernity as they are captured in “monstrous”—gender and sexually non-normative—characters who call into question hegemonic models of masculinity as they are juxtaposed with rural reform. As Fischer argues, the portrayal of these dissident subjects “embodied the anxieties held by those in whose best interests it was to perpetuate conventional, reproductive masculinities as the norm; they also forced a rethinking of the economic underpinnings of those masculinities” (60). This trope of an embodied anxiety projected upon queer bodies is a running current for the author’s analyses: queer bodies pose a biopolitical threat to the longevity of the state’s prosperous future. In Chapter 3, this is made apparent through the temporal spaces of utopianism in the ideologies of the Unidad Popular, wherein heterosexual and queer masculinities grate against one another. Chapter 4, perhaps the most theoretically rigorous chapter of the book, presents the body as a site that reveals how “the state of exception can manipulate time and teleology by deploying the language of heterosexual reproduction” which extends theories of exceptionalism in gendered terms (160). Chapters 5 and 6 assess the politicization of the feminine/female as an embodied practice that has more recently been placed at the center of the tensions between official discourses, the public sphere, and dissidence.

Fischer’s sophisticated study of sexual dissidence amidst the rhetoric of nation-building is an invaluable contribution to Latin American literary and cultural studies. He reveals the necessity to account for the bodies that have always already been at the center, yet overlooked in the study, of constructions of modernity and national desire. While the category of “dissidence” remains to haunt how we think about queerness in Latin America, as Fischer eloquently demonstrates, it is still perhaps the only necessary way to rethink our relationship to the archive as we account for those bodies that have still yet to be rescued.

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García Liendo, Javier. *Migración y frontera: experiencias culturales en la literatura peruana del siglo XX*. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt-am-Main: Vervuert, 2017. 343 pp. ISBN ISBN 9788-4169-2222-2

Javier García Liendo's first published book, *El intelectual y la cultura de masas: argumentos latinoamericanos en torno a Ángel Rama y José María Arguedas* (2017), describes the struggles of the Andean indigenous people trying to acculturate to a society in transition of industrialization, specially during the second half of the twentieth century. For this second book, García Liendo assembles fourteen essays about how migration has interacted with the formation of Peruvian literature. The resulting compilation demonstrates the fluctuation of not only humans but also of narratives from the early twentieth century. The migration across the imaginary border between the coast and the Andes in Peru marks the starting point of most of the essays presented in this book. The fourteen essays provide answers and supply questions important to concepts inherited in the Peruvian literature, which include the idea of borders, identity, province, cosmopolitanism, modernization, regionalism, *indigenismo*, transculturation, and integration.

Migration—whether physical or mental—and modernization are indelible realities for all authors studied in this book. The editor has included recognized authors from whom there is no escape who themselves had to face these two fascinating but difficult issues. For instance, the literature of Abraham Valdelomar, as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, portrays the struggle of migration and modernization. In the essay of Marie Elise Escalante we can find that the early short stories of Valdelomar portray certain anxiety and repudiation toward modernization. In fact, instead of embracing this new and unstoppable change, Valdelomar's literature projects fear and uncertainty (49). While Valdelomar struggles with modernization, the poetry of Cesar Vallejo, as José Antonio Mazzoti claims, “transcribe la migración hacia estados mentales poco antes explorados en la tradición literaria occidental” (67). When Vallejo moved to Paris, he may also have migrated mentally in his poetry. The condition of Vallejo in Paris was, in words of María Ortiz Canseco “el de intelectual subalterno y periférico...” (74). Ortiz Canseco's essay plays an important role in understanding Vallejo and his literary production in Europa.

The book *Migración y frontera* not only argues themes of migration and modernization but also national identity. Melisa Moore's essays claims that José Carlos Mariátegui's innovative and rejuvenated political-poetic discourse gave him and his followers the tools and ability to create a new national spirit (112). Whereas some praise these cultural roots, according to Sara Castro-Klarén, others like Mario Vargas Llosa refuse to embrace the nation with its pitfalls. Castro-Klarén argues that Vargas Llosa's double morality flourishes since he denigrates national authors who write about Peruvian culture while he praises European writers who do the same (127). The idea of being different from the rest seems to be a very European ideology, and it seems that this ideology still prevails among some people in Latin America.

Indigenismo, ethnicity, regionalism are other topics taken into account in this book's analysis. The scholar Ulises Juan Zevallos Aguilar proposes to see the work of Gamaliel Churata, José María Arguedas, and Luis Figueroa as totalizing, though I think that each author approaches these issues differently. Furthermore, Zevallos Aguilar states that these three artists have represented in their work the complexity of a subculture that has been ignored by others. Because they are proud of their past and their country, these artists do not hesitate to share with the world the richness of their culture and its diversity (173). Zevallos Aguilar's essay can help us understand that these three authors loved their country and understood the differences, as well as the similarities, that separated them from others.

There are downsides to this text. For instance, there is still little focus on the ethnic minorities in Peru. One of the two relevant essays provided in the book is by Carlos Yushimito del Valle who analyzes *La casa verde* (1966) by Mario Vargas Llosa and *La iluminacion de Katzuo Nakamatzu* (2008) by Augusto Higa Oshiro. In his study, Yushimito del Valle finds that in both novels the integration of the Japanese communities into Peruvian society seemed to be difficult; nevertheless, they become fully integrated as the novel continues (295). The misrepresentation of Japanese-Peruvian writers is obvious in the book, and I think that García Liendo could integrate at least one more ethnic minority writer.

Moreover, the second essay, written by Milagros Carazas, describes the poetry of Leoncio Bueno, an African descendent who also experienced the migration from the countryside to the city of Lima. Like the vague and random writer studied, Carazas states, “La bibliografía crítica sobre la obra poética de Leoncio Bueno es muy dispar,” and then she adds, “En realidad, no hay un estudio crítico que analice su obra completa o siquiera un libro de poemas” (275). It does not come as a surprise to understand that most of the literary critics have focused on works by Mario Vargas Llosa, Jose María Arguedas, or even José Carlos Mariátegui; however, I think that this book could rescue other lesser known authors and integrate them because in some instances, there are essays that talk about the same author repeatedly. Instead of putting in two or three essays on the same author, this book would do far better by adding another writer. In fact, this book could have done better if women and LGBT writers had been included because there is none included in the text.

Overall, this book offers an in-depth understanding about migration, identity, regionalism, modernization and other great topics that still prevail in the Peruvian society. More importantly, García Liendo travels in time to offer an overview of the past. This book superficially explores how these Peruvian writers have reflected this transition, from Los Andes to the coast, from rural places to the city, from one language to another, from the past to the present, from ancient to modern, from Cuzco to Lima, through literature.

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Gómez-Barris, Macarena. *Beyond the Pink Tide. Art and Political Undercurrents in the Americas*. Oakland: U of California P, 2018. 145 pp. ISBN: 9780520296664

Escrito antes del triunfo de Andrés Manuel López Obrador en México y de la llegada al poder de Jair Bolsonaro representando a la extrema derecha en Brasil, el libro de Macarena Gómez-Barris propone diferentes maneras en las que el arte y la cultura pueden ayudarnos a sobrellevar las decepciones provocadas por diferentes políticas progresistas—la marea rosa, a onda rosa, the pink tide—a través de todo el continente americano. En lugar de enfrentarnos con un estado de desesperación política, la autora propone “recognize and bolster the already existing practices and the continual nonlinear movement toward sustainable and equitable futures, practices that represent an ocean of radical potential” (2). Para ello, argumenta Gómez-Barris, es necesario prestar atención a formas afectivas de hacer política y en maneras no-lineales de pensar el tiempo y el espacio, como han insistido el feminismo y los estudios queer desde hace tiempo. Más importante, estos futuros posibles y nuevas formas de pensar lo político, deben venir de espacios translocales “defined by a hemispheric politics based on feminist knowledge production that emerges in spaces of Black and Brown solidarity and in the transits of the South, North, and Caribbean middle spaces of the Américas” (xiii). Esta manera de trazar geográficamente—desde

Latinoamérica (desde el sur global)—las corrientes artísticas y su potencialidad es uno de los mayores aciertos de *Beyond the Pink Tide*, puesto que pone en manifiesto la necesidad de estudios transnacionales que den cuenta de los procesos coloniales, de cómo estos se han intensificado en la época neoliberal y de las maneras en las que podemos producir conocimiento y estrategias decoloniales.

En este sentido, otro de los aciertos de *Beyond the Pink Tide* es cuestionarse la utilidad de los estudios de área y de imaginarse nuevos caminos para los estudios latinoamericanos, desvinculándolos de discursos que refuerzan la idea de estado-nación. Por ejemplo, en el capítulo “An Archive of Starlight” las corrientes van del océano a tierra, de la Patagonia a mapas ingleses y de ahí a geografías indígenas, imposibilitando una visión fija de territorio nacional. Por otro lado, se propone una rearticulación de los estudios americanos y del llamado “sur global”, donde este último no sólo es el productor de conocimiento sino aquel con prácticas radicales y proyectos que ya están cambiando las formas de hacer política en un mundo global.

Los primeros dos capítulos del libro demuestran esto último. “Sounds Radical” es un análisis de la música de Ana Tijoux a través de lo que ella ha llamado “creative chaos”—“a musical mix of genres that break the boundaries of fixed identities, nations, and geographies” (27). Gómez-Barris explica cómo Tijoux y su relación con la diáspora africana y con otros espacios del sur global como Palestina posibilitan prácticas de tran-solidaridad, es decir, una solidaridad que trasciende los límites del estado-nación. Lo más interesante de todo es que Gómez-Barris logra demostrar que la música de Tijoux funciona como una alternativa a políticas capitalistas, progresistas y masculinistas que movimientos estudiantiles han utilizado para visibilizar la deuda económica, los efectos negativos del neoliberalismo, el racismo, el patriarcado y la ocupación de territorios indígenas (en fin, para evidenciar sistemas opresivos de poder).

Titulado “How *Cuir* is Queer Recognition?”, el segundo capítulo parte de un análisis de la producción de Pedro Lemebel, principalmente de su manifiesto “Hablo por mi diferencia”, para explorar qué diferencia hace si cuirizamos lo queer y las políticas identitarias del movimiento LGBTI. Para Gómez-Barris, utilizar cuir es una manera de localizar los cuerpos no normativos en el espacio y en el tiempo, haciendo guiño a los procesos imperiales y coloniales heteronormados. A mi juicio, este es uno de los capítulos donde se ve con mayor claridad la importancia de repensar las relaciones entre norte y sur, y de considerar este último como el productor de opciones viables para un futuro diferente del que hasta ahora ha trazado la hegemonía del Norte. Para la autora, la escritura de Lemebel y las performances de las Yeguas del Apocalipsis en los años noventa cuestionan los límites de las políticas identitarias, de reconocimiento y de los derechos LGBTI al proponer lo que Gómez-Barris llama “the sexual underground”, un sótano de tejido social cuir que no puede ser absorbida por el estado-nación. En otras palabras, el trabajo de Lemebel propone lo que los estudios queer discutirían años después.

Finalmente, en los últimos dos capítulos del libro se clarifica la relación del arte con el espacio. En “Art in the Shadow of Border Capitalism” se analiza el trabajo de Sayak Valencia, Teresa Margolles, Tany Golash-Boza, entre otros artistas, para develar las condiciones de violencia extrema de vivir en la frontera de México-US. Como mencioné anteriormente en “An Archive of Starlight”—capítulo que conecta con el trabajo anterior de la autora en *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*—, Gómez-Barris trabaja con mapas coloniales en relación con archipiélagos e indigenismo para reorientarnos a nuevas formas de pensar el espacio—todo esto a través de un análisis de la película *The Pearl Button* (2014) de Patricio Guzmán. Algo que enriquece a estos dos capítulos es el trabajo con el archivo—que hace eco a las

ideas de ‘scavenger hunt’ de Jack Halberstam como metodología queer—llevando al lector por teorías transfeministas, performances, mapas coloniales, leyes, películas, etc.

Quiero cerrar esta reseña haciendo hincapié en las posibles audiencias para este libro. Evidentemente es un trabajo interdisciplinario que aboga por decolonizar los llamados “Transnational American Studies”, influenciado por estudios latinoamericanos, feministas, cuir y queer. Trabajar interdisciplinariamente muchas veces significa priorizar una audiencia, un método, un área. Macarena Gómez-Barris cuiriza su metodología y borra estas divisiones. Quizá valga la pena mencionar que el libro está diseñado también para estudiantes: abre con un resumen de cada capítulo con la tesis explicada de manera concisa y cierra con un glosario de términos relevantes. En otras palabras, *Beyond the Pink Tide* escribe satisfactoriamente para múltiples públicos, siempre haciendo de Latinoamérica (y el sur global) el punto de partida, poniendo en práctica lo que teóricamente propone: formas decoloniales de trans-solidaridad.

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González, Aníbal. *In Search of the Sacred Book: Religion and the Contemporary Latin American Novel*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2018. 244 pp. ISBN 9780-8229-6504-6

Nos encontramos ante un libro de valor y de interés, la obra de un estudioso con un extenso caudal de conocimiento, con una visión amplia del tema y con una probada entereza moral. El título deja claramente establecido el tema. Desde el prólogo se nos aclara los objetivos de la obra, el material que se empleará como base para el estudio y los acercamientos críticos que servirán para el comentario de los textos que sirven de prueba a la tesis central. La propuesta es sencilla: la religión, vista en términos muy amplios, sirve para entender piezas claves de la narrativa contemporánea hispanoamericana. (Aunque el título habla de novela latinoamericana, en verdad sólo se estudian obras hispanoamericanas.) González es claro y específico al apuntar sus objetivos: “This book aims to examine one of the various aspects of those inner dynamics of the Latin American novel that also, of course, partakes from other cultural traditions: the use of religion to endow the novel with greater aesthetic, intellectual, and even spiritual transcendence” (ix). Aquí no se intenta ver cómo se ha representado la religión en la novela hispanoamericana sino cómo esta ha afectado la narrativa como artefacto artístico. Por ello el autor observa las repercusiones estéticas, intelectuales y hasta espirituales de la religiosidad en once importantes textos narrativos. El libro no es un catálogo de la temática religiosa en nuestra narrativa, sino un intento de establecer cómo ciertos principios que identificamos con lo religioso conforman novelas claves en nuestras letras.

De inmediato hay que apuntar que su definición de religiosidad es amplia, quizás demasiado amplia. Valiéndose sobre todo de las ideas de Rudolf Otto—aunque también emplea ideas de otros importantes teóricos: Kristeva, Foucault, Pelikan, entre muchos más—, González esencialmente se acerca a lo religioso en cuanto es una manifestación de lo sublime. Esta reducción—reducción que a la vez reduzco para explicar sucintamente su método—le facilita el acercamiento a textos tan diversos como *Redentores* de Zeno Gandía, *Cien años de soledad* de García Márquez, cuentos de Borges donde se trata la teoría de la novela y *Los detectives salvajes* de Bolaño, entre otros. Como González parte de una idea básica del gran estudioso de la religiosidad de principios del siglo XX—“for Otto the religious concept of the sacred is closely related to the aesthetic concept of the sublime...” (11)—, su visión de lo religioso es amplia, a veces hasta muy diluida. Pero a la vez es práctica, ya que el concepto de lo sublime le sirve para

acercarse a textos narrativos muy diversos que poco parecen tener en común y poco también parecen estar relacionados con el tema de la religiosidad. Esto es así a primera instancia, antes de que el crítico los comente y los interprete.

Para mí hay dos elementos que salvan este estudio que puede parecer demasiado difuso y poco enfocado en el tema de la religiosidad, dado el diluido punto de partida que emplea para definir lo religioso. El primero es la abarcadora cultura del autor quien puede relacionar obras aparentemente disímiles, hasta contradictorias, y colocarlas en un revelador contexto literario y cultural. Sus referencias a Flaubert, a Longino, a Spinoza, a Burke, a Ortega y a Paz, entre muchísimos otros escritores y pensadores, le sirven para crear un amplio contexto en el cual coloca las obras que estudia y, al así hacerlo, las relaciona y las hace formar parte de un todo mayor. Por ello mismo el capítulo introductorio, donde hay un gran despliegue de hitos culturales y filosóficos y donde se desarrolla sus ideas sobre la relación de la religiosidad y lo sublime, es para mí el mejor. En segundo lugar, a pesar de que el concepto de lo religioso que se emplea es amplio y a veces no parece aplicarse a la obra estudiada, González siempre nos sorprende cuando comenta los textos que estudia porque nos revela mucho sobre los mismos aunque, a primera instancia, su acercamiento teórico parezca forzado. Hay capítulo donde la aproximación a las obras es más clara y fructífera, pero, en general, siempre terminamos de leer su comentario de los textos estudiados con una nueva visión de los mismos.

Como ya he señalado, González no estudia la expresión de lo religioso desde una perspectiva teológica sino como una manera de ver y estudiar la construcción de los textos a partir de la idea de lo sublime. A pesar de ello creo que hace falta en el libro un acercamiento a la teología de la liberación, la contribución más importante de Hispanoamérica a este campo. El estudio del impacto de esta a la narrativa le hubiera servido a González para estudiar desde otra perspectiva, por ejemplo, textos como *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* de Elena Poniatowska que ve desde su amplia definición de lo religioso. Pero, en fin, estas son otras puertas que se pudieron haber abierto para estudiar el tema, pero no son las que González escogió. Pero lo que sí nos ofrece ya es mucho. Probablemente pidamos más porque quedamos muy satisfecho con lo que ya se nos da en el libro y eso mismo nos hace querer ampliar el tema.

In Search of the Sacred Book es un estudio de mérito que nos ofrece un acercamiento innovador a los textos que estudia. Es un libro que nos hace leer de manera distinta novelas clásicas que ya se han visto desde otras perspectivas. Es esta una mirada innovadora. Pero es, sobre todo, el despliegue de erudición y el empleo efectivo de la amplia cultura del autor, rasgos que le facilitan crear un amplio marco en donde colocar las novelas estudiadas, lo que más me impresionó de este libro. Al leerlo me preguntaba cuál sería la motivación que llevó a González a escribirlo. En su prólogo no lo aclara, pero no creo que haya sido un impulso de religiosidad, sino una gran conciencia ética. Esa conciencia, que se esconde en cada una de estas páginas, retrata a un intelectual digno y comprometido.

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López-Calvo, Ignacio, and Victor Valle. *Latinx Writing Los Angeles: Nonfiction Dispatches from a Decolonial Rebellion*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2018. 234 pp. ISBN: 978-1496202413.

López-Calvo and Valle's thorough criticism and broad selection of works in *Latinx Writing Los Angeles* resulted in a seminal contribution to the study of Latinx spatiality. In its own textual

performance, this compilation empowers the voices of Latinx authors who have lettered the city of Los Angeles with their writing of the city and from the city. In countervailing the Hispanic fantasy heritage of Los Angeles, the editors highlight a variety of experiences representative of the transnational foundation of the city; much more in a city of the historical and cultural proportions such as Los Angeles, the plethoric character of the compilation uncovers what has been covered over—to use Enrique Dussel’s concept of coloniality—by dominant narratives of the city. Imbricated on the concepts of dissent and rebellion, *Latinx Writing Los Angeles* reveals an urgency to consider the intersections of place, space and identity in Latinx nonfiction. In short, the works compiled substantiate the vibrancy of the Latinx presence in the sociocultural density of Los Angeles.

The editor’s fluid and decolonial approach to *Latinx Writing Los Angeles* points towards the complicity between the canon’s homogenizing pulsations and the cultural narrowness of official narratives about the city, and challenge the political and urban planning myopia that has failed to embrace wholly the multicultural densities of Los Angeles. This is not to say that there are not phenomenal works exploring such spatial-cultural makeups. Rather, it is to insist on the significance of displacing a fantasy heritage syndrome for an intentional appreciation of the multicultural heritage rooted in these cities since their inception. Contextualized in such history of racist city planning, and along current trends of cultural oversimplification via gentrifying waves of spatial-cultural commodification, *Latinx Writing Los Angeles* claims a Latinx right to the city by evoking the specters of diversity that haunt dominant narratives of cities like Los Angeles and others of similar cultural density and historical proportions. While it is undeniable that there is an attempt by city officials to recover Los Angeles’s Latinx heritage, recent legislative history in the state also reminds us of the systematic xenophobia saturating some of these efforts. For example, two decades ago California’s Proposition 187 attempted to criminalize undocumented citizens and ostracized them from public services. Nonetheless, López-Calvo and Valle’s contribution attests to the foundational and ongoing transnationality of Los Angeles.

Another crucial element in the comprehensive quality of this work is the editor’s critical introduction to the literary value of nonfiction narratives and the Latinx voices within. Along with the introduction, López-Calvo and Villa’s selections demonstrate that spatial sensibility has long been a trope for cultural and ethnic assertion and a topic of writing for the Latinx community outside the 1990’s academic spatial turn. The works are organized chronologically, extending from the colonial genre *cartas de relación* to more recent reflections on gentrification and its impact on the intersection of memory and place, covering as well a wide range of topics and places of enunciation that are representative of the Latinx sociocultural heterogeneity and a fluid collective consciousness. The inclusion of Mexican Ricardo Flores Magón’s newspaper article “The Repercussions of a Lynching” and Colombian Blanca de Moncaleano’s “To Womankind, a Manifesto” are worth mentioning in that they not only talk about issues pertinent to Latinxs in the United States, but they also demonstrate the editors’ broad vision for diversity in the themes and forms of *Latinx Writing Los Angeles*. Similarly, the reflections by Anaïs Nin (born Angela Anaïs Juana Antolina Rosa Edelmira Nin y Culmell) epitomize the fluidity of a metropolitan experience. Born of Catalan Cuban parents in France and raised in the United States, Anaïs Nin writes about her gradual appreciation for Los Angeles as she compares the city’s social rhythms to other metropolises, like New York and Mexico City. López-Calvo and Valle’s selection of Anaïs Nin’s writings is coherent with the precept that cities are hubs for multicultural contact, and that Los Angeles is a product of a constant transnational movement of people. In this respect, as expected

of a metropolitan city, the array of voices compiled in this text demonstrates an unbroken transnational legacy of Los Angeles and the Latinx foundational presence in it.

In conclusion, the texts in this compilation intersect in multiple fluidities and it is intellectually and culturally stimulating. While the individual impact of each work can extend beyond this compilation, together they form a restorative corpus that elucidates the multicultural foundation of Los Angeles. Together, these texts talk back against a systematic erasure of the Latinx presence in the city and its profuse writing tradition. López Calvo and Valle delivered another robust text for the advancement of Latinx and American literary and cultural studies. In regards to writing Los Angeles, spatial contestation is tantamount to a colonial and decolonial dialectic within the competing narratives written on the city and of the city; as such, the cultural and academic significance of López-Calvo and Valle's compilation is informed by the dialectic between Los Angeles' fantasy heritage and its Latinx sociocultural density, rooted in its founding transnationality and the everyday lived experiences of the largest Spanish speaking city of the United States.

José Juan Gómez-Becerra, Eastern Kentucky University

Luna, Ilana Dann. *Adapting Gender: Mexican Feminisms from Literature to Film*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2018. 290 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-6828-0

En este libro, la autora propone realizar lecturas laterales de cuatro obras llevadas al cine, examinando las operaciones que intervienen en el proceso de la adaptación. Se trata de elucidar la práctica de la adaptación filmica como un acto potencialmente subversivo, y poner de relieve el giro que dio el cine mexicano en los años 90. Se propone asimismo mostrar cómo nuevos espacios se abrieron para que diversas historias de mujeres fueran llevadas a la pantalla. Los filmes examinados reiteran, expanden y personalizan discursos feministas previos a través del diálogo intertextual para constituir una fuerza que se opone al modo de discurso dominante. Son “ecos expandidos” del texto-fuente, afirma con acierto la autora.

Los textos fuente se vuelven a contar para públicos diferentes a los que los recibieron por primera vez; así, se amplía el alcance de sus mensajes iniciales sobre el género, lo mismo que las fronteras de los feminismos representados en los textos. A cada una de las obras analizadas corresponde un capítulo del libro, al tiempo que se emplean estrategias distintas para el análisis, según se requiera. El Capítulo 1 examina la transposición de *El viudo Román*, novela corta de Rosario Castellanos (1964) al filme intitolado *El secreto de Romelia*, dirigido por Busi Cortés (1988). La película subraya ideas feministas, latentes en la obra literaria, para una nueva generación. A la vez que constituye un homenaje a Rosario Castellanos, plantea nuevas preguntas, en un momento histórico distinto; resignifica la cuestión central de ser mujer en el México posterior a 1968. El diálogo entre madres e hijas, presente ya en el cuento de Rosario Castellanos, se expande y actualiza en el filme de Busi Cortés.

En el Capítulo 2 se estudia el paso del teatro al cine de *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda*, de Sabina Berman (1992). Se trata de un caso de autoadaptación, pues el filme fue dirigido por la autora de la pieza teatral. Ambas obras cuestionan la autoridad de la Historia en tanto discurso y desmitifican la figura de Villa como macho mexicano. Encontramos una metacrítica de modelos de género en los que se ejerce violencia contra las mujeres: en el filme hay personajes femeninos que reflexionan de manera crítica sobre su participación dentro de las estructuras patriarcales.

El Capítulo 3 está consagrado a *Novia que te vea* (1992), novela de Rosa Nissán en la que se realiza la negociación de una identidad judía en el México católico y la educación que se daba a las jóvenes. Dos amigas, Oshinica y Rifke, recuerdan su adolescencia. En la adaptación de la obra literaria Guita Schyfter escribe su propia historia de exploración personal de la “mexicanidad” judía. En el filme se entretiene lo azkénazi con lo sefardí y se da una multiplicación de voces. El *flashback* se emplea abundantemente para establecer un sentido de resolución ausente en la novela.

El tema del Capítulo 4 es la adaptación (más bien la versión) que Jaime Humberto Hermosillo realizó a partir de un cuento de Elena Poniatowska (1979), con una ligera variante en el título: “De noche vienes” se transforma en *De noche vienes, Esmeralda* (1997). Se retoma la crítica hacia la desigualdad de género, presente en las estructuras legales mexicanas aludidas en el cuento. En la película, mujeres y hombres gozosamente desmitifican la farsa del matrimonio, y se presenta a través de ello resistencia ante el miedo a la diferencia, a lo *queer*. En este sentido, el discurso del filme contribuye a modificar el imaginario nacional, otorgando un giro gay al discurso de la respetabilidad.

Las conclusiones apuntan hacia nuevas posibilidades para continuar la investigación, centrada en el estudio de las relaciones dialógicas entre escritoras, adaptadoras y adaptadores, y el público. Se presentan alternativas a un discurso monolítico de la mexicanidad. El estudio también reveló tensiones y conflictos entre mujeres, activistas gay y entre las mismas comunidades. Se subraya que hay pocos filmes en los que el lesbianismo es central en la trama. Todavía hay marginalización de directoras, sobre todo lesbianas y que traten el tema de la homosexualidad femenina, pues sus propuestas son vistas como riesgos financieros.

La autora propone que el pensamiento feminista debería ser visto como multiplicidad de posiciones conscientes del género, críticamente comprometidas con la cultura circundante. Explica que su interés en el libro es poner de manifiesto que la adaptación ha sido y puede ser una práctica feminista: la recapitulación orientada hacia el género, la puesta al día, la intervención, la distorsión y el diálogo con la literatura feminista, a través de la cita y la intertextualidad, subvierten activamente los tropos con género del filme e interrumpen la hegemonía de los discursos nacionalistas de masas. Es decir, en los filmes estudiados la adaptación, como práctica reiterativa, se convierte en una herramienta para hacer evidente y desestabilizar discursos que han tratado de parecer “naturales”.

En cuanto a las ‘ganancias’ obtenidas durante el periodo examinado, los estudios realizados por Ilana Dann Luna confirman que nunca antes había habido tantos filmes centrados en figuras y situaciones de mujeres, o no se habían hecho lecturas desde perspectivas analíticas y feministas; 1990 fue, en efecto, la década del cambio.

Los enfoques teóricos que podrían contribuir a fortalecer las perspectivas analíticas presentadas en este libro no son muy abundantes, aunque no están ausentes por completo. De Linda Hutcheon se toman criterios básicos para hablar de la adaptación de una obra, como el considerarla un acto creativo e interpretativo de apropiación, un compromiso intertextual extendido con la obra adaptada. Asimismo, se hace una rápida mención del dialogismo bajtiniano para el estudio de la transposición como producto, pero no se ahonda en el tema.

Adapting Gender es una propuesta interesante en cuanto a la adaptación: la obra “llevada” al cine expande su contenido de un medio poco consumido en México (el libro) a una audiencia mucho más amplia. Esta expansión, lograda a través de los procesos de adaptación y transposición a partir de obras escritas por mujeres mexicanas, es una de las contribuciones sobresalientes de este libro.

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Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, Malgorzata. *Fierce Feminine Divinities of Eurasia and Latin America: Baba Yaga, Kālī, Pombagira, and Santa Muerte*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 188 pp. ISBN 9781-1375-3500-9

Professor of Spanish and Women’s Studies Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba has written a far-reaching comparison of four mythical figures and archetypes that reveal important aspects of human condition in general and marginal women in particular. It is firmly in the field of “postmodern” (a term she uses) cultural studies, but it relates to canonical literature like the *danse macabre* and Homero Aridji’s recent novel *La Santa Muerte* (2012) (113, 125, 134). Oleszkiewicz-Peralba claims to have written the study for her aforementioned fields, along with religious studies, anthropology, Slavic studies, and “the general public” (11). The use of terms like “liminality” (3) and “chthonian” (26) makes me wonder how “general” her audience is. Nonetheless, I could see this book attracting readers at a Unitarian Universalist religious education group or similarly heterodox religious gathering: Spiritist, Umbandist, Neo-Sufi, or *Santero*, a study group of scholars from different fields, or a book club associated with an art or history museum, college, or urban public library. Not many others are interested in reading about topics like the Paleolithic origins of the phallic Bird Goddess (25) or the Yoruba names of the five embodiment of the life force Ajé (94).

The introduction seems to foresee the criticism that she arbitrarily associates these entities with one another: Slavic, Iberian, and Indian cultures are not usually immediately related to one another. In addition to her own background and travels in Poland, she conducted fieldwork in Brazil, Mexico, and the US Southwest. She found mythical female beings there that were the opposite of Western notions of “motherliness, docility, humility, passivity, and obedience” (1-2). They are liminal figures, embodying transitions between worlds, life and death, good and bad, and she bases her definition of “liminality” on the theories of anthropologists Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, Arpad Szokolczai, and Bjorn Thomassen (3).

Her first chapter examines the powerful pagan origins of Baba Yaga, an archetypical witch now associated with Slavic children’s fairy tales. In many ways, she is a precursor for the other goddesses that the study discusses. The book has a quasi-chronological structure that begins with the pre-Christian origins of the Mother Goddess in Europe (36) and then Kālī’s in India, which may be older in some manifestations. That said, she is analyzed in her eighteenth-century form and regarding her influence on contemporary France and Latin America (64-65). The author re-establishes Baba Yaga’s gravitas, lost in fairy tales, through mythical interpretation and intercultural comparisons. Her house of bones is related to women’s control over life (birth) and death (the return to the earth as a metaphorical or mythical return to the womb) (35). Her relation to birds and snakes is compared to the Christian dove and Quetzalcoatl, respectively (24, 29). Her

colors, red, white, and black, are related to bodily fluids, making them universal human symbols (31).

While she develops the chapter on the Hindu entity Kālī less than the others, it appears in the study because she is the “ultimate creator, preserver, and destroyer” and “the epitome of the types of goddess we are looking at” (54). Scholars of Hinduism will not find the analysis of the goddess particularly enlightening, but her discussion of her presence in the Indian and Roma diaspora will be of interest. It also bridges the Old World to Latin America. She is popular in Trinidad and Brazil in different forms (64). In Southern France, a Roma Goddess that looks like Kālī is worshipped as a Catholic saint (64). In Brazil, this saint, Sara-La-Kālī [sic], was reinterpreted as “Sara Kali” and associated with Our Lady Aparecida in Umbanda places of worship (65).

The Umbanda faith is one of the homes of Pombagira, the divine “Lady of the Night,” the topic of her third chapter (76). The chapter discusses historical factors in the appreciation of this liminal, pragmatic deity, who is popular among the marginalized of Brazil (70). This deity shapeshifts: “She appeared as the street woman and female devil, together with the *malandro* (‘scoundrel’) Zé Pilintra, as part of the powerful *povo da rua* or ‘street people’ of Umbanda/Quimbanda” (72). Oleszkiewicz-Peralba goes on to explain that the many manifestations of Pombagira, while “inferior” or “unevolved” in syncretic faiths, are pragmatic and willing to do things other spirits will not (91). She is the embodiment of Exu, the semi-god of transitions that is also seen as the devil (87). She sometimes manifests as a “Gypsy” (83). In every case, she is a useful and impure trickster. She is the opposite of the “dulcified” Yoruba deity Iemanjá, who in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is often depicted with “pure” white skin and syncretized with the maternal Our Lady of Aparecida (84). This chapter would be useful for interpreting contemporary literature about Afro-Brazilian identities and syncretic literature, especially *literatura marginal*, given the shared focus on *favelas* (shantytowns) (100). The chapter includes poems and lyrics, which could be used in a poetry study (94-95).

The chapter “Santa Muerte, Death the Protector” is of interest to Chicano, Latinx, Central American and Mexican studies scholars. Mexico’s patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe, is a pure, maternal entity with Catholic and indigenous roots that has been associated with the marginalized for centuries (134). But the new forms of mass violence associated with the traffic in narcotics and the reactionary War on Drugs have made many in Greater Mexico more desperate for immediate solutions in a moral gray zone (119). Like the prostitute Pombagira, Santa Muerte, the personification of death, is transactional and willing to do one’s dirty work (9). While popular among the oppressed, the robed skeleton is also a favorite of prison guards, lawyers, and others who are liminal in different ways (9). Even the self-proclaimed “Archbishop” David Romo Guillén, former leader of the Iglesia Tridentina, a major center of the faith, was sentenced to prison for election fraud and multiple kidnappings in 2011 and 2012, respectively (153). The chapter includes various examples from visual culture, from candles, statues, and low rider trunk altars to paintings and artist Teresa Margolles’s shocking display of stolen body parts at the 2009 Venice Biennale (120). The pervasive narcoculture in North and Central America makes this adoration of death in the context of mass killing for economic reasons relevant to multiple fields.

Oleszkiewicz-Peralba’s conclusion links her four disparate liminal goddesses and reaffirms her cosmopolitan feminist vision:

Like independent and fierce women healers and seers who did not conform to the established patriarchal order in the past, and as a consequence were persecuted and punished with banishment or death, today these fierce feminine divinities are often

subjected to censorship through dismissal, demonization, dulcification, ridicule, or relegation to children's games and tales. (141-42)

By the end of the book, the reader sees these mythical women as part of the complex web of associations that make up humanity's relationship to nature, the divine, death, and femininity.

Oleszkiewicz-Peralba has carried out a limpid, thoroughly researched, well-explained, innovative, and multifaceted study. On the other hand, her editor did not do the same careful job of ensuring spacing and spelling issues were addressed, especially in her block quotes. These issues are so prevalent that I found it hard to read at times (5, 53, 56, 69, 72, 73, 95, 129, 132, 133, 153). Palgrave MacMillan should address them in the online edition and future runs, because the author has clearly put roughly a decade of work into this study; it deserves a more professional presentation.

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Ran, Amalia and Moshe Morad, eds. *Mazal Tov, Amigos! Jews and Popular Music in the Americas*. Boston: Brill, 2016. ISBN 9789-0041-8447-3

A wave of Jewish immigration to the Americas began during the late nineteenth century, when pogroms and famine urged massive numbers of Eastern European Jews to depart the Old World for the New. In the twentieth century, Arab nationalism and German Nazism were two factors among many that encouraged the continued migration of Jews to the Americas. These Jews brought with them the cultural treasures acquired over the course of their millennial diasporic wanderings, including an especially rich musical tradition, as Amalia Ran and Moshe Morad's edited collection *Mazal Tov, Amigos! Jews and Popular Music in the Americas* persuasively articulates.

Some of this edited collection's most successful chapters cohere to Judah M. Cohen's elegant argument, at the volume's conclusion, for the importance of listening to the dialogic interchange of Jewish music throughout the Americas. Attention to this conversation provides a fuller, truer, and more interesting picture, while at the same time poses more challenging questions that go well beyond the sphere of Jewish popular music. Benjamin Lapidus's and Nili Belkind's chapters in the volume do just this. Lapidus presents a fascinating "examination of the multifaceted, complex, and long-standing relationship Jews have had with Latin music as consumers, promoters, dancers, composers, arrangers, and performers" that concludes with a case study of Larry Harlow, a legendary musician who illuminates the author's thesis. Nili Belkind's especially compelling chapter expands the "static conceptions of legitimate collective identities" by way of a survey of Roberto Juan Rodriguez who, while not Jewish, has found a home "in the Jewry of life" (139, 123). Such chapters demonstrate the precision of the editors' description of the collection in their introduction: "we wish to clarify that this volume is not about Jewish music. It seeks to explore the role of Jews and Jewishness *in* popular American music. In other words, this collection focuses on popular music as a means for social integration while creating a new American culture which is also Jewish in many senses" (4).

The second largest Jewish population in the Americas, after the United States, resides in Argentina. Understandably, then, several chapters attend to this profound repository of Jewish culture. (It is incomprehensible, on the other hand, that *Mazal Tov, Amigos!* disregards Jewish Mexico). Pablo Palomino delineates the complexity of the early twentieth-century's Jewish

musical field, which is best summarized with the author's conclusion that "Jewish musical life in Buenos Aires hence challenged the opposition between high and low, the separation of local and foreign, and the wrong assumption that musical forms are clearly bounded and mirror social and ethnic hierarchies" (41). In addition to illustrating the vibrancy of Yiddishkeit in Buenos Aires, Amalia Ran convincingly argues in her contribution that "from the 1940s onward, this symbolic space, constituted by popular music, enabled Jewish musicians to belong to the nation's musical and cultural arenas, even prior to their acceptance as part of Argentina's mainstream culture; in other words, popular music in Argentina comprised musical *ethnoscapes* that enabled the integration of these musicians into Argentinean society" (44). This chapter pays special attention to Jewish participation in tango, to the lesser-studied genre the chamamé, and to one of its important developers, Isaco Abitbol. In a case study of Argentine musician Simja Dujov, Lillian M. Wohl finds that this musician's eclectic approach "locates Jewish sound and Jewish Argentines within a broader matrix of urban activities and musical projects renewing the Jewish cultural imaginary throughout the Americas" (171). Thomas George Caracas Garcia and Edwin Seroussi put forth two chapters devoted to other parts of Latin America. Caracas Garcia studies Jacob do Bandolim, a Brazilian composer of choro, and the political background—namely the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas—against which he rose to become "one of the most popular performers of his day" (62). Successive generations have made him into a "Jewish (-) Brazilian composer," a label he would most likely have rejected, the author suggests, as the *bandolinista* viewed himself as a Brazilian musician, pure and simple. As a corrective to the minor attention paid to cultural expressions of the "Jews of Islam," a term that Edwin Seroussi cogently argues is more apt than "Sephardic," the author concisely reviews these modern Jewries and their musical repertoires.

Several chapters, such as Ellen Koskoff's "Is 'White Christmas' a Piece of Jewish Music?," center on U.S. American Jews and popular music. Koskoff looks to answer the intriguing question she poses in the chapter's title "through the lens of whiteness studies" (14) which she does only incompletely over a mere two pages, dedicating the chapter's lion's share to a bulky review of what Matthew Frye Jacobson has called "the racial odyssey of American Jews from 'white persons' to 'Hebrews' to 'Caucasians.'" Ari Katorza studies Jerry Lieber, Mike Stoller, and Phil Spector, Jewish writers and producers that "blended African-American cultural charisma with European high art" and in so doing produced "a more authentic portrayal of what American culture was all about" (79-80). Jon Stratton's chapter interrogates Jewish singer-songwriters of the late 1960s and 1970s, including Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, Randy Newman, and Paul Simon. Stratton discusses these artists in terms of "strangerness," a concept framed by Georg Simmel and further developed Zygmunt Bauman: "It was this feeling of strangerness, in spite of apparently being insiders, coupled with their disillusionment with the American dream, and anxiety, if not paranoia, related to the Holocaust, that underlay the concerns expressed by Jewish singer-songwriters of the 1960s and 1970s" (101). Abigail Wood reviews the ways in which U.S. American Yiddish song responds to "the challenges of creativity and meaning in a contemporary, non-vernacular Yiddish culture," surveying three of its variants, "Old World Yiddish song," "Yiddishism," and "Bricolage" (144, 149). Uri Dorchin's case study of the rapper Drake, who is both black and Jewish, deliberates the ways in which the musician strategically wields both identitarian categories, and in so doing offers us a glimpse of the "rules of the genre" (164). Moshe Morad's essay "looks at a particular musical/cultural aspect of this intersection [Jewishness and queerness]—the great American Jewish divas—who became "gay icons" and subjects of female impersonations in drag shows." (188). Morad's thesis misses the mark as its conceptions of

Jewishness and queerness are reduced to Judeophobic and homophobic definitions, as the section title “Jewishness and Queerness, Judeophobia and Homophobia” forecasts.

Despite the peccadillos mentioned above and a few typographical infelicities, this is a provocative, readable collection that tackles several complex questions. Especially strong are the chapters attentive to the hemispheric resonances of Jewish music in the Americas, and those that question traditional notions of identity. *Mazal Tov, Amigos!* considerably advances scholarship over and above the field of Jewish popular music in the Americas and will be well received by students of several disciplines.

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Sánchez Prado, Ignacio, ed. *Mexican Literature in Theory*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.
305 pp. ISBN: ePDF: 9781-5013-3253-1

Este volumen reúne quince propuestas para abordar la literatura mexicana desde la academia estadounidense. Es decir, son ensayos sobre la literatura mexicana producidos, principalmente (todos menos uno), por académicos que trabajan en Estados Unidos. El punto en común de los ensayos es que cada uno de ellos pone en diálogo las referencias teóricas con un corpus literario mexicano. Los acercamientos teóricos son muy variados: van desde el Orientalismo, algunos feminismos, la ecocrítica, hasta las políticas del cuerpo pasando por, entre otros campos, la deconstrucción y la teoría poscolonial.

Ignacio Sánchez Prado, editor del volumen, explica que los quince ensayos que componen este libro son resultado de la solicitud que él hizo a algunos de sus colegas en universidades de Estados Unidos, participantes de los principales foros de la disciplina dentro de LASA (Latin American Studies Association) y MLA (Modern Language Association). En dicha introducción el editor justifica que solo incluya a un académico que trabaja en México (Roberto Cruz Arzabal) mencionando las limitaciones de la tradición académica mexicana (caracterizada, según Sánchez Prado, por el predominio del enfoque filológico y el limitado acceso a recursos bibliográficos). Esta concepción del mundo académico mexicano podría considerarse, como mínimo, parcial, pues aunque haya escuelas que puedan quedar reflejadas en esa imagen, también hay muchísimos colegas cuyo trabajo no tiene nada que envidiar a cualquier académico del primer mundo; existen académicos políglotas poco limitados por recursos bibliográficos gracias tanto a iniciativas de acceso abierto a la información como a inversiones de consorcios académicos como por ejemplo, en México, CONRICyT.

Los estudios críticos sobre literatura mexicana en Estados Unidos es muy diversa o heterogénea y eso sí se puede apreciar con claridad en el volumen. Abarca lo canónico, pero también hay ensayos sobre escrituras recientes. El volumen está ordenado cronológicamente de principios de siglo XIX hasta el presente de acuerdo a los textos literarios que se analizan. Hay enfoques tradicionales y algunos menos conservadores. Algunos de los trabajos presentados en el volumen proponen relecturas a partir de un marco teórico *nuevo*. Por ejemplo, en el ensayo “Rosario Castellanos’s Southern Gothic: Indigenous Labor, Land Reform, and the Production of Ladina Subjectivity,” Ericka Beckman hace una lectura histórica sobre los conflictos sobre la propiedad indígena de la tierra a partir de *Balún Canán*; otro ejemplo lo constituye el ensayo “Pale Theory: Amado Nervo and the Absentia,” de José Ramón Ruisánchez Serra, uno de los capítulos más originales, en que propone una relectura de *El éxodo y las flores del camino*. Hay ensayos

donde se señala la ambivalencia de autores canónicos como el de Bruno Bosteels que aporta una lectura de la obra rulfiana con apoyos de Benjamin y Derrida.

Si los lectores buscan una respuesta a la interrogante de qué es la Teoría, deberán revisar cada uno de los textos del volumen porque cada uno ofrece diversas maneras de acercarnos a este concepto. El volumen no se apega a alguna definición ortodoxa del término, sino más bien invita a que los lectores cuestionen y reflexionen sobre lo que se entiende por “teoría literaria” o la manera en que este concepto es utilizado en cada uno de los trabajos. Es muy interesante analizar la idea de que la Literatura mexicana es considerada como un espacio en que los escritores o las escritoras exponen sus teorías sobre la literatura.

Así, este volumen tal vez sea adecuado considerarlo como un producto caleidoscópico que trata más sobre tendencias, los enfoques e intereses del mundo académico de Estados Unidos respecto a la literatura mexicana, que una aportación con visiones panorámicas y lecturas innovadoras sobre la misma. La crítica literaria es por naturaleza una disciplina que siempre deja muchos cabos sueltos y que a veces cae en la contradicción de actuar con los vicios que dice criticar. Nunca el heterogéneo y contradictorio grupo de lectores académicos va a coincidir en la relevancia de temas, autores y mucho menos teorías. Lo que sí es relevante es que se publiquen trabajos enfocados en la literatura mexicana en una época muy conflictuada para la población latina en Estados Unidos.

Mexican Literature in Theory es en teoría un libro interesante, con algunos elementos de controversia, útil para quienes se inician en los estudios sobre literatura mexicana y desean saber qué tipo de trabajos se realizan en el mundo académico estadounidense. Es probable que este volumen encuentre gran eco en las letras y el mundo académico mexicanos o latinoamericanos, independientemente de que estén escritos en inglés o sean leídos por académicos formados en otra tradición. Incluso, es posible que las bibliotecas universitarias de América Latina puedan permitirse su adquisición. Sin embargo, en la práctica las aportaciones del libro solo dejarán una huella precedera en el lector si su interés radica únicamente en conocer la metodología de la academia estadounidense utilizada para el análisis de la literatura de su vecino del sur.

Ester Bautista Botello, Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro

Sepúlveda, Magda. *Gabriela Mistral: Somos los andinos que fuimos*. Santiago: Cuarto Propio, 2018. 196 pp. ISBN: 9789-5626-0995-1

Magda Sepúlveda studies Chilean poetry from the framework of cultural studies. *Somos los andinos que fuimos* is a very well-informed collection of essays on Mistral, specifically under the perspective *estudios trasandinos*. Sepúlveda reads Mistral’s major works and reveals Mistral’s *mestizo* awareness and ability to subvert hierarchies, gender roles, ideals of knowledge and religion. In the prologue, analyzing a mural in Santiago by Fernando Daza (1971), Sepúlveda presents the theoretical framework she employs to read Mistral’s poetry against the collective or “national” imaginary of Mistral’s work and figure. Along the following six essays Sepúlveda subverts the ideal of Mistral as the divine professor in possession of knowledge, above her pupils as depicted in Daza’s mural. The book cover warns the reader that this is not a traditional reading of Mistral. The cover is a mandala by Caiozzama, a street artist who portrays Mistral dressed in *caquis* and a colorful hoodie, offering both a travestied outfit and a modern representation. Thus, the cover is attuned with Sepúlveda’s analysis.

As an overall hypothesis, Sepúlveda elaborates on the idea that Mistral designs an Andean consciousness assembled on knowledge and discourse models pertaining to that cultural region (18). Sepúlveda explains that the title is a fragment from one of Mistral's poems stating that the verse synthesizes Mistral's understanding of the Andean world, which encompasses past and present at the same time (19). In the prologue, Sepúlveda exhibits her consistent work in the field of cultural studies and specifically "*Los Estudios Culturales Transandinos*", derived from postcolonialism studies. She explains that she looks at Mistral's work from an academic perspective, but also from the point of view of popular culture in order to diverge from the national imaginary that tends to project her as a decontextualized universal mother (19).

Each essay focuses on one of Mistral's major poetry collections. In the first, Sepúlveda elaborates on the book *Desolación* (1922). Sepúlveda's reading revolves around the idea of the human and ecological devastation of Patagonia. Throughout the essay, Sepúlveda develops the idea of Mistral's empathy with the indigenous people who were swept off their land by the national colonization process of the Patagonia. In this way, *Desolación* overlaps with Mistral's depiction of the devastated landscape with the desolation of the native dwellers. But as in the following essays, Sepúlveda understands Mistral's poetry as a means of dignifying the native, imagined as the poor, women, children; her poetry is not only about denouncing, but rather about giving a voice to those that have been ignored. Mistral gives a voice to the mothers of unborn children who claim that it is best not to give birth into such misery; death, as opposed to birth, becomes an act of resistance and dignity (51-3).

If chapter one focused on the native peoples of the Patagonia, chapter two elects the dramatic living conditions of Chilean children in the early 20th century as depicted by Mistral in *Ternura* (1924). Sepúlveda reads *Ternura* along with Mistral's *Lecturas para mujeres* (1924), a varied anthology of literary texts for Mexican women that Mistral compiled under Alvaro Obregón's revolutionary government. The common threads among these publications, says Sepúlveda, are dignifying poverty, the value of popular meals, and a plea for respect towards single mothers (67). Sepúlveda explores the female-reader built through a poem such as "*Manitas*" (69). Thus, Sepúlveda asserts that Mistral is writing poetry with which underprivileged working single mothers can identify.

The third essay in Sepúlveda's text revolves around *Tala* (1938). This chapter takes the same title of the book, insisting: "*Otra vez somos los andinos que fuimos*" (emphasis mine). Sepúlveda notices Mistral's references to an Inca culture that spread all the way south to the central valley (106). Sepúlveda contends that Mistral elaborates her idea of a Latin American community on the basis of an agrarian culture where large rocks, *huacas*, are an element of stability that act as geopolitical milestones to outline stewardship over an area (107). Mistral, according to Sepúlveda, figures Los Andes as a lively cultural space, where different communities walk together (109). Thus, Mistral signifies the mountain as a past-present, revealing the depth of the Andean culture (110).

Sepúlveda analyzes Mistral's book *Lagar* (1954) from a feminist perspective, explaining how the poet appropriates the word "*locas*" used to point out women who do not fit in the norm; Mistral subverts the negative connotation of the word *locas*, celebrating women who refuse to fulfil conventional expectations (123). Sepúlveda asserts that in *Lagar* the Andean topic merges with women's topics; in an ecofeminist claim, suggesting that the Andean region must be saved from degradation (129). In *Lagar* Sepúlveda sees an aesthetic intention to recover the Andean culture that has been despised (130-1).

The essay “No te digan indio pata raja” focuses on Mistral’s *Poema de Chile* (1967). As Sepúlveda reports, after the independence of Chile in 1810 the native people who did not have property certificates were stripped of their land (143). Accordingly, Sepúlveda reads *Poema...* as a claim to establish a new pact with the native peoples and a plea to give them back their land (145). Finally, Sepúlveda explores Mistral’s performance or creation of her own public character once she has chosen her public name: Gabriela Mistral. Sepúlveda asserts that Mistral does not describe the native culture, nor the single mother’s or the out of the norm *locas*’ experience as an outsider, but that she creates an “us” [*un nosotros*], that participates in said experiences. Mistral’s crusade relies in her confrontation to the country’s hegemony which scorned single mothers and native peoples (171). According to Sepúlveda, Mistral writes for a female audience—the *locas*, working women, single mothers, indigenous women—that can feel identified, dignified and empowered by her poems.

As an admirer of Sepúlveda’s work, I believe this book brings together her excellent extensive and profound research; readers will not only learn about a Mistral, but will also find in Sepúlveda’s style and structure an excellent model in literary and cultural studies.

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Tenaglia, Alejandra. *Viaje al principio de la noche*. Buenos Aires: Muerde Muertos Editorial, 2018. 234 pp. ISBN 9789-8726-5072-6

Tenaglia’s debut novel is a veritable Pandora’s box of feminist horror stories, a knotty tangle of narrative threads that lead the reader, relentlessly, implacable, in this labyrinthine narrative into the inner chamber of those horrors. There the Minotaur—Pablo, the piano teacher, child sex abuser and self-satisfied provincial superstud—is lured to his drowning death in the waters off Mar del Plata by Victoria, the woman he abused as a twelve-year-old student. In a narrative crescendo that intertwines her persistent memory of his abuse and the details of how she gets him into the waves in order to drown him, *Viaje* closes a story that, upon retrospective assessment, the reader realizes has been describing, if not a cold and calculated plan of revenge, at least a fortuitous series of circumstances that ends up with the same executionary consequences of such a plan.

Troping Celine’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932), Tenaglia’s character’s voyage to the beginning of night is the voyage back to the roots of her existential nightmare, the recovery of the memory of the primal rape scene that is the common lot of more children (mostly but not exclusively women) than our self-satisfied decent society wishes to imagine. Victoria is a history teacher, and while she knows the importance of establishing the sequence of events that account for social history, the tangled mass of her narrative threads show that, in apparent fulfillment of the Freudian premise that access to a repressed past does not come easy, she is slow to come to the realization of the precise erotic trajectory, based, one repeats, in rape by a teacher twenty-years her senior, that accounts for her incapacity to love and form meaningful human, sexual relationships. One cannot discount a reading of the novel in which Victoria has had the glimmer of a revenge opportunity from the start. Yet—and I reiterate the metaphor—the tangled mass of narrative gives the sense that it is more of an awakening, first, to the truth of her rape and, then, second, to the emerging discovery of an opportunity, if not to liquidate the task, to counter one

passive event of violent consequences (her rape) with another active one of her own making (the murder of her rapist).

Viaje is a complex interweaving of multiple narrative texts that, in retrospect, lead to Victoria's murderous revenge, while at the same time they testify to the difficulties of accessing one's psychological past. As an exercise in fictional psychoanalysis, *Viaje* models those difficulties at the same time that it provides a panoply of samples of how that past might be accounted for. Tenaglia combines customary third-person narration with first-person thought (in italics). Since the basic story recounts Victoria's return to the provincial small town where she grew up to care for her ailing mother, she is afforded the opportunity of recovering diaries and other documents left behind from when she was a young woman. These she "supplements" with an extensive current personal log she maintains on her computer, as she goes about caring for her mother and interacting in difficult terms with the older woman, reviving old girlhood friendships with women who have remained in the town, encountering old lovers, and trying to piece bits together from random conversations regarding her family's painful disintegration through cancer, suicide, and manslaughter. In the process, she teaches basic Spanish history at a local high school, and her lectures on the Spanish royal families are reproduced in the novel, by which, presumedly, one learns that human history, from the court of Spain to the dull Argentine province is one of unrelenting pathetic stupidity. At one point, she is asked to write columns for the newspaper of a local town, and her often quite pointless commentaries constitute a counterpoint to the sort of horror story of sexual abuse she cannot speak forthrightly. Indeed, at one point Victoria utters a phrase that could serve as a valuable self-help guide in this human melodrama, "Hay que protegerse de la autoboludez" (197).

Even if Victoria cannot speak forthrightly the real stories of sexual abuse of which her own is but one example, *Viaje* certainly can be said to be one of the most forthright feminist novels recently written in Argentina. With all the intransigence of an Alejandra Pizarnik, who one suspects committed suicide without really saying everything she had to say beyond her allegorical bloody countess, Tenaglia has no use for discursive subtleties. Her novel is, in addition to frank assessments of multiple feminist existential *huits clos*, replete with details of sexual emotions and sexual acts that make it difficult not to understand the extent of, and the justification for, Victoria's propulsion toward cathartic revenge.

Viaje al principio de la noche is an outstanding novel and deserves to be recognized as one of the best feminist narratives in recent Argentine fiction.

David William Foster, Arizona State University

Valencia, Sayak. *Gore Capitalism*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2018. 336 pp. ISBN 9781-6359-0012-5

Zavala, Oswaldo. *Los cárteles no existen: Narcotráfico y cultura en México*. Malpaso ediciones, Mexico, 2018. 252 pp. ISBN 9788-4170-8151-5

Familiar media representations of the parallel development of the drug economy in Mexico and the State's war on drugs foreground ideas of compromised security and stability. These ideas intertwine with profitable representations of cultural dissolution. The caricature of the lawless narco that Oswaldo Zavala describes in his book, *Los cárteles no existen: Narcotráfico y cultura en México*, who wears a cowboy hat and boots and carries a gold-plated gun, provides an uncritical

distraction from the underlying conditions of the emergence of trafficking-related violence in Mexico. The thuggish figurehead of organized crime is not only a profitable source of inspiration for the film, television and literary industries, it also provides the stable image of a powerful and clandestine figure against whom an ongoing war continues to be waged by the Mexican government, justifying a prolonged state of exception, to use Giorgio Agamben's frequently deployed language. A well-developed academic and journalistic discourse, on the other hand, seeks to situate the rise of violence associated with the drug trade in Mexico as operating in the service of transnational economic interests and *not* in terms of a failed regulatory state unable to maintain the rule of law. From this perspective the State might not be considered negligent or incapable, but rather complicit in the rise of seemingly uncontrollable violence, which has destabilized regional community autonomy and opened new terrain for the extractive interests of transnational corporations originating from places like the United States and Canada.

Sayak Valencia's *Gore Capitalism* intervenes in these debates. It insists on the importance of analysis that is not "reductive and paternalistic," of the contemporary intensification of violence in Mexico within a specific cultural context, while arguing that the discourses of globalization and neoliberalism are insufficiently explanatory, alone, of the daily functioning of power in Mexico. This book contends that affect, bodily experiences, and power function radically differently in separate realities, as signaled by the terms "First World" and "Third World," which encounter each other in border zones. Valencia's interpretative capabilities as a cultural critic expose a deeply embedded assumption in discourses of globalization and neoliberalism: that capitalism and power look the same everywhere.

The attention that John Pluecker, of language justice organization Antena, brings to his translation of *Capitalismo Gore*, includes a sensitivity for moments when it might be necessary to keep and contextualize terms in their original Spanish. In the bilingual preface, for example, the phrase "*Esto es Tijuana*" is repeated in Spanish and then becomes the English phrase "*This is Tijuana*" three pages later. The significance of this phrase, like its translation, arrives after a delay at the end of the book. In a personal anecdote there, Valencia describes the experience, having returned to the city after living abroad, of witnessing a man's torso fall from the back of a truck filled with what had seemed to be bags of trash on Boulevard Insurgentes. Shocked, she turns to her adolescent sister sitting in the passenger's seat who in place of an explanation, affirms, "That was the torso of a man who'd been cut into pieces, Sayak. This is Tijuana." In this epilogue the phrase "*This is Tijuana*" explains the divergent affective responses to the sight of violence. The difference is not just one of individual emotional responses; it is tied to the sense of reality, including the normalization of violence, which exists in a particular place. The polemical thrust of *Gore Capitalism* suggests that differences like these are difficult to come to terms with in the discourse of critical theory, due to the prevalence and universalizing tendencies of the First World version of this discourse.

Pluecker's attention to this difficulty prompts him to include a translator's note about the term "transfeminismo" which Valencia deploys in her final chapter. The note explains to North American readers that this term signifies differently in different contexts. "*Transfeminismo*," Pluecker amends, "rather than imagining itself as the articulation of a new form of postidentitarian sociality (as queer did), is considered a polemical appropriation of, and a refusal of exclusion from, existing [Anglophone] feminist frameworks that remain vitally necessary." The attention to multiple forms of resistance encoded in the term exemplifies how bringing politicized academic terminology from one language and cultural context into another is more than a matter of translation. The difference between transfeminism as a term in Anglophone theoretical discourses

and the polemical thrust of *tránfeminismo* in Latin American and Spanish contexts highlights the way that theoretical discourses move partially, or in pieces, across linguistic and cultural boundaries, when they move at all.

The movement of Valencia's intervention into English draws attention to an often-recognized border in critical theory itself, which has the double effect of exoticization and devaluation of forms of subjectivity and political action present in the global South. Valencia questions moments where Agamben, Negri, and Cocco have done this with the examples of "drug consumers" or "the new subjectivities formed in the favelas of Brazil." While *Gore Capitalism* takes issue with theoretical approaches that would romanticize actors in the drug war as symbols of political resistance, it also takes a stance against discourses positioning actors in the drug war as victims condemned to the "dystopias" of globalization. Differing from journalistic accounts of how the drug war has effectively opened up natural resources and territory in Mexico for foreign investment and exploitation, the book questions how these political economic approaches also narrate the expansion of capitalism as inevitable and unavoidable, and locate its primary actors and investors in the First World. *Gore Capitalism* suggests that capitalism looks different in Mexico than it does elsewhere, and that registering this difference requires accounting for possibilities "for action and empowerment" that do exist there, and "the creation of its own discursive frame" that neither romanticizes the pure revolutionary potential of the Third World subject nor imagines the expansion of global capitalism and its social relations as a unidirectional and monolithic force.

Gore Capitalism challenges the normalization of everyday violence as a cultural response to a perceived loss of sovereignty, where sovereignty is thought to be inseparable from consumption or economic self-sufficiency, and violence provides a means to produce economic and political power in the absence of material resources. It de-sediments seemingly universal constructions, like the role of the "male-provider" and the equation of self-realization with purchasing power, demonstrating how these constructs shape the experience of violence. Oswaldo Zavala's text also understands that what looks like a strategic question—What can be done about the level of lethal violence in Mexico?—may be founded on the wrong assumptions when the answer is given in terms of cartels and narco-traffickers. Instead, he articulates the question as an epistemological one similar to that of Valencia: What do we know about the trafficker and the cartel who serve as explanations for ongoing violence? While there may seem to be an abundance of information available in literature, journalism, popular media and academic discourses about cartels, capos, and drug-trafficking, Zavala suggests that the limits of what appears in these representations have in effect been set by the state itself, not through censorship, but through the fabrication of an irresistible mythology. *Los cárteles no existen* resists the "depoliticization" of systematic violence in novels and journalistic texts, which reproduce and profit from the mythological terms of the discourse of the war against trafficking. These terms, Zavala's essays suggest, position the cartels and those who work for them as outside of the reach of the State, with a shadowy and clandestine power that cannot be controlled.

The book's polemical title, like the pronouncement of the death of the author, means to draw attention away from the figure of the narco and towards the discursive construction of cartels. In one of the book's most striking moments, while meditating on his own experience as an investigative journalist in Ciudad Juárez in the 1990s, Zavala describes a photograph taken by Julián Cardona of a forensic photographer and, presumably, criminal investigators crouched over the body of a young man who had been stabbed more than thirty times. An audience has gathered in the background. This is the moment, captured by Cardona, in which "a critical gaze is

constructed around a body,” and the economic effects of Mexico’s adoption of neoliberalism come to be interpreted by a community through the scene of violence and investigation. The placement of the forensic photographer in the center of the image, and the orientation of his camera lens towards the body on the ground generates a narrative for the audience, a way of processing the irruption of violence into everyday life.

The representations of violence praised in *Los cárteles no existen*, the novels of Daniel Sada and Juan Villoro among them, all with male authors, are those which suggest that the activity of the cartels and of narcotraffickers might be understood to be administrated by the State. Through a condensed reading of Roberto Bolaño’s novel *2666* which situates it in the context of academic and journalistic attention paid to the feminicides of Ciudad Juárez, Zavala suggests that feminicide and narcotrafficking are “metaphors which erase the contingent history of power and oppression that produce them in order to foster a convenient mythology.” The particular nature of this contingent history, in keeping with the work of a group of journalists and the former director of CISEN (el Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional) is what Zavala is at pains to express. According to this history, the secure sovereignty of the PRI-controlled state between 1970 and 1990 was later challenged and fragmented during the PAN presidencies between 2000 and 2012. As a result, this narrative goes, the control over organized crime in Mexico which had been effectively held by the PRI governments was later posited as something to be regained and reasserted through the war on drug-trafficking and the state of exception and militarization it has come to justify. The narrative of a contingent history put forward by Zavala’s text centers a loss of sovereignty and control on the part of the State, and the need to recover it through Schmittean political decisiveness. The book offers a narrative of developments in political and literary theory over roughly the same time period which is strikingly similar. According to Zavala, ideas of the State and of sovereignty themselves have been lost, “relegated for decades under the aegis of cultural studies.” Zavala’s preference for narratives which do not “underestimate the power of the State” and its disciplinary strategies determines which of the literary and journalistic representations of drug traffickers and related violence are counted as critical: those which rearticulate contemporary State sovereignty and its monopoly on violence. The narratives considered less favorably are those which fall into the “impasse” of narcoliterature. Sergio González Rodríguez’s works about the narco, for example, perform “the compulsion to insert him [the narco] into the repercussions of a global cultural context,” presumably at the expense of the particularity of Mexican political history.

The political history relevant to *Gore Capitalism* suggests that the perception of a loss of sovereignty is mediated by a larger post-colonial context. For Valencia, the exportation of cultural norms of hyperconsumption and competition into Third World countries through popular media have created a situation in which Mexican state officials envy the monopoly on fear that criminal organizations have effectively achieved in different parts of the country. This air of competition, according to Valencia, means that official discourses cannot admit what must be admitted—that organized crime and related violence cannot be effectively eradicated while structural economic inequality and a lack of employment opportunities persist. Instead, in this situation of what she calls “post-colonialism in extremis,” the force of work is replaced by entrepreneurship and specialization of “gore tactics” such as kidnapping, extortion, dismemberment, and murder, which provide a means to pursue the desire for “consumption, self-affirmation, and empowerment.” *Gore Capitalism* avoids a developmentalist frame that might interpret State sovereignty in Mexico either as not fully formed or as derivative of the functioning of power elsewhere, for example, in the United States. It suggests, instead, that existing conceptions of biopower cannot account for

conditions in Mexico, where specific forms of subjectivation *and* heteropatriarchal social demands create the conditions for necropolitical power exercised by the purveyors of violence to function “parallel to the State without subscribing fully to it.”

Regardless of who holds a monopoly on violence and whether the criminal class operates alongside of or is reducible to the political class, in both legal and illegal political institutions and economies, power operates in specific ways so that inherited forms of racial and gendered inequality are reproduced. Perhaps considerations of who is affected by the attempts to maintain a monopoly on fear through violence can help frame the ongoing situation in Mexico within a transnational context while also retaining its specific political and historical context. Only by asserting the non-applicability of universal and binaristic categories, and by affirming the particularity of different realities, like that signaled by the phrase “Esto es Tijuana,” can theorizations be developed which avoid reproducing or profiting from “hierarchical and (neo)colonialist” modes of interpreting cultural, political, and economic phenomena. So long as the cultural norms of a hyper-consumerist First World reality (and glorifying representations of its criminal underbelly) are exported along with the demands of a globalized capitalist economic system, compensatory violence will be inflicted on displaced minority groups in attempts to reestablish sovereignty and reinscribe dominant forms of social power.

Anastasia Baginski, University of California, Irvine

FILM REVIEWS

Diago artista apalencado. Dir. Juanamaría Cordones-Cook. Cuba, 2013. Dur.: 27 min.

Las imágenes fragmentadas al ritmo de tambores que dan inicio a *Diago artista apalencado*, introducen lo que será el desarrollo de este trabajo audiovisual que se centra en la obra del artista plástico cubano Juan Roberto Diago. Naturaleza y realidad urbana convergen en la obra del artista para dibujar la historia de sus ancestros, la suya y la de muchos cubanos que la mantienen con orgullo, dolor, y en este caso arte. Este documental de Cordones-Cook se suma a muchos otros que en conjunto logran construir un panorama de la cultura cubana y su conexión con el tema racial como lugar común. En el año 2013 Cordones-Cook realizó otro documental además de *Diago artista apalencado*, que lleva por título *Nancy Morejón: Paisajes célebres*. Ese trabajo da testimonio de la cultura cubana contemporánea y la vida de diferentes artistas e intelectuales del país. La presencia de Nancy Morejón es recurrente en la producción de esta directora y como tal, aparece afincadamente en *Diago artista apalencado* a través de la lectura de su poema “Diago, el joven” (2002) en el que se enfatiza el tema racial, ancestral y artístico del pintor plástico.

Palenque es el nombre que se le da a una comunidad o asentamiento de cimarrones. Apalencado es el adjetivo que lleva el título de este trabajo filmográfico y que describe a un artista que busca establecer conexiones con sus raíces. Pero ¿es Diago un artista apalencado? Varios son los grandes tópicos que se desarrollan en el documental y que interactúan directa o colateralmente con el tema racial. La comunicación que ofrece el artista a través de sus obras se relaciona con la búsqueda de una historia no conocida pero cuyas líneas intentan trazar un mapa en el que su raza es un punto clave. Las imágenes collage de velas encendidas, vírgenes, santería, sincretismo, música afrocubana, gente y calle que inician el documental, anteceden a la información que da el

pintor de su familia, también fragmentada, y sus relaciones con la cultura cubana. Su conexión con las artes, especialmente la pintura y la música, ocurre desde temprana edad por la experiencia de vida que tuvo con su abuela Josefina Urfé quien lo crió, y quien fuera hija de José Urfé un músico cubano. Su abuelo, el pintor Juan Roberto Diago, al que solo conoció durante siete años, tuvo gran influencia en su trayectoria artística gracias a la constante dedicación que su abuela tuvo al inculcar la proximidad a las artes y al trabajo de su abuelo, quien además de haber sido gran amigo del escritor cubano Lezama Lima, se relacionó con la literatura al ilustrar algunos trabajos literarios de escritores importantes cubanos como Eliseo Diego y Carilda Oliver.

Diago, el artista, busca sus raíces en la historia que desconoce y que lo ha llevado a indagar en distintas fuentes y documentos un pasado que luego plasma en su trabajo artístico. Documentos esclavistas como salvoconductos que necesitaban los esclavos para movilizarse de un lugar a otro, o cartas de propiedad de seres humanos, o artículos de periódico con fragmentos de discursos de Fidel Castro relacionados al racismo en Cuba son algunos de estos extractos atesorados por él. La reconstrucción del pasado y la importancia de los objetos, como muchas veces escribió Eliseo Diego en su poesía, son piezas que el pintor une para rehacer un pasado roto. Se convierte el artista en un armador de historias traduciendo pedazos y construyendo piezas de arte con añicos. Muchas de sus obras, cosidas, muestran la reconstrucción como parte fundamental de su comunicación artística. Sus piezas, con rostros unidos por hilos gruesos, son sus representaciones de las expresiones que buscan unir pedazos que tal vez pertenecen, pero que hay que juntar, y cuya fusión debe mostrarse para que las secciones sean parte de la misma historia. La pintura, el arte en general son para este artista la posibilidad de comunicar ideas, y estas vienen o pueden venir en distintos formatos para una galería de arte o para todos en la calle.

Intercede siempre Nancy Morejón apuntando el camino con su voz: “decir Diago en La Habana, decir Diago en la Isla, es poder encontrar el fino rumor de un talento que no cesa, que no termina, sino que se revuelve en su jardín de existencia vital mientras asciende en espiral”. Y así como bien lo describe Morejón, va el artista mostrando desde la dirección de Cordones-Cook su trabajo intimista y social. De los rostros cosidos se pasa a la instalación “Ciudad en rojo, el pueblo de Changó” una escultura elaborada de múltiples casas hechas de marabú que salen de la tierra y levitan. Diago toma el marabú, entonces material de desecho por entorpecer pastos y paisajes, y los convierte en arte, y como los antes apalencados utilizando recursos del medio ambiente para sobrevivir, construye y mantiene vivas otras historias, quizá no dichas. “Ciudad en rojo, el pueblo de Changó” es una pieza con la que se interactúa, se camina entre las casas que la componen, se pueden tocar, sentir sus movimientos. Este documental muestra a un Diago que une seres humanos y arte, lo íntimo y lo social buscándose, encontrándose y volviéndose a separar, como la historia misma. Entre tambores y la voz de Morejón llegamos a esta escultura cuyo título hace irrefutable la relación existente entre la santería y lo irrevocablemente afrocubano tan presente en la existencia de este artista y sus obras.

Otra de las piezas que muestra el documental representa la pobreza con una exhibición de pequeñas casas hechas también de materiales de desecho, y que, como las reales, se extienden sobre las laderas de las montañas en forma de pared en las galerías. El artista señala haberla presentado en la calle con otro formato y la compara con los barrios de Caracas o de Río de Janeiro y que también proliferan en Cuba. La pobreza y su representación a través de estas casas van de la calle, a la galería y a la calle nuevamente reforzando lo íntimo en lo social y viceversa.

El tema racial es el hilo conductor del documental con sus múltiples manifestaciones artísticas a través de la descripción del trabajo del artista plástico desde su propia voz y la de Nancy Morejón. Diago no es un artista apalencado en el estricto significado de la palabra, pero en su

producción está la rebeldía, la no aceptación del racismo, la mantención de la lucha por conocer la historia, revelarla, apropiarla, expresarla y mantenerla viva.

Belkis Suárez, Mount Mercy University

El techo. Dir. Patricia Ramos. Cuba, 2016. Dur: 75 min.

Patricia Ramos' first full-length feature film *El techo* [*On the Roof*] (2016) was an immediate success at its world premiere at the 38th annual International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana, Cuba in December 2016. At the Havana Festival *El techo* won both the press prize awarded by the APEC: Association of Cuban journalists, as well as the Sara Gómez Female Filmmaker Prize awarded by the *Red de Realizadoras Cubanas* in honor of the late and exceptional filmmaker Sara Gómez. Before traveling abroad, *El techo* also won the *Caracol* Competition in Cuba and received the SIGNIS Prize for the best fictional film awarded by the National Union of Cuban Artists and Writers [UNEAC]. *El techo* has also been lauded internationally chosen as best picture in the XX Encounter of Latin American Cinemas in Marseille, France in 2018, along with the Best Actor award for the film's actor Enmanuel Galbán at the same festival. At the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, Ramos' film won the Juror's Prize for Best Fictional Film, as well as the Young Jury's Prize for Best Fictional Film (2017).

In the US the film has been celebrated from coast to coast reaching many film festival audiences, garnering an impressive selection of awards-including The Juror's Award for Best Feature-length Fictional Film at the 20th Las Américas Film Festival in Austin, Texas, and Best New Director Prize at the Wine Country Film Festival in California 2017, Best Director prize and the Best Acting Award to Andrea Dominados both at the Providence Latin American Film Festival. Among many other national and international awards in Miami, Managua, Nicaragua-the country which co-produced the film, and Los Angeles, the online platform for Latino Culture-REMEZCLA based in New York City, Los Angeles, and Mexico City chose *El Techo* for its list of top 15 Latino and Latin American films not to be missed for 2017.

The intimate 75-minute fictional film in Spanish with English subtitles captures a side of Havana that is under-represented in Cuban cinema-a glimpse at daily life and friendship. The film focuses on three twenty-something friends who share their dreams, quotidian moments, and larger struggles from a different perspective: on the roof. The rooftops of Havana are key spaces for daily life- far from both tourists and at times the State. Under the omnipresent sun, this personal film reveals how change is slow to occur, and despite politics and social movements, life just continues on.

El techo captures Cuba's contemporary daily realities where both rapid change, and stagnation co-exist. This is an up-close, un-dramatic look that also reveals through an examination of these three characters how Cubans daily get by or as they say "resolver." Without formal jobs, employment options, and access to much money, the three friends, and other characters resolve their daily lives selling clothes to contacts, breeding pigeons, or sewing.

At the film's turning point the three friends take advantage of the recently approved micro-business opportunities and open their own rooftop pizza parlor using all of the resources they have. Working together, the three friends serve pizzas through a pulley system to deliver to other neighbors, as well as host international tourists on their roof. Through their small pizza business, the friends break with the boredom of daily life. The inertia quickly returns, when a visit from a

State official results in the closing of their pizza place. Due to a lack of a permit from the State or another unknown reason, their pizza business, and their break from boredom are brief.

Despite not being an overtly political film, this experience creating a micro-business reveals the greater social context of Cuba. It is clearly set post Raúl Castro's officially recognized entrepreneurial 2010 and 2013 lists of approved non-state businesses-or in Cuba known as *cuentapropismo*. As an audience we see that while micro-business options quickly change the pace of life for these three friends, the excitement comes to an abrupt end when their business is closed down by the State without an explanation.

El techo is a character-driven film that explores the depths of friendship through comedy, sadness, and the unknown complexities of others people's families. It also creates a window into the world of urban rooftops, micro-businesses, unemployment, increased international tourism, and how despite all of the news of great changes life just marches on. These characters through their boredom each share part of their complex story with parents in the US, racism, failed dreams, and pregnancy that surface through amazing hints of comedy. In this rare combination of depth, and comedy, we see a masterfully crafted script.

The aesthetics of Ramos' film share a Havana different from many films coming from Cuba. As 90% of the film takes place on the rooftops of Havana, without any filmmaking at street level, the camera captures a world that is literally above the eye of tourists and government officials. It reveals a light saturated society where colors are bleached from the power of the Cuban sun as drying white laundry plays as the backdrop of most scenes.

Ramos' opera prima is a quirky, comic, and critical look at a young person's Cuba. This film is appropriate for an array of audiences from high school students learning Spanish, to university students studying cinema and/or Cuba, to professional film critics, to political scientists specializing on Cuba, and of course to general film audiences. This sun-bleached exploration of friendship and contemporary Cuban daily life is not to be missed.

Michelle Farrell, Fairfield University

La obra del siglo. Dir. Carlos Quintela. Cuba, 2015. Dur: 100 min.

After his contained exercise in minimalist cinema (*La piscina*, 2011), Carlos Quintana (1984-) directed his second feature film (*La obra del siglo*, 2015), where he explores 20th and 21st century "progress" through the lives of three generations of men housed in a ruinous building that overlooks and abandoned nuclear reactor. Shattered dreams on the most grandiose scale haunt this docudrama that received, among others, the Lions Film Award at the Rotterdam International Film Festival to and the Jury Prize at Lima Latin American Film Festival.

In 1976 the Cuban government and that of the USSR signed an agreement to build two nuclear reactors near the town of Juraguá, southwest of Cienfuegos. Initially the project was to build twelve nuclear reactors: four in Juraguá, four in Puerto Esperanza and four in Holguín, but it was decided to limit the construction to two. In the end, only one was began to be built in 1983 and, after multiple unexpected problems, the plan was suspended in 1992, without having even completed the first reactor. The development of what came to be known as The Nuclear City near the reactor aimed at housing engineers, technicians, workers and their families, all the supporting equipment, as well as all kind of services. What remains today of all that is a small ghost-like town made of trailers and dilapidated buildings inhabited by a floating and resourceless population with

no place to go and nothing to do; all in the shadow of the reactor shell, which very recently was converted into a dumping ground.

La obra del siglo deals with this failure and with its effect on the lives of those who were mobilized to work in the project. The film, which focuses on the private stories of History, thus portrays the daily lives and concerns of three generations whose lives were impacted by the project. Otto (Mario Balmaseda) plays an embittered grandfather, a man who made the difficult transition from capitalism to socialism. Rafael (Mario Guerra), Otto's (and the Revolution's) son, is an engineer who was sent to work in the project, a true heir of its ruins. The third main character is Rafael's tearaway son Leo (Leonardo Gascón), who, after leaving his wife, only finds vital expression through his tattoos, an old cell phone, and masturbation. Tensions between the three escalate when Rafael's new girlfriend Marta (Damarys Gutierrez) appears on the scene.

Behind a light plot that revolves around anodyne sketches, one can easily glimpse an allegorical design that stages the conflicting relationship between three generations of Cubans with their political history and how the latter affected, and ultimately destroyed, their lives. The main characters' devastating stories are interspersed with fascinating archive material from Cuban newsreels that depict a rosy and grandiose view of the project, as it was presented to the nation. While the dramatic scenes are depicted in black and white, conferring a somber tone to them, the newsreel segments are presented in their original color, in tune with the full-blown optimism they try to convey. The violent contrast between the two marks the acrimonious tone of the film, as well as its hopeless message.

La obra del siglo is representative of a current trend among Cuban filmmakers. After the downfall of the Soviet Union and the advent of the Special Period, much of Cuba's cultural production has focused on the collapse not only of the metanarrative of the Revolution, but also of the material culture that embodied it. While revolutionary discourse was permeated by a utopian teleological impulse, literature and film have progressively evolved toward a dystopian view of the nation's current condition and a bitter reflection on its most recent past. In this context, ruins have informed material culture as allegories of this collapse and emblems for a dark vision of the nation's present and future. Ruins have also been endowed with the feelings of melancholy and nostalgia, which are characteristic of nations undergoing complex social and political transitions. Young filmmakers have displayed an increasing interest in documenting this phenomenon. In this sense Quintanela's film is akin to Juan Carlos Cremata's *La Época, El Encanto y Fin de Siglo* (2000), Gustavo Pérez' *Despertando a Quan Tri* (2005), Alejandro Ramírez Anderson's *deMoler* (2004), Laimir Fano's *Model Town* (2007), Florian Borchmeyer's *Habana - Arte nuevo de hacer ruinas*, 2006), and Marcelo Martín's (*Elena*, 2014), to name a few, which have explored the meaning of Cuba's ruinscapes and their significance in shaping contemporary Cuban identity. These films share a reconfiguration towards a more fluid, sentiment-based articulation of Cubanness. Moving away from rigid notions of citizenship, they inscribe contemporary affective dislocation in terms of individual emotionally-driven perception and, in so doing, register structures of feeling that question dominant discursive formations.

Santiago Juan-Navarro, Florida International University

Las muchas Natalia Bolívar. Arte, Utopía y Religión. Cuba, 2018. Dir. Juanamaría Cordones-Cook. Dur: 56 min.

Entrar al universo creativo, humano y espiritual de Natalia Bolívar es entrar a la vida de una mujer que desarrolla su actividad política, artística y como investigadora en un mundo cruzado por las transformaciones sociales y políticas, en su isla natal, en Cuba. El documental *Las muchas Natalia Bolívar. Arte, Utopía y Religión* nos adentra en esa rica geografía personal, bajo la certera dirección de Juanamaría Cordones-Cook, quien bajo el auspicio de *The Curators of the University of Missouri*, nos entrega este documental en 2018, con fotografía de Erik Delgado y música original de Juan Antonio Leyva y Magda Rosa Galván.

A lo largo de los 56 minutos de duración escuchamos el testimonio de una vida, desde variadas perspectivas y puntos de vista. Por un lado, la voz de la protagonista, la voz de la intelectual cubana Natalia Bolívar, quien va desandando lo vivido con su voz pausada y contenida pasión. Por otro lado, un sin número de voces forman parte del grupo de entrevistados, quienes la van retratando, relatando anécdotas de momentos de historias personales y sociales compartidos. Nos referimos al cruce de perspectivas que ofrecen importantes personalidades como Guillermo Jiménez, Reynaldo González, Jorge Perugorriá, Nancy Morejón, Santiago Rodríguez Olazábal, Monseñor Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Eduardo “Choco” Roca Salazar, Eusebio Leal. El documental nos conduce como espectadores entre sus objetos, sus collares, sus cuadros, el mobiliario y la historia, desde la vida privada de la protagonista hasta los espacios donde se desarrollara su historia social y política.

En este cruce discursivo se lleva a cabo la narración autobiográfica intercalando entrevistas, testimonios, apoyándose en la fuerza visual de los objetos en los que se detiene la cámara, los testimonios de archivos históricos y un itinerario de la ciudad de La Habana, que le brinda escenario y enmarca los recuerdos, los proyectos, los distintos momentos de la vida de esta gran intelectual y artista que es Natalia Bolívar.

Natalia Bolívar Aróstegui nació en La Habana en 1934, hija de una familia burguesa y católica con importantes ancestros por vía paterna vinculados al General Simón Bolívar, pues, según ella relata en el documental, los Bolívar eran vascos que vinieron a América como conquistadores y hay constancia de que ocuparon posiciones prominentes en América del Sur desde 1553. Su parentesco con el Libertador llega a través de su abuelo, don Juan de Bolívar y Villegas, quien fuera gobernador de la provincia de Caracas y Capitán General de Venezuela a finales del siglo XVII. El hijo mayor de don Juan, Pedro de Bolívar y Aguirre, fundó la rama cubana de la familia de Natalia luego de ser enviado a Santiago de Cuba como joven teniente del Ejército de la Corona de España. Su padre Arturo Bolívar y Bolívar, militar de carrera, se involucró en la resistencia contra la dictadura de Machado a los 30 años.

Por el lado de su madre, María Teresa Aróstegui y González de Mendoza; los Aróstegui y los González de Mendoza vinieron a Cuba de España a fines del siglo XVII y principios del XVIII. La hermana de su madre, Natalia Aróstegui fue fundadora de la Sociedad Pro-Arte de La Habana y también patrocinó a muchos artistas cubanos famosos en Nueva York: Alicia Alonso, Rita Montaner, el compositor Ernesto Lecuona, entre otros. Todos los Aróstegui tocaban instrumentos musicales y la familia celebraba reuniones musicales y organizaba funciones de teatro. Los Aróstegui fueron los que le inculcaron a Natalia valores culturales y la importancia de desarrollar una rica vida interior. Las vinculaciones de Natalia con importantes personalidades del arte, la política y el mundo intelectual cubano, desde su infancia, han sido uno de los rasgos que le

permitieron moverse con seguridad y soltura aún en los momentos más complejos de la lucha contra Batista, previos a la Revolución Cubana.

Dentro del ensamblaje autobiográfico, entre los personajes que más influyeron en su construcción identitaria, se distingue su *nanny*, una criada negra, hija de esclavos que la introdujo a la tradición oral de cuentos de origen congo y otras importantes prácticas culturales provenientes de los esclavos. De este contacto emocional y afectivo surge su interés, como futura etnógrafa, a dedicar parte de su vida al estudio de los aspectos interculturales de las religiones en Cuba. Su investigación formal de las religiones africanas se publica en su conocido estudio *Los orishas en Cuba*, libro que tuvo innumerables ediciones en Cuba y fuera de la isla. Otra influencia notoria en este campo de estudio fue la de Lydia Cabrera, sin olvidar su amistad con otros investigadores del tema afrocubano como Fernando Ortiz. Adentrarse en el mundo de la santería y estudiar sus símbolos, significados, prácticas la llevó a incluir en su *corpus* las tradiciones religiosas de otra isla vecina, Haití, con la que expresa significativos vínculos.

Con ritmo regular, con adecuadas intercalaciones de materiales de archivo fotográfico, familiar, social, político, histórico la cámara nos adentra en los numerosos vericuetos que ha sido y es la vida de Natalia Bolívar, la importancia de su compromiso político antes de la Revolución, durante la Revolución Cubana, como también formando parte del Directorio Revolucionario de las FEU- Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios- en sus inicios y sufriendo la prisión y persecución. En 1956, para poder involucrarse mejor en el mundo revolucionario deja de pintar, práctica que retomará en años posteriores, para crear un lenguaje plástico que expresa los mitos afrocubanos, las prácticas de la santería y su universo simbólico.

El guión del documental, escrito por Karen Brito, no pretende crear un espectáculo de su vida, sino que con objetividad va entretejiendo armónicamente sus recuerdos, con los recuerdos de los entrevistados, intercalando valiosos materiales de una época de gran conmoción social. Un material más que imprescindible para los interesados en la cultura cubana, su historia, y el anclaje intercultural de sus tradiciones y religiones, bajo la acción transformadora y comprometida de la entrañable intelectual y artista cubana Natalia Bolívar.

Zulema Moret, Grand Valley State College

Miriam miente. Dir. Natalia Cabral & Oriol Estrada. Dominican Republic, 2018. Dur: 90 min.

This Dominican/Spanish co-production is the directors' Cabral and Estrada first full-length feature film. Their previous work is in documentaries, such as the award-winning *You and Me* (2014) and *Site of Sites* (2017). Their feature film *Miriam miente* has traveled the international film festival circuit from the Chicago International Film Festival where the film was nominated for a Gold Hugo prize, to Gijón International Film Festival in Spain where the film won an ALMA Award. *Miriam miente* also won a Cima Award at the Huelva Latin American Film Festival. Additionally the film won an Award of Ecumenical Jury Special Mention at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in the Czech Republic. Most recently finishing out the year in December 2018 the film competed in the 40th annual Havana Film Festival in Cuba.

In 90 minutes, directors Cabral and Estrada along with the nuanced acting of emerging actor Dulce Rodríguez envelope the audience with an intimate look into the world of Miriam: a young 15-year old woman in the Dominican Republic with a white overbearing mother with whom she lives, and a black father divorced from her mother whom she visits. The film begins with a soft opening

with Miriam swimming with her best friend Jennifer (Carolina Rohana). As the two girls share their future hopes and dreams, Miriam carefully protects her hair from getting wet, as Jennifer plunges her dirty-blond hair in the water. In their pool conversations the two laugh, tease each other, and decide to celebrate their upcoming quinceañeras together.

Between comedic dance rehearsals that keep the audience laughing and awkward sequined dress fittings, Miriam's mother Tere consistently picks at her daughter in minuscule ways that have an underlying racial subtext. Despite her mom's micro-aggressions, the audience also witnesses Tere's complexity as she attempts to erase the traces of Miriam's father from her daughter's life from an unresolved divorce. Tere is both the source of aggression and protection for her daughter in a difficult mother-daughter relationship.

In preparations for the quinceañera, the topic of Internet romance looms as Miriam struggles to find a way to invite her Internet boyfriend Jean-Louis to be a member of her dancing court. Although only having met in an online chat room without exchanging pictures, Miriam realizes upon spying on him before their planned meeting that he is black. Instead of meeting with Jean-Louis, Miriam hides and ignores him. After ghosting him online, Miriam struggles to figure out how she could tell her mother that he is a young black man and not the child of the French ambassador that her mother has hoped he would be. Miriam defies Tere and decides to invite Jean-Louis to the quinceañera. In a painful moment in the film, the audience quickly sees that it is not only her mother who is racist but also possibly Jean-Louis himself as he chooses to ignore Miriam at her own party. The film concludes coming full circle as Miriam and Jennifer dressed in sequins find themselves once again alone quietly laughing together as others celebrate their quinceañeras inside.

The cinematography of the film adds to the gentle and intimate narrative. Throughout the movie, the camera uses a series of close-up shots to study Miriam's pondering face, as she considers and decides where she fits in the outlandish quinceañera preparations and larger than life celebration. The close ups also reveal Miriam's agency and thought process throughout the film, as she distances herself from the stress and excitement of the quinceañera planning-in a world of hair straightening, tulle, and decorations.

To further capture the delicate topics of the film, it is shot almost entirely using a soft assortment of colors with a hazy if not dreamlike quality. From the light turquoise of the opening scenes, to the pastel pink and blue of the quinceañera dresses in the final shot, the film begins and ends with a soft close up on Miriam with her best friend Jennifer. Through the delicate palette, the film is as much about revealing accepted forms of racism and societal traps as it is about true friendship between two young women.

Miriam miente offers a cinematic gaze into the intimate challenges, heartbreak and friendship as Miriam negotiates daily life. This film is a break out from previous representations of race and coming of age in the Dominican Republic and would be an exceptional addition to Latin American and Caribbean film collections. It is appropriate for a range of audiences from film or cultural studies specialists analyzing representations of race and gender, to undergraduate and/or high school students studying film, and Spanish language. In its accessibility and intimacy, it invites audiences into Miriam's Dominican world of race, Internet relationships, racism, micro-aggression, societal rules, and true friendship between young women.

Michelle Leigh Farrell, Fairfield University

Olazábal, un hacedor de objetos. Dir. Juanamaría Cordones-Cook. Cuba, 2015. Dur. 35 min.

“Un hacedor de objetos” es la frase con la que el mismo artista, Santiago Rodríguez Olazábal, caracteriza su labor artística en el Arte Cubano Contemporáneo. La vida sufrimiento de sus antepasados africanos en Cuba y el conflicto entre las creencias filosóficas, culturales y religiosas en la sociedad es lo que Olazábal nos comunica en sus dibujos, pinturas, y esculturas.

Este documental, dirigido por Juanamaría Cordones-Cook, nos presenta el mundo de Olazábal y su arte por medio de la auto-narración intercalada con fotografías de sus pinturas y esculturas que reflejan su identidad cultural inmensamente influenciada por las religiones afrocubanas. También, se incluyen las opiniones de varios críticos de arte del Museo Nacional de Cuba que validan el intelectualismo y talento del artista.

El documental comienza con el artista dando un retrato histórico de su familia, sus antepasados y la influencia que tiene la religión africana en su arte. Su identidad cultural y religiosa es su legado familiar, su bisabuelo materno, era de origen canario, quien practicaba una religión de origen Bantu, y fue uno de los primeros sacerdotes *Ifa* criollos, consagrados en Cuba. Olazábal continúa explicando sus antepasados y varias creencias de su religión afrocubana. Por ejemplo, habla de que su tatarabuela llegó a Cuba en condición de esclava y tenía un hermano *to jo su* que significa niño deforme o un *abiku* que significa niño que nace para morir. El artista relata su trayectoria en la religión terminando con su consagración como sacerdote *Ifa* al igual que su bisabuelo materno.

Después de tener esta introducción a los antepasados y cultura del artista, el documental nos muestra a Olazábal recorriendo su estudio de arte. El artista se muestra pensativo en su entorno artístico y nos narra un poco sobre su niñez, su crecimiento humilde en un solar. Explica cómo su crecimiento estuvo rodeado por la música y especialmente el sonido del tambor, al mismo tiempo que escuchamos la música utilizada para invocar a un *orisha*, a una deidad, a santos, y para diferentes ceremonias en la santería. Olazábal cuenta que la santería era religión prohibida, “por ser cosa de negros”, sin embargo, dice que no es solo para un tipo de sociedad, los oráculos hablan de la esencia del hombre y su generalidad a la sociedad. Por lo tanto, la vida de sus antepasados y la religión está muy presente en su obra.

Después de mostrar múltiples de sus obras, el artista relata en detalle las etapas de su vida que han influenciado su arte. En esta parte, lo vemos trabajando en su estudio mientras explica en la academia de arte aprendió de la estética, diferente a la de su humilde crecimiento en un mundo marginal. Los materiales de arte son muy costosos y en la academia de Arte tenían que trabajar con materiales limitados. En ese tiempo, surgió un movimiento llamado “Arte pobre” donde los materiales usados eran de sus casas, encontrados en la calle, o reciclados lo que promovía la creatividad. En sus comienzos, utilizó papel, lápices de colores, tinta, pinceles, madera, objetos, hierbas, y fue evolucionando a medida que obtenía más conocimiento de los soportes existentes para sus obras.

El documental nos lleva también a la Galería Havana, donde tiene lugar una exposición de arte de Olazábal titulada *palabras* en la cual varios críticos de arte hablan sobre la singularidad de su arte y su vasto conocimiento, tanto técnico como habla sobre sus códigos estéticos como el resultado de sus códigos éticos.

En el último segmento, Olazábal explica que sus obras expresan y defienden el dolor y agonía de sus ancestros que tuvieron que vivir su cultura en secreto, escondiendo sus costumbres y cultura. “El dolor del negro” dejando su sangre en algo que no merecía la pena. Mientras se muestran más obras, aparece una mujer danzante en la orilla del mar, posiblemente reflejando el

sentir del artista. El artista habla de la influencia tuvieron artistas en su trabajo, como Michelangelo, Rembrandt, y Toulouse-Lautrec, y se muestran obras que reflejan estas influencias.

El documental finaliza con el artista explicando que su arte se basa en transmitir los conceptos filosóficos de sus ancestros, su modo de hacer la religión y sus ritos, y de conocer las esencias de esos ritos. Olazábal discute varios aspectos filosóficos como el hombre, la memoria, la raza, la racionalidad, la religión, la palabra, entre otros.

En definitiva, este documental educa sobre el fondo artístico de Olazábal, su arte motivada por memorias, sueños, e imaginación. El documental intercala fotografías, paisajes, y personas de una manera efectiva para entender el trasfondo del artista. La música tiene un efecto importante que le da contexto a las obras. El hecho de que el artista mismo nos habla durante todo el documental facilita el entendimiento su inspiración, desarrollo artístico, e identidad filosófica. Los comentarios de los críticos de arte nos dan confirmación del aprecio e influencia de este artista en el arte cubano contemporáneo. Por último, este documental incluye subtítulos en inglés que transmiten el mensaje del artista y que hacen posible que este documental sea accesible para audiencias.

Heidy Cuervo Carruthers, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville