

Review Essay: Evangelization and Cultural Identities in Spanish America (1598-Present)

Andrango-Walker, Catalina. *El símbolo católico indiano (1598) de Luis Jerónimo de Oré. Saberes coloniales y los problemas de la evangelización en la región andina*. Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2018. 237 pp. ISBN 9788-4169-2290-1.

Nogar, Anna M. *Quill and Cross in the Borderlands: Sor María de Ágreda and the Lady in Blue, 1628 to the Present*. Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 2018. ix-xv + 457 pp. ISBN 9780-2681-0213-5.

In *El símbolo católico indiano (1598) de Luis Jerónimo de Oré. Saberes coloniales y los problemas de la evangelización en la región andina* (2018), Catalina Andrango-Walker establishes Oré's *Símbolo* as an overlooked yet valuable resource on early modern viceregal Perú. In four chapters, she considers the *Símbolo* as a response to the Third Lima Council (1582-1583) and José de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral* (1590), and its intertextuality with other contemporary and classical texts. In addition, she examines Oré's didactic strategies for converting the natives, pointing out how he uses this evangelical pedagogy to covertly criticize aspects of viceregal political and ecclesiastic administration. But whereas Latin Americanists have understood the *Símbolo* as merely another catechization manual, Andrango-Walker rescues its contributions to pre-Hispanic and colonial Andean history and geography, largely by underscoring Oré's claim that evangelization efforts in Perú were ineffective due to administrative corruption and bureaucratic inefficacy rather than the natives' alleged savagery and lack of civilization. Consequently, Andrango-Walker's analysis reveals more broadly "la identidad del criollo en pleno proceso de construcción" (194).

Andrango-Walker anchors her analysis in a methodology not unlike that of Juan Vitulli, who privileges a work's original context in order to achieve accurate, nuanced literary and historical analyses. Accordingly, Andrango-Walker investigates Oré as a multifaceted individual who moved in several cultural and geographical spheres: "como letrado capaz de debatir con sus pares europeos y de superarlos en conocimiento, como autoridad promotora de la cultura europea entre los nativos y como representante de una incipiente comunidad letrada local que ya comenzaba a manifestarse a finales del siglo XVI." This approach offers scholars "un mejor entendimiento de la interacción de este sujeto criollo con el poder colonial al que contesta y a la vez apoya" (23).

In chapter 1 Andrango-Walker describes how the Third Lima Council impacted the *Símbolo*'s contents and publication. The Council was convened in part to investigate why evangelization was much less successful in Perú than expected. Church officials acknowledged several problems: there was no uniform pedagogy and the recently converted were thus confused about basic doctrine; clergy members in the field could not speak indigenous languages and had little knowledge of indigenous cultures; and there was rampant ecclesiastic and administrative corruption. The laudatory poems and prefaces to Oré's book emphasize its contribution to improving evangelization techniques through the author's expertise, experience, and religious fervor. Oré furthermore implies that he wrote the book at the behest of his superiors—a rhetorical strategy that perhaps facilitated the approval process, since Oré includes pre-Hispanic history and criticism that was beyond the scope of a manual for evangelization.

Chapter 2 deals with the influence of contemporary historiography on Oré's work. Oré takes up the theory of the five zones, which European intellectuals had used to argue that the natives were savages. Rather than disproving this theory, Oré uses it to demonstrate that the tropics

are capable of producing intelligent beings (both indigenous peoples and criollos) with organized, advanced societies. He thus undermines the natural slave justification for Spanish domination. But rather than denying the Spanish right to rule in the colonies, he justifies their presence with the Providential argument: God had led the explorers and conquistadors to the New World in order to bring Christianity to the indigenous peoples.

Beyond demonstrating his thorough knowledge of early modern historiography, Oré establishes his authority to write about Andean indigenous culture and history through his knowledge of European historiographic methodologies and his experience traveling throughout the viceroyalty while catechizing the native population. During his extensive travels, he interviewed native informants in order to compile and record their oral histories in what he considered proper historiographical format. Writing a pre-Hispanic history of the natives enables Oré to describe their advanced culture and civilization and thus undermine the commonplace that they were mere savages. The text also subtly criticizes conquistadors' violence by narrating the pain they inflicted upon native peoples, even as the natives remained open to conversion. Andrango-Walker creatively labels this rhetorical strategy "crítica-alabanza": Oré criticizes Peninsular bureaucracy while still supporting its overall position. Andrango-Walker identifies many instances of this same strategy throughout Oré's work. In chapter 3, for example, she examines Oré's description his family—mostly comprised of priests and nuns—as model Catholics who were exemplars not only for newly indoctrinated natives, but also for the Spanish clergy whose motivation for moving to Perú was financial rather sacred.

The final chapter offers a close reading of two *cánticos* written in Quechua but structured and sung according to Catholic tradition, which Oré used to teach doctrine to the indigenous population. Oré believed that the indigenous people were mentally capable of understanding doctrine but lacked the cultural referents necessary for indoctrination to be effective; thus, he took advantage of parallels between Andean and Catholic religious practices to build a more effective praxis. By the same token, Oré made sure to undermine or de-mystify Andean beliefs while offering parallel Catholic beliefs as proper replacements. Based on her análisis of this technique, Andrango-Walker concludes that "el despliegue en un performance que constituye una mimesis de los rituales de la cultura hegemónica son una prueba de la imposibilidad de dejar de lado el contexto local y la religión prehispánica. Al mismo tiempo, esto muestra la imposibilidad de asimilar completamente al sujeto andino a los ideales del colonizador" (190).

Following the four main chapters are appendices with two letters that Oré wrote toward the end of his life when he was bishop of La Concepción. These documents highlight the priest's work as a missionary and as an ecclesiastical administrator, rather than as the intellectual that we see in the *Símbolo*. It is the first time these letters have been published in their entirety (David Noble Cook provides only excerpts in a 2008 article), and will therefore be of great use to those who study Oré, scholars who examine colonial celebrations, Marianologists, or historians of ecclesiastical administration.

Andrango-Walker's nuanced analysis of Oré's *Símbolo* is thoroughly grounded in knowledge of the political and intellectual context in which it was produced, while taking into account extant criticism on Oré. It is of broad interest to scholars working on early modern Perú, intellectual history, topics related to catechization, and Luis Jerónimo de Oré. It is a welcome addition to early modern scholarship on Latin America.

Anna M. Nogar's text, by contrast, contemplates Sor María, a Spanish nun from Ágreda, Spain, who was well-known during the seventeenth century for her bilocations to the New Spanish borderlands, where she proselytized to the Jumano tribe. She was famous as well for her Marian

treatise, *La mística ciudad de Dios*, among several other religious texts. Over the centuries and throughout the Spanish Empire, her protomissionary efforts morphed into local legends about a Lady in Blue who protected and aided those in dire straits, even while her writing was neglected and eventually forgotten. Consequently, nineteenth- through twenty-first-century scholars have largely balked at Sor María as a serious topic of study since her bilocation is, to us moderns, clearly a tall tale. Yet what if we were to look beyond these fabricated legends of flying nuns and more seriously consider Sor María's oeuvre?

With *Quill and Cross in the Borderlands: Sor María de Ágreda and the Lady in Blue*, Anna M. Nogar does just that. Therein, Nogar demonstrates that because popular mythology surrounding the Lady in Blue has largely disregarded her writing, scholars have also failed to acknowledge that "the survival and propagation of Sor María's mission narrative hinged on the persistent popularity and wide distribution of her writing" (3). In order to accomplish this weighty task, Nogar traces the circulation and readership of Sor María's works (both rough manuscripts and published pieces) as well as texts written by Sor María's contemporaries about her work. Nogar then extends her examination to popular manifestations of the Lady in Blue in literature, artwork, plays, puppet shows, and festivals from the nineteenth century to the present, so as to identify when, how, and why Sor María's writings have been overlooked by scholarship. By focusing on Sor María's writing and highlighting newer artistic production that likewise does so, Nogar "create[s] a different narrative from which future creative work on Sor Maria may draw" (335). Given the lack of diversity that has plagued Spanish America's early modern canon for more than four hundred years, as well as the durability and adaptability of Sor María's persona, this reader finds Nogar's goal resolutely sound.

Chapter 1 presents a thorough overview and contextualization of the five foundational sources on and by Sor María: Alonso de Benavides' *Memoriales* from 1630 and 1634; Gerónimo Zárate Salmerón's *Relaciones de todas las cosas que en el Nuevo-Mexico se han visto y sabido, asi por mar como por tierra, desde el año de 1538 hasta el de 1626*; a 1631 letter composed by Benavides with Sor María addressed to missionaries in New Mexico; and Joseph Ximénez Samaniego's *vita* of Sor María, which is most often published as a preface to Sor María's *La mística ciudad de dios* (the fifth source). Benavides and Zárate Salmerón, early New Mexican Franciscan missionaries, argued for the further development of Spain's borderland missions. Ximenez Samaniego's 1670 *vita* sought to present Sor María's bilocating proselytization in a positive light in order to promote her beatification (unsuccessful to date). Although the relationship between these various texts is oftentimes quite tangled, Nogar offers a clearly detailed trajectory, even while contextualizing Sor María's contributions (heavily mediated by her male superiors and influenced by the need to demonstrate her obedience) to the letter and *vita*.

The next three chapters are particularly useful for book history, print culture, and reader reception scholars. Chapter 2 provides Sor María's biography; her writing process and a summary of the contents of *La mística ciudad de dios*; and a history of the Franciscan order's efforts to beatify Sor María via a transatlantic fund drive and a propaganda press whose profits subsidized the beatification efforts. Chapter 3 turns to how Sor María's writing influenced readers in the Spanish American colonies, demonstrating how these texts shaped not only lettered populations but also illiterate people who were exposed to Sor María and her Conceptionist ideas through sermons and artwork. Chapter 4 examines how Sor María was viewed as a writer and missionary in what is today the US Southwest and Mexico's northern states. Having studied private and institutional library inventories, Nogar establishes that Sor María's texts had, in fact, reached these areas, and that the Propaganda Fide College of Santa Cruz de Querétaro, which trained

missionaries, included Sor María in their curriculum. Nogar also shows that missionaries such as Junipero Serra were inspired both by Sor María's writing and her hope for the future success of borderland evangelization.

The next two chapters move into more recent history. In chapter 5, Nogar signals a shift in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from interest in Sor María as a writer and protomissionary, to a focus almost exclusively on the Lady in Blue narrative. Sources she uses to document this shift include a New Mexican *alabado* collected in 1951, and three histories from the first half of the twentieth century which use Sor María to legitimate Hispanic communities in the face of entrenched racism. However, Nogar warns readers that these texts, as early twentieth-century productions uninformed by postcolonial theory, are problematic in that they homogenize indigenous characters and present them stereotypically.

In chapter 6, Nogar examines the Lady in Blue in three novels, arguing that the authors use her to “signif[y] cultural currency and place,” similar to how the authors examined in chapter 5 use her to signify cultural identity and value (288). Happily, Nogar notes, some of these more recent works do succeed in problematizing Sor María as an aid to colonization, and at least attempt to represent native populations with greater nuance. Finally, Nogar discusses a puppet show which represents Sor María as a writer struggling for agency at a time when her voice was strictly mediated through her male superiors.

These last two chapters examine a large number of textual, folkloric, artistic, and cultural productions involving Sor María. Because Nogar covers such extensive ground, each item is presented with a minimal amount of plot summary or description—only that which is necessary to contextualize a brief literary analysis in support of her claim. More in-depth analysis of fewer examples would help vary the structure and provide greater depth to arguments that seem provisionally supported by the great quantity of examples. Overall, though, this hefty volume is well-written and clearly organized: the author establishes claims at the beginning of each chapter and then supports them with concrete evidence. Chapters build chronologically and logically on the materials presented in each previous section, beginning with a comprehensive overview of Sor María's life and textual production for readers unfamiliar with the nun. Moreover, individual chapters and even sections would make for good readings in undergraduate or graduate courses on early modern, independence-era, or contemporary history, literature, culture, and gender studies. The volume is sure to become required reading in the field of Ágredan studies.

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Review Essay: Hacia una ética de la representación: género y sexualidad en la cultura latinoamericana

Costagliola, Claudia A. *El sida en la literatura cuir/queer latinoamericana*. Santiago: Cuarto propio, 2017. 256 pp. ISBN 9789-5626-0914-2

Estrada, Oswaldo. *Troubled Memories. Iconic Mexican Women and the Traps of Representation*. New York: SUNY P, 2018. 244 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-7189-1

Finnegan, Nuala. *Cultural Representations of Femicidio at the US-Mexico Border*. London and New York: Routledge, 2019. 195 pp. ISBN 9781-1384-8217-3

La vieja pregunta de Theodor W. Adorno de si puede o no el arte contribuir a la transformación de este mundo subyace y se actualiza en los libros aquí reseñados: ¿se puede hablar de una forma ética de representar la violencia de género en el arte? ¿qué pasa cuando la literatura y otras manifestaciones artísticas re-escriben la historia desde perspectivas feministas y cuir? ¿cómo abordar, desde la ficción y la escritura académica, una pandemia tan recientemente devastadora como lo es el sida? Claudia A. Costagliola, Oswaldo Estrada y Nuala Finnegan comparten la preocupación de pensar si es posible hablar de una ética de la representación en las obras de arte y en consecuencia, se preguntan qué metodologías se deberían utilizar en la investigación académica para reflejar dicha sensibilidad ética. Si bien los libros tratan temas y siguen metodologías muy diferentes, dejan ver la urgencia de trabajar el género y la sexualidad en la cultura latinoamericana sin reproducir investigaciones que se identifiquen principalmente por sus objetos de estudio. En otras palabras, más que incluir voces o expandir el canon, estas investigaciones sugieren que el feminismo y los estudios cuir/queer ayudan a pensar de manera productiva la relación del arte con el mundo.

Cultural Representations of Femicidio at the US-Mexico Border es una necesaria revisión de las respuestas culturales a los femicidios de ciudad Juárez y su rol en visibilizar la violencia de género en términos globales. Siempre pensando en maneras éticas de representar la violencia de género, Nuala Finnegan se pregunta hasta qué punto el arte puede convertirse en un medio para restaurar algún tipo de justicia si se considera que las vías legales y el Estado continúan fallando. A través de las ideas de comunalidad de Cristina Rivera Garza, Finnegan argumenta que las representaciones culturales del femicidio “might lead us to a place of ‘being with others’...towards a sense of *comunalidad*, still open, still waiting to be fully articulated” (187). Si bien esta idea puede parecer efímera o imperfecta, aclara Finnegan, los lazos afectivos y políticos que el arte crea, más allá de simplemente visibilizar y re-humanizar a las víctimas, develan los complicados ensamblajes estructurales que permiten la violencia de género. La propia Finnegan incorpora estas prácticas de comunalidad en su investigación y escritura, es decir, utiliza una metodología feminista que no puede reducirse simplemente a su objeto de estudio.

Dividido en cinco capítulos, cuatro analizan diferentes géneros artísticos y sus repuestas a la violencia feminicida mientras que el primero esboza los antecedentes de la violencia de género en Ciudad Juárez, centrándose en las principales líneas argumentativas como la globalización y la economía, la necropolítica, Juárez como una ciudad monstruosa y los roles de género. Como la propia Finnegan menciona, gran parte del trabajo crítico sigue centrándose en el argumento de la globalización—“there would be no killing of women in Juárez without the structurally violent patterns of labour originating with the *maquilas*” (30). Sin embargo y como los siguientes capítulos demuestran, es importante reconocer el femicidio como parte de un sistema global de violencia que está altamente inscrito en dinámicas de género. En otras palabras, las representaciones culturales aquí estudiadas complican los discursos tradicionales de la violencia feminicida puesto que evitan explicaciones reduccionistas.

En “Sacrificial Screams. Excess in Alex Rigola’s Stage Adaptation of *2666*,” Finnegan analiza el grito del personaje de Rosita Méndez (Alba Pujol) en la obra de teatro catalana basada en la novela *2666* de Roberto Bolaño. Lo más interesante de este capítulo recae en estudiar una adaptación realizada por un hombre europeo—con todas las limitantes que esto conlleva—como un proceso que involucra considerar al producto “as part of a lateral rather than vertical relationship with the original” (58). Finnegan no está interesada en continuar la discusión sobre Bolaño sino en considerar la adaptación como una respuesta cultural directa a los femicidios de ciudad Juárez, como un ejemplo de cómo a nivel transnacional se re-imagina y re-presenta la violencia

feminicida. El capítulo se centra en la dimensión performativa del dolor feminicida inscrito en el cuerpo de Rosita a través del sonido y el movimiento corporal que Alba trae a la escena. Siguiendo diferentes ideas sobre la acústica como un espacio incoherente, entre lo físico y lo virtual, lo real y lo imaginado, Finnegan sugiere que la manifestación sónica del horror del feminicidio permite traer al frente cuestiones de agencia y resistencia mientras que al mismo tiempo se mantiene la historia de dolor y violencia.

Si el primer capítulo deja más o menos claro que evaluar el impacto del arte es algo siempre problemático y desafiante, los siguientes dos capítulos exploran cuestiones de afecto y emociones como vehículos que demandan a los espectadores a que formen parte de un enfoque ético-global a este tipo de violencias. El capítulo “Remember Them. Ethics and Witnessing in Artistic Responses to Femicide” analiza los retratos de las víctimas de feminicidio del artista irlandés Brian Maguire. Para Finnegan el trabajo cultural de Maguire funciona como una herramienta de derechos humanos, ya que su metodología demuestra cierto grado de responsabilidad y ética artística: Maguire no solo pasó tiempo en Ciudad Juárez y con las familias de las víctimas sino que pintó dos retratos, uno para exhibición y otro para las familias. Además, las ganancias de las copias vendidas se van para la ONG *Nuestras hijas de regreso a casa* y mientras estuvo en Juárez, impartió talleres de arte a niños víctimas de la violencia. Por otro lado, Finnegan utiliza su propia metodología feminista para analizar el trabajo de Maguire. Motivada por la responsabilidad ética del artista y su posición individual como feminista, Finnegan analiza su propia reacción de empatía: desde qué significa comprar una copia del retrato para ‘decorar’ una oficina hasta la decisión de entrevistar a una de la madres (siendo Finnegan una madre también) a las que Maguire dio el retrato. Algo similar sucede en “Resilience and Renewal in Documentary Film about Femicide in Ciudad Juárez”, capítulo que analiza *Señorita extraviada* (2001) de Lourdes Portillo y *La carta* (2010) de Rafael Bonilla. Nuevamente lo que le interesa a Finnegan es analizar su reacción personal y emotiva ante estas películas como algo que ayuda a construir solidaridad o bien un reconocimiento feminista: “these are ‘my’ uncanny cinephiliac moments and mine alone: they demonstrate nevertheless, how emotional linkages in the bodies of film spectators are forged” (138). Finalmente, en “Toward an Activist Poetics: Fiction Responds to Femicide in Ciudad Juárez” se analizan las estrategias discursivas utilizadas para llorar y recordar a las víctimas de feminicidio y la conexión entre escritura y derechos humanos a través de la creación de enlaces afectivos. A través de *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* por la escritora chicana Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Ciudad final* de Kama Gutier y los testimonios de *El silencio que la voz quiebra*, Finnegan muestra como estos textos oscurecen la división entre arte y activismo, demostrando tanto las posibilidades como las limitantes de la escritura para representar la violencia.

En *Troubled Memories. Iconic Mexican Women and the Traps of Representation*, Oswaldo Estrada analiza la representación de mujeres mexicanas como iconos culturales: la Malinche, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Leonora Vicario, las soldaderas y Frida Kahlo. Más allá de que todas estas mujeres se han vuelto objeto de consumo y símbolos de identidad nacional—sus rostros aparecen en el peso mexicano, en estampas de correos, en series de Netflix—lo que las hace únicas es su capacidad trascender su propio contexto histórico para simbolizar arquetipos de feminidad y valores culturales hasta ahora vigentes en la sociedad mexicana. Desde la colonia hasta el contexto post-revolucionario, centrándose en la producción literaria del siglo XXI y siguiendo teorías feministas y de género, Estrada analiza como estos textos transgreden las representaciones hegemónicas—entiéndase patriarcales e incluso machistas—de estas mujeres o bien como las reinscriben nuevamente en perspectivas misóginas (9). La conclusión no es muy positiva: todas estas mujeres continúan esperando una representación sensible y coherente que vaya más allá de una

metáfora atractiva para el mercado editorial neoliberalizado.

Los cuatro capítulos más el epílogo siguen más o menos la misma estructura y metodología. Primero se hace una revisión del contexto histórico del icono en cuestión para después hacer una lectura detallada de los textos elegidos. En conjunto, la lectura de Estrada revela lo siguiente: la representación de estas mujeres se da de manera problemática porque hay una tendencia a explorar la intimidad y sexualidad del icono (más claramente en Sor Juana), se privilegia la historia de amor (La Malinche y Cortés) y se perpetúan los extremos o estereotipos de feminidad (Leonora Vicario, la madre de la patria). A pesar de que se intenta representarlas como agentes históricos y se busca contar una versión alternativa de sus vidas, esto se logra a menudo por vías de exotización (Frida Kahlo), condenándolas a la esfera doméstica y/o a la perpetua invisibilidad (las soldaderas). Siguiendo a Nelly Richard, Estrada argumenta que una ficción feminista más que privilegiar espacio femeninos, debería de confrontar la validez de las estructuras culturales que en primera instancia determinan dichos espacios como tales: “What some of us would like to see in these novels... [is] a clear confrontation of all stereotypes associated with the ‘femenine’ and the ‘private,’ or, simple put, a transgressive articulation of various ‘intimate’ scenarios traditionally linked to women or the female experience, as if they had nothing to do with the world of men and masculinity” (41). Y es justo lo que Estrada hace con su análisis: confrontar las estrategias misóginas y los estereotipos de género que sigue reproduciendo la literatura del siglo XXI.

Titulado “*Si Adelita se fuera con otro... Soldaderas of an Unfinished Revolution*”, sobresale de los demás capítulos porque no analiza a un icono singular y definido. En lugar de privilegiar la mistificación de la Adelita (la mujer ideal), Estrada sugiere que ésta ha contribuido a la invisibilización de las soldaderas. A pesar de la ausencia de una soldadera como protagonista (analiza novelas de la revolución de Pedro Ángel Palou, Paco Ignacio Taibo II, entre otros), Estrada rescata el trabajo de Elena Poniatowska y la novela *Por debajo del agua* de Fernando Zamora. En el trabajo de Poniatowska, la soldadera representa una pluralidad multidiferenciada que desafía cualquier etiqueta simplista de 'la mujer'. En otras palabras, si la historia y el patriarcado ha difuminado las identidades de las soldaderas, esta memoria problemática abre otro tipo de espacios que Poniatowska aprovecha para otorgar ciudadanía y agencia a sus soldaderas. Finalmente, *Por debajo del agua* es una novela que cuenta la historia de Hugo, un hombre que se convierte en soldadera y descubre su propia identidad como Isabel. Si bien esta novela desafía los patrones heteronormativos tan marcados en la literatura de la revolución, entre más internaliza Hugo su identidad como Isabel, los patrones de género terminan por corroborar que la cultura mexicana tiende a empoderar la masculinidad y marginalizar lo femenino (183). Un lector atento se queda con la sensación de que el caso de las soldaderas podría abrir el espacio para re-pensar estrategias de representación menos problemáticas que, como Finnegan sugiere, vengan de espacios de comunalidad. Lo que queda claro y más aun con un icono tan reciente como Frida Kahlo, es que la participación activa de las mujeres continúa generando ansiedad. Si bien estamos lejos de que ficciones feministas se vuelvan un lugar común como lo demuestra la lectura crítica de Estrada, la incomodidad puede generar otro tipo de historias que, si bien no perfectas, complejizan los roles de género y la sexualidad en la cultura mexicana.

Finalmente y como su título lo indica, *El sida en la literatura cuir/queer latinoamericana* es un estudio de como la enfermedad física trasciende a una enfermedad textual, dándole a la escritura “un poder performativo en tanto que la ficción se politiza a través del discurso del sida” (15) que a su vez, termina por servir como vehículo de crítica para otros discursos marginalizados. A través de una atenta lectura de textos canónicos como *Antes que anochezca* (1992) de Reinaldo Arenas, *Loco afán. Crónicas de sidario* (1996) de Pedro Lemebel, *Un año sin amor; diario de sida*

(1998) de Pablo Pérez, *El desembarrancadero* (2001) de Fernando Vallejo y *La ansiedad. Novela trash* (2004) de Daniel Link, Costagliola propone que la literatura cuir/queer que trata sobre el sida, privilegia un discurso testimonial que, al presentarse a través de una mezcla de diversos géneros literarios y diferentes escenarios espacio-temporales, imposibilita sostener la división entre ficción y no ficción. Similar al trabajo de Finnegan, Costagliola sugiere que la pandemia obliga a la literatura a cuestionarse su propia relación con el mundo, donde la estética y la ética terminan siendo una misma cosa.

El trabajo de Costagliola comienza con una introducción donde esboza los antecedentes del sida y la historia de dicha enfermedad en América Latina. En pocas páginas, Costagliola logra dar un resumen las principales investigaciones sobre esta enfermedad a nivel global para luego dar cuenta de cómo se ha tratado en Latinoamérica—por ejemplo, como un cáncer marxista o una nueva forma de colonialidad del cuerpo como lo propone Lemebel. Además, en esta introducción, la investigadora clarifica su marco teórico: una ‘promiscuidad teórica’, justificada a través del propio archivo, “que se traduce como una reacción neobarroca frente al fenómeno de la epidemia” (61). Desde Michel de Certeau, los formalistas rusos, Michel Foucault hasta Carlos Monsiváis, Severo Sarduy, Paul B. Preciado, Judith Butler, Ricardo Llamas, José Esteban Muñoz y Jack Halberstam, la promiscuidad teórica es a mi juicio el mayor acierto del libro porque implícitamente esta respondiendo a la pregunta de qué puede hacer la teoría queer, principalmente aquella escrita desde y para Estados Unidos, por el estudio de la cultura y sociedades latinoamericanas. Hay que tomar en cuenta que gran parte de la escritura cuir/queer y del sida esta escrita por autores hispanohablantes “sexiliados” en los Estados Unidos (231). Por ello, *El sida en la literatura cuir/queer latinoamericana* cierra justo con una meta-genealogía de la teoría torcida/cuir/queer que justifica su uso en los capítulos anteriores al ‘traducirse’ a un espacio y tiempo determinado.

Además del sida como metáfora y estética, lo que une a los tres capítulos del libro—“Los efectos de la promiscuidad temporal en “Mona” de Reinaldo Arenas”, “Temporalidad y parodia neobarroca: pilares para una nueva aleación del cuerpo y su representación en el texto seropositivo” y “Pedro Lemebel y Fernando Vallejo: retórica urbana, memoria y sida”—es el interés por cuestiones espacio-temporales en relación al cuerpo cuir/queer seropositivo. Combinando las ideas de Halberstam y de Muñoz con el neobarroco latinoamericano, Costagliola sugiere que el sida permite percibir una temporalidad promiscua que difícilmente puede reducirse al presente o al futuro. En este sentido, el análisis de “Mona”, una historia donde “se intercalan varios hilos temporales que se superponen o se combinan para crear situaciones alternativas” (99), es un buen ejemplo de lo que esta investigadora propone a lo largo del libro. Para Costagliola la temporalidad cuir del cuerpo seropositivo es un tiempo mezclado que alude al proceso promiscuo—irregular y sexualizado—que deriva en la ficcionalización del proceso del contagio del sida.

Me gustaría agregar que no me convence del todo la estructura del libro. Por un lado, me resulta muy esquemática: contexto histórico, marco teórico, un análisis detallado de las obras aplicando diversos acercamientos teóricos y una conclusión que termina por justificar el trabajo anterior y abrir más espacios para lo cuir/queer. Por otro lado, terminar por el principio, es decir, con la explicación de por qué la teoría cuir/queer importa o no en Latinoamérica, rompe con las normas tradicionales de la escritura académica. Quizá habría valido la pena seguir con este impulso y proponer una metodología de análisis literario más cuir.

Siguiendo un enfoque de género y cuir, el trabajo de Claudia A. Costagliola, Nuala Finnegan y Oswaldo Estrada revela las limitantes y posibilidades éticas de representar el sida y la violencia de género, ya sea en su manifestación más extremista como el feminicidio o a través de

la invisibilización de las mujeres que han cambiado la historia de México. Estas investigaciones dejan en claro que la división entre arte, activismo, feminismo y política ha dejado de ser productiva y una de las tareas de los estudiosos de la cultura latinoamericana es buscar metodologías y estrategias de análisis que no estén divorciadas de lo que Finnegan llama una ética de la representación. Si bien el trabajo de Costagliola y Estrada demuestra como la literatura en sí puede o no representar cuestiones de género y sexualidad de manera que ésta tenga un impacto positivo en el mundo, falta una posición mucho más crítica y problematizada del propio quehacer del académico y la escritura académica: cuáles son las consecuencias positivas y negativas de que un académico hombre escriba sobre la invisibilización de voces femeninas; o bien, más allá de cumplir con requisitos de la academia, que está en juego para la propia Costagliola al escribir sobre el sida. Para mi, una metodología feminista y cuir demanda una discusión personalizada del proceso de investigación donde se piensa la propia posición de poder del académico y su relación afectiva con el tema. En este sentido, el trabajo de Finnegan marca el camino hacia una nueva forma de hacer investigación, donde las emociones y el feminismo jugaran un papel determinante en el análisis de la cultura latinoamericana. Haciendo eco de Cristina Rivera Garza, es necesario que el trabajo académico se cuestione qué significa hacer una investigación ética en estos tiempos de violencia extrema.

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Review essay: Mexicanists in Recent Publication

Esch, Sophie. *Modernity at Gunpoint: Firearms, Politics and Culture in Mexico and Central America*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018. 284 pp. ISBN 9780-8229-6538-1.

Jaimes, Héctor, ed. and trans. *You Are Always With Me: Letters to Mama*. Virago Press, 2018. 175 pp. ISBN 9780-3490-1195-0.

Pineda Franco, Adela. *Steinbeck y México: Una mirada cinematográfica en la era de la hegemonía estadounidense*. Bonilla Artigas Editores. 217 pp. ISBN 9786-0785-6028-8.

Sánchez Prado, Ignacio M.. *Strategic Occidentalism: On Mexican Fiction, the Neoliberal Book Market and the Question of World Literature*. Northwestern University Press, 2018. 233 pp. ISBN 9780-8101-3755-4.

The works I review in this essay deal with questions of Mexican transnationalism in relation to the personal effects of migration, to Central America, the United States and Europe. Each of these works approaches this question in a different way. Héctor Jaimes' *You are Always with Me*, is an edited volume of Frida Kahlo's letters to her mother. This translation of *Tu hija Frida: Cartas a mamá* (Siglo XXI, 2016) offers a new perspective into the life of Frida Kahlo. The book begins with an introduction to Kahlo's biography and how various parts of her lived experience come up in her letters to her mother. These include her relationship with Diego Rivera, the topic of money, and her life in the United States. The introduction establishes that this was a work conceived of for the general public. It states that for Kahlo, "This maternal love was fixed and constant for her; everything else – the ability to have a child herself, good health and a stable relationship – seemed beyond her reach" (15). It describes her as "the painter who is already part of us; we recognize ourselves in her" (15).

The book is divided into three sections: Mexico, San Francisco and New York. The sections detail Kahlo's life in each location before reprinting her letters. In Mexico, we encounter Kahlo as a young school girl, who first meets Diego Rivera when he is giving a talk at her school. In San Francisco, we see Frida's impressions of crossing the border, of the gap between rich and poor in the US. Her letters describe her encounters with a doctor, Dr Eloesser, whose treatments would dramatically improve her life. Each section includes multiple useful footnotes that refer to people, places and pets, and ensure that we understand the letters' context. The final section, about New York, touches upon significant topics in Kahlo's life. Overall, this work demonstrates Jaimes' skill in obtaining permission to reproduce the letters and organizing them so as to tell a more complete story about Kahlo's life. The version in English is occasionally too literal of a translation from Spanish. Overall, this collection shows us that Kahlo is an early border crosser who connected the world through the arts.

Sophie Esch's *Modernity at Gunpoint* begins during the same time period as Jaimes' work. This book uses a single trope, the gun, as it relates to concepts of modernity, to explore the Mexican revolution, the Civil War in Nicaragua in the 1980s and the so-called War on Drugs today. It is based on an innovative premise that unites areas and eras that are not always thought of in relation to one another and connects visual arts, music and literature. The introduction explains how each of these three threads of the argument relates to firearms and theories of modernity. The first two chapters deal with the Mexican Revolution. One analyzes Nellie Campobello's *Cartucho* and explores roles of guns and cartridges in the Mexican revolution, and the way that guns enhanced certain interpretations of masculinity. It contrasts this masculinity with how the novel portrays the roles for women in this emerging modernity. The next chapter explores the affective components of violence, particularly through Martín Luis Guzmán's *El águila y la serpiente*. The subsequent chapters explore the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, discussing memoir and song. Esch concludes with a chapter on the postwar and demilitarized combat in Central America, and the so-called War on Drugs in the Mexico-US borderlands. She relates portrayals of both areas to phallogocentric and misogynist ideologies (168). This chapter expertly brings her sustained analysis of questions of firearms and modernity to bear on 21st-century news from the US. This chapter also weaves a nuanced analysis of gender, to which she alludes in her entire work, to the question of firearms. Moreover, the entirety of the work is showing us the direction that I think our field is going, showing the commonalities between Mexico, Central America and the borderlands—even as it reaffirms the uniqueness of each context.

Adela Pineda Franco's prize-winning *Steinbeck y México* overlaps, chronologically, with Jaimes' and Esch's works. Like Jaimes' edited volume, Pineda Franco's deals with a single person. It analyzes connections between John Steinbeck and Mexico and ways of understanding the Mexico-US relationships. Pineda Franco expertly weaves together the histories of the two countries from the introduction onward, connecting big historical events with literary and cultural production. As she states, "El libro sitúa esta trayectoria geopolítica en el ámbito de la cultura, al reflexionar sobre la manera en que Steinbeck abordó la relación de Estados Unidos con México en el cine y la literatura a partir de su visión sobre la comunidad, el Estado y la nación" (23). She deliberately explains that she leaves some questions out of the scope of the text, such as Steinbeck's reception in Mexico, and the question of the translation of his works into Spanish. Pineda Franco is preoccupied with the question of him as a public intellectual, and how that role relates to the two countries' bilateral relationship. For example, his work celebrated rural life in the great depression is accompanied by a detailed analysis of agrarian policies in Mexico (53-55). The book then analyzes Steinbeck's literary work and its cinematic adaptations, such as *The Pearl*,

alongside one another. Pineda Franco places them in their context; in this case, in the development of the CCIA and the US' interest in Mexico. This attention to history highlights Pineda Franco's attention to the archive, one of the hallmarks of her work as a critic. The subsequent chapter also demonstrates this archival expertise and the connection between US intelligence and Mexican politicians (167). Pineda Franco brings archival research to bear on Steinbeck's social critique and the way that he supported governments over revolutions (168). The ambitious conclusion attempts to relate Steinbeck's work to the historical trajectory outlined in the beginning. *Steinbeck y México* invites us to rethink the way literature and film relate to one another, the relationship between Mexico and the US, and the political, social and economic tendencies in both countries.

Finally, Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado's *Strategic Occidentalism* has a similar approach to Pineda Franco, albeit in a more recent time period, from the 1960s onward. His work is a necessary intervention in the field of Mexican studies. His introduction expertly connects his topic, how Mexican writers have interacted with general ideas of the west and the western canon, with problems in the discipline and in our classrooms. This short but comprehensive work takes up three central themes: Sergio Pitol, an author with a heterodox trajectory, the Crack writers, a group that is only beginning to receive the critical attention it deserves, and then the question of neoliberalism and gender, primarily through the work of Cristina Rivera Garza.

The case of Pitol, whose work spans the 1960s to the 1980s, introduces readers to how Mexican writers and intellectuals encountered the world as members of Mexico's foreign service, not uncommon in the earlier part of the 20th century. It also surveys unusual methods of translation, questions important for the ways that Mexican academics and intellectuals understand world literature and how US academics receive Mexican literature. Sánchez Prado insightfully observes that world literature is neither aesthetics divorced of politics, as cosmopolitan writers would have it, nor social realism, as communists would prefer (32). The second chapter engages with the Crack writers, focusing on how they write, and how their work engages with the so-called Western canon. This chapter exemplifies Sánchez Prado's critical style, which deals with the sociological milieu. The critic also examines why this literary group has failed to receive the recognition that it deserves within and outside of Latin America because of their refusal to engage with questions of identity and to fall in line with the stereotype of Latin America as magic realism (81-3). The crack writers are an urgent plea for change in the Mexican literary tradition. The final chapter in this book deals with gender through the figure of the Mexican woman writer. In earlier chapters, the critic mentions women writers alongside men, and here he mentions men alongside women. This placement of women and men's writing alongside of one another demonstrates shows that women and women's writing do not occur in a vacuum and that this type of writing happens alongside of the most important criticisms of women's writing, including Jean Franco and Debra Castillo (142). This chapter, significantly, discusses the use of English as the language of neoliberalism, which is a topic he has alluded to at every turn in this work: "As I hope is evident in my analysis, world literature is neither a self-evident category nor a literature that cleanly corresponds to idealistic notions of the world. Rather, world literature, for me, is always the result of material practices and cultural ideologies that ground the category in diverse contexts that cannot be reduced to a single process" (187).

The question of Mexico beyond Mexico connects each of these works, as they deal with literary and cultural production to allow us to better understand the unique nature of each time period, author and geographical area.

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Review Essay: Gabriela Mistral in Contemporary Text

García-Gorena, Velma, ed. and trans. *Gabriela Mistral's Letters to Doris Dana*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2018. ISBN 9780-8263-5956-8

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

Gabriela Mistral (née Lucila Godoy, 1889-1957) became Latin America's first Nobel Laureate for Poetry in 1945, cementing her rightfully indisputable place in literary history; yet how she is configured in Chilean, Latin American, and global cultural memory—and, by extension, how her poetry is read—have long been a source of contention. Mistral was a vital public figure, not only an accomplished poet but also a leader in education and nation-building. She worked as a schoolteacher in Southern Chile where she witnessed the brutal repression of the Mapuche; in 1922 she was hired by Mexico's Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos, to build public education in post-revolutionary Mexico; she served as a lifelong consul, holding positions in France, Spain, Brazil, Portugal, Mexico, Italy, and the US; she held visiting professorships in prestigious US institutions such as Barnard, Columbia, Vassar, and Middlebury; and she served on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women until her death of pancreatic cancer. Although her strong public voice cannot be denied, it has been muted by the transformation of her iconic stature into that of a longsuffering maternal schoolteacher. This image, fostered by the military regime of Augusto Pinochet throughout the 1970s and 80s, has been challenged by critics who shed light on this fiercely independent woman whose highly guarded private life did, in fact, include intimate relationships with women. Two recent books, a collection of Mistral's letters to her life partner, Doris Dana, edited and translated into English by Velma García-Gorena, and a monograph on Mistral's poetic *oeuvre* by Magda Sepúlveda, are two indispensable contributions toward this timely effort to reexamine Mistral's life and work, which speaks volumes not only about her historical moment but also to our own.

Mistral's letters to Doris Dana (1920-2006) were first made public after Dana's death and were published in Spanish by Pedro Pablo Zegers in 2010. Dana was the daughter of a wealthy family in New York who had first met Mistral in 1946 when she was a student at Barnard and attended one of Mistral's lectures. Dana initiated correspondence with the poet in 1948 and the two would eventually fall in love. They remained close until the end of Mistral's life, and Dana, who was typically presented as Mistral's secretary, inherited much of the poet's wealth and her archives. Mistral and Dana lived together for a time in Mexico, again in Italy, and in 1953 they purchased a home together in Roslyn, New York, though Mistral would travel to New Orleans to escape the cold winters. The intimate nature of their relationship was not publicly disclosed until after both of their deaths; Dana left Mistral's archives to her niece, who decided to make them public for the compelling story they tell and the light they shed on Mistral's existence as a woman obliged to keep her romantic life secret. The release of the letters was not without controversy, especially in Chile, as they shattered the myths of traditional femininity in which the poet had been shrouded.

The English-language edition, edited and translated by García-Gorena, includes a critical introduction, an afterword on Dana written by her niece, and correspondence about Mistral: letters to Dana from Palma Guillén, Mistral's lifelong friend and the woman with whom she adopted a son, whose suicide at age 17 was, of course, devastating to the poet; to Dana from Gilda Péndola, Mistral's secretary and travel companion in Italy and New York; and correspondence between

Dana and Chilean politician and friend of Mistral, Radomiro Tomic, who offers a subtle but supportive acknowledgement of the nature of Mistral and Dana's partnership. The letters from Mistral to Dana—the bulk of the book—are presented as chronologically as possible (not all are dated), and are divided into three sections: letters from California and Mexico, 1948-1950; from Italy, 1952; and from Roslyn (Long Island) and New Orleans, 1953-56. Where the archival record exists, the editor includes letters and telegrams from Dana to Mistral, but unfortunately most of Dana's letters are lost—indeed, habitually destroyed by Mistral. It was Dana who saved the letters she received and, as reported by her niece, treasured them dearly for the rest of her life.

The value of this collection of letters goes beyond the evidence they contain to “prove” Mistral's sexuality and instead lies in the cumulative effect of reading through the tedium of a nearly daily correspondence written by a strong, independent woman whose insecurities are laid bare in the absence of her partner. Much of the content of the letters has to do with finances, a clear source of stress for Mistral, who had no family other than Dana—as she reiterates throughout—and who did not trust herself to manage her bank accounts and properties, which were scattered beyond her reach in California and Brazil, obliging her to rely heavily on the assistance of friends and secretaries. There is no one single letter that stands out in a way that might exemplify or explain the relationship between these two women. The letters simply profess love, admiration, and longing for the recipient. The letters are, naturally, written only when the two were separated, and it is evident that Mistral wrote much more frequently and copiously than Dana, as another constant theme is Mistral's expression of frustration with Dana for not writing back and leaving Mistral guessing as to her partner's reactions, feelings, and intentions. Indeed, the experience of reading the collection can be frustrating for the reader, as the one-sidedness of the record leaves one wondering just what Dana did think of her partner and what she was up to during her long absences. The introduction, however, explains that Dana drank too much and that she suffered from schizophrenia and was frequently institutionalized, outside knowledge that lends poignancy to Mistral's desperation to receive word from her love.

Mistral and Dana came from different worlds: there was an age difference of some thirty years; Dana grew up on the edges of New York's high society (a city loathed by Mistral) and Mistral from a small town in Chile. Mistral often muses about the “racial” differences that perhaps, she thinks, explain their different approaches to relationships. Mistral frequently praises Dana's mastery of Spanish and disparages her own lack of skills in English; their love, however, bridged these linguistic and cultural divides. But other than her concern for gossips and those whom she thought were rifling through her correspondence, and her admonishment to Dana to be “careful” with her letters, the basis of their relationship as it is reflected here is that of two women who wish to spend their lives together caring for one another. As the years progress, Mistral appears to grow more confident in the stability of their relationship, and the differences between them fade away.

The Mistral that emerges from these letters offers a unique glimpse into her private self: she was vulnerable and insecure in her relationships; her distance from Chile was lived as a kind of exile, painful and nostalgic; physical ailments and memory loss often consumed her as she grew older; she was witty, as when she wrote of her longing for Dana in the voice of their pet kitten or insulted Chile's authoritarian president Carlos Ibáñez. She was annoyed by insufferable men, particularly those dismissive of her, such as Alone (penname of the Chilean literary critic renowned for his praise of Pablo Neruda); she believed in the rights of the downtrodden, and yet she had a deep mistrust of her servants and maids; she longed for a simple life with a house and a garden and the company of her chosen partner, Doris Dana.

This masterful translation of Mistral's letters into English will serve to bring greater attention in the English-speaking world to an extraordinary poet and public figure from Latin America, and it will be of interest as well to scholars of queer and gender studies in the Americas. Although Mistral worked for the government throughout her life, she was deeply critical of state projects and her letters reveal markers other than nationality, for example her "Latinness," her indigeneity, her mestizo roots, her Basque and Jewish ancestry. She also shows gender fluidity when identifying with masculine forms of words in Spanish, effectively rendered in translation by adding "man" to the English version. These qualities reveal Mistral's complex subjectivity.

Further re-examination of cultural appropriations of Mistral as a public figure constitutes the first chapter of Magda Sepúlveda's monograph, which takes its title from one of Mistral's poems, "Somos los andinos que fuimos" ("We are the Andeans we once were"). Sepúlveda's starting point is Francisco Daza's 1971 mural of Mistral, prominently located in downtown Santiago and just down a main avenue from the Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral. She quickly dismisses the latter for Mistral's palpable absence in this state-sponsored cultural center of Chile's post-dictatorship democracy, and she problematizes the mural—representative of a center-left appropriation of Mistral associated with Chile's democratic socialism—for its patronizing representation of the indigenous as naïvely awaiting the knowledge offered by the matronly schoolteacher figure, an image that is contradicted at every turn of Sepúlveda's insightful reading of Mistral's poetry. Sepúlveda's analysis of Mistral's place in the Chilean imaginary—both in this first chapter and in the last, which explores Mistral's literary agency and the identity she herself forged in the public sphere—is refreshing in and of itself, but most especially because Sepúlveda goes on to offer new readings of Mistral's poetry more coherent with the dynamic and independent figure of the poet than older versions of her allowed for. The book devotes a chapter to each of Mistral's major volumes of poetry and Sepúlveda reads them through the lens of Trans-Andean Cultural Studies, showing how Mistral's work valorizes indigenous and female forms of knowledge and autonomy that subvert, ignore or defy the patriarchal, Eurocentric, colonizing and exploitative paradigms of the nation state.

Mistral is well known for her defense of the human rights of the indigenous. Sepúlveda's reading of her poetry, beginning with *Desolación*, delves into the ways in which the poet deplores the state's project of granting land to European immigrants who destroyed both the land and its original inhabitants. Whereas the famed "Sonetos de la Muerte" in this book have served critics to link Mistral's poetry with her personal tragedies—in this case the death of a young man with whom she had had a relationship—Sepúlveda focuses on the poems that are clearly connected to Mistral's time in the South of Chile and her personal and political response to the horrors she witnessed there. The poet's identification not with the modernizing project of the state that sent her to the south on an educational mission, but rather with the victims of the colonizers is compelling, and Sepúlveda's convincing reading of these verses lays bare the damaging ways in which previous generations of Mistral's readers have muted this vital dimension of the Nobel laureate's work. In the chapter on the later volume *Tala*, which in English has been translated *Tree Felling*, Sepúlveda further develops her reading into Mistral's identification with and development of an Andean sensibility, showing how her poems valorize the cultural knowledge of the indigenous and forge a poetics of solidarity, speaking not *for* the marginalized but *with* and *among* them. This shift in how the positionality of the poetic voice is perceived is fundamental for reading Mistral's poetry as one of solidarity with the indigenous and opposition to the colonizing projects of the nation state. As Sepúlveda keenly points out, Mistral's "we" declares continuity with the indigenous past and embraces the trans-Andean indigeneity of the present.

In the chapter on *Ternura*, Sepúlveda turns her attention to the gender politics of Mistral's poetry and again provides compelling re-readings of now canonical works to show how the Nobel laureate channeled her maternal sentiments into a defense of the rights of single mothers. The idealization of the maternal in her work has typically been read in terms of the poet's autobiography: her own longing for a child, her devastation over the suicide of her adopted child, her commitment to teaching. Sepúlveda draws out the references to the trials, tribulations, and fierce independence of mothers raising children without men involved. She ties her reading of the poems to Mistral's lesser circulated non-fiction on the rights of women and the result breathes new life into the poetry.

Sepúlveda's approach is a refreshing read that feels true to the poetry of Mistral. Having taught her work for years, I have often sensed a disconnection between the way her work is framed in both anthologies and literary criticism. A whole new readership of Mistral is prepared to embrace the figure of an independent woman who loved other women and was committed to the downtrodden and the marginalized. While Mistral's politics of race and gender may at times seem constrained in her public statements or private musings, Sepúlveda shows how in her poetry her convictions run wild and free, eschewing the ideologies of her time in favor of a much more complicated representation of power and the stakes of liberation in the Andean world and throughout the Americas. Both Mistral's life and her work deserve new readings in today's climate of misogyny, homophobia, and racism throughout the Americas, and these two books offer entry points into so much that Mistral still has to offer.

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Review Essay: Screening Subjects: Gender and (Trans)nationalism in Latin American Film and Literature

Castro Ricalde, Maricruz, et. al. *Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature*. New York: Peter Lang, 2017. 316 pp. ISBN 9781-7870-7066-0

Luna, Ilana Dann. *Adapting Gender: Mexican Feminisms from Literature to Film*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018. 312 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-6827-3

Martin, Deborah and Deobrah Shaw, Eds. *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Production, Politics, Poetics*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017. 288 pp. ISBN 9781-7845-3711-1

Roberts-Camps, Traci. *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Social and Cultural Perspectives*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017. 208 pp. ISBN 9780-8263-5827-1

Selimović, Inela. *Affective Moments in the Films of Martel, Carri, and Puenzo*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018. 263 pp. ISBN 9781-1374-9641-6

The five books reviewed here, all released within the last two years, approach various topics related to national culture and identity categories, mainly but not exclusively in terms of gender and sexuality. As we discern through the themes and methods included in these recent studies, subjectivities and national identities come to bear on one another in myriad ways in cultural production from throughout Latin America. Recent scholarship, it seems, is quite keen to recalibrate understandings of the boundaries of national identities and subjectivities and their respective places in the cultural imaginary.

Latin American Women Filmmakers: Production, Politics, Poetics begins with a concise preface by Ruby Rich in which she situates the emergence and evolution of women filmmakers from the Latin American region over the past few decades. The preface is particularly helpful in orienting regionalist approaches to film (studies) in both this volume and the current state of the field writ large. In their introduction, editors Martin and Shaw continue this consideration of the interplay between national and regional cinematic traditions and industries, which they identify as the specific contribution of this volume within the broader panorama of recent critical studies on Latin American women directors. Going back as far as 1917's Argentina, the editors pluck women from the margins of filmmaking and offer a robust and compelling history of women's roles in national filmmaking industries throughout the region. As Martin and Shaw state here, the volume seeks to maintain a focus on this history and the precedents for the proliferation of women's filmmaking that has taken place in recent years. This framing vests the volume with an incredible critical and theoretical value.

In keeping with the volume's focus on offering an alternative history of national filmmaking practices, Lúcia Nagib's chapter, "Beyond Difference," begins the first section of the book, "Industrial Contexts." Nagib situates women's involvement in the much commented *Retomada*, or renaissance of Brazilian film in the 1990s. Taking Jacques Rancière's notion of "dissensus" as a point of departure, Nagib shows how women filmmakers introduce a dilemma that "multiplies the meanings of the referent" (32). Nagib emphasizes collaboration so as to move beyond difference. From there, Sarah Barrow explores the "Llosa effect" in recent Peruvian film production, specifically the works of Rosario García-Montero. In keeping with the volume's focus on rewriting national film industries' histories, Barrow explores Marianne Eyde's woman-centered filmmaking in the 1990s as an important precedent for Llosa and García-Montero as national filmmakers. Turning their focus to documentary production, Claudia Bossay and María-Paz Peirano begin their chapter considering the function of the *olla común*—the "common pot" placed in the street to feed those in need in times of particular hardship—in recent Chilean documentaries produced by women. Bossay and Peirano take the *olla común*, in its symbolic meaning of salutary fellowship, to be analogous to the cultural logic that undergirds documentary production by women in Chile in recent years. Exploring the possibility of "women's cinema," the essay avoids an essentializing or reductionist approach to women's documentary production. The authors submit that women documentary makers explore issues that have often been considered "women's issues" at the same time that they incorporate issues more conventionally related to other subject positionalities whose voices have often not been foregrounded in film production.

The next section, "Representations," begins with Catherine Leen's consideration of Sylvia Morales' re-visioning of Latinas in *A Crushing Love*. Leen's endeavor to move "beyond the spitfire" in depictions of Latinas that are rooted in archetypes of femininity draws from Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and historicizes women's place within the Chicano movement. The chapter discusses *A Crushing Love*'s representation of Latina women within the broader history of women in Chicano movements. Placing the documentary in conversation with Lourdes Portillo's *Las madres: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*, Leen concludes that the documentary expands cultural understandings of motherhood to include solidarity. Deborah Shaw then discusses the representation of domestic workers in *El niño pez* and *La mujer sin cabeza* with a focus on affect that draws from Laura Podalsky's work on the subject, specifically her redefinition of politics in popular culture. Shaw pays particular attention to the ways in which Lucrecia Martel's *La mujer sin cabeza* maintains borders between family members and servant classes as a way of reducing anxieties surrounding intimacy and distance, unlike other recent Latin American films that have

effaced this distance. Continuing her focus on Martel, Shaw turns her focus to *El niño pez* by way of introducing the film's intertextual references with Martel's earlier film *La ciénaga*. Unlike Martel's pessimism, Shaw notes that Puenzo imagines a new queer social order through the upper-class adolescent and domestic worker's relationship with one another. Leslie Marsh, for her part, considers women's roles in comedy filmmaking in Brazil. The chapter situates director Anna Muylaert's and comedy's respective places within contemporary Brazilian filmmaking and goes on to discuss the director's *Durval Discos* and *É proibido fumar* as a critique of post-feminist culture, particularly the assumption that gender equality has been achieved. Drawing from Dianna C. Niebyski's position that humor in recent Latin American film posits a shift in expectations, Marsh argues that these films allow for an examination of cultural assumptions. Specifically, Marsh focuses convincingly on how these films use dark humor so as to question heteronormative romance and to question assumptions about gender construction. Ending this section, Constanza Burucúa's chapter situates Solveig Hoogesteijn's films in relation to Venezuela's national film industry. Burucúa stipulates that, although Hoogesteijn did not belong to the socialist feminist Cine Urgente group, the director nonetheless shares the group's commitment to social and political issues in her filmmaking. Within this context, the chapter offers a comparative reading of *Macu, la mujer del policía* and *Maroá, una niña de la calle*. In the former, Burucúa focuses on the points of contact between psychoanalysis and the nation; in the latter, the author emphasizes the temporal structure and the use of flashbacks that force a fairytale ending, which Burucúa contextualizes within the trajectory of 1980s filmmaking.

The next section, "Key Agents," begins with Niamh Thornton's consideration of Mexican director Marcela Fernández Violante. Thornton pays particular attention to Fernández Violante's relationship to national cinema and to national politics, specifically the importance of 1968 for filmmakers of her generation. She discusses *De todos modos Juan te llamas*, the first film to be directed in Mexico by a woman except for the 1951 film, *Trotacalles*, and Fernández Violante's later film *Misterio*, concluding that the director challenged what it meant to be a woman and to be a filmmaker at a time and in an industry in which women were not readily accepted. Similarly, Marvin D'Lugo situates Bertha Navarro within women's filmmaking in Latin America and in Mexico specifically. D'Lugo underscores how the director was able to innovate and reshape media from an often-marginalized status among Mexican creators. Finally, the section and the book end with Deborah Martin's consideration of Lucrecia Martel's place among New Argentine Cinema. Martin situates Martel in line with María Luisa Bemberg and Lita Stantic, an important genealogy of feminist filmmaking in the nation. She also situates Martel alongside contemporaries such as Lucía Puenzo, Julia Solomonoff, Albertina Carri, and Celina Murga in their respective use of water for thematic and aesthetic purposes.

Overall, the essays that compose this volume offer new insight into the regional and national meanings of gender and filmmaking. Moreover, the sustained focus on contemporary filmmakers' relations to precursors offers new ways of thinking about media and national identities as they relate to gendered subjectivities.

Traci Roberts-Camps' *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Social and Cultural Perspectives* also explores the works of directors who identify as women from throughout Latin America. Roberts-Camps considers films from a variety of countries, focusing a chapter on each of the directors she studies through a specific thematic approach. She couples these chapters by country (Argentina, Mexico, Chile, and Brazil). As the author states in the introduction, her intervention is unique in that it is a monograph dedicated to women filmmakers throughout the region, whereas many previous studies (and two of the others included here, *Affective Moments*

and *Adapting Gender*) circumscribe their analysis of women directors to one country. In this way, Roberts-Camps is able to trace lines of continuity and rupture among individual nations and Latin American film traditions on a regional scale. For this same reason, the rationale for focusing on these four countries and not on others could be made a bit more explicit.

In the first chapter, Roberts-Camps revisits the filmmaking of pioneer Argentine director María Luisa Bemberg with a focus on transgression. Discussing the films *Camila* and *Yo, la peor de todas*, Roberts-Camps argues that both the subjects portrayed in Bemberg's films and Bemberg's own approach to filmmaking in 1980s' Argentina are subversive. The discussions of the formal and thematic elements that make these films transgressive are convincing and help to contextualize further Bemberg's place in 1980s' Argentine filmmaking. The chapter concludes that Bemberg's films are a precursor to Lucía Puenzo. Yet, given the importance of other feminist filmmakers in the interim (such as Lucrecia Martel and Lita Stantic, whom, as Roberts-Camps mentions in the chapter, Bemberg described as a fellow "transgressor"), some readers may wonder how the discussion of these two specific directors fits into a broader panorama of recent Argentine filmmaking. In this way, this book, Martin and Shaw's volume, and Selimović's study complement one another quite well. Turning her attention to Argentine Lucía Puenzo, Roberts-Camps focuses on the theme of isolation in *XXY* and *El niño pez*. Roberts-Camps emphasizes the formal aspects of isolation in Puenzo's treatment of *XXY*'s intersex protagonist, Alex, such as desolate takes of the beach space where her family has isolated themselves away from Buenos Aires. As the author notes, many of the shots and frames emphasize this isolation. In comparison to *XXY*, isolation is less noticeable in *El niño pez*, Roberts-Camps submits, but remoteness between characters is an important theme. The chapter concludes that the formal and thematic elements of isolation emphasize disconnects between characters and establish a melancholy mood in *XXY* and *El niño pez*.

Moving to a Mexican context, chapter three discusses María Novaro's films *Lola*, *Danzón*, *El jardín del Edén*, and *Sin dejar huella* through an emphasis on female solidarity. In this chapter, a working theoretical understanding of the themes being studied would be beneficial. Nonetheless, the chapter's conclusion that solidarity amongst themselves allows Novaro's female characters to fill in the gaps left by men in the context of socioeconomic turmoil offers new ways of thinking about how Mexican film treats women's relationship to the public and economic spheres. In contrast, the next chapter begins with a concise theoretical consideration of spectacle as it lays the framework for its discussion of the female body as spectacle in Mexican Dana Rotberg's films, defined as a woman seen by others as having stepped out of bounds. Roberts-Camps explores such depictions of women in *Otilia Rauda* and *Ángel de fuego*. In Rotberg's films, the author shows, women characters to use their bodies as revenge against their abusers yet do so in such a way that ultimately punishes the women themselves.

In Chile, Roberts-Camps discusses Carmen Luz Parot's *Estadio Nacional*, emphasizing parallelism in the documentary film. The chapter explores parallels between past and present as well as formal uses of parallelism within the documentary. Roberts-Camps' conclusion to the chapter, which situates Parot within a broader panorama of documentary filmmakers in Chile, serves to provide helpful context for the history and evolution of documentary and also helps to further the author's emphasis on parallels between past and present in Parot's film. From there, the book moves to contemporary Chilean fiction filmmaker Alicia Scherson's *Play* through the thematic lens of escape. Her comparison here to *Cien años de soledad* could use further contextualization, particularly since it seems to equate surrealism with magical realism. As

Roberts-Camps concludes, the theme of escape serves a dual function in Scherson's film to underscore the thematic importance of play in the film and also as a critique of Chilean society.

Shifting her focus to Brazilian filmmaking, the author then explores Suzana Amaral's cinema with an emphasis on urban and inner lives. As Roberts-Camps shows throughout her discussions of Amaral's films, the director portrays characters' wandering so as to emphasize the relationships between their interiority and the urban spaces that surround them. Finally, Roberts-Camps considers Brazilian filmmaker Tizuka Yamasaki's works with an emphasis on national identity. The author underscores throughout the chapter that characters' self-understanding and self-representation as Brazilian citizens is crucial to their subjectivities as they navigate their identities and experiences as immigrants.

Latin American Women Filmmakers is a clearly written, straightforward approach to filmmaking by women on a regional scale. The various thematic approaches to each chapter allow the author to explore how different aspects of Latin American life are taken up by women filmmakers. It is certain to be of relevance to scholars thinking about film in a variety of Latin American contexts.

Ilana Dann Luna's *Adapting Gender* is dedicated exclusively to Mexican works of literature and their film adaptations. As Luna notes in her introduction, before her book there was a surprising paucity of critical studies of adaptation in Mexican film relative to the practice's prevalence within the Mexican film industry. Despite being circumscribed to Mexican authors and filmmakers, Luna engages transnational conversations so as to study what she terms the "particularly *Mexican*" ways of storytelling as functions of power structures that these films are critiquing in different ways.

In addition to the introductory chapter, Luna also includes a first chapter in which she thoroughly and exhaustively discusses the history of film adaptations in relation to the Mexican film and Latin American film industries. Like Martin and Shaw's introduction, this chapter is valuable not only insofar as it offers a history of women's roles in the Mexican film industry but also for articulating a new historical understanding of Mexican film writ large. Like *Mexican Transnational Film and Literature*, this chapter productively balances the particularities of Mexican cultural production with broader regional and global trends. In particular, Luna's close attention and deference to contradictions between various feminisms are especially valuable to both her analysis of these particular works and to the field more broadly. Luna cogently distills this history to argue for a feminist praxis of adaptation studies that will guide her discussions throughout the following chapters.

Chapter two discusses Rosario Castellanos' orientation to Mexican feminist thought as well as to second-wave global feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir. The chapter creates a generative historical overview of feminisms within Mexico and, precisely, of how they differed from the trajectory of first and second-wave feminist movements in France and the U.S. From there, Luna situates the dialogue into which Busi Cortés enters with Castellanos as she adapts *El secreto de Romelia* within a moment at which feminist conversations, Luna shows, were reimagining the role of the state in Mexican national filmmaking. As the chapter concludes, the intergenerational negotiations between Castellanos and Cortés in the latter's adaptation offer alternative histories of women's political participation in Mexico.

From there, Luna turns her focus to contemporaneous adaptation in the case of Isabelle Tardán and Sabina Berman's *Entre (Pancho) Villa y una mujer desnuda*. In this chapter the importance of polyphony and dialogue comes into sharper relief through Luna's discussion of the collaboration between Tardán and Berman. Her reading of the works emphasizes their intertextual

engagement with a variety of forms; this analysis makes an even stronger case for the emphasis on adaptation that Luna underscores throughout this book.

In chapter four, Luna offers an incisive reading of Rosa Nissán's novel *Novia que te vea* and Guita Schyfter's homonymous film adaptation. Both the novel and film have received a significant amount of critical attention, all of which have underscored the points of contact between Jewishness, immigration, gender, and national belonging in *Novia que te vea*. For her part, Luna's thorough and illuminating discussions of the circumstances in which Schyfter adapted the novel contribute substantially to understandings of this film. Moreover, her sustained focus on Nissán's and Schyfter's respective approaches to national politics, gender, immigration, and Jewishness not only changes the way we think about this important film, but also makes a compelling case for the importance of adaptation studies.

Next, Luna turns her focus to Jaime Humberto Hermosillo's film *De noche vienes, Esmeralda*, a film adaptation of Elena Poniatowska's short story "De noche vienes" that, as the author shows, actively queers Poniatowska's text. Luna shows that, in the film, *Esmeralda*'s causes are adopted by feminists and gay rights activists. As Luna argues in her discussion of the story and the film, Hermosillo could be understood in a similar vein as Marta Lamas' indictment of Carlos Monsiváis as a "misogynist feminist" insofar as the director's usurpation of a feminist story to tell a cisgender, homosexual male's story. Yet, as Luna shows, Hermosillo was attuned to the tensions between women's movements and gay rights movements in the 1970s and 1980s. The negotiations between women's rights and gay rights in this adaptation have compelling implications for conversations about allyship and intersectionality in both a Mexican and transnational context without.

To conclude, Luna emphasizes that the adaptations that she discusses, as part of ongoing dialogues about subjectivities and politics, are points of departure for further, continued conversations. These authors and filmmakers are embroiled in polyphonic considerations of gender and national identity. Adaptation, Luna submits, serves to ensure that these conversations continue.

Like *Adapting Gender*, the edited volume *Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature* also focuses on Mexican cultural productions with an emphasis on the interplays between national and transnational aspects of these works. In light of the enormous visibility that Mexican cultural production (especially film) currently enjoys on a transnational scale, the volume's introduction puts forth an endeavor to explore the points of contact between the local, national, and global. Unlike the other books reviewed in this essay, this book does not focus specifically on gender or sexuality (nor, it bears mentioning, does Selimović's book explicitly seek to foreground gender, despite its exclusive analysis of filmmakers who identify as women).

The book's first section is "Transnationalism and Posthumanism." In the book's first body chapter, James Ramey discusses transnational cinema and posthumanism. Ramey seeks to reconceptualize "transnational interpretive communities" through theories on posthumanism put forth by Cary Wolfe. The chapter's exploration of posthumanism—which is gaining traction but remains relatively underdeveloped within Latin American cultural studies—is quite welcome, as is Ramey's focus on Bakhtinian heteroglossia in film. The chapter does leave the reader eager to hear what interpretations of Mexican transnational film might look like in the framework that Ramey puts forth. Next, Alejandra Bernal's chapter analyzes Alexander Beecroft's model of "globalization plots" in Jorge Volpi's *El fin de la locura* and Juan Villoro's *Arrecife*. Bernal submits that both novels make use of the allegorical trope in their depictions of globalization. Drawing from Doris Sommer's and Idelber Avelar's models of Latin American allegories, Bernal

puts forth a “campo afectivo transnacional” in recent allegorical novels. Bernal’s conclusion takes into consideration Jameson’s controversial 1986 essay on third-world allegory to return to the “horizonte afectivo transnacional.” This term promises to be useful to future critical considerations of allegory, and would benefit from being placed into conversation with other recent critical interventions on affect. From there, Eunha Choi discusses Carlos Reygadas’ *Batalla en el cielo* in the context of what she terms “plural perspectivism,” through which a scene’s audiovisual composition has the effect of destabilizing a unified image of the nation-state in favor of a plural media focused on the body of the subject. As Choi underscores, drawing from André Bazin, the interplay between image and montage style creates a particular field of vision that, in Reygadas’ works and in *Batalla en el cielo* especially, registers what falls outside the field of vision of the nation. Choi’s intervention is a welcome addition to the corpus of scholarship on Reygadas’ film. Turning her focus to *Post tenebras lux*, Silvia Álvarez-Olarra discusses the director’s use of the refracted lens that, in her account, forces the spectator to adopt a haptic vision of the film that allows for a sensorial experimentation with the unknown.

Returning to written fiction, Lourdes Parra Lazcano’s chapter explores the works of Esther Seligson through the theoretical lens of Édouard Glissant’s “poetics of relation.” This approach is particularly welcome insofar as Parra Lazcano situates Glissant’s creolization within his Antillean context and in conversation with Fernando Ortiz and with Erin Graff Zivin’s “wandering signifier.” In this way, the chapter offers compelling comparative approaches to Jewish-Mexican literature.

The book’s next section is dedicated to “Textual Movements and Displacements.” It begins with Maricruz Castro Ricaldi’s consideration of Mexican Golden Age cinema in popular graphics. Castro Ricaldi underscores these images’ function in the context of Monsiváis’ “aires de familia” as well as Claudio Lomnitz’ model of the circular dialectic of nationalistic culture. From there, Manuel Cuéllar discusses the significance of the “Noche Mexicana del 1921.” Cuéllar draws from García Canclini’s notion of a *patrimonio* that is theatricalized and Diana Taylor’s emphasis on the physical space of performance to argue that the event allows for a reconceptualization of Mexican identity beyond masculinity and *mestizaje*. Considering various journalistic depictions of the event, Cuéllar proposes Mexicanness as a *mise-en-scène* in which cultural performances literally embodied national identity, offering compelling new insights. For his part, Carlos Belmonte Grey considers 1930s’ Mexican cinematic production as predicated on the mixture of representations of tradition combined with a perception of modernity, as seen in other aspects of 1930s’ Mexican culture, such as *Los contemporáneos*. Focusing on films about the Mexican Revolution, the chapter explores filmic endeavors to represent the revolution in such a way as to bring the nation into modernity. Continuing this consideration of film and the Mexican Revolution, Álvaro Vázquez Mantecón discusses Mariano Azuela and film. As the chapter emphasizes, Azuela’s relationship to filmmaking and to adaptation sheds light on relationships between authors and Mexican Golden Age cinema, concluding that literature and film were, at this point, co-constitutive of one another. Given the scope of this volume, this conclusion is particularly helpful in thinking of how film and literature converge to inform and reflect on national identity. Returning more explicitly to the volume’s focus on transnational aspects of cultural productions, Lauro Zavala explores ideological tensions between classic Hollywood and Mexican film. Zavala highlights such contrasts as Hollywood noir’s moralizing ideology as opposed to Mexican melo-noir’s moral ambiguities, Mexican romantic comedy’s class consciousness, that Mexican musical films’ polyphonic and carnivalesque improvisation, the importance of Catholic forgiveness in Mexican melodrama, and, finally, different privileging of family and romantic love in a Mexican versus Hollywood contexts.

Akin to Zavala's exploration of melo-noir, Álvaro A. Fernández puts forth an aesthetic cosmopolitanism through his reading of *El hombre sin rostro* and *Crepúsculo*. Specifically, he considers the use of the dolly shot that exceeds a national aesthetic in conversation with García Canclini's hybridity and Benedict Anderson's imagined communities.

The third and final section, "Migration and Borders," begins with Danna Levin Rojo and Michelle Aguilar Vera's consideration of the films *El Norte* and *Norteadó*. As the authors show, while both films portray undocumented immigration from Mexico to the U.S, the formal aspects of the two films differ drastically. In keeping with the book's emphasis on transnational cultural production, the chapter highlights the films' shared status as co-productions between countries and their screenings for international audiences, highlighting the importance of *El Norte* and *Norteadó*'s relationships to U.S. Chicano and mixteco communities, respectively. Diego Augusto Salgado Bautista's chapter discusses the documentary *Eco de la montaña* following a straightforward structure that discusses specific sequences of the film as they relate to history and to documentary representation. From there, Roberto Domínguez Cáceres analyzes depictions of immigrants to Mexico in *Rosa Blanca* and *Jaula de oro* in the context of the petroleum boom in the 1920s and Central American immigration in the 2010s, respectively, and these immigrants' different relationships to Mexican subjects. Itzá Zavala-Garrett, for her part, discusses *La misma luna* in dialogue with Moraga and Anzaldúa's *This Bridge Called My Back* and with images found in murals throughout Los Angeles. Continuing the exploration of women's subjectivities and the U.S.-Mexico border, Alicia Vargas Amésquita considers Sabina Berman and Carlos Carrera's *Backyard: El traspatio* to argue that the film depicts the double objectification of women's bodies as garbage and as the soil of a "nación-basurero." Finally, Mauricio Díaz Calderón analyzes the film *Espiral*, discussing the mixtecos of Oaxaca as did Domínguez Cáceres. Drawing from Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, Díaz Calderón situates *Espiral* within Mexican nationality and within broader conversations on new forms of empire.

In its totality, *Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature* brings Mexican cultural production in conversation with broader global and regional conversations. In some of the essays, the volume's focus on transnational elements of cultural production could be a bit more explicit. Nonetheless, these essays shed new light on particular works, movements, and figures in Mexican literature and film in ways that allow us to reconsider Mexico's current place in film, literature, and global geopolitics.

Most recently, in her 2018 book *Affective Moments in the Films of Martel, Carri, and Puenzo*, Inela Selimović explores how these three filmmakers incorporate affective moments into their films in order to articulate sociopolitical critiques. In the book's introductory chapter, the author thoroughly situates her discussion of affective moments within existing critical and theoretical discussions on affect. This succinct yet exhaustive way of defining "affective moments" does great service to affect studies, Latin American cultural studies, and film studies insofar as Selimović cogently and convincingly lays the groundwork for what her later close readings of specific films will tell the reader about affective moments. Despite the many footnotes and citations of theory, the author never loses her firm grasp on her argument and focus; to the contrary, Selimović marshals an impressive number of ideas and voices on affect so as to make her intervention clear and thoroughly informed.

The book's first chapter, "Minors and Homebound Violence," focuses on domestic spaces in Albertina Carri's *La rabia*, Lucrecia Martel's *La ciénaga*, and Lucía Puenzo's *El niño pez* (which Deborah Shaw also discussed alongside one another). The author introduces the idea of "affective dwelling" in these films. In her discussion of *La rabia*, the author brings together

considerations of affect, formal conventions of film, and psychoanalysis to discuss Carri's use of inverse scopophilia. In Selimović's view, this inverse scopophilia functions not as a fulfillment of desire to look at women, but as a function of "confusion, threat, and loss" (41). The author's consideration of Martel's *La ciénaga*, which has been the subject of a considerable amount of critical attention, is innovative and refreshing in its focus on the character of Isabel, the live-in indigenous housekeeper. The author situates Martel's treatment of motherhood within a broader context of recent Argentine film that has dealt with the topic of motherhood as it relates to politics, particularly in the context of memory and recent history. In such moments of the text, Selimović's treatment of affect has clear, compelling implications for other thematic and topical aspects of recent Argentine cultural production. In her discussion of Lucía Puenzo's *El niño pez*, Selimović focuses on the director's use of film noir elements in her depiction of the space of the home and the adolescents' desire to escape the domestic space. The author argues that through her use of queer characters Puenzo subverts film noir's core aesthetics so as to allow the queer characters to outwit predominantly male authority figures. She concludes that the film challenges the Foucauldian notion of the "intelligible body" through the termination of character Ailin's pregnancy and with its characters occupying a non-place in their search for affective dwelling.

The next chapter, "Remediations and affect," focuses on protagonists' vexed relationships to the recent past. Selimović revitalizes conversations on Albertina Carri's highly acclaimed and often discussed 2003 film *Los rubios* by revisiting the now fifteen-year-old film as a "hyperbolic remediation." Here, Selimović distills the points of contact between what has already been said in criticism about *Los rubios* and the importance of affective moments in film. The author concludes her analysis of *Los rubios* asserting, that the film's hypermediacy is inexorable from moments that distill corporal, cognitive, and affective functions. Continuing her focus on affect and memory, Selimović turns her attention to Lucrecia Martel's *La mujer sin cabeza*. As the author notes, the potency of Martel's sociocultural critique is inexorable from its use of affect; she explores this use by engaging Deleuzian notions of affect as well as Foucauldian biopolitics. Her discussion of *La mujer sin cabeza* concludes that the film offers a critique of present-day social exclusion on the basis of ethnicity as much as it explores the unresolved memory of an unjust past. From there, Selimović takes into consideration Puenzo's film *Wakolda: El médico alemán*, centering her analysis on silence's relationship to affect in the film, specifically on the association that the film creates between silences and its titular character. In this film, Selimović submits, remediation allows Puenzo to explore the relationship between film and ethics in the context of both the Holocaust and Argentina's national politics (and to the point of contact between the two insofar as the film is set in 1960, the year of Eichmann's capture in Argentina). The author productively explores the similarities between Puenzo's having authored the novel from which she adapted *Wakolda*, Carri's reimagining of *Los rubios* in *Los rubios: cartografía de una película*, and Martel's remediation of deaths on the road (predominantly of indigenous individuals) in Salta.

The final body chapter of the book introduces the reader the terms "bold boredom" in relation to libidinous affect. In the case of Puenzo's film *XXY*, Selimović focuses on how moments infused with boredom in relation to the protagonist's gendered self-understanding. The author pays particular attention here to the relationship between the space of the beach and the protagonist's contemplation of alternative ways of forging her identity as an intersex adolescent. From there, Selimović explores Carri's *Géminis* with an emphasis on the film's depiction of incestuous desire. Particularly compelling is Selimović's reading of moment of the film in which the character of Lucía walks in on her children having sex: "it is an affective moment that captures the failure or rejection of a normative 'technology of sex' on the one hand, and establishes its own subversive

counter-position toward the normative sexualization of children in the form of anomalous sexual behavior, on the other” (195). Finally, the author discusses Martel’s *La niña santa* and focuses on the affect of touch in the film.

As the author concludes, close attention to these three directors’ use of affective moments in their films breaks new ground in critical understandings of New Argentine Cinema’s continually evolving aesthetic regimes. Because of Selimović’s compelling, incisive discussion of specific films as well as broader sociopolitical issues in Argentina, the book leaves the reader eager for the author to expand her focus to discuss affective moments in films from other countries and regions of Latin America beyond Argentina. As it stands, the book is a very welcome intervention in the field of Argentine film criticism. Moreover, *Affective Moments* contributes substantively and productively to existing analyses of affect both within Latin American studies and more broadly by incorporating an expansive amount of theory on affect.

Throughout these recent interventions, we discern an urgency to think through the various points of contact between the national and the transnational. The three books dedicated exclusively to one country—*Adapting Gender*, *Affective Moments*, and *Mexican Transnational Literature and Film*—all situate national culture within a broader regional and global context. For their part, Roberts-Camps and Martin and Shaw et. al show the need to look at Latin American film on a regional scale and, at other times, on a country-by-country basis. Within this context of the shifting relations between nationalism and regionalism, the books’ shared emphasis on subjectivities (in particular in relation to gender, but also to race, ethnicity, and religion) allow us to reflect on how different national and regional paradigms allow for self-representation and for exploration of what it means to be Latin American.

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Review Essay: Ensayos críticos y nueva poesía en la literatura colombiana

Mendoza, Annie. *Rewriting the Nation: Novels by Women on Violence in Colombia*. Tempe: AILCFH, 2015. 181 pp. ISBN 9780-9794-4804-1

Ronderos, Clara Eugenia. *Después de la fábula*. Madrid: Verbum, 2018. 70 pp. ISBN 9788-4907-4636-3. 70 pp.

—. *De reyes y fuegos*. Madrid: Torremozas, 2018. 60 pp. ISBN 978-84-7839-741-1

Williams, Raymond L. y José Manuel Medrano. *90 años de la novela moderna en Colombia (1927-2017): de Fuenmayor a Potdevin*. Bogotá: Desde abajo, 2018. 268 pp. ISBN 9789-5889-2671-1

Rewriting the Nation es un libro que ha recibido reconocimientos importantes. El manuscrito original ganó el premio a la mejor tesis doctoral por parte de la Asociación de Colombianistas en el año 2011. Como monografía obtuvo el premio de crítica Victoria Urbano que concede la Asociación Internacional de Literatura y Cultura Hispánica (AILCFH) en el año 2015. El volumen realiza un análisis de novelas inspiradas en tres períodos históricos de violencia en Colombia durante el siglo veinte. El primero es la masacre de las bananeras ocurrida en 1928 en la zona Caribe. La segunda es la época llamada La Violencia bipartidista de mitad de siglo en la zona andina del país. La última es la guerra de drogas que tuvo lugar a partir de los años ochenta

en los centros urbanos. El estudio se enfoca en las obras literarias que surgieron alrededor de los eventos que marcaron dichos períodos de conflicto en Colombia.

Mendoza establece paralelos entre obras de autores reconocidos tales como Gabriel García Márquez, Álvaro Cepeda Samudio, Eduardo Caballero Calderón, Fernando Vallejo, Jorge Franco y escritoras tales como Fanny Buitrago, Albalucía Ángel y Laura Restrepo alrededor de eventos relevantes durante estos períodos de violencia. Lo sobresaliente de este análisis es que confiere valor a todas las perspectivas presentadas con un acercamiento crítico riguroso.

Mendoza se basa en conceptos teóricos de Jean Franco y Francine Masiello en las que se presenta la visión feminista de la literatura latinoamericana escrita por autoras “avant-garde” del siglo XX. Aclara que la categorización como “literatura feminista” no significa que las autoras se declaren a sí mismas como feministas, sino lo que sus obras reflejan. Según Mendoza, las autoras seleccionadas representan la visión de una sociedad en donde las relaciones de mujeres, sin importar clase, raza o orientación sexual, les permite superar situaciones de violencia y convertirse en agentes de transformación social.

Mendoza examina la producción feminista literaria a partir de la segunda mitad de siglo XX en las siguientes novelas: *El hostigante verano de los dioses*, de Fanny Buitrago (1963), *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en un verde limón* de Albalucía Ángel (1975), *La multitud errante* (2000) y *Delirio* (2004), de Laura Restrepo. En todas estas obras se manifiesta la preocupación de la violencia social en el marco de las relaciones de género, clase y raza. El análisis parte de la pregunta de cómo las mujeres enfrentan la dominación patriarcal que permite una continuación cíclica de la violencia en la nación. Según Mendoza, las novelas estudiadas desafían el orden patriarcal forzando al lector a cuestionarse lo que significa ser una mujer en un país que privilegia jerarquías de poder construidas sobre la base de género, raza y clase social. Lo que dichas novelas evidencian es que el abuso sexual y psicológico en el núcleo familiar está inherentemente relacionado con los códigos de poder que enmarcan la sociedad.

Lo interesante y novedoso del estudio de Mendoza es que contrapone la literatura escrita por autores masculinos y femeninos en los mismos períodos históricos alrededor de eventos que marcaron la violencia social y política del país. De esta forma, la masacre de las bananeras ocurrida en 1928 en la zona del Caribe descrita por García Márquez y Cepeda Samudio en sus obras estelares, fue también representada por la obra de Fanny Buitrago años antes, sin el mismo reconocimiento. De igual forma, el Bogotazo que desató la época de violencia partidista de mitad de siglo, lo describe Albalucía Ángel con una perspectiva alterna a las multitudes de narraciones masculinas sobre el mismo, cuestionando las instancias de género y de clase. Las obras de fin de siglo relacionadas con la guerra de drogas y el desplazamiento interno se analizan en paralelo con las renombradas novelas de Fernando Vallejo, *La virgen de los sicarios* y de Jorge Franco, *Rosario Tijeras*. Lo que distingue la visión masculina de la femenina, encarnada en las obras de Laura Restrepo, *La multitud errante* y *Delirio*, es la perspectiva de las protagonistas como sujetos con capacidad de transformar las relaciones de dominación.

Mendoza sostiene que las novelas “feministas” redefinen la forma como se presenta la violencia porque ofrecen un contexto crítico para entender cómo la hostilidad que se vive a nivel macro en la sociedad es reflejo del abuso a nivel doméstico y privado. Igualmente, la autora critica con firmeza la explotación de las mujeres en las series populares y de tinte comercial que han surgido en el nuevo milenio en donde las protagonistas glorifican el submundo de la prostitución dentro del narcotráfico.

El libro de Mendoza se distingue de otros estudios sobre la literatura de la violencia por ser un análisis sólido que contrapone la visión femenina con la masculina en tres períodos de la historia

de Colombia. Además el trabajo hace una pregunta fuerte sobre la posición de las mujeres como sujetos y agentes en el marco de la violencia, y a la vez cuestiona la visión hegemónica que permite una repetición cíclica de este fenómeno en la sociedad. Como estudio crítico constituye un aporte de alto nivel a los debates sobre género clase y raza, pues trasciende las categorizaciones de victimización y abre múltiples perspectivas en torno a la escritura femenina en Colombia.

La escritora colombiana Clara Eugenia Ronderos penetra en el mundo del imaginario fantástico y de los mitos milenarios en dos poemarios publicados en 2018: *Después de la fábula y De reyes y fuegos*. Con un lenguaje lírico de gran agudeza los poemas recorren los velos de sujeción inherentes a las leyendas tradicionales y establecen un diálogo punzante y divertido que abordan el amor, el deseo, los sueños y el destino humano. Ronderos es profesora de literatura y Lingüística hispana en Lesley University en Cambridge, Massachusetts. Es autora de *Estaciones en el exilio* (2010), libro ganador del premio Conde de poesía, republicado en edición bilingüe como *The Poetry of Clara Ronderos: Seasons of Exile* (2014), del poemario, *Raíz del silencio* (2012) y de la colección de narraciones cortas, *Ábrete sésamo* (2016).

Después de la fábula es una colección de poemas que aluden a cuentos hadas, mitos, leyendas de espacios y tiempos que poblaron nuestra imaginación infantil y de juventud. Por esas páginas discurren Blanca Nieves y sus siete enanitos, lobos feroces y Caperucitas, bellas durmientes y sapos que no se convierten en príncipes. También aparecen Odiseo esquivando sirenas y Noe con su arca deshabitada sobreviviendo el diluvio—y hasta Simón Bolívar y Camila O’Gorman refutando la historia. Figuras como Scherezada y la mujer de Lot adquieren agencia y se convierten en heroínas.

Los poemas en voz de Clara desdibujan las fábulas. Los héroes se tornan verdugos y las princesas se convierten en seres de carne y hueso. Desaparecen los finales felices. Los besos ya no convierten a los sapos en príncipes ni a estos en objeto del deseo. No hay final feliz porque el velo que recorren los poemas son el de mujeres ancladas a su rol sempiterno de abnegación y silencio. Los reyes se develan en su papel opresor de canjear hijas por favores y poder. En fin, los sueños de la infancia se tornan en la pesadilla del diario vivir. Los mundos fantásticos creados por las fábulas se desvirtúan para mostrar el verdadero rostro que impone la condena de opresión tras los ensueños de la fantasía. Los mitos del deseo, la belleza y la pasión afloran a lo largo de este recorrido poético para generar preguntas y reflexiones en torno a las relaciones de género y a la realidad que veda la fantasía. Raquel Medina lo reconoce así en el prólogo:

Después de la fábula deconstruye, subvierte y transforma desde la voz de la colectividad femenina uno de esos discursos que a través de la historia ha definido el papel de la mujer en la sociedad: los cuentos de hadas y los cuentos infantiles. Por otra parte, reescribe y se enfrenta a otras fábulas mitológicas o simplemente históricas. A los primeros los desmantela, desmitifica y los dinamita desde esa voz de una mujer en la madurez que conoce las mentiras de esas fábulas que nunca fueron ciertas, pero que se siguen contando... para mantener a cada uno en el sitio que el sistema patriarcal ha determinado desde hace siglos. (12)

La voz poética nos lleva de la mano a través de imágenes sutiles que subvierten con ironía ese sistema como se aprecia en el poema titulado “Manifiesto contra la nobleza”:

*Yo no era una princesa de verdad
No tenía un guisante bajo mi colchón
sino un dragón que rugía
y un montón de piedras
y un melón...*

*No. Yo no era una verdadera princesa
delicada y feliz
ni fue un príncipe mi dueño.
Cuero duro mi piel, mi sangre sin azul. (19)*

El poemario se divide en Primeras fábulas y Otras fábulas. Las primeras se refieren a los cuentos tradicionales de hadas. Los segundos dialogan con mitos milenarios, así como con personajes de la Biblia y de la historia. Como corolario, Clara se nombra a sí misma, reconociéndose en su voz lírica como portadora de la palabra, el poema, la página y el texto. Se convierte así en sujeto de sí misma, asumiendo su lugar como escritora.

De reyes y fuegos muestra una textura más intimista. Los poemas se estructuran en varias secciones tituladas: “Vida en la isla”, “Saciar el animal”, “Encrucijada por hogar” y “Desdoblamiento. La lectura traza un recorrido a lo largo de las relaciones de pareja: amores opresivos (fieras sin domar), amores truncos, pasiones sofocantes, deseos insatisfechos.

El poemario en su totalidad encierra un misterio sobre la profundidad del alma. Hay una variedad de acertijos, referencias míticas y bíblicas, que como en otros poemas de Ronderos plantean un juego de intertextualidades literarias. Aparecen las gestas épicas como *El libro el Buen amor*, referencias a Gilgamesh y a la muerte del héroe. Confronta también a los poetas icónicos modernistas, José Asunción Silva y a César Vallejo. Juega con las imágenes cotidianas como el pan de cada día, los viajes constantes, el amor de la mañana y las cenas con vino en las noches plácidas.

El diálogo con el lector se establece a través de alusiones a criaturas legendarias por todos conocidas, así como a las barajas que preconizan reyes y fortunas y a preguntas que quedan sin respuesta. Y por supuesto, la poeta no se sustrae al poder que le otorga la palabra para deponer el orden masculino representado en el Rey todopoderoso, de su cetro y su corona: “Abriste entonces la mano, para dejarlos caer descabezados/ a los reyes de tu destino” (44).

La última sección, “Desdoblamiento”, aborda la época otoñal, la armonía de una relación cómoda donde ya no existen secretos ni apasionamientos desbordados. Es la relación madura que se nutre del café de la mañana, la mano sobre mano, y la placidez de un amor reposado, “domesticado y sobrio”.

Con estos dos poemarios Ronderos ratifica la perfección estilística en su poesía y el mensaje intrínseco feminista. Si en *Estaciones en el exilio*, la travesía nos conducía por las estaciones de la vida en búsqueda de una Ítaca inexistente, en *Después de la fábula* y *De reyes y fuegos*, se renueva este recorrido por imaginarios fantásticos y por el transcurrir de la vida con sus retos y desafíos. En todos ellos, Ronderos ofrece un mundo pleno de imágenes poéticas que interrogan las condiciones opresivas y el destino humano desde una perspectiva femenina clara y contundente.

El volumen *90 años de la novela colombiana (1927-1917): de Fuenmayor a Potdevin* de Raymond Williams y José Manuel Medrano propone que la novela colombiana moderna surge en la década de los cuarenta del siglo XX y desde ese momento se da una continuidad moderna y urbana en oposición a la narrativa costumbrista y regionalista que había prevalecido hasta esa época. El compendio analiza diecisiete novelas colombianas en un recorrido que va desde 1927 hasta 2017.

Williams es uno de los críticos norteamericanos más connotados por haber dado a conocer la literatura colombiana en el exterior. Tiene a su haber más de ochenta ensayos sobre narrativa colombiana y latinoamericana. Fue cofundador de la Asociación de Colombianistas y es autor de numerosos libros de crítica que reúnen lo más destacado de la novela colombiana en el siglo XX.

Este es el primer libro de autoría de Raymond Williams publicado en Colombia. Williams hace salvedad en el prefacio de que solo analiza los ejemplos más representativos de la narrativa moderna y urbana representada en novelas de autores colombianos. Se estipula también que el coautor, José Manuel Medrano, escribió algunos de los análisis de algunas de las obras y se hizo cargo del trabajo editorial.

La definición de lo moderno (*high modernism* en inglés) se refiere a la técnica narrativa que pretendía revelar verdades profundas acerca del universo, crear un nuevo lenguaje literario y al mismo tiempo revelar realidades desconocidas que abordan problemas del entorno sociopolítico de América Latina. Según esta definición, el novelista moderno no pretende conocer la realidad, sino que la cuestiona.

El análisis se inicia con novelas de la década del veinte, con José Felix Fuenmayor, uno de los integrantes del Grupo de Barranquilla, pero es en los años cuarenta, que surge en realidad la novela moderna tal como lo estipula la definición. En esta línea, aparecen las grandes obras que caracterizaron la moderna novela de América Latina de mediados de siglo: *El señor Presidente* (1946) de Miguel Ángel Asturias, *Al filo del agua* (1947) de Agustín Yañez y *El reino de este mundo* (1949) de Alejo Carpentier. Las *Ficciones* de Borges hacen parte de este modelo con expresiones que rompen la tradición regionalista y que tratan de emular a los grandes escritores europeos y norteamericanos de la época: Marcel Proust, Virginia Wolf, Faulkner, Kafka y Hemingway.

El volumen crítico selecciona varias novelas representativas de este estilo, empezando con Fuenmayor y su novela *Cosme*. Continúa con el análisis de *Los dos tiempos* de Elsa Mújica y *Las estrellas son negras* de Arnoldo Palacios, ambas obras publicadas en 1949. Según Williams llama la atención que estas novelas hayan sido publicadas el año siguiente del famoso Bogotazo, el evento que partió la historia de Colombia y desató la época de la violencia de mediados de siglo. Ambas representan el apogeo de la novela moderna colombiana y son las precursoras del boom narrativo que le seguiría en los años sesenta.

En la década del sesenta surge el fenómeno mayor que haya ocurrido en Colombia, Gabriel García Márquez con *Cien años de soledad*. En esa década aparecen también otros autores como Fanny Buitrago, Manuel Zapata Olivella y Héctor Rojas Herazo. Todos ellos son exponentes de la novela moderna y precursores de los escritores que surgirán en la década de los setenta: Jorge Eliecer Pardo, Germán Espinosa, Oscar Collazos y Fernando Vallejo. En los ochenta y noventa vendrán Jorge Franco, Héctor Abad Faciolince, William Ospina, Santiago Gamboa, Mario Mendoza, Tomás González y Evelio Rosero, toda una generación de escritores que ahondan en la problemática urbana y la violencia desbordada de fin de siglo. Luego aparece una nueva oleada de autores que utilizarán técnicas más experimentales e innovadoras en lo que se conoce como novela posmoderna y de la cual hacen parte R.H Durán, Darío Jaramillo, Andrés Caicedo, Albalucía Ángel, Alberto Duque y Philip Potdevin.

A finales del siglo XX y principios del nuevo milenio surge una heterogeneidad de tendencias y temas que van desde la obsesión por la violencia urbana y el narcotráfico con otra serie de autores que se desligan de la realidad nacional para explorar temas disímiles. Williams señala a los autores del nuevo milenio que podrían superar la sombra de García Márquez, en figuras como Pablo Montoya, Juan Gabriel Vásquez, Julián Malatesta, y al que considera con más potencial, Philip Potdevin.

Llama la atención que las escritoras de fin de siglo ocupen un espacio mínimo y solo se mencionan algunos nombres. Lo mismo ocurre con los autores de minorías étnicas. Es verdad que Elisa Mújica ocupa un espacio privilegiado como autora destacada de mediados de siglo con su

obra *Los dos tiempos*. Lo mismo sucede con los escritores afrocolombianos Arnaldo Palacios y Manuel Zapata Olivella. Albalucía Ángel recibe un reconocimiento como escritora de novelas de corte posmodernista. Sin embargo, las escritoras colombianas de fin de siglo y el nuevo milenio brillan por su ausencia. La obra de una autora de la talla de Laura Restrepo es apenas mencionada y descalificada dentro de la categoría de “narco-ficción”. Es evidente que el crítico desconoce su obra y los alcances de una novela como *Delirio*, que ha sido internacionalmente reconocida como una de las obras de mayor complejidad que retrata y cuestiona la realidad colombiana.

Es entendible que un estudio de noventa años de literatura no pueda incluir todas las obras. Es decepcionante, no obstante, que un gran conocedor de la literatura colombiana continúe perpetuando la mirada sesgada y desconociendo figuras literarias reconocidas en otros ámbitos. Sorprende también que este estudio se presente en una edición descuidada con problemas tanto de forma como de contenido. El volumen ofrece análisis certeros de las obras seleccionadas, consideraciones sobre la ecocrítica valiosas y rescata nombres olvidados dentro del panorama literario. Sin embargo, al final deja la sensación de una empresa inconclusa.

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Review Essay: Cuba and the Hispanic Caribbean in Transition

Del Rio Gabiola, Irune. *Resistant Bodies in the Cultural Productions of Transnational Hispanic Caribbean Women: Reimagining Queer Identity*. Boulder: Lexington Books, 2017. 147 pp. ISBN 9781-4985-2077-5

De la Fuente, Alejandro, editor. *Cuban Studies*, no. 44. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2016. 416 pp. ISBN 9780-8229-4447-8

—. *Cuban Studies*, no. 46. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2018. 396 pp. ISBN 9780-8229-4512-3

Febles, Jorge. *Revisiones: Lecturas heterogéneas de textos cubanos*. Valencia: Aduana Vieja Editorial, 2017. 331 pp. ISBN 9788-4946-4073-5

Gonzenbach Perkins, Alexandra. *Representing Queer and Transgender Identity: Fluid Bodies in the Hispanic Caribbean and Beyond*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2017. 127 pp. ISBN 9781-6114-8842-5

Rodríguez Matos, Jaime. *Writing of the Formless: José Lezama Lima and the End of Time*. New York: Fordham UP, 2017. 232 pp. ISBN 9780-8232-7408-6

Divided into four distinct chapters, Gonzenbach’s *Representing Queer and Transgender Identity* examines queer representation in Caribbean cultural production of the 21st century. Taking as case studies Mayra Santos-Febres’s *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* (2000), Adela Vazquez’s *Sexile/Sexilio*, Abel González Melo’s *Chamaco*, and Ismael Ogando’s performances, the author insists on reading the body as a textual object of representation more than an embodied cultural praxis of meaning-making. Each cultural artifact is representative of a particular geopolitical context: Santos-Febres’s novel is from Puerto Rico, Jaime Cortez’s speaks of the trans experience of Cuban exile, Abel González Melo’s theater piece deals with complexities of queer Cuban daily life, while Ogando’s performance embodies a trans-*Dominicanidad*. All serve as examples of a “virtual transnationality” that makes of Caribbean identity a fluid, contingent, and permeable space. Although lacking a strong theoretical backbone grounded in Caribbean thought and praxis

as extensions of a global south epistemology, the book evolves around four main concepts that structure its main arguments: the body, fluidity, transnationality, and trans/queer representation.

The body thus appears in order to “highlight the flows of representational strategies as rendered on the page (through narrative) to the body (through visual representation and physical embodiment)” (xxiii). In Chapter One, “Caribbean Translocations,” Gonzenbach provides a reading of Mayra Santos-Febres’s novel, which situates a discursive body challenging fixed subjectivities, while blurring the conventional borders of intimacy, kinship, and belonging. In this case, the trans body of the protagonist in *Sirena Selena vestida de pena*, as well as the queer kinship established among the characters of Selena, Martha Divine, and Leocadio, are a case in point for the author to argue that queer kinship, queer space, and queer temporality are problematized in Santos-Febres’s novel. Her argumentative logic relies on the close reading of excerpts from the novel to illustrate the fluidity of the text, both in form and content, while the insertion of theory, predominantly from the global north, serves to explain several queer aspects of the novel. At times, the analysis follows the rhythms of theory more than that of the novel at hand. For instance, when critically reading the episode when Hector is sexually penetrated by Selena, the author reads in it the representation of “a cathartic release for Hugo, while narrating the revelation of Selena’s masculinity” (18). The blurring of the lines separating conventional femininity and masculinity is certainly at stake in this excerpt; however, the text goes beyond “the fluidity of identifications” to shed light on the erotic perversity of desire, while unveiling the ambivalence of masculine power in sexual acts. The text itself is imbued with a carnal materiality and a rich affectivity that rest latent in Gonzenbach’s analysis.

In Chapter Two, “Drawing Out Identities,” the author examines Jaime Cortez’s graphic novel *Sexile/Sexilio* which “illustrates the experience of Adela Vazquez, a trans woman who fled Cuba in the 1980s” (26). This chapter locates Adela’s body along the contested spaces of gender, culture, and ideology between Cuba and the United States. What I find intriguing is the pedagogical tones of this graphic novel: “Cortez focuses on Adela’s time in Los Angeles in the 1980s, during the height of the AIDS crisis. Adela speaks openly and honestly about her sexual encounters and time as a sex worker, for the purpose of educating readers on the risk of HIV/AIDS and the importance of safe sex” (26). Given that “[i]t’s Adela’s story told through Cortez’s line” (37), Gonzenbach’s analysis centers on the ways through which the trans female body is narrated through the eyes of a gay novelist, but refrains from fully discussing the implications in the process of mediation that occurs when creating the graphic novel. It remains unclear whether this text was produced under a synchronized process of collaboration: whether both storyteller and graphic novelist engaged in a sort of mediation to create this text, or whether Cortez found Adela’s story to later create a graphic narrative. This is an important aspect to consider, especially when speaking about the ethical implications of representing the experience of trans and queer identities, and when discussing trans people’s real agential capacity in processes of representation and mediation. On the fluidity of genre, gender, and belonging, Gonzenbach situates this graphic novel on the limits of testimony, didacticism, and transgender memory, arguing that “the open and honest representation of genitalia and secondary sex characteristics emphasize Adela’s personal experience and her journey through both exile and transgender experience” (39). In this case, the body emerges as a mnemonic tissue that adapts according to context. This is not to deny Adela’s condition as a woman. On the contrary, the representation and possible re-adaptation of her story highlights the complex ways through which trans negotiation is embodied on a daily basis.

Abel González Melo’s play “Chamaco” takes center stage in Chapter Three, “Conscripts of the Body,” where the author argues “that the physicality of queer and transgendered bodies

provides new reading of identity” (53). This opening argument must be further questioned as it relies of an “original” notion of Cubaness that seems to contradict, to a certain degree, the emancipatory force against identity politics that queer and trans bodies are supposed to embody according to Gozenbach’s understanding of fluidity: “While the settings and places change,” the author adds, “there is always a remnant of the original *cubanidad* that shapes the characters, setting, and dialogue of this play” (54). If the intent is to dislocate any notion of identity, be it national or cultural, how does *cubanidad* then challenge, or not, national belonging? In such case, does it question the very tenets on which the national identity is assembled? If so, how is it possible to articulate a transnational Cuban identity when the construction of *cubanidad* has dialogued in inverse opposition to sexually-diverse, or queer, experiences? González Melo’s “Chamaco” not only addresses issues of sexuality and queer identification but also poignantly represents the cruelty of living in a failed experiment of modernity, as well as a racialized commodification of desire under a state capitalism. The author insists on reading issues of cultural adaptation and, what translation studies theory refers to as, localization in order to approach the international accolade this play has received. But, if there is anything particular to this play that evokes an empathic response among transnational audiences—and element that Gozenbach’s reading seems to overlook—it would be the play’s visceral crudeness, its critical emotion, which moves beyond any textuality, abandoning genre categorization and establishing an affective connection between stage and spectatorship.

Finally, Chapter Four, “Dialects of the Body,” approaches “the performance art of Dominican-transnational artist Ismael Ogando” (85). If the previous chapter on theater grapples with issues of cultural adaptation, genre transgression, and transnational representation, this last chapter on performance, I think, ought to elaborate on embodied practices of cultural meaning-making beyond textual analysis. The author, however, decides to “analyze the ways in which identity is situated on the body, and how Ismael Ogando’s performances challenge the hegemonic imposition of identity as a top-down process, mediated by socially constructed concepts such as, nationality, race, sexuality, gender class, and others” (85), without fully examining the bodily ways of decentering a logocentric critique. This chapter appears as the most obtuse in terms of its deployment of jargon; terms such as “rhizomatic process”, “queer *dominicanidad*”, or “community-making processes” are left unexplained or further problematized. In terms of the author’s account on the praxis of transnational performance and its challenge to national discourses of belonging, Ogando’s performance certainly questions a stable notion of *dominicanidad* in light of the exclusionary politics of race condensed in the citizenship bill against Hattian descendants in the Dominican Republic. What remains undefined is whether Ogando’s performance also challenges U.S. nationalism via queer *dominicanidad* taken into consideration that this performance intervention took place in Miami, Florida, according to the legend in Figure 4.1. If his intention is also to confront U.S. discourses of national belonging through a discursive practice of *Latinidad*, Gozenbach falls short in identifying a decentering performative of U.S. national identity in Ogando’s performance work.

More than tracing the insufficiencies of a desynchronized national discourse as a placeholder for identity, the author is interested in the ways through which queer cultural production in the Caribbean inhabits contradictory, untraceable and displaced embodiments that negotiate accessing networks of globalization, transnationality, and belonging through cultural representation. Although Gozenbach highlights the importance of conceptualizing the Caribbean as a space of “fluidity” (xvii), the cultural corpus analyzed in the book defies this notion of fluidity per se, as the latter is reduced to a metaphor for analysis and underdeveloped as a theoretical

concept, even after having engaged in a critical reading of all cultural texts. It is certain that each of the works studied problematize fixed notions of identity, space, and cultural representation, but they do so by tracing the residual gestures of an unstable national space. It would have been helpful for the author to differentiate the ways in which a “transnational subjectivity” reaffirms, although tacitly, concepts of nationality and the national, while attempting to transgress the boundaries imposed by heterosexual cultures of nationalism.

More than developing critical categories of cultural analysis, a trendy academic practice that seems to index cultural critique according to the confines of disciplines, such conceptual contradictions highlight the insufficiencies of a scholarly grammar that insists on imposing a specialized jargon to objectify a strand of cultural production that deals with historically marginalized and culturally ignored practices, discourses, and collectives. More of this epistemological imposition is also present when the author cites *ad infinitum* the work of Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, or José Esteban Muñoz, whose impact is undeniable in the consolidation of a queer critique but whose site of enunciation, in spite of the marginality that such authors occupy within the imperial academy, is not immune to the geopolitical hierarchies of knowledge production and dissemination.

In *Resistant Bodies*, Irune del Rio examines a fascinating corpus of cultural production by Hispanic Caribbean women. Divided into three main parts, with a total of six chapters dedicated to the work of female artists from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, del Rio conceptualizes “transnationalism as an emancipatory technique—a methodology of the oppressed—that ultimately opens up cultural and political subversion, and celebrates an intersectional analysis of subject formation” (xiii). Integrating Chicana feminist thought, mainly through Gloria Anzaldúa and Chela Sandoval, queer theory and Caribbean cultural criticism from the United States and the global north, the author subscribes to a notion of “transnationalism from below,” contending that the configuration of a transnational space “renders a potential for agency and subjectivity” (xiii).

An initial critique of adopting transnationality more as a cultural practice than as a frame of analysis is the undeniable allusion to “nationality” in the term itself. In this sense, transnationality indeed offers a way in which culturally marginalized subjectivities exert a degree of agency in the field of cultural production and intervene in the space of symbolic representation. What remains unclear about the author’s arguments, positioning herself clearly as a transnational feminist, is the degree to which the transnational space replicates the discourses of othering located within the flows of globalization, neoliberalism, and technocratization. The question remains: is transnationality a new umbrella term to reduce the contradictory cultural complexities facing social minorities in the process of cultural production? Or, does such term highlight the shortfalls of cultural criticism’s terminology when attempting to understand the production of artistic agents that are often illegible to national paradigms of culture? The intimacies of transnationalism further problematize issues of belonging, identity formation, and cultural agency. It is paramount, nonetheless, to consider that, in a transnational context, the networks of restriction are polyvalent and multidirectional. Although del Rio offers a discussion about the concepts of *latinidad*, shame and failure, which are important when challenging monolithic notions of subjectivity, belonging, and cultural geography, the author’s discussion is rather brief and annexed to a particular strand of queer critique that is now institutionally consolidated. In this sense, the use of queer theory seems to privilege a particular strand of global north epistemology (i.e. third world feminism, critical race theory, queer temporality, etc.), creating doubts as to whether the author’s intention is to truly

establish a dialogue with the Caribbean women's cultural production in spite of her transnational frame.

Part I, on Puerto Rico, offers a critical reading of Frances Negrón-Muntaner's pseudo-biography "Briñcando el charco," and Mayra Santos-Febres's "Sirena Selena vestida de pena," focusing on the bodily re-appropriations of the discourses of shame and failure and their generative potential to challenge conventional narratives of nation formation. Using the work of Jack Halberstam, Larry La Fountain-Stokes, Eve K. Sedgwick, Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé, among others, as a theoretical frame to address shame and failure, the author attempts to locate a queer episteme of *puertorriqueñidad* through the notion of what La Fountain-Stokes calls *sinvergüenza*. In this sense, her reading of these two cultural texts by Puerto Rican women addresses the silences, invisibility, and illegibility that queer female bodies occupy in societies marked by a patriarchal biocontrol of female bodies. Precisely, in this section on Puerto Rico, the author "examines the modes in which the ideology of the traditional family unit that has functioned as national trope for *puertorriqueñidad* can be reconsidered as an emancipatory technique" (25). This "epistemological crisis of family and nation" (29) is present in the narratives the author examines, arguing that a queer sense of belonging pushes the traditional bonds of family kinship, and affectivity, while reimagining "the *gran familia puertorriqueña*" (31). These bonds of belonging are forged through experiences of shame and failure, yet do not mark a triumphalist narrative of becoming; rather, unbecoming abounds in such cultural texts. The author insists on reading these cultural narratives through the eyes of queer temporalities, namely through the theory of failure developed by Halberstam. This theoretical inclination, at times, contradicts the author's attempt to decouple colonization from a national paradigm of understanding love, kinship, and belonging. Although revelatory, and without a doubt ground-breaking, Halberstam's queer temporality is insufficient to unlock notions of failure in the Caribbean context because in this context several discourses of modernity, development, and progress converge beyond neoliberalism. In this sense, the author provides a critical reading of the texts at hand, while tracing "alternative family bonds" (26). Although the author traces queer modes of relationality, a hygienist reading of queer practices emerges tacitly as an undercurrent in her reading. For instance, in describing in detail the plot of Santos-Febres's novel, del Rio remarks: "Instead, Martha teaches Sirena to survive in a world threatened by AIDS, sexual abuse, drugs, and constant danger" (27). As Halberstam aptly argues, it is those social spaces of disease and unproductivity (i.e., AIDS, drugs, sexual violence, etc.) that characterize a queer time and space, as well as a queer way of life. A constant danger, in this sense, marks the embodiment of shame and failure. I argue the latter less as a gesture to naturalize the violence queer bodies, and in particular queer female bodies, face constantly, than to highlight the fact that heterosexual logics of belonging continue to frame a politics of life and death, endangering the discursive spaces queer bodies occupy and minimizing their agency amidst such danger.

Part II is dedicated to Cuba. Chapters 3 and 4 examine, respectively, the collective work of Cuban hip-hop music band Las Krudas, and Cuban-American Cristy Road's graphic narratives. Intermixing interviews and close reading of hip-hop lyrics, the author contends that "Las Krudas embrace [an] emancipatory and democratic love in...their music. For them, hip-hop allows the creation of a space not only for black feminist thought but also a space of oppositional consciousness that includes women, queer, and children across the globe" (56). More than sensing their Black hip-hop feminism through the sonic, or even musical traces, del Rio reads Las Krudas's lyrics as queer transnational narratives of Afro-Cuban lesbian women: "The lyrics advocate for a sense of solidarity and collectivity that will prompt a better world; starting with the inclusion of both women involved in a situated love relationship, it moves toward a more global context to

reach out the oppressed and to unfold oppositional consciousness” (58). In this case, it is clear that Afro-Caribbean women engage collectively in the construction of a counterspace that celebrates radical love and alternative modes of affectivity through their art. These Afro-Cuban women profess their love not only as a form of bonding, but also as a political intervention in the space of cultural representation. What seems far-stretched in del Rio’s reading is the floating utopianism that lies latent in Las Krudas’s hip-hop: “As she publishes her queer love, the world is transformed into a new inclusive system where all lesbian women can speak up and articulate their queer desires, where hatred is over and there are no psychical and physical boundaries” (58). Without a doubt Las Krudas hip-hop music strikes a lesbian affect that serves to ignite radical dreams of belonging beyond patriarchal ways of life. However, these musical landscapes do not exist in a void; rather, they are embodied in a sense of togetherness, through which performers and audiences inhabit ephemeral spaces. It is this space of feeling closer together that holds a potential to suspend the everyday violence against queer bodies. Las Krudas’s radical critique and potentiality to image otherwise rests on the subtleties of their own context: Afro-lesbians celebrating their love through the radical beats of queer hip-hop.

It is precisely a lack of contextualization that primes del Rio’s analysis not only in this chapter, but throughout her book. Each chapter dedicates a brief section to contextualize the work of the artists thereby examined; however, these sections entangled in a larger historical description do not provide a current contextualization, nor do they dialogue with contemporary intellectuals who have largely historized about the topic from those contexts (i.e., Sandra Álvarez, Roberto Zurbarano, Yolando Wood, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, or Antonio Benítez Rojo in the case of Cuba). In Chapter 3, for instance, the author fails to mention the appropriation tactics of hip-hop that the Cuban Revolution deployed in order renovate its anti-imperial cultural politics, while it censored and restricted the development of a critical hip-hop movement, of which Las Krudas was part. In Chapter 4, this lack of contextualization is evident in the framing of the process of exile that would mark Cristy Road’s graphic work. This missing detail is significant as it frames the degree to which the graphic novelist defines, contends, or reaffirms, her Cuban-Americanness. The waves of exile and migration from Cuba into the Americas are defined by a revolutionary politics of othering, and contingent upon larger geopolitical configurations, e.g. early exile, forced exile, political exile, sexile, etc. The visual aspect in Road’s narratives is read as an attempt to decenter the logocentrism that written language represents. Nonetheless, this “radical semiology” (70) affirms a modern approach to texts embraced by del Rio, while insisting on a seemingly deconstructionist perspective to interpret visuality, one that adopts nonetheless a postmodern binary as method.

Part III, dedicated to Dominican female artists, Raquel Paiewonsky and Jacqueline Jiménez Polanco, offers a reading into the corporeal and performative practices that play with biologized discourses of the body. Paiewonsky’s visual art highlights body permeability and carnal plasticity by incorporating an aesthetics of gender insubordination, female sexualization, racialization, and environmental symbiosis. Irune del Rio Gabiola aptly states that “Paiewonsky highlights the flexibility of the body” (107), but, by the look of Paiewonsky’s photographic archive examined in this book, the visual artist’s work appears less concerned with issues of national identity and *dominicanidad* than with the malleability of bodies. In the last chapter, del Rio traces “how sexually nonconforming women propose a radical conceptualization and revitalization of the concept of home” (112) by examining the work of Jiménez Polanco. “Divagaciones” is a collection of texts written by twenty-four Dominican women who re-envision the body as a place of belonging, pleasure, and affectivity. Through her reading, del Rio reinterprets the lesbian body not

only as a sanctuary for love and desire, but also as a critical space for social reconfiguration through literature. In all, *Resistant Bodies* offers a fascinating archive of cultural texts written by lesbian women from the Caribbean, while developing an oppositional stance against nation formation, heterosexuality, and representation, that is arguably referred to as a process of “decolonization in a transnational and Latina context” (129).

Revisiones is a collection of unpublished articles written by Jorge Febles, whose scholarship has studied the literary work of Cuban authors such as, Alfonso Hernández Catá, Cipriano (Chanito) Isidró, Matías Montes Huidobro, Gustavo Pérez Firmat, and Roberto G. Fernández. Divided into six chapters, Febles deploys a traditional literary method to trace out certain particularities in the writing style of such authors, while reading in between the lines to understand, supposedly, the construction of characters, narrative voices, and the writers’ ulterior literary motives. In this sense, Febles attempts to decode the authors’ writing style.

Chapter 1 presents an analysis of Alfonso Hernández Catá’s short story “Los cuarenta kilos de Emilio Verona,” in which Febles identifies a romantic yet modernist short story structure. This literary characterization situates Hernández Catá within a larger constellation of Cuban literary historiography in the early decades of the twentieth century:

Ejemplifica, en suma, una manera de crear en la cual se advierten pinceladas ideológicas noventayochistas, cierta afinidad por el positivismo, un empeño estructural realista-naturalista de corte estético, resabios líricos romántico-modernistas así como la tendencia a reproducir tipos lo mismo femeninos que masculinos endémicos en tal corriente, y un psicologismo superficial. (25-26)

In rather baroque prose, Febles is intrigued by the way in which Hernández Catá constructs a male protagonist, Emilio Verona, in opposition, or rather by contrast to, his female counterpart, Julia Kauffman. In this sense the Cuban writer gives shape to a voluptuous, androgynous, and asexual male character whose obesity destabilizes a conventional model of masculinity. Febles identifies an almost perverse character development technique through which Hernández Catá masculinizes a female subject by associating her with an erotic energy and a spiritual disposition. The cathartic nod of the story is centered around Verona’s unrequited love for Julia, who rejects him for his abject corporeality. Febles finds in this character interaction a dynamism that is structured thematically, throughout most of the short story, through the narrativization of body control and sadomasochism. The death of Verona caused by his dieting is part of the parody deployed in Hernández Catá’s writing.

Chapter 2 examines Chanito Isidró’s 1985 novel, *Manuel García, el Rey de los Campos de Cuba*, which portrays the life and misadventures of Manuel García, a Havana-based outlaw who embodied a sort of Cuban Robin Hood. Isidró’s 210-verse novel exemplifies an oral epic that attempts to revindicate the contradictory history of Manuel García, who appears in the annals of official history as a cruel bandit. Febles’ interpretation of Isidró’s text as a historical novel serves as an example of the fictionalization of history, especially when Isidró tries to associate Manuel García’s atrocious deeds with those seemingly noble ones enacted by so-called initial fighters of the country’s independence, namely Céspedes, Agramonte, Maceo, and Martí, among others. In this sense, Manuel García’s personal story is indexed under the original epic that, according to Fidel Castro, gave birth to the Cuban revolution of 1959, and started on October 10th, 1868. Febles’s comparative analysis contrasts the contending life stories of Manuel García: that of the criminal legend with the life of the national hero. In either case, Manuel García’s fictionalization maintains a contradictory space in a strand of literary criticism of the Cuban national canon. A sense of satire transpires from Febles’s reading of Isidró’s historical novel,

especially in allusion to the national values of virility, sacrifice, and warfare. Febles, nonetheless, avoids any explicit critiques or references to an exacerbated, or even satirized, revolutionary pathos in Isidró'n's text.

The short story "El hijo noveno" by Matías Montes Huidobro is an excuse in Chapter 3 for the author of *Revisiones* to perform an analysis of Huidobro's historical trilogy, *Concierto para sordos*, which contains the aforementioned short story. Febles spends this chapter detailing Montes Huidobro's poetics and its relation to the nation's historical becoming, while attributing an esoteric sentiment for a search of renewed sense of historical time in the novelist's prose. In his approach, Febles articulates an unconvincing argument that seeks to position Montes Huidobro's text on par with those written by other outstanding literary figures, such as Alejo Carpentier, or José Lezama Lima. In spite of Montes Huidobro's intricately labyrinthic prose and aesthetic interest in metaphors and symbols, "El hijo noveno" contains certain literary keys that allow the literary critic to unlock his poetic secrets. Febles's reading of this short story is more a gesture to pay homage to Montes Huidobro's literary trajectory than a metaliterary exercise in understanding the complex counterpoints of *cubanidad*. Chapter 4, the largest of all of this essay collection, examines yet another text by Matías Montes Huidobro, *Un bronceado hawaiano. Un film noir* (2012), a detective novel, which Febles distinguishes from other similar texts in terms of "su naturaleza poliforma, así como por cierto abigarramiento barroco que oscurece la trama" (110). Montes Huidobro, as Febles aptly argues, also plays with the conventional formula of the detective novel by inserting a visual language that alludes to the Scottish artist Jack Vettriano. In tracing the ekphrasis in the novel, Febles reads a postmodern critique of the detective genre through which Montes Huidobro inserts a complex narrative structure that incorporates Vettriano's sexually-charged visuality, rendering a particular vision of the carnivalesque. Finally, a panoramic reading of the work by Gustavo Pérez Firmat and Roberto G. Fernández is found in Chapter 5, while Chapter 6 of this book is dedicated to Fernández's *El príncipe y la bella cubana*. Febles reads a certain reticence from both authors to become interpreters of a complex cultural hybridity that primes the Cuban, American and Cuban-American experiences. In his reading of these texts, Febles recognizes the "CubAngst" (257) that characterizes the insertion of a migratory experience into a larger narrative of American nationalism. According to Febles, Pérez Firmat narrates an identity situated at the intersection of a nostalgia for the past, and a possibility found in the here and now, articulating a poetic discourse that allows Pérez Firmat to build an identity as a literary critic, while Fernández embodies an identity in a post-exile context. In either case, both conjure "imaginary homelands," borrowing such a term from Salman Rushdie. Overall, *Revisiones* constitutes more of a final display of Febles's established career as a literary critic within a reduced sphere of literary scholarship than a critical intervention that offers new visions that problematize the positionality of texts and authors along the "heterogeneity" alluded to in the book's title.

Writing of the Formless by Jaime Rodríguez Matos examines the complexly rich cultural reflections that Cuban writer José Lezama Lima develops on the notion of time throughout his literary texts. Rodríguez Matos offers an innovative reading of Lezama Lima's work, which has generated a larger scholarship on his theories of the poetic image, his poetic vision of history, and his neobaroque aesthetics as a practice of world-making, to name only a few. Rodríguez Matos revisits the depth of Lezama Lima's visions of time by focusing on a wider discussion that places the writer at the center of philosophical debates concerning Latin American modernity, postmodernity, and the political crisis of representation. Rodríguez Matos debunks a common misconception that associates Lezama Lima's vast texts with a lack of political disposition and commitment. On the contrary, the critic establishes, that Lezama Lima's texts informs "a plicity

that retreats, this is the hope, from all the grand politics of modernity” (22), while confronting his readers to challenge their own categories of thought and fully “approach a zone that lies neither in the “order” of a single time nor in the “disorder” of multiple temporal layers that coexist” (22). Rodríguez Matos thus offers a method that intimately approaches Lezama Lima’s work. As such, “reading with” the Cuban author not only performs a “reading in the history of literature but also of deeper insight into the [Cuban] revolutionary process itself” (23).

In the first part of the book, entitled “Times,” the author intimately reads the insufficiencies of the theories of time through the eyes of modernity. By threading the philosophies on temporality developed by various modern thinkers, such as Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Jacques Derrida, Hegel and Lyotard, among others, the author traces a genealogy of time in Western thought and its manifestations on the development of the notion of Latin America as a space for the accumulation of signs and signification. This thought on temporalization is later revised in the book as a means to examine the ways in which such process became manifested in the Cuban Revolution, a project that sought the rearrangement not only of a national time but also of a political force of redemption. In the case of Lezama Lima, his poetic project emerges as a different manifestation of a redemptive pulse present in the messianic epic enacted by the rebel fight for a social utopia. In spite of Lezama Lima’s theological characteristics, Rodríguez Matos describes the Cuban poet’s temporal project as more than a subversive vanguard: “This is an uncertain time. And yet there is the need for infrapolitical deconstruction to make it appear, not as an aesthetic program but as a confrontation with the formlessness of history” (48). In the remaining three chapters of this first part (i.e. “Sovereignities, Poetic and Otherwise”; “The (Mixed) Times of Revolution”; and “Nihilism: Politics as Highest Value”), Rodríguez Matos revisits the romantic literary tradition and traces the relationship between poetry and theory. In these chapters, the author examines the ways in which a revolutionary notion of time adopted the forms of a secular messianism, to later confront this messianic teleology with nihilism. This first part serves as the theoretical foundation in which the poetic work of Lezama Lima emerges as an infrapolitical approach to writing the absence of time.

Writing the Formless thus presents a detailed analysis of the romantic tradition that, according to the author, positions poetry as a way of apprehending the world through the mediation and sublimation of the *other*. In this sense, politics, philosophy, and literature converge within the poetic act: “Poetry is attempting to capture the paradoxical movement of something that presents itself as it withdraws; as it is left with nothing it turns to a metapoetic discourse that becomes poetry itself” (65). In the last two chapters of the first part, Rodríguez Matos highlights the failures of the grand narratives of epic redemption, embraced not only by the Cuban Revolution’s teleology of progress but also by the representational politics of modern ruptures. It is in his critical reading of nihilism that Rodríguez Matos finds a way of recognizing “the being of the void” (100) as a political and aesthetic project, one that is present in the work of José Lezama Lima. According to Rodríguez Matos, “formless time is the temporality of the absence of time (a posthegemonic time of existence that does not seek to organize others unto its rhythms)” (70).

The reader might expect to find in Part II, “Writing of the Formless,” a detailed analysis of José Lezama Lima’s literary work; however, Rodríguez Mato centers on the philosophical connections imbued in Cuban poet’s texts concerning an absence of time. In this last section Rodríguez Matos clearly defines two main concepts that sustain the main book’s argument: infrapolitics and the writing of the formless. About the former, the author states, “I understand infrapolitics as the praxis-thought that sees in the lack of foundations of politics, not a problem that has to be solved by supplementing the abyss with a contingent ground, but the opportunity

and possibility of imagining a politics otherwise than the imperial and hegemonic variants dominating the history of the West” (154). On the latter, the author provides the reader with a helpful breakdown of “writing of the formless” on page 172 as a concept that defines Lezama Lima’s literary practice. Although Rodríguez Matos finds several points of convergence between Lezama Lima’s poetic vision of the world and Western epistemologies of time, his reading of the formless in the Cuban poet seems more of a continuation of the “hegemonic variants dominating the history of the West” than a situated intervention from which the work of a Latin American author is recognized as an self-standing epistemology of time. José Lezama Lima’s stance as a poet, intellectual, and mentor, relies on a cannibalistic attitude through which he reinterprets not only Western cultural codes but also the very essentialism that defines a Cuban ethos in mid-twentieth century Latin America. Overall, *Writing of the Formless* is a sophisticated study on the notion of time found in the work of José Lezama Lima. In it, Jaime Rodríguez Matos reads *with* the Cuban poet, tracing the ever-stimulating potency of *lo difícil*.

Edited by Alejandro de la Fuente, *Cuban Studies*’s No. 44 provides a multidisciplinary perspective on understanding the reconfigurations of US-Cuba relations. Focusing on the past, present, and future potentialities that such interactions have had historically, politically, culturally, and economically, this number dedicates its dossier, with a total of six essays, to the Cuban economy slow-down and its impact on the various economic sectors on the island, such as international trade, fiscal reform, domestic investment, and the present challenges of Cuban economy in the twenty-first century. Of note are the articles by Jorge I. Domínguez, Saira Pons Pérez, and Oscar Fernández Estrada. Domínguez presents an introductory note to this first section, while enlisting the major obstacles facing the Cuba economy today, i.e. the bankruptcy of the sugar industry, the standstill of the agricultural sector, the obsolete infrastructure of manufacturing, the dependency on the exportation of natural resources and on the importation of basic foods, and the stagnant growth of the Gross Domestic Product. Focusing on the fiscal reforms in the second decade of the twenty first-century, Pons Pérez highlights the economic inequality generated with high taxation on consumption and the irregular fees imposed on corporate and personal rent, problematizing the effects of the Law 113 introduced in 2012. The new incentives to foreign investment and the high taxation on both private businesses and state industries, according to Pons Pérez, question the efficiency of such tributary laws. Oscar Fernández Estrada discusses the contradictions generated by the Cuban government’s rhetoric on transformation of the economic sector. While a process of transformation continues to embrace a socialist economic model, the heavily-regulated centralization of the Cuban economy hinders the development of an efficient model of economic planification, one that does not resort to tactics of overspending and scarcity.

The section on “Culture and Society” features three articles written by Velia Cecilia Bobes, Joel G. Thomas, and Gustavo Pérez Firmat, reflecting on the political, and cultural implications of various reforms in Cuba. Bobes’s article opens a critical question on what it means to speak of the process of reform in Cuba, while considering the disconnect between a *démodé* socialist project that fails to account for a diverse, re-stratified, and symbolically reimaged Cuban society. For Bobes, a true reform is impossible to achieve without acknowledging the emergence of a new social model that departs from that the one established through a revolutionary ethos of the “New Man.” Thomas’s historical reflections on the Cuban health-care system during the Special Period helps to situate the resilience, adaptability, and survival of a health-care infrastructure supported by an ethical model now in question. The author establishes that Raúl Castro’s socialist ideology not only reconfigures a revolutionary ethics concerning access to health-care but also drives institutional reforms in Cuba. In his article contribution, Pérez Firmat reflects on a literary casualty

produced by the publication of Wallace Stevens's poem "Academic Discourse at Havana." Translated into Spanish, Steven's "Discurso académico en La Habana" first appeared in the 1929's *Revista de Avance*, influencing the work of several Cuban authors. Pérez Firmat's detailed analysis of Steven's poem problematizes the objectifying gaze of the poet who engages in a tropicalization of the city, concluding that Steven's weekend trip to Havana was defined *a priori* more by the poet's preconceived imagination of the tropics than by the real, intricate and intimate city landscapes.

Cuban Studies No. 44 also offers a section on "History," featuring the scholarly work of Rafael E. Tarragó, Alfred J. López, Anita Casavantes Bradford, and Abel Sierra Madero. From different time periods and approaches to historiography, this set of articles examines the impact that various subjectivities in different time periods have had on the construction of collective imaginaries, memories, and stereotypes in Cuba. Tarragó's study examines the presumptive validity of the U.S. Consul to Cuba Fitzhugh Lee's testimonies and writings in light of Cuba's fight for independence in the late 1800s. Tarragó concludes his article by questioning Lee's motives to make of Cuba a U.S. dependent territory although they were also masked behind a sign of empathy toward the Cuban independent cause. Writing on the mythical martyrdom of José Martí, Alfred J. López delves into the "historical vacuum surrounding Martí's death" (265) in order to flesh out the similarities between history and fiction in the making of a myth that grounds a national project. Anita Casavantes Bradford's article on childhood and memory-making borrows a cultural studies lens to interrogate the contending narratives about Operation Pedro Pan and the international battle for Elián González's custody. Focusing on the public stories about childhood and politics from Miami and Havana, Casavantes Bradford's problematization of a dialectical frame of memory-making serves to approach the real-life experiences of boys and girls, or Peter Panes, whose intimate stories go beyond an antagonistic paradigm of political identification. Abel Sierra Madero's analysis of the UMAP process, the entrapment of counterrevolutionaries and their supposed virilization through forced work as a means of political reformation during the 1960s, highlights the complex biopolitics of the Cuban state in the forming of a revolutionary subjectivity. Sierra Madero insists on the difficulties of conducting archival research in Cuba about specific government tactics that remain obscured by the government's lack of transparency on the UMAP files.

As part of this volume, *Cuban Studies* includes the work of artist Lázaro Saavedra González and features two interviews with Dr. María Elena Solé Arrondo, a renowned psychiatrist in charge of conducting a psychological study on homosexuality at the UMAPs, and to Captain Alfredo Sadulé, personal assistant to former Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, offering primary sources that provide contending visions to commonly accepted histories.

Featuring a dossier on the multifaceted work of writer, activist, and feminist Lourdes Casal, *Cuban Studies*'s No. 46 presents a set of articles that revision the work of this under-studied queer Cuban feminist. Ruth Behar's introduction to the dossier situates Casal as a forefront feminist, who is one of the first few of women of color to incorporate interdisciplinarity and intersectionality before Kimberlé Crenshaw's coining of the latter term. All four articles address the importance that race, gender, and socioeconomic status, among other factors, played in the shaping of Casal's political and aesthetic writings. A Cuban exile in the U.S., Casal's diasporic experience defines her own intellectual trajectory and, as Laura Lomas asserts in "On the "Shock" of Diaspora," she contributed to the forming of an interdisciplinarity that currently defines Cuban studies. Casal's intersectional feminism is present in her reflections on racial identity, which stem from a very autobiographical and personal interraciality related to her condition as a hemispheric black woman.

In “Race and Reconciliation in the Work of Lourdes Casal,” Jenna Leving Jacobson argues that Casal’s writings, during the years of Grupo Areíto and the Brigada Antonio Maceo, not only served as a critical examination of racial structures in Cuban society, but also as a form of mediation through which Casal underpinned certain aspects of her own racial identity to reconcile her lived experience as a *mulata* with her ideological positioning. Casal’s writings appear as a dialectic bridge that aims to unify “the Cuban communities on and off the island” (46). Yolando Prieto’s “Lourdes Casal and Black Cubans in the United States” centers on Casal’s role as a social scientist and her pioneering study on Black Cubans in Miami. Prieto approaches a different facet of Casal’s intellectual trajectory, stressing the ethically-sound, socially-committed, and collaborative social science model embraced by the Cuban feminist. The comparison between the ideologies of *mestizaje* and racial mixing in Lourdes Casal’s autobiographical and literary texts concerns Iraida H. López’s article. According to López, the notion of *mestizaje* is key to approach Casal’s critique of race in Cuba prior to her exile in the U.S, after which the intellectual reaffirms blackness as an ineludibly important aspect of racial mixing in Cuba in spite of the supposed eradication of racism after the advent of the Cuban Revolution. This volume’s section on “History” features an ample scope of topics that range from urban gardens in Havana to the Cuban women’s movement during the 1920s, passing through a reading of Afro-Cuban women’s activism in the work of filmmaker Sara Gómez. In this section, Ana Amigo considers the spatial, symbolic, and social implications of the presence of the urban gardens in the city of Havana. A fascinating article on the uses, abuses and misuses of public space, Amigo’s piece argues that the urban gardens constitute part of Havana’s modern iconographical identity in spite of chiseling an urban model based on colonial exoticism. María Elena Meneses Muro’s contribution on the confiscation of slaves by the Spanish state during the Ten Years’ War not only presents a careful examination of archival sources but also provides evidence regarding the various levels of agency available to slaves at the time. Meneses Muro’s compelling argument advocates for a more complex understanding of slavery and agency that moves beyond the space of *barracones* in order to conceptualize a nuanced sense of enslaved mobility in Cuba. Devyn Spence Benson’s “Sara Gómez” examines the films *Iré a Santiago*, *Crónica de mi familia*, *La otra isla*, and *Mi aporte* to trace out the intricacies of censorship, antiracism, and feminism in Cuba during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Benson’s visual analysis of Gómez’s less commonly-known cinematography highlights the filmmaker’s concerns regarding racism, sexism, and other pressing social issues that official governmental policies at the time denied or erased from public discourse. Benson’s contribution also situates Sara Gómez’s production in a long history of Afro-Cuban female activism in order to recognize the genealogy of anti-racist struggles on the island. Takkara Brunson’s “In the general interest of all conscious women” offers a detailed analysis of the coalition building processes within the women’s movement in Cuba during the 1920s and 1930s. Brunson’s argument places race at the core of popular movement organizing, in which Afro-Cuban women helped build cross-racial alliances that would ask for political reforms during the 1940 Constitutional Assembly. This study of the racial and class dynamics in the women’s movement of the time sheds a critical light on the capacity for agency and community organizing strategies deployed by marginalized women.

In the section, “Culture and Society,” the article contributions by Lester Tomé, Marelys Valencia, Laura Redruello, and Yvon Grenier reflect respectively on diverse sociocultural topics, such as Alejo Carpentier’s libretto *El milagro de anaquillé*, the visual poetics of Nicolás Guillén Landrián, the cultural dynamics between cinema and the Catholic church during the Special Period, or state’s gatekeeping tactics in Cuban culture. Tomé’s essay examines a ballet project with libretto by Alejo Carpentier and music by Amadeo Roldán. Focusing mainly on the libretto,

Tomé uncovers the politics of representation in a ballet that combined avant-garde techniques with *afrocubanismo* and that mirrored aesthetically the political transformations of the time. In spite of their attempt to invigorate Cuban culture with an avant-garde trend, Carpentier and Roldán nonetheless adopt a colonialist and Eurocentric gaze that replicated a modern divide between the objectification of the other and the authority of the intellectual. Valencia's textual analysis of two of Guillén Landrián's documentaries adopts the notion of reflexivity as a frame of cultural analysis to approach his film production. In the case of Guillén Landrián's documentaries, his level of experimentation, audiovisual montage, and media references not only serve as a pedagogy for the audience, but also as a questioning of filmic master narratives. Laura Redruello locates the cultural space in which the Catholic church finds refuge after its ideological divide with Cuban socialism in the early decades of the Revolution. The church's strategies to maintain a connection with the civil society through its active involvement in cinema clubs, national film festivals, and the publication of film journals, renewed its presence in the public sphere and allowed it to disseminate its ideology during the Special Period. Yvon Grenier delves into the sticky contradictions of cultural policy in Cuba, while arguing that a political pendulum, oscillating between ideological "opening" and "closing," has characterized cultural politics since the advent of the Cuban Revolution. In this sense, artistic freedom is contingent upon the cultural producers' "willingness" to negotiate their autonomy within official structures of power, offering an intricate picture of a cultural network that combines politics, aesthetics, and institutionalism. Under the section heading of "Economy," this *Cuban Studies* volume presents an extensive analysis of the emerging nonstate sector in Cuba based on eighty interviews. This collaborative study, written by Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Roberto Veiga González, Lenier González Mederos, Sofía Vera Rojas, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, provides a definition of the nonstate sector, while considering its expansion, restrictions, and impact, as well as offering suggestions to invigorate the nonstate sector based on interviewees' comments. This volume also features the visual work of José Manuel Fors, 2016 National Prize of Visual Arts, and an interview with economist and scholar Carmelo Mesa-Lago on the importance of maintaining a separation between political endorsement and intellectual inquiry as is the case with the separation between church and state. Mesa-Lago, moreover, makes a distinction between recognizing the asymmetry of power structures as part of intellectual inquiry, and making scholarship political propaganda. *Cuban Studies* Volumes 44 and 46 close respectively with ten and twelve book reviews, offering its readers a vast bibliography of emerging scholarship on Cuban history, culture and society, including Aurea Matilde Muñoz's *José y Consuelo: Amor, Guerra y exilio en mi memoria* (2013); Kristina Wirtz's *Performing Afro-Cuba: Image, Voice, Spectacle in the Making of Race and History* (2014); Consuelo Naranjo Orovio's *Historia mínima de las Antillas hispanas y británicas* (2014); Mercedes García Rodríguez's *Con un ojo en Yara y otro en Madrid: Cuba entre dos revoluciones* (2012); Alejandro Leonardo Fernández Calderón's *Páginas en conflicto: Debate racial en la prensa cubana (1912-1930)* (2014); Enrique López Mesa's *Tabaco, mito y esclavos: Apuntes cubanos de historia agraria* (2015); Iraida H. López's *Impossible Returns: Narratives of the Cuban Diaspora* (2015), and Irina Pacheco Valera's *Imaginario socioculturales cubanos* (2015), among other titles.

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Review Essay: Navegantes y conquistadores: la historiografía imperial por mar y tierra en la temprana época colonial

Ángulo-Cano, Yanira. *Historia de una conquista o conquista de una historia*. Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 2018. 156 pp. ISBN 9788-4948-3010-5

Rodríguez, Jimena N. *Escribir desde el océano: La navegación de Hernando de Alarcón y otras retóricas del andar por el Nuevo Mundo*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2018. 188 pp. ISBN 9788-4919-2023-6

En su estudio sobre Hernando de Alarcón y otros navegantes servidores de la corona española en los siglos XVI y XVII, Jimena N. Rodríguez propone un nuevo marco historiográfico marítimo basado en la escritura “de quienes en un principio no están del todo en tierra” (14). Según Rodríguez, esta escritura representa no el afán por asentarse en el nuevo territorio sino la perspectiva de un sujeto—el navegante-explorador—en constante movimiento. Rodríguez se concentra específicamente en textos que detallan la exploración de las Californias por sus costas y ríos, poniendo en relieve las estrategias retóricas empleadas por los navegantes-exploradores para justificar una empresa que, en muchos casos, termina en fracaso. Contrastando con al marco marítimo de Rodríguez, Yanira Ángulo-Cano ofrece un estudio de un conquistador cuyo éxito en la empresa imperial pareciera ser indisputable. Se trata de la *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, texto compuesto por Bernal Díaz del Castillo originalmente como probanza de méritos (en 1538) para luego convertirse, tras varios borradores, en un memorial de guerras (terminado en 1568) (Ángulo-Cano 19). La relectura de la obra Bernal Díaz emprendida por Ángulo-Cano nos permite apreciar cómo el empeño con que el conquistador compone su historia se sitúa dentro de una batalla por los privilegios difícilmente otorgados por el estado español en plena expansión. Tomados juntos, los estudios de Rodríguez y Ángulo-Cano presentan dos paradigmas historiográficos condicionados por distintas formas de territorialidad en el Nuevo Mundo. Sin embargo, ambos paradigmas son comparables en la postulación de un nuevo “yo” ante el aparato imperial.

En *Escribir desde el océano*, Rodríguez cuenta no la historia de los conquistadores-colonos llegados al Nuevo Mundo para quedarse sino la de los navegantes que exploran el territorio americano desde el mar y para quienes siempre queda la posibilidad, sino la expectativa, de un retorno a su lugar de origen. Alejándose de los mejor conocidos viajes de figuras como Colón, Vesputio, y Magallanes, Rodríguez centra su estudio en las “expediciones de menor envergadura que tuvieron como misión reconocer los litorales marítimos, buscar ‘pasos’ de un océano a otro y adquirir información para extender los límites del dominio europeo en el continente” (13). Enfocándose en el territorio de las Californias, Rodríguez plantea una mirada narrativa mediada entrañablemente por el mar o río. Dentro de ese marco narrativo, el barco adquiere primacía como eje de enunciación de un navegador que se encuentra lejos de su patria y, por tanto, de todo punto de referencia arraigado a un territorio familiar. Lejos de dicho territorio, el barco se convierte en un hogar provisional, una casa ambulante en que se reproducen la cultura y las jerarquías de la sociedad ibérica. Al mismo tiempo, y considerando la sociedad como un cuerpo corporativo, Rodríguez nota la tendencia en las narrativas náuticas de imaginar el barco en sí como cuerpo. En este sentido, Rodríguez señala el uso de los verbos “corrimos” y “caminamos” en vez de “navegar” o “bogar” en estas narrativas, más la descripción de un barco que “sufre” y se “fatiga” en la relación de Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo (106-107).

Para Rodríguez, ese estado ambulante, y el continuo acercarse y alejarse de la nave como casa flotante, crea una subjetividad particularmente liminal en la figura del navegante-explorador que, si bien internaliza la misión imperial, se ve forzado a negociar con los habitantes autóctonos de los territorios navegados para seguir su rumbo. La relación de Hernando/Fernando de Alarcón sobre su expedición en las Californias en el año 1540 sirve como caso ejemplar de esta liminalidad náutica. Aunque el texto original de esta relación está perdido, una traducción en italiano de la relación se logró publicar en 1556, dentro de la antología *Navigazione et viaggi* compuesta por Juan Bautista Ramusio (Rodríguez 121). En la segunda parte de su estudio, Rodríguez proporciona por primera vez una traducción completa en castellano de la relación de Alarcón grabada por Ramusio, lo cual resulta en un gran aporte para el estudio de la literatura colonial. Según Rodríguez, el texto de Alarcón nos presenta con una figura única ya que, a diferencia de otros navegantes-exploradores provenientes de la península ibérica, éste “se interna en el continente [norteamericano] por vía fluvial, y en cierta medida abandona la condición satelital propia del navegante para ‘meterse’ tierra adentro, aunque por el río Colorado” (123). Esta decisión produce una serie de negociaciones con las comunidades indígenas del río Colorado ya que de ellas depende Alarcón tanto para el abastecimiento de comida como para la recaudación de información sobre la expedición de Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. Esas negociaciones empiezan con el gesto de Alarcón de pisar su bandera y espada como seña de paz, acto que según Alarcón lo ayuda a ganar la confianza de los líderes indígenas.

En su agudo análisis sobre el texto de Alarcón, Rodríguez señala cómo este navegante-explorador emplea el discurso de la paz para apropiarse de un estatus especial como protagonista histórico. Una vez que Alarcón comprende la importancia del sol como ente divino entre las comunidades indígenas, él se presenta a sí mismo como el hijo del sol venido a apaciguar las guerras entre ellos. Rodríguez destaca el episodio en que Alarcón reparte cruces de palitos y papel entre los indígenas como momento clave en su transformación de “yo” navegante-explorador a “yo” evangelizador (128). Esta transformación protagónica acompaña un cambio de objetivo ya que la misión original de Alarcón—de suministrar a la expedición de Coronado—no se llega a cumplir. Según Rodríguez, si bien Alarcón no cumple con su misión, éste aún provee a la corona una forma de mercancía sumamente valiosa: información (ver la nota 37 en la página 153). De esa manera, Alarcón contribuye a la misión imperial, dando primeros conocimientos sobre el territorio explorado y los pueblos en sus confines. Alarcón hace uso de una variedad de técnicas metafóricas para efectuar la imagen de un exitoso agente imperial a servicio de la corona y la iglesia católica. Estas técnicas incluyen la infantilización de un anciano-líder indígena, la caracterización de los indígenas como meros instrumentos, y la presentación del barco como iglesia. Todas estas metáforas sirven para naturalizar el dominio católico sobre los territorios explorados pero no conquistados ni colonizados, posicionando a Alarcón como agente único en su proyección desde el barco como eje de enunciación.

El “yo” protagónico presentado por Ángulo-Cano en *Historia de una conquista*, en cambio, se radica en la figura de Bernal Díaz del Castillo, conquistador que se convierte en escritor para contar la ‘verdad’ de la conquista de los territorios de Mesoamérica privilegiando la perspectiva del soldado común. En su análisis, Ángulo-Cano propone “superar el debate crítico entre la fidelidad narrativa y los intereses mezquinos del autor de la *Historia verdadera*” (16). Según Ángulo-Cano, ambas perspectivas son válidas ya que “[l]o mezquino delata al conquistador, todavía relativamente joven, quien ve sus méritos menospreciados y la fidelidad narrativa refleja la nueva auto-concepción de su personalidad histórica como escritor y anciano” (16). Para Ángulo-Cano, entonces, estas dos visiones se refuerzan pero también cambian en su intensidad a lo largo

de la vida de Bernal Díaz, respondiendo así a la preocupación del mismo por su lugar en el récord histórico y al deseo de procurar los privilegios que él piensa que merece por su trabajo a servicio a la corona. Entre estos privilegios eran de prioridad la posesión a la encomienda y el reconocimiento de Bernal Díaz como conquistador. Ángulo-Cano ofrece un resumen de las trabas institucionales con las que se enfrenta Bernal en sus reclamos ante varias entidades jurídicas (el Consejo de Indias, el fiscal real en Valladolid, la Audiencia real de los Confines) (42-48). Los procesos jurídicos contextualizan la motivación original para la composición de la *Historia Verdadera*, empezando como probanza de méritos que servirían como documentación comprobando las acciones y logros de Bernal Díaz en las campañas de conquista en el Nuevo Mundo. El estudio de Ángulo-Cano muestra que, pasando por un extenso proceso de revisión en respuesta a las historias compuestas por otros escritores sobre la conquista de México, la *Historia verdadera* toma su forma final como memorial de guerras en que el “yo” protagónico se plantea a sí mismo como testigo fiable de lo contado ya que éste ha participado directamente en los eventos plasmados.

Ángulo-Cano argumenta que en la *Historia verdadera* Bernal Díaz pone en marcha una serie de técnicas aristotélicas que le ayudarán, después, a moldear un nuevo “yo” autobiográfico representando, así, un salto de la voz colectiva valorizada en la tradición clásica a la voz singular del narrador-protagonista típica de la literatura moderna. Estas técnicas, que Ángulo-Cano expone en el tercer capítulo de su estudio, consisten en la auto-presentación del orador, la apelación al oyente o juez del caso, la postulación del mérito de la causa, y las denuncia en contra del adversario. En un principio, estas estrategias retóricas responden al contexto jurídico que mueve a Bernal Díaz a abogar por los privilegios que éste espera del estado español. Pero, como Ángulo-Cano señala, dichos privilegios difícilmente se les otorgaba aún a los más renombrados conquistadores, quienes no sólo no consiguieron la recompensa que buscaban, sino que, como era el caso de Hernando Pizarro, podrían terminar encarcelados (43). Suficiente razón, entonces, para la cautela con la que Bernal Díaz compone su historia, dotándole una modestia característica de la retórica clásica en que se apela a la autoría corporativa, al “nosotros” por encima de un “yo” protagónico (83). Para Ángulo-Cano, sin embargo, Bernal Díaz, en su afán por defender sus derechos individuales, “no tiene otr[a] alternativa que cambiar su perspectiva narrativa por la del autor individual” (83). Ángulo-Cano, al mismo tiempo, sostiene que la figura de un adversario particular se convierte en un adversario colectivo al que Bernal Díaz tiene que responder con la autoridad de un testigo protagónico (96-97). Por lo tanto, Ángulo-Cano ve en la *Historia verdadera* el germen de una nueva forma de escribir a partir de la circulación y multiplicación de diferentes versiones de la conquista de Mesoamérica.

En el cuarto y último capítulo de su estudio, Ángulo-Cano dispone de la teorización de Karl J. Weintraub acerca del género autobiográfico para explicar la dinámica por la cual Bernal Díaz desarrolla su identidad como “yo” protagónico en contraste a la autoría colectiva aún en boga entre sus contemporáneos, como Bartolomé de las Casas, quienes se ciñen a las fórmulas de la retórica clásica. Ángulo-Cano propone que la *Historia verdadera* exhibe un dinamismo propio del género de la memoria, según Weintraub, en que el autor-narrador alterna entre su mundo interior (el “Tipo Ideal”) y la realidad externa (el *Res Gestae*) (116). A este esquema Ángulo-Cano agrega la categoría de la Auto-Justificación que surge del mundo interior de la voz autobiográfica, manifestándose en la obra de Bernal Díaz como una ideología imperial que junta la dominación de los amerindios con la misión evangélica en una especie de negociación entre los intereses económicos y la religión (118). De allí Ángulo-Cano entra en algunas particularidades de la *Historia verdadera* como memorial de guerras, destacando la construcción de Bernal Díaz como

héroe cristiano y vehículo para el “transplante de instituciones” en el Nuevo Mundo (130). Ángulo-Cano pone particular énfasis en la introducción del caballo al Nuevo Mundo, lo cual facilita, en primer plano, la victoria militar de los españoles y, en segundo plano, la circulación de los objetos fundamentales para la evangelización de la población indígena (128-131).

Con ese énfasis en el caballo como medio de transporte, Ángulo-Cano traza la imagen de un “yo” protagónico anclado a la tierra, deseoso de quedarse con sus parcialidades terrenales (es decir, su encomienda), y ansioso por guardar la memoria de su participación en la toma de ciudades y territorios en nombre de la monarquía española. Es un “yo” que afirma con suma certeza lo que ha visto y vivido en tierra firme, en el meollo de Mesoamérica, y que se proyecta como instrumento indispensable para la evangelización. En este último punto, Bernal Díaz, tal como lo trata Ángulo-Cano, se asemeja al navegante Hernando de Alarcón. Sin embargo, como Rodríguez muestra en su estudio, el navegante-explorador proyecta un “yo” que sólo ve las cosas imperfectamente desde lejos y que de ninguna manera se atreve a abandonar nave y agua para exponerse a los peligros que le pudieran suceder tierra adentro. Encarnado por la figura de Alarcón, este “yo” tiene que negociar con las poblaciones indígenas con las que se topa en su viaje, a diferencia de la relación dominadora que Bernal Díaz establece con las comunidades indígenas subyugadas o coaptadas por fuerza militar. En el último análisis, los textos de Alarcón y Bernal Díaz representan dos paradigmas de la historiografía imperial, uno delineando los contornos de un territorio potencialmente apropiable (análogo textual del acto de dibujar un mapa) y el otro documentando en primera persona la participación del conquistador en la expansión territorial del imperio transatlántico español. Siguiendo las aportaciones de Rodríguez y Ángulo-Cano, estos paradigmas son emblemáticos de una nueva conciencia literaria que resalta la experiencia particular del individual ante un creciente aparato estatal que funge como mayor distribuidor de recursos, bienes, y privilegios.

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Ariza, Julio. *El abandono: abismo amoroso y crisis social en la reciente literatura argentina*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2018. 236 pp. ISBN 9789-5084-5374-7

La crítica ha abordado el vínculo entre literatura argentina y crisis social desde diferentes perspectivas: las “ficciones del dinero” (Alejandra Laera), la reemergencia del imaginario decimonónico (Verónica Garibotto) o las narrativas de anticipación (Fernando Reati). El fascinante libro de Julio Ariza, *El abandono: abismo amoroso y crisis social en la reciente literatura argentina*, indaga en un terreno poco frecuentado por la crítica: las ficciones del abandono amoroso, en las cuales la separación de sus protagonistas es simultánea al resquebrajamiento de la matriz social que produjo la crisis de 2001. El recorte de materiales es sumamente inteligente, ya que estas novelas conforman una constelación que revela las diferentes dimensiones de la crisis, desde la pausa temporal que habita el precariado contemporáneo hasta la transformación de la ciudad en un “paisaje de la devastación” (Adrián Gorelik).

El abandono está dividido en dos secciones. La primera parte comienza con una introducción a las diferentes dimensiones del término “abandono”, así como a las novelas de la crisis que se valen de este tema. Estas novelas, dice Ariza, trabajan el amor desde un “después de” que muestra al abandonado como al sujeto de la crisis por excelencia, alguien que habita un estado de excepción o un afuera de la ley. Para Ariza, las ficciones del abandono constituyen “tragedias

modernas” en las cuales la Historia con h mayúscula repercute en la intimidad de personas comunes y corrientes, seres ordinarios que han quedado al margen de las grandes narrativas de la nación (54).

A partir del segundo capítulo, Ariza examina las novelas del abandono amoroso derivando de ellas una cartografía de la crisis social en Argentina. El segundo capítulo, titulado “Límites”, es el único que trata más de una novela. El motivo de esta elección se debe a que Ariza explora las semillas de estas ficciones del abandono en una novela cuyo tema no es la crisis de 2001 sino la hiperinflación de 1989: *El aire* (1992) de Sergio Chejfec. El texto de Chejfec, que transcurre en una Buenos Aires ligeramente posapocalíptica, introduce varias de las características de las novelas de la poscrisis amorosa y, en especial, el derrumbe de la noción de límite: entre el pasado y el presente, la vida y la literatura, lo individual y lo social. Por otra parte, Ariza argumenta que la relevancia de *El pasado* (2003) de Alan Pauls en tanto novela de la crisis se debe a su condición de objeto-texto anacrónico, no sólo por su extensión, sino también por su apuesta por un exceso de memoria que permite pensar lo diferente en tiempos de homogeneidad temporal y presentismo.

El tercer capítulo, “Fragilidad”, se enfoca en una de las varias “narraciones de la intemperie” (Elsa Drucaroff) que emergieron tras la crisis de 2001: *La intemperie* (2008) de Gabriela Massuh. Como el término “abandono”, “intemperie” apunta en varias direcciones de manera simultánea: lo espacial, lo climático y lo afectivo. Ariza sostiene que la novela de Massuh revela, a través del formato del diario íntimo, la fragilidad del yo en tiempos de crisis individual y colectiva. Este capítulo resulta iluminador en la medida en que retoma los debates sobre las llamadas “escrituras del yo” en la literatura argentina reciente y presenta a *La intemperie* como una novela que escenifica lo que Daniel Link ha denominado “imaginación intimista”.

La segunda parte del libro abre con un capítulo dedicado a *Ida* (2008) de Oliverio Coelho, novela que también indaga en una “imaginación intimista” a través de la fragilidad de un yo que se opone a las fantasías ideológicas e identitarias del neoliberalismo. Este capítulo se titula “Irse” y se enfoca en la “anacor-ética” del protagonista, Eneas Morosi, cuyo nombre de términos contradictorios sugiere tanto heroísmo como morosidad, inacción y detenimiento. Ariza demuestra que Eneas Morosi es —como la narradora de *La intemperie*— un escritor de la crisis, la urgencia y el límite, puesto que plasma su experiencia de la ciudad en apuntes y bocetos que intentan capturar el eterno “tiempo presente” (Beatriz Sarlo) de la poscrisis.

El quinto capítulo, “Cronofobia”, examina *Miles de años* (2004) de Juan José Becerra. La obra entera de Becerra es una larga reflexión sobre los modos de medir el paso del tiempo, una actividad que en estas novelas del abandono—como nos recuerda Ariza en su bella reflexión—se vuelve imposible. El protagonista de esta novela, Castellanos, quiere falsear la flecha de la historia a fin de volver a la época anterior al abandono amoroso. Para ello se vale de diferentes métodos, de una “escritura anti-tiempo” entregada a las temporalidades de la fotografía, el mito y los mapas.

El último capítulo del libro, “Inequivalencias”, contiene un análisis de *Historia del Abasto* (2007) de Mariano Siskind que funciona como coda. Según Ariza, la novela de Siskind revela la puesta en crisis de la noción de valor que está presente en varias de estas narrativas. Las ficciones del abandono amoroso, según Ariza, muestran la imposibilidad de la traducción y la equivalencia, tanto en un sentido monetario como afectivo. La conclusión trae a la superficie un término que había permanecido latente a lo largo del libro: precariedad. Para Ariza, la crisis genera “economías del abandono” en las cuales la precariedad se manifiesta en dos órdenes interconectados: la propiedad y la temporalidad.

En última instancia, estas ficciones muestran las dimensiones biopolíticas que vienen aparejadas con el ejercicio de pensar en nuestra (precaria) contemporaneidad: ¿cuánto valen los

cuerpos y las vidas cuando el estado, antes que prevenir, justifica jurídicamente los regímenes de excepción? La publicación del libro de Ariza llega en un punto neurálgico de la lucha contra los abusos y acosos sexuales a través de movimientos como Ni una menos. Por ello, su incisiva reflexión sobre crisis social, abandono amoroso e imaginarios temporales se vuelve una contribución urgente que permite repensar los lineamientos fundamentales del momento contemporáneo.

Nicolás Campisi, Brown University

Brescia, Pablo y Oswaldo Estrada, Eds. *McCrack: McOndo, el Crack y los destinos de la literatura latinoamericana*. Valencia: Albatros Ediciones, 2018. 270 pp. ISBN 9788-4727-4359-5

Desde la aparición en 1996 de *McOndo*, la antología de cuentos compilada por Alberto Fuguet y Sergio Gómez, así como del “Manifiesto del Crack” (de Jorge Volpi, Ignacio Padilla, Eloy Urroz, Pedro Ángel Palou y Ricardo Chávez-Castañeda), la crítica especializada no ha dejado de referirse a ellos—momentos, movimientos o grupos—como ejes centrales que anunciaron el surgimiento de la “nueva” literatura más allá del *Boom* latinoamericano y del realismo mágico. En su momento, la crítica vio con recelo que estas voces nóveles irrumpieran en el ámbito literario latinoamericano con tales pretensiones; más de veinte años después, hablar de la nomenclatura de “McOndo” o del “Crack” resulta ya algo demasiado familiar para todos. Además de sugerir una fusión e inauguración de momentos, movimientos o grupos literarios, el título podría sugerir una fundación que decanta en “destinos de la literatura latinoamericana”; sin embargo, en su lectura se corrobora más bien la (con)formación y articulación de redes y conexiones literarias a partir y más allá de estos momentos, ya que los mismos se contextualizan, haciéndole justicia a la historia literaria de América Latina en su conjunto.

En la introducción, Pablo Brescia y Oswaldo Estrada se refieren al origen de “McOndo” y del “Crack” y señalan que la compilación es el resultado del coloquio internacional que tuvo lugar el 20 y 21 de octubre de 2016 en la Universidad del Sur de la Florida (*Our America? Past and Future of the New Latin American Fiction (¿Nuestra América? Pasado y futuro de la nueva narrativa latinoamericana)* [12]. Sin embargo, el libro no tiene el aire de una compilación de “actas” de conferencias académicas, sino de ensayos que en su mayoría son bastante especializados. Asimismo, los compiladores señalan que los propósitos del libro—muy bien cumplidos—son tres: “1) estudiar a los dos fenómenos en conjunto; 2) reunir tanto a críticos especialistas en el tema como a escritores participantes de estos agrupamientos (Edmundo Paz Soldán para *McOndo*, Pedro Ángel Palou para el Crack) y otros escritores que, a pesar de no pertenecer a estos grupos, son contemporáneos de aquellos y participaron en el mismo campo literario de manera influyente y 3) reflexionar de manera crítica sobre lo que ha quedado de estas intervenciones literarias [...] y cómo han sido estudiadas” (13). En efecto, en la compilación participa un gran número de críticos (Pablo Brescia, Oswaldo Estrada, Eduardo Becerra, Jorge Fornet, Tomás Regalado López, Wilfrido Corral, Rita De Maeseneer, Catalina Quesada-Gómez, Daniel Mesa Gancedo, Ezequiel De Rosso, Sara Booker, Ana Gallego Cuiñas, Thomas Nulley-Valdés, Jonathán Martín Gómez; estos dos últimos, participan con una entrevista) y escritores (Edmundo Paz Soldán, Pedro Ángel Palou, Naief Yehya, Cristina Rivera Garza), lo que hace que encontremos un balance entre estudios académicos y visiones desde la producción literaria misma. Aunque resultaría imposible evaluar en detalle cada una de las contribuciones de la compilación,

sí es evidente que todas llevan a cabo, a su manera, una historia crítica de la literatura latinoamericana reciente; además, se constata que ambos momentos no son equivalentes sino más bien complementarios, pero que ambos contribuyen a contrastar y estudiar el desarrollo (más que “destino”) de la literatura latinoamericana actual contemporánea; particularmente: Argentina, México, Chile, el Caribe, Colombia y Estados Unidos; este último, como espacio donde estas literaturas se producen o se estudian.

No obstante, la producción de esta historia crítica de la literatura, que viene además sustentada con una bibliografía en la mayoría de los ensayos, es realizada mayoritariamente como un proceso estrictamente literario; es decir, de una manera no interdisciplinaria. Sin embargo, en un número reducido de ensayos, también encontramos que se abordan otros temas más allá de la literatura, como la inmigración, el mercado literario, y la globalización, lo que apuntaría al intento de teorizar los fenómenos de “McOndo” y el “Crack” a través de prismas mucho más complejos y desafiantes. Pero, en la introducción Brescia y Estrada notan este vacío y señalan que “es menester cruzar trabajos de crítica en varias lenguas sobre lo que podemos denominar la ‘teoría de las nuevas modalidades’, estudios que se intensifican hacia la segunda década del siglo XXI” (18) y dan como ejemplos diversos textos: *El lectoespectador* de Vicente Luis Mora, *Radicante* de Nicolas Bourriaud, y *Atlas portátil de América Latina. Arte y ficciones errantes* de Graciela Speranza.

En *McCrack: McOndo, el Crack y los destinos de la literatura latinoamericana*, el lector encontrará una evaluación pormenorizada de estos dos momentos literarios y que fueron también “un diagnóstico” de lo experimentaban tanto México como América Latina (Palou 255). Además, esta compilación es enriquecida con la inclusión de consideraciones extraliterarias como la inmigración, el mercado literario y la globalización, las cuales dan cuenta de que este “destino” de la literatura latinoamericana no podrá pensarse o articularse más allá de la región sino a través de ella misma, con sus problemas y contradicciones. En suma, una compilación útil no solamente para los temas centrales, sino para rastrear también el desarrollo de la literatura latinoamericana contemporánea.

Héctor Jaimes, North Carolina State University

Climent-Espino, Rafael. *Del manuscrito al libro. Materialidad del texto y crítica genética en la novela iberoamericana: 1969-1992*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2017. 299 pp. ISBN 9781-9307-4480-6

For a complete analysis of a literary work, it is necessary to look deeper into its conception, beyond the published text. Rafael Climent-Espino suggests a journey through the peephole of the text to find all the possibilities hidden in and out of the *codex book* of texts published between 1969 and 1992, “where, how, and why the text was written, on what material format, with what materials and intention, who writes it, to whom it is addressed” (12). In searching for the answers of motif, space, and materials, Climent-Espino affirms that many other textual possibilities arise, which are not and cannot be imprisoned in the final book version presented to the reader. In order to uncover the layers of textual materials and genres, the author creates the concept of *material infrastructure*, a tool which recovers the literary genesis of the *libro codex* and that Climent-Espino defines as “the concept of material infrastructure aims to focus on the textual genres that the codex

book format makes invisible. By *material infrastructure* I mean all the materials that are hierarchically below the narrative structure and that raise the scaffolding material of fiction” (14).

Del manuscrito al libro is composed of four chapters dedicated to in-depth study of the original manuscript of four novels written by Iberoamerican authors written between 1969 and 1992. These novels are *Boquitas pintadas* (1969)—published as *Heartbreak Tango* (1996) in English—by the Argentinian writer Manuel Puig; *Água Viva* (1973) —published as *The Stream of Life* (1978) —by the Brazilian Clarice Lispector; *Zero* (1974) by the Brazilian author Ignácio Loyola Brandão, and, finally, *Nubosidad variable* (1992)—published as *Variable Cloud*—by the Spanish writer Carmen Martín Gaité. In his meticulous journey through archives in-loco, interviews, research, and manuscripts related to these literary works and authors, Climent-Espino gives a distinct analysis and offers new data to complete what escapes the traditional format of these novels.

In Chapter One, “*Boquitas pintadas* como *codex factitium*. Manuel Puig y la poética del reciclaje,” Climent-Espino introduces the reader to Puig’s manuscripts, drafts, and to the author’s writing habits. He uncovers the uses Puig makes of popular culture and points to the array of possibilities included in and excluded from the final product of the 1969 novel. Climent-Espino also refers to the variety of texts created by the novel’s characters, which requires an attentive reader to re-create and elaborate mentally those materials. Registering *Boquitas pintadas* as *codex factitium*, the author establishes the gathering of all different materials (tangos, boleros, melodramatic novels, films, obituaries, love letters, police and medical reports, etc.), loosely assembled to adapt to an artificial format, which is the conventional book. According to the critic, Manuel Puig compiles and recycles all existent materials into the fluid format of his sentimental novel. Climent-Espino concludes that the reader can generate different fictions with the materials of *Boquitas pintadas* by re-arranging the codex materials.

In Chapter Two, “Clarice Lispector y la narrativa informe: *Água viva* como antilibro” (pp. 111-162) the shapelessness and fluidity of the textual material of *Água viva* leads Climent-Espino to propose it as an anti-book, similar to Umberto Eco’s anti-library. The novel *Água viva* reconstructs the unpublished materials of *Atrás do pensamento* and *Objeto gritante*. According to Climent-Espino, what is published in the traditional format escapes “factual plots and descriptions” (113). The narrator of *Água viva*, who is a painter, warns the reader “this is not the way to write” (121), and composes a fragmented display of thoughts without beginning, middle, nor ending, which can be experienced in a circular form or in any form; elements to be appreciated at a distance. Climent-Espino re-shapes a web of literary criticism around the text and author, considering the novel as abstract and anarchic, shapeless and mutant like water, and he concludes that it should not to be contained/restrained by the book format.

In Chapter Three, “*Zero*: una archivalía de la dictadura militar brasileña,” Climent-Espino classifies the novel by Ignácio Loyola Brandão as a literary archive of the historical decades of Brazilian dictatorship in its form and content. He explores the genre of journalistic literature, a genre initiated by the need to trump censorship while being the only accessible vehicle to state the actual reality. During the 60s and 70s, the journalistic style flourished in Latin American literature, in response to the widespread totalitarian regimes in the region. Climent-Espino draws the connection to other Latin American authors. In *Zero*, 340 documents make the *material infrastructure* of the novel, organized in endnotes, titles, drawings, media, among other displays; Climent-Espino refers to twenty-one topics (197). The novel’s organization helps the reader to compose webs of possible readings of the “daily reality of the country” (200) and thus disrupt the linearity of the *codex* book. Climent-Espino clarifies that *Zero* contains the diversified combination

of textual materials to depict the socio-political issues of the Brazilian military dictatorship, becoming a historical archive of an era marked by censorship and propaganda.

In Chapter Four, “El papel de los papeles en *Nubosidad variable* de Carmen Martín Gaité,” the author affirms that writing is therapeutic not just for the characters Sofia and Mariana, who write in notebooks and letters formats, but for Carmen Martín Gaité as well (212, 234). Climent-Espino investigates and analyzes each of the fourteen notebooks that comprise the manuscripts of the published novel. Those notebooks present collages of notes, images, pictures and texts over texts, rich textual materials in which Climent-Espino works like an archeologist, bringing to light possibilities of the genesis of the novel and the artistic *menester* of Martín Gaité. He also asserts that the documents written by the main characters—letters by Mariana and notebooks by Sofia—are elaborated not only to develop the friendship and self-analysis among characters, but also as therapeutic liniment for Martín Gaité. Moreover, the author transports these personal writings to the reader’s voyeurism, which plays a role in the writing-reading-therapeutic processes.

Moreover, *Del manuscrito al libro* has illustrations by Chema Madoz and Abelardo Morell, which visually contextualize Espino’s study. *Del manuscrito al libro* opens new possibilities to the studied novels and the research method can be applied to distinct literary works.

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Di Stefano, Eugenio Claudio. *The Vanishing Frame: Latin American Culture and Theory in the Postdictatorial Era*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. 200 pp. ISBN: 9781-4773-1619-1

Espero, sin afán de exagerar, estar en lo cierto al asegurar que pocos temas han tenido la centralidad en los estudios latinoamericanos como la postdictadura, también conocida, no sin un intenso escrutinio, como transición a la democracia. Desde los estudios culturales y literarios, y específicamente, a través del análisis de obras de arte producidas en el Cono Sur desde el momento cumbre de la dictadura en los años setenta hasta la primera década del siglo XXI, el texto de Eugenio Claudio Di Stefano, *The Vanishing Frame: Latin American Culture and Theory in the Postdictatorial Era*, presenta al lector una provocadora mirada sobre las relaciones entre estética y cultura durante este periodo, así como de la narrativa ético-política de donde éstas abrevan.

La primera parte del libro, “Postdictatorial Aesthetics,” nos muestra en sus tres capítulos el ascenso y límite de la identificación entre la posición subjetiva del lector, de la ideología de los derechos humanos y del neoliberalismo. Desde la introducción, y a través de una reflexión de la recepción de la película *No* de Pablo Larraín, el autor despliega con toda contundencia su tesis: el horizonte político de la postdictadura, incluso en las izquierdas, no es el de la legitimidad de la democracia, sino el del neoliberalismo y la afirmación del privilegio epistémico de la posición subjetiva; de aquello que de forma similar a las *políticas de la identidad* experimentamos según lo que “somos”, ya sea nuestro género, raza, e incluso, nuestro cuerpo.

En la escena cultural, esta narrativa toma forma en el interés que despertaron obras que a través de la producción de diversas “experiencias afectivas,” como el miedo o el dolor, posicionan al espectador como si éste fuera un testigo de las violaciones a los derechos humanos que perpetuaron las dictaduras de la región. El contenido ideológico que Di Stefano encuentra en intelectuales de los más diversos signos, en el que curiosamente incluye tendencias tan diversas e incluso enfrentadas entre sí mismas como la deconstrucción, la decolonialidad y la neo-

vanguardia, es el rechazo a la autonomía artística como un espacio donde la creación de significados no se encuentra “determined by the reader’s experience or position” (8). Para el autor, más allá de la encomiable empatía con las víctimas de la dictadura, el rechazo compartido a la intencionalidad artística no hace más que reproducir la estructura actual del mercado: la de la reificación de identidades particulares.

Como ya indica el título del primer capítulo “From Revolution to Human Rights” el texto busca entender el cambio de paradigma político y estético que sucedió durante la postdictadura. A partir de una pieza teatral conocida por su postura crítica respecto a la tortura como *Pedro y el capitán* de Mario Benedetti, Di Stefano muestra la transición epocal de una obra enmarcada en el antagonismo político, entre un revolucionario y un militar, a una donde lo esencial se vuelve el cuidado y la gestión del cuerpo, en este caso, el del torturado. En el segundo capítulo “Disability and Redemocratization” el análisis de *El Padre Mio* de Diamela Eltit, así como de *La muerte y la doncella* de Ariel Dorfman, obras cuyo foco en el género y la discapacidad ha servido para criticar la exclusión de grupos marginados por encima de la explotación de corte económico, continúa con la reflexión de lo que el autor ha llamado “el proyecto corporal” del capitalismo. En el tercer capítulo “Making Neoliberal History” la lectura de *Las cartas que no llegaron* de Mauricio Rosencof, así como el documental de Albertina Carri *Los rubios* plantea la pregunta de qué implica remplazar el concepto de historia, no sin decirlo, problemáticamente universal y teleológico; por el de memoria, particular e identitario, que “recibimos” pasivamente, étnicamente, por ejemplo, y desde el cual estructuramos nuestra identidad.

La segunda parte del libro “Toward a Politics of the Frame,” con tres capítulos y una “coda” a manera de conclusión, nos presenta obras que pretenden retomar la idea de que el marco estético y la autonomía del arte pueden constituirse como catalizadores de una política capaz de superar al neoliberalismo. En el cuarto capítulo, “The Reappearance of the Frame,” Di Stefano examina la serie pictórica “Abu Ghraib” de Fernando Botero, la cual, en el contexto de la guerra de Iraq, pone de nuevo a la tortura en el centro de la obra de arte. Aunque, a diferencia de géneros como el Testimonio, se nos insiste en que se trata de una obra que no demanda una respuesta ética del espectador, ya que se trata de una pieza que se encuentra “ensimismada” (*absorbed*) en su propio marco estético. El quinto capítulo, “Anti-intentionalism and the Neoliberal Left,” nos señala, desde una lectura minuciosa de *Estrella distante* de Roberto Bolaño, que la especificidad del arte respecto a otras esferas, como la naturaleza o el mercado, radica en la intencionalidad del artista, y, por lo tanto, en el regreso de la interpretación como forma de creación de significados en una obra de arte. Finalmente, en el sexto capítulo “Literary Form Now” Di Stefano encuentra en *Bonsái* de Alejandro Zambra un ejemplo de literatura que escapa al consenso postdictatorial al regresar a la forma literaria como un espacio autónomo a la vida cotidiana, donde otra realidad puede pensarse.

En su libro Di Stefano plantea la pregunta de si es posible un retorno a la autonomía literaria más allá de la nostalgia que anhela el regreso a una *Ciudad Letrada* más mítica que realmente existente. A pesar de las estimulantes conexiones intelectuales que el texto teje entre tradiciones de pensamiento en apariencia disimiles, las conclusiones con las cuales el autor responde a su pregunta resultan parcialmente insatisfactorias. Si para Di Stefano por fin es posible ver en el espejo retrovisor a la postdictadura, la idea de que estamos ante un retorno a una forma artística que sirva a la conformación del sujeto y la acción política más allá de la estructura del mercado se mantienen, al menos por ahora, más como un postulado que como una posibilidad real.

Eljaiek-Rodríguez, Gabriel. *The Migration and Politics of Monsters in Latin American Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 231 pp. ISBN 9783-3199-7249-7

The Migration and Politics of Monsters in Latin American Cinema is an in-depth study of Latin American horror cinema that focuses on contemporary “hybrid horror films,” or films that displace foreign literary and filmic traditions and transform these by resituating them in the Latin America context. The project maps a “new cartography of horror cinema” that traces how Latin American horror directors “confront local situations using an aesthetic and a cinematic language widely recognized by global audiences” (158). Eljaiek-Rodríguez proposes that Latin American horror films rewrite colonial discourses and connect the horror and gothic traditions with present-day discussions of violence, migration, and fear of immigrants. This timely monograph argues that these films serve as “terrifying cautionary tales” of “the resurgence of authoritarianisms and nationalisms” (218). Eljaiek-Rodríguez theorizes the book’s key terms—migration, monsters, and politics—through a postcolonial and postmodern lens that inverts traditional readings of horror conventions as seen in films from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia. The author contends that while these films are the product of “contact zones” (as coined by Mary Louise Pratt), these transnational encounters are not necessarily founded in “coercion and inequality,” but reclaim “monstrosity as a form of historical rewriting,” ultimately illustrating the power of horror to tell narratives that are difficult to articulate in other filmic genres (218).

The book is divided into six chapters, beginning with a historical and theoretical introduction and followed by five chapters of close film analysis, each dedicated to a set of films from a region in Latin America. Each chapter can be read alone, since its accompanying bibliography immediately follows the chapter, making it accessible for undergraduate and graduate courses that focus on country-specific case studies of horror and gothic literary and filmic narratives. While Eljaiek-Rodríguez’s close readings of the films are national and thematic in focus, the methodological approach is transnational since the readings of the films emphasize how the horror cinema of these countries bleeds across national borders. These films are the product of the “migration of tropes” that uses horror politically to represent and interpret the social complexities of the continent, addressing issues of race, class, gender, armed conflict, and dictatorship (18).

Chapter One traces the critical and chronological development of the monstrous in the New World, situating its literary origins in Columbus’s journal entries and letters describing cannibals, which will then be inverted in Latin American horror films. Eljaiek-Rodríguez postulates that this corpus of horror films engages in the Latin American theoretical practices of *hybridization* (García-Canclini), *transculturation* (Rama), and *heterogeneity* (Cornejo Pilar) by reworking colonial encounters through European gothic figures like zombies and vampires (14). Chapter Two focuses on films from the Caribbean that demonstrate the “tropicalization” of the vampire and the zombie figure within national contexts. Films such as Juan Padrón’s *Vampiros en la Habana* refer to recognizable historical moments, such as the Cuban regime and US imperialism adapting the European figure of the vampire to represent the effects of resource extraction. In Puerto Rico, Caribbean *machismo* is evident in the macho ethos of Radamés Sanchez’s *Celestino y el vampiro*. Chapter Three highlights the international impact and influence of Mexican filmmaker Guillermo del Toro, claiming that his global success is due in large part to the director’s knowledge of genre conventions. Del Toro blends horror and fantasy (*The Shape of Water*) and creates recognizable horror figures, from his “monstrous” place as both a Mexican and global

director (69). The book pairs its analyses of the remakes of Carlos Enrique Taboada's tetralogy of horror films with their Mexican originals to argue how Taboada defies genre conventions by using "doubt and ambivalence" and creating "in-between characters" that were emblematic of Mexican films of the 1960s and 1970s, but are lost in their U.S. remakes (100).

Latin American horror films "migrate horrors" and "transform sources rather than create repetitions" to denounce and give voice to social and political injustices that are silenced in other filmic genres (217). Chapter Four explores the adoption of Asian horror themes and styles in Colombian, Peruvian, and Mexican films, such as the figure of the *yūrei*, the vengeful female ghost of J-Horror, who is re-imagined to criticize the systemic silencing of *feminicides* in Ciudad Juárez, as seen in Rigoberto Castañeda's *KM31*, and the hypocrisy and misogyny by the Catholic church on women in Peru, evident in Eduardo Schuldt's *La entidad*. Chapter Five reflects on how filmmakers from Argentina and Chile depict monsters as zombies and slashers, to critique the "political, repressive, and destructive system" of dictatorships and their present-day effects. Similar to the detailed auteurist study of Del Toro and Taboada, Eljaiek-Rodríguez proclaims director Adrián García Bogliano as the "carver of Latin American slasher" films who also uses gore to push the horror subgenre to new limits and to complicate the present-day interpretation of historical events.

The book dialogues with Latin American cinema scholarship, such as the work of Deborah Shaw, Ignacio Sánchez Prado, Dolores Tierney, and Victoria Ruétalo, which engages in current debates of transnational filmmaking, monstrous neoliberalism, and Latsploitation, respectively. Eljaiek-Rodríguez recognizes that his study leaves out many Latin American horror films. Notwithstanding, the project and its methodological approach of contextualizing and pairing Latin American horror films with classic works, places the genre in global and regional discourses, offering future film students and researchers the tools to employ the book's critical and theoretical lens to (re)discover hybrid horror films. In doing so, filmmakers and scholars can use the horror and gothic genres to speak about the present in more complex ways. Eljaiek-Rodríguez's book succeeds in making a case for the ability of Latin American horror to give an effective account of the social and political processes of the continent. It opens the door to scrutinize contemporary political landscapes where discourses of exclusion and exploitation continue to haunt our everyday existence.

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Janzen, Rebecca. *Liminal Sovereignty: Mennonites and Mormons in Mexican Culture*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2018. 254 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-7103-7

Es posible leer *Liminal Sovereignty: Mennonites and Mormons in Mexican Culture* de Rebecca Janzen como un estudio de caso de las secuelas de lo que fue uno de los proyectos ideales del estado mexicano desde Agustín de Iturbide hasta Lázaro Cárdenas: el sueño de la activación productiva del territorio y la población mediante la colonización y la inmigración. Después de todo, los mormones y los menonitas fueron, para el estado mexicano, en primer lugar, colonos. Lo mismo podría decirse de lo que representó el territorio mexicano para estos grupos. Para los mormones y menonitas, antes de su llegada, los territorios de Chihuahua, Sonora y Durango, que luego ocuparían, fueron también, en primer lugar, sólo territorio. De hecho, muchas de las asperezas y tensiones entre los menonitas, los mormones y el estado que estudia Janzen en el

presente trabajo fueron el resultado precisamente de este proceso mutuo de abstracción y desparticularización. Para explorar estas disyuntivas, *Liminal Sovereignty* recorre en sus capítulos una serie de “interacciones” entre los proyectos integracionistas del estado y la cultura mexicana, y la negociación de grupos menonitas y mormones que insistían en su propia separación.

La existencia excepcional de estas comunidades que se ciñen a su alteridad comunitaria les garantizó un lugar complejo en el imaginario cultural mexicano. Para adentrarse en este imaginario, el primer capítulo estudia cómo los recién llegados menonitas y mormones a principios del siglo XX fueron conceptualizados racialmente, y cómo se relacionaron a las teorías de mestizaje. Más específicamente, se enfoca en la representación de ambos grupos en documentos migratorios entre 1926 y 1959. Para Janzen, los documentos producidos por oficiales anónimos ofrecen un vistazo a las maneras en las que el estado interactuaba “on the ground” con los sujetos y explora la inscripción de estos sujetos en las estadísticas estatales.

Sin embargo, como señala Janzen, el proyecto del estado “mestizo” no sólo enfatizaba el aspecto racial, sino además la constitución identitaria mediante la educación. Si, por un lado, el énfasis racial presentó un obstáculo en ocasiones para la integración de los grupos estudiados, lo mismo sucedió, por el otro, con relación al interés tanto del estado mexicano como de los grupos mormones y menonitas de regir la educación de sus miembros. Un ejemplo revelador de estas tensiones y su resolución es la visita de un funcionario de una colonia menonita en Chihuahua en mayo de 1935. Tras recorrer sus instalaciones, el funcionario ordenó a que se cerraran todas las escuelas ya que no cumplían con los requisitos legales de una educación secular. Como respuesta, algunos líderes menonitas consiguieron una audiencia con el presidente de entonces Lázaro Cárdenas. Luego de escucharlos, Cárdenas le escribió al gobernador del estado, y ordenó que se les eximiera de tales requisitos puesto que los menonitas eran “un importante factor [en] el desenvolvimiento económico de ese Estado...” (10). Para Janzen, esta exención no sólo prueba la excepcionalidad del lugar de estas comunidades en el aparato legal y político mexicano, sino que muestra además los privilegios que se le extendieron; privilegios que no estuvieron disponibles para comunidades campesinas o ejidatarios.

Los siguientes dos capítulos, enfocados en las experiencias mormona y menonita respectivamente, abordan cómo se desplegó esta excepcionalidad con relación a los proyectos agrarios posrevolucionarios. Específicamente, estudian los litigios en los que las colonias de estos grupos se enfrentaron tanto a ejidos existentes o a ejidos prospectivos, y las maneras en las que los documentos relacionados representaban el lugar de los menonitas y los mormones vis-à-vis la nación. A través de una serie de enfrentamientos particulares, Janzen explora instancias en las que se evidencia el despliegue de una retórica excluyente que presentaba a los mormones y menonitas como extranjeros que se enfrentaban a campesinos que recién habían vivido la experiencia de la revolución. También mira otros momentos en los que el gobierno recurrió a una retórica incluyente contraria y así privilegió a los menonitas por su poder y potencial económico, por encima de los ejidatarios.

Si los primeros tres capítulos se encargan de la relación entre el estado y los grupos particulares, los capítulos 4 y 5 se enfocan en la relación entre la cultura mexicana y estos grupos. El cuarto capítulo se enfoca en la manera en la que estos grupos han sido integrados al imaginario cultural criminal y narco que prolifera en la producción cultural del siglo XXI. Con este fin explora el *webcomic Macburro* (2013-15), y las series televisivas *The Bridge* (2012-13), *Los héroes del norte* (2010-15) y una historia narrativa de un secuestro en una comunidad mormona, *Los güeros del norte* (2010). Uno de los argumentos mayores de Janzen es que estos textos muestran cómo la violencia y los imaginarios de la violencia han terminado integrando a los menonitas y los

mormones de manera más efectiva que cualquier narrativa nacional o proyecto estatal anterior. Finalmente, el quinto y último capítulo reflexiona sobre el presente y mira cómo obras del siglo XXI desarrollan ideas de comprensión mutua y empatía mediante consideraciones sobre la tecnología, el amor, y la muerte en las comunidades menonitas. En específico, mira la serie fotográfica *Las mujeres flores* (2011) de Eunice Adorno y el filme *Stellet Licht* (2007) de Carlos Reygadas y explora las zonas de contacto entre estos grupos y las comunidades que los rodean. De cierto modo, este último capítulo resume el proyecto general del libro: la descripción y el análisis de las zonas de contacto entre el estado o artistas y las comunidades mormonas y menonitas del norte de México. Para Janzen, aunque ambos grupos aboguen por su separación, y aunque ocupen el lugar de un “otro” doméstico en el imaginario cultural, a través de las décadas han logrado enraizarse en la cultura que los rodea.

Liminal Sovereignty estudia un fenómeno clave en la cultura mexicana para entender el funcionamiento del estado del México posrevolucionario. El proyecto se hubiera beneficiado de una teorización más cuidadosa sobre el estado en sí mismo, al igual que un desarrollo más detenido del concepto titular—la soberanía liminal—, el cual pasa por desapercibido a través de los capítulos. Eso dicho, se trata de un libro que contribuye tanto a los estudios culturales latinoamericanos en general, como al estudio del desarrollo de la cultura mexicana de los siglos XX y XXI. También figura como un texto de interés para cualquier estudio comparativo de las minorías religiosas o culturales en Latinoamérica y su relación con el estado y la nación.

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Ros, Ofelia. *Lo siniestro se sigue riendo en la literatura de Lamborghini, Aira y Carrera, y en la producción cultural poscrisis 2001*. Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, Universidad de Pittsburgh, 2016. 208 pp. ISBN 9781-9307-4471-4

El libro *Lo siniestro se sigue riendo en la literatura de Lamborghini, Aira y Carrera, y en la producción cultural poscrisis* se enmarca en una crisis económica devastadora para el pueblo argentino, en el año 2001. Pese a haber sido un momento histórico caótico y difícil de recordar por las repercusiones sociales que tuvo, Ofelia Ros nos muestra, a partir de la obra de los escritores: Osvaldo Lamborghini, César Aira y Arturo Carrera, cómo lo sucedido durante este periodo fue el sustrato para la creación de una parte de sus obras (cuentos, novelas y poemas). Ros propone una lectura de dichas obras a través del concepto de “lo siniestro” de Sigmund Freud, el cual pone en evidencia diferentes anomalías en el comportamiento, propias de la cultura argentina, y que han sido naturalizadas y por tanto son difíciles de percibir. Algunos de los recursos utilizados por los escritores, según Ros, son el ridículo, el chiste y la percepción infantil sobre la relación con el dinero.

Ros señala la estrecha relación que existe entre lo siniestro, la infancia y la comicidad. La verdad oculta, camuflada de manera inocente o irónica, sale a la luz; en algunas ocasiones a hacerse muy visible y en otras a incomodar al punto de posibilitar el encuentro entre el lector y las dinámicas naturalizadas, invisibilizadas en la cotidianidad. Así como en el cuento de Lamborghini, “La causa justa”, el escenario se invierte y son los espectadores quienes quedan expuestos.

Ante una situación que desestabiliza la armonía, el status quo, la definición “inquebrantable” de las clases sociales el pueblo deviene en espectador, un espectador que opina muchas veces desde la ironía, el chiste es la forma popular en la que se construye otra cara de la

historia, una historia mínima de relatos de la cotidianidad. En estas narraciones quedan expuestos los criterios de valoración de una nación entera, poniendo de manifiesto la xenofobia, el autoritarismo, el racismo, el machismo y la homofobia, de una manera aparentemente ingenua aunque en realidad la ironía presente en dichos enunciados se manifiesta como un no querer decir o un decir camuflado que subraya ciertas verdades intrínsecas las cuales definen las coordenadas subjetivas de todo un pueblo.

Lo siniestro se sigue riendo permite hacer un análisis de las sociedades latinoamericanas, en las cuales la pobreza siempre ha existido, claro está, para un sector social determinado e invisibilizado en las grandes urbes. Le llamamos crisis a lo que pone en riesgo a las clases dominantes y privilegiadas. Por esa razón, el análisis que ofrece Ros, sobre la manera en la que comprendemos el mundo y a las relaciones sociales mediadas siempre por el valor de cambio, que establece directamente un vínculo inquebrantable con el lenguaje, es sumamente pertinente.

La autora analiza la forma en la que se establece una semejanza entre lo siniestro y ese proceso de cambio en el dinero, ante la devaluación del mismo. Ver cómo los bienes y servicios de un país pierden valor de cambio implica una desestabilización de la percepción del mundo conocido, ese extrañamiento deviene siniestro. El humor y el refrán hacen presente una verdad oculta, esa verdad es el conocimiento popular acerca de las formas de dominación en los roles sociales, afirma Ros que más que la consabida expresión de Marx que reza “ellos no saben lo que hacen pero lo hacen”, lo que tenemos en nuestras sociedades son cínicos, que no solo saben perfectamente lo que hacen y aun así lo hacen, sino que además de eso, lo camuflan en la ironía.

En esta investigación la risa tiene una doble función: en la primera, se toma el chiste, el refrán, el dicho, la frase popular como objeto de análisis para descubrir cómo se relacionan éstas con los cimientos de las perversiones de una sociedad. En la segunda, la risa es un método emancipatorio, el pretexto para producir lo siniestro, para crear incomodidad y extrañamiento. Con la risa se hace patente lo que estuvo latente; sale a la luz, junto al chiste, el malestar de una época, las enfermedades de la cultura. En este último sentido la risa como lo dice Ros “es una forma de resistencia ante el cinismo” (Ros 11). En la obra de los autores trabajados los portadores de esta misión son payasos, títeres, niños y cartoneros; los ingenuos, los que incomodan y los invisibles.

Ante la crisis se quema el dinero en público, es un espectáculo. Así como en la novela *Plata quemada* (1997) de Ricardo Piglia las buenas costumbres, la moral, el buen comportamiento, se relacionan directamente con la manera en la que se sostiene el status quo del capitalismo, de una forma brutal, enseñando a los niños enseñando a los niños a acumular desde pequeños. Ante la pérdida del valor de cambio quedan al descubierto otras formas de vida como la del cartonero o reciclador. La realidad resulta más fantástica que la literatura. Los anteriores empresarios y profesionales de la acomodada clase media argentina se transforman en cartoneros, convirtiéndose, además, en las musas de los artistas del siglo XX.

Dadas las circunstancias Ros presenta uno de los proyectos culturales que nacen en medio de esa mutación social. Eloísa Cartonera es una editorial para grandes escritores, artistas, vecinos y recicladores. Están todos invitados a deconstruir las relaciones de poder en un sistema de producción artístico que no está mediado por intereses económicos y que quedarán como un monumento de aquella historia en la que Argentina se convirtió en un basurero gigante de desempleados que encontraron oficio organizando su propia basura y su caos.

Tal y como señala la autora al final del libro, la violencia de estos últimos dos siglos en América Latina ha consistido en dejar morir de hambre y de enfermedades curables a un alto número de la población de estos países. Por esta razón celebro la publicación de una obra como

esta. Ojalá que lo siniestro se siga riendo para que salga a la luz la crisis profunda, la crisis de la cultura, permitiendo a los cínicos mirar sus deformidades frente al espejo.

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Ruffato, Luiz. *Minha primeira vez*. Porto Alegre: Arquipélago Editorial, 2014. 218 pp. ISBN 856-017-165-7

Minha primeira vez é uma coletânea de crônicas sobre o tema das origens: o primeiro encontro com os livros, o primeiro desafio laboral e outras experiências de novos começos na trajetória do celebrado escritor brasileiro contemporâneo Luiz Ruffato. O escritor propõe uma antologia de textos previamente publicados em *El país*, *África 21* e outros diários. Como ele nos informa numa “Nota,” trata-se de crônicas (“por força de nomenclatura” 7) parcialmente reescritas para a publicação em formato de livro. Colecionando pedras miúdas – encontros, desvios, acidentes – que constituem o seu caminho de Cataguases (Minas Gerais) para São Paulo, Ruffato acompanha a sua emancipação do trabalho manual (sempre apresentado com dignidade) para o mundo do jornalismo e da escrita literária. Nesta coleção de quarenta e três crônicas, lemos “histórias de gente sem nome e sem rosto” (12), reconhecemos os esforços de uma classe trabalhadora de emigrantes descrita sem idealizações, e visitamos o Brasil desmemoriado e excludente de ontem e de hoje. Embora o princípio ordenador das crônicas pareça no início questionável—a simples ordem alfabética (7)—a “aleatoriedade” da sequência temporal acaba também reforçando a ideia de uma perenidade dos problemas, dos vícios e das alegrias na história do país. O Brasil e sua “débil democracia” (133); a ameaça do desemprego e da pobreza do emigrante, do marginal, do “outro;” a miragem da grande cidade como espaço renovador de possibilidades; a indiferença e o desconhecimento entre cidadãos (tema retomado na entrevista a seguir); a violência doméstica. Mas também: o patrimônio cultural e literário do Brasil; o entusiasmo nos atos de ativismo local; o sentido de humor e o efêmero “espírito da Copa” que dá o título a um dos textos.

Uma palavra chave para entender o universo da crônica de Ruffato é certamente “resistência.” O autor destaca episódios em que cidadãos desprovidos de grandes recursos econômicos mas animados por uma flamejante curiosidade intelectual conseguiram organizar eventos culturais, tertúlias, estratégias de oposição contra a ditadura militar. Em “Aos cétricos” Ruffato conta a história da criação da cooperativa “Bar do Zé Batidão” na periferia de São Paulo, um lugar de socialização, *spoken poetry*, diversão e intervenção ideado pelo poeta Sergio Vaz; em “Elogio da amizade,” acompanhamos as atividades de um grupo de jovens poetas de Juiz de Fora em 1979; em “Entre nós” conhecemos L., estudante universitária animada pela *joie de vivre*, feminista engajada dos anos oitenta, e vítima de abuso sexual. Não se trata, porém, de uma galeria de heróis isolados. Ruffato nunca perde de vista a ressonância coletiva dos gestos individuais. É sempre a resposta de um grupo—a capacidade de uma ideia para se irradiar e contagiar—que determina (ou determinaria em potência) as mudanças de uma sociedade. A cooperativa, os saraus poéticos, os grupos engajados se configuram então como exemplos concretos, evocados nostalgicamente, de uma possibilidade de renascença política e social que Ruffato deseja para o Brasil, apesar dos sentimentos anti-comunitários muito fortes que bloqueiam os seus cidadãos.

Existe uma sólida coerência temática entre as crônicas e os romances de Ruffato.

Por exemplo, os trabalhadores rurais e urbanos das crônicas lembram o protagonista do romance epistolar *De mim já nem se lembra* (2007; recentemente traduzido para o inglês por Marguerite Itamar Harrison com o título de *Unremembering Me*, Tagus Press, 2019). Neste romance, parcialmente inspirado pela história familiar de Ruffato, José Célio, moço mineiro à procura de um futuro melhor em São Paulo, descobre a luta pela sobrevivência dos operários nas grandes engrenagens duma cidade hostil, onde a ideia de comunidade parece ainda mais inalcançável.

O aprendizado do José Célio se dá através da experiência da solidão, do ritmo incessante do trabalho e da descoberta da lei do mais forte. Numa carta para a mãe, José Célio escreve: “Eu sei o quanto é importante a gente ter uma bola só nossa, porque impõe respeito e nesse mundo só vence quem impõe respeito nos outro.” (*De mim já nem se lembra* [56]. São Paulo: Companhia das letras, 2016 nova edição). Em *Minha primeira vez*, os temas econômicos, o emprego ocasional, a angústia do desemprego e do fracasso existencial, a loteria do acaso na vida do autor e de outros personagens, atravessam a coletânea, intervalados por reflexões literárias, episódios humorísticos e *fait divers*.

De particular interesse me parecem as três crônicas “Bola perdida,” “Q. está morrendo,” e “Somos gelo desprendido de um iceberg” onde o autor trata do tema da mortalidade. O primeiro texto poderia ser lido juntamente com o conto “Mineirinho” de Clarice Lispector. Um menino de rua “filho de pai alcoólatra e mãe usurária de crack” (45) que sonha em se tornar jogador profissional de futebol é morto “com cinco tiros—dois na cabeça e três nas costas” (45) em Fortaleza. O evento sugere a Ruffato uma reflexão sobre a condição das crianças pobres no Brasil e sobre as mãos armadas, muitas vezes não identificadas, responsáveis pelos massacres. “Q. está morrendo” e “Somos gelo desprendido de um iceberg” descrevem as etapas de aprendizado do autor através das perdas mais importantes na vida dele.

De ágil leitura, as crônicas de *Minha primeira vez* são uma leitura aconselhada para quem tenha já alguma familiaridade com a obra romanesca de Luiz Ruffato, para entender os aspetos *à clef* da narrativa de Ruffato, mas sobretudo para melhor apreciar a relevância que o tema da “comunidade desejada” ocupa em toda a sua produção.

Elogio do realismo: um encontro com Luiz Ruffato

Luiz Ruffato respondeu a algumas perguntas durante a sua visita ao Departamento de Línguas Modernas da Florida International University (Miami) no outono de 2018. Ruffato dialogou com meus estudantes de português e comigo algumas semanas antes das últimas eleições presidenciais do Brasil. Nesta entrevista—que mantém claras marcas de oralidade—Ruffato partilha as suas ideias sobre literatura, realismo, a situação cultural e política do Brasil, e conta um apólogo sobre o “arrancar de olhos” que a sociedade brasileira decidiu praticar.

Nicola Gavioli: No seu blog ‘Lendo os clássicos,’ numa resenha sobre o romance *O Jardim dos Finzi-Contini* (1962) do escritor italiano Giorgio Bassani, você escreveu “Certa vez ouvi, de um sujeito que se dizia escritor, que a trama de qualquer livro poderia ser condensada nos 140 caracteres de um Twitter. Eu respondi a ele que sim, talvez a trama de um volume medíocre... O

grande livro, para mim, é exatamente aquele não conseguimos resumir, de maneira alguma...”¹
Luiz, você poderia explicar mais a sua ideia de literatura?

Luiz Ruffato: É sempre problemático usar esses termos de “boa” ou “má” literatura mas, enfim, vamos usar esses termos, provisoriamente. Eu acho que a boa literatura é aquela que permite as mais variadas camadas de leitura. Quanto mais camadas de leituras tiver, melhor. Essas camadas se dão porque literatura é transcendência e transcendência se dá pela linguagem. Quanto mais rasa é a leitura do mundo que o escritor faz no livro, menos possibilidades de leitura serão possíveis ao leitor. Talvez você possa resumir um best-seller nesses 140 caracteres. Mas *O Jardim dos Finzi-Contini*? Ele é um livro sobre o fascismo? Sim, é. É um livro sobre a cegueira da burguesia em relação ao papel que ela exerce no mundo contemporâneo? Também é. Ele é uma história de amor? Uma história dos judeus de Ferrara? Também. Ou seja, existem inúmeras possibilidades que você não consegue resumir facilmente. Passa por aí a minha percepção do fazer literário e do tipo de livro que eu gosto de ler. Aquele livro que que você poder ler uma vez, duas vezes, três vezes, sempre com resultados diferentes. Mudou o livro? Não, ele é sempre o mesmo, mudou você, na verdade.

NG: Em *O Jardim dos Finzi-Contini* e no romance breve *Os óculos de ouro* (1958), Giorgio Bassani descreve o progressivo disseminar-se na sociedade italiana de ideias fascistas e discriminatórias no final da década de trinta (as leis raciais contra os judeus são de 1938). Mutatis mutandis, em anos recentes, o debate sobre a atualidade e a persistência de uma ideologia ou de um método “fascista” reapareceu em vários países, no Brasil, na Itália, nos Estados Unidos, entre outros. As extremas-direitas voltaram a ter um papel perigosamente preponderante em várias sociedades do mundo. No meio dos fatores, está a evidente pobreza de capacidade crítica de multidões de eleitores e o ressentimento contra vários “outros.” Esses fatores forneceram terreno favorável para o surgimento de líderes oportunistas e sem escrúpulos, nostálgicos de autoritarismo. Discute-se também da responsabilidade dos intelectuais. Considerando o caso do Brasil, será que nessas últimas décadas faltou um maior engajamento com a sociedade por parte de educadores, professores de literatura, escritores? A impressão é que hoje em dia o trabalho de um escritor seja muito solitário, muito ligado a prêmios literários, à visão de uma carreira literária e que se perdeu talvez um contato mais profundo com a sociedade. Então me pergunto se você observa essa responsabilidade, sobretudo em relação à formação dos jovens.

LR: Talvez fosse leviano se eu falasse de uma maneira generalizada mas do Brasil especificamente eu posso dizer. Essa é uma questão muito complexa. Vou tentar resumir alguns princípios de reflexão. Primeiro, a sociedade brasileira é uma sociedade de não leitores. Ela sempre o foi. Basta lembrar que enquanto a América Hispânica tinha universidades desde o século dezesseis, a nossa primeira universidade foi em 1930. São quatrocentos anos de atraso em relação à América Hispânica, imagine em relação à Europa e aos Estados Unidos. Segundo: a nossa burguesia. Em vários países, a burguesia teve um papel importante de disseminação do conhecimento, da cultura, da civilização. Mas não no Brasil. A burguesia brasileira sempre esteve muito vocacionada para a exploração econômica. Ela nunca se ocupou realmente do progresso civilizacional da sociedade. O terceiro ponto é que a elite política brasileira (que se confunde com a elite cultural e intelectual, mas não necessariamente) nunca esteve compromissada com a formação de uma educação de qualidade para a população. O governo de Getúlio Vargas criou algum centro de ensino técnico,

¹ Tirado do blog de resenhas literárias de Luiz Ruffato://lendoosclassicosluizruffato.blogspot.com/2018/05/o-jardim-dos-finzi-contini-1962-giorgio.html (último acesso: dia 13 de abril 2019).

uma coisa muito específica para atender uma demanda muito específica. Mais tarde, durante a ditadura militar, destrói-se o sistema público de ensino do Brasil. Intencionalmente. Tenta-se retomar essa questão com o governo PT mas acho que erros crassos foram feitos. O primeiro deles foi não criar o mais necessário: uma educação de qualidade para o ensino básico. O PT sempre apostou no ensino superior. Esses aspetos todos aliados ao fato que o Brasil é um país, não é uma nação. Não há por isso uma convergência de interesses. Os interesses são pontuais e muitas vezes classistas. Não são interesses comuns. Existe uma certa cunha entre a produção intelectual e a sociedade. E basta lembrar que os intelectuais são oriundos de classe média, médio-alta. Juntando tudo isso e mais uma série de outros fatores explica-se a nossa situação atual.

NG: Na coluna ‘Os conceitos que nos faltam’² o sociólogo português Boaventura de Sousa Santos escreveu: “[...] os grupos dominados nunca se sentiram tão derrotados quanto hoje, as exclusões abissais de que são vítimas parecem mais permanentes do que nunca, as suas reivindicações e lutas mais moderadas e defensivas são silenciadas, trivializadas pela política do espetáculo e pelo espetáculo da política, quando não envolvem riscos potencialmente fatais.” Sousa Santos continua: “Lutam com os conceitos e as armas que têm mas, no fundo, não confiam nem nuns nem noutras. Suspeitam que enquanto não tiverem confiança para criar outros conceitos e inventar outras lutas correrão sempre o risco de serem inimigos de si mesmos” (30). O professor Boaventura menciona de como hoje até se chega a colocar em dúvida a própria diferença entre “esquerda” e “direita.” Até o próprio conceito de democracia deveria ser “repensado,” segundo muitos. A literatura tem algum papel na defesa desses conceitos e na luta contra o niilismo?

LR: Acho que a literatura tem uma participação fundamental, pensando na literatura no sentido do ‘fazer literário’ e considerando o ‘fazer político’ que advém do fazer literário. A literatura sempre foi o espaço da liberdade, ou seja o espaço da subversão. A liberdade é subversiva, sempre. Para mim, o fascismo sempre representou uma forma sem conteúdo. Hoje nós assistimos exatamente a isso: forma sem conteúdo. As palavras perderam o sentido. Falar que não existe diferença entre esquerda e direita significa esvaziar o conteúdo de esquerda e de direita. Falar que a democracia teria que ser repensada é esvaziar o conceito de democracia. Eu acho que o papel da literatura é de sempre estar questionando esses valores mas dentro de uma tradição, de um conteúdo. Isso vai também contra o niilismo. O que que o niilismo faz? Os niilistas, para combater a tradição, caem num vazio. Quando na verdade a tradição só pode ser combatida a partir da ruptura. Você não rompe a partir do nada, mas a partir de alguma coisa pré-existente. A literatura é um exercício contínuo de diálogo com a tradição para que você consiga a ruptura da tradição. Quando você faz isso, está contribuindo de uma maneira radical com a construção de uma sociedade democrática, com o combate contra os totalitarismos, as injustiças. Com isso não estou falando do “engajamento” da literatura. Eu abomino a literatura engajada por que ela também está prestando um desserviço.

NG: A figura do escritor subversivo, atento às dinâmicas da sociedade e dotado de grande espírito crítico, é representada muito bem por Pier Paolo Pasolini. Não é por acaso que menciono Pasolini. O crítico italiano Goffredo Fofi comparou numa resenha o seu romance *Estive em Lisboa e lembrei de você* ao *Ragazzi di vita* do Pasolini: “Questa lettura”—argumenta Fofi—“ci rinvia a un’epoca lontana dell’Italia e delle nostre lettere. Ad anni in cui le ‘storie di vita’ erano cercate e proposte da grandi autori e c’erano storie italiane picare e forti vissute da un popolo povero e avventuroso

² Boaventura de Sousa Santos. “Os conceitos que nos faltam.” *Jornal de letras, artes e ideias*. n. 1248. 30.

per necessità.”³ Parece-me uma comparação discutível mas interessante. A luta contra a mediocridade foi uma constante da atividade de Pasolini. O desaparecimento de um povo “povero e avventuroso” e o aburguesamento geral da sociedade italiana contribuíram, para Pasolini, à mediocridade. Como você vê essa comparação?

LR: Para mim é honrosíssimo. Na verdade, uma das questões que me incomodam muito é que a sociedade brasileira como um todo também fez uma opção clara pela mediocridade, pelo “mediano.” Optámos por não fazer absolutamente nada que radicalizasse as nossas posições. Tudo é mediano, medíocre. Por exemplo, quando eu era criança, ouvia a única rádio da minha cidade. De manhã bem cedinho, antes que os trabalhadores fossem para a fábrica, ela tinha uma programação sertaneja, caipira, por que essas pessoas geralmente vinham do campo. Tratava-se de pessoas que tinham imigrado para a cidade mas que ainda tinham uma cultura do campo. Quando eles estavam na fábrica, faziam uma programação para donas de casa, para quem fazia o almoço e cuidava das crianças. Nessas horas, a rádio tinha uma programação de música romântica, brega. Na hora do almoço, quando os trabalhadores voltavam para casa e a família se reunia, era o tempo das notícias. Depois, para os jovens que ficavam em casa depois da escola a programação era “jovem:” música popular brasileira e pop internacional. No finalzinho da noite, quando todos se preparavam para dormir, a programação era nostálgica, músicas da década de cinquenta. Ou seja, se abriu mão à quebra de expectativas que faz uma sociedade caminhar para a frente. Ao longo do tempo, como a população brasileira foi se tornando eminentemente urbana, imaginei que também chegasse a privilegiar a música “urbana.” Mas aconteceu o fenômeno contrário. O que hoje você escuta em quase a unanimidades das rádios brasileiras é música sertaneja. Aquela música que decorre da música rural passou a ser a música da burguesia brasileira. De um mau gosto incrível. *Funk*, música homofóbica, misógina, de ostentação, de exaltação do crime, da droga. Música evangélica. Nós fizemos opção muito clara por essa mediocridade. Na literatura e nas artes de uma maneira geral acontece a mesma coisa. Essa opção é que me assusta. Mediocridade também política: aí está o Jair Bolsonaro. Portanto, eu acho que em algum momento da nossa história bem próxima essas coisas todas convergiram para uma espécie de letargia da sociedade. Uma sociedade que não escuta, não vê, está hipnotizada pela sua própria mediocridade.

NG: Você mencionou a sua admiração pelo monólogo-canção “Qualcuno era comunista” (Alguém era comunista) do músico e compositor italiano Giorgio Gaber (1939-2003). Nesse monólogo inserido no álbum “Il teatro canzone” (1992), Gaber apresenta um elenco das razões –ideológicas, existenciais, viscerais ou meramente ocasionais – que motivaram a adesão ao comunismo numa geração italiana do pós-guerra. O texto oscila entre um tom irônico ou até sarcástico e um sentimento de nostalgia. O monólogo termina com a imagem de um ser humano cansado, dividido, frustrado: “E ora? Anche ora, ci si sente come in due. Da una parte l'uomo inserito che attraversa ossequiosamente lo squallore della propria sopravvivenza quotidiana e dall'altra, il gabbiano senza più neanche l'intenzione del volo, perché ormai il sogno si è rattrappito. Due miserie in un corpo solo.” Luiz, você poderia explicitar por que você achou impactante este monólogo?

LR: Creio que, de alguma forma, ele resume o sentimento de parte da esquerda ideológica hoje. Enfraquecida a utopia de construção de um mundo mais justo, igualitário e tolerante, ficamos sem um discurso alternativo ao avassalador crescimento de movimentos ideológicos reacionários, desde os ultraliberais até os nazi-fascistas, passando pelo fundamentalismo religioso e pelo

³ Goffredo Fofi. “Scritto e orale.” *Internazionale*. 5 maio 2011.

<https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/goffredo-fofi/2011/05/05/scritto-e-orale>. (último acesso: 13 abril 2019).

ultraconservadorismo de costumes. No entanto, não devemos nos deixar paralisar pela impotência e pela nostalgia, mas sim tentar encontrar um caminho viável para contrapor à barbárie, com um olhar humanístico.

NG: Em seu ciclo romanesco em cinco volumes “Inferno provisório” você descreve gerações de “desenraizados.” Se houvesse um sexto romance deste ciclo focado no mundo de hoje qual seria o papel da tecnologia? Você descreveria a tecnologia como mais um instrumento de “desenraizamento” da população? É indubitável que a tecnologia exerça uma sedução, que tira energias às pessoas, por exemplo energia ao ativismo que fica encapsulado em algumas frases “gritadas” no Facebook...

LR: Tudo pode ser trazido para o positivo ou o negativo. Nada em si é mau ou bom. É o uso que se faz. O Brasil era um país eminentemente analfabeto na década de cinquenta. Quando veio a ditadura militar, os militares tiveram a ideia de interligar o país por razões de segurança nacional. Naquele momento estava nascendo com muita força a televisão. Eles perceberam que a televisão ia fazer a unificação nacional. Os militares fizeram um investimento forte na TV Globo, a rede de união de todos os brasileiros. Nós passamos então de uma civilização eminentemente oral para uma visual, sem passar pela civilização da escrita. Como consequência, a nossa relação com a tecnologia é de ignorância. As pessoas no Brasil usam o i-phone para ficarem sozinhas. Têm milhares de seguidores no Instagram. Esse instrumento não as torna mais bem informadas ou sociáveis. Muito pelo contrário. Todo mundo achou que o acesso a tecnologia ia democratizar a informação mas isso não aconteceu. O ponto é que há uma diferença entre acesso à informação e acesso à informação de qualidade. Você pode avaliar isso se tiver uma educação de qualidade. Sempre achei ridículo quando o próprio governo PT dizia que seu grande trabalho era obter que cada criança tivesse um tablet. Para mim o melhor seria que cada criança no Brasil tivesse professores de qualidade, bem remunerados e com um quadro na frente deles. Essa sim seria uma revolução. O tablet não é nada.

NG: A inteligência artificial é outra possível ameaça que nos espera. O desemprego virá também daí.

LR: O Brasil é um país cruel. Vou te dar o exemplo dos ônibus de São Paulo. Noventa por cento da população de São Paulo tem um cartão magnético para usar no transporte público. Quando você entra num ônibus em São Paulo, encosta o cartão e passa a catraca. Mas continua existindo um trocador. Por quê? Porque o sindicato conseguiu que ele fosse mantido lá. Do ponto de vista da manutenção do emprego, é importante, mas trata-se de uma situação humilhante. Nós temos uma relação com o trabalho muito curiosa. O trabalho não é dignificante. O grande sonho do brasileiro é nunca mais trabalhar e vir morar em Miami! Isso vem de longe. Quando o Brasil começou a ser colonizado tinha uma aristocracia branca que escravizava os índios e depois os africanos no trabalho. O trabalho sempre ficou, no imaginário do brasileiro, como uma coisa inferior.

NG: Com tanto tempo livre o que fariam os brasileiros?

LR: Ficariam no Facebook! Nós temos muitos passos a dar. Do que a gente fala não é mais “proletariado” mas de “preariado.” Temos um desemprego de doze por cento, computando só quem continua efetivamente buscando um emprego, não quem já desistiu de encontrar.

NG: Vivemos hoje num momento de opacidade de direção em sentido não só político mas filosófico e ético também. Contrariamente ao que seria lógico esperar, nem todos estão preocupados por isso. Existe um aspecto que precisa ser destacado. Queria lembrar brevemente a figura de Liliana Segre, sobrevivente italiana de Auschwitz. A senhora Segre deu um contributo fundamental para a transmissão da memória da Shoah, visitando escolas e oferecendo inúmeras

palestras públicas na Itália. Faz alguns anos em Milão construiu-se um memorial⁴ dedicado às vítimas dos campos de concentração nazistas. As autoridades pediram para a senhora Segre escolher apenas uma palavra que pudesse resumir a experiência da deportação. A ideia era colocar essa palavra numa parede do memorial, gigantesca. Ela escolheu a palavra “Indifferenza”. Essa palavra poderia ser colocada num edifício de São Paulo ou numa imaginária parede do Brasil?

LR: A palavra é perfeita. Pense no recorte de homicídios no Brasil. Por que que isso não causa comoção na sociedade? Não causa porque o homicídio é sempre “distante.” Só quando algo atinge de perto é que comove. Esse é outro fator que explica o surgimento do Jair Bolsonaro. É comum ouvir conversas como “O Bolsonaro é racista? Ah, mas eu sou branco, então isso não é problema meu. Ele é homofóbico? Ah, mas ninguém em casa é gay.” Essa indiferença é patética.

NG: Você fica surpreso que 90 % dos brasileiros residentes em Miami tenha votado em favor de Bolsonaro?

LR: Não. O que me surpreende é que, no primeiro turno, 47 % dos eleitores no Brasil esteja com ele. O recorte na Florida é muito específico. Quem está em Miami em grande parte são pessoas da burguesia brasileira que em algum momento tiveram dinheiro suficiente para sair do país, incomodados com a falta de segurança. Muitos têm uma visão do Brasil a partir da “Casa Grande.” O 47% me surpreende mais: essa massa representa a totalidade das classes sociais, das etnias, dos gêneros. É isso o que eu não compreendo. Como é possível que homossexuais, mulheres, pessoas pobres desprezadas pelo discurso do Bolsonaro votem nele? É quase incompreensível.

NG: Em seu texto “Bolsonaro: o nosso monstro particular,⁵” você sintetiza a trajetória de Jair Bolsonaro, sublinhando o oportunismo, a paranoia anti-comunista e a truculência desde os anos da adolescência dele. Em particular queria destacar esta frase: “Talvez a característica mais evidente—e que melhor explique as ideias de Bolsonaro—seja o seu profundo ressentimento, algo que parece guiá-lo em todas as atitudes, uma espécie de desforra contra a sociedade por sua mediocridade, o que o identifica ainda mais ao ‘homem comum.’” Você poderia falar mais sobre esse “ressentimento” do “homem comum” encarnado por Bolsonaro?

LR: Quando digo “homem comum” estou pensando naquele homem comum que nasce das reflexões de Hannah Arendt em seu magnífico ensaio sobre o holocausto. O assustador é isso: não são grandes lideranças, que detêm um saber ou uma ideia, que alimentam o novo fascismo que toma conta do mundo, mas justamente as pessoas medianas - medíocres -, com pensamentos rasos e gostos duvidosos. O homem comum não pensa, ou melhor, pensa simplificarmente. Nesse sentido, infelizmente, a ultradireita compreendeu muito melhor e mais rápido o poder das redes sociais para divulgar suas ideias. Sem qualquer tipo de filtro, tudo que percorre as redes sociais é dado como verdade - uma mentira repetida mil vezes torna-se a verdade...

NG: Uma categoria crítica adotada com frequência para descrever o seu trabalho é “realismo.” É uma categoria válida? O romancista e crítico italiano Walter Siti oferece num pequeno livro (‘Il realismo è l’impossibile,’ 2013) uma definição surpreendente de “realismo.” Para Siti, o realismo literário seria sobretudo a recriação daquele efeito de “imprevisto” presente no nosso cotidiano. Para explicar melhor a sua ideia, Siti refere uma anedota encontrada numa biografia de Charles Dickens escrita por Chesterton. Dentro de uma cafeteria Dickens reparou nas enigmáticas palavras ‘moor eeffoc’ escritas na porta principal do local. Depois de um instante de perplexidade se deu

⁴ Trata-se do “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano.” A página oficial do memorial é: <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/home-page/>

⁵ O texto de Ruffato foi publicado em tradução italiana no livro *Strongmen* (Nottetempo 2019).

conta que essas palavras correspondiam simplesmente à escrita “coffe room” lidas por ele ao contrário (7). Houve um momento de incompreensão da realidade. “Il realismo, per come la vedo io, è l’anti-abitudine: è il leggero strappo, il particolare inaspettato, che apre uno squarcio nella nostra stereotipia mentale” (9). Segundo Siti, o texto realista apresenta aquela surpresa que é parte integrante da nossa experiência do mundo.

LR: Gosto muito da ideia de realismo, não gosto de naturalismo. Eu não anoto absolutamente nada para escrever. Eu estava em São João do Rei num fim-de-semana para participar de um evento. O organizador falou que ia ter também uma representação teatral de um grupo local naquele dia, um espetáculo baseado no livro *Lendas são-joanenses* da década de vinte. Eu fui lá ver. O que me chamou a atenção foi essa estória: a protagonista é uma mulher chamada Chica Mal-Acabada. Segundo a encenação, ela se apaixonou por um sujeito que cantava no coral da igreja. Ia para a missa levando um espelhinho para ver secretamente a imagem do seu namorado. Uma colega falou para ela “*Olha que isso é pecado.*” E ela: “*Oh imagina!*” Só que um dia ela foi à igreja e viu no espelhinho... o diabo! Ela levou um susto e começou a gritar. A partir desse dia, ela enlouquece e começa a ver o demônio em tudo. É internada num hospício, até que uma noite ela está mais sossegada e lhe tiram a camisa de força. Ela começa a ver de novo o demônio e arranca os olhos para não ver. História maravilhosa. Eu quis reescrever essa história. Contando para um amigo, ele me falou “Mas isso é exatamente o que está acontecendo hoje. Não queremos ver o demônio e arrancamos os olhos.” Isso é realismo, entende? Nem eu tinha percebido. Eu mesmo digo para mim que o que faço é realismo. Realismo machadiano que pode fazer esse flirt com o chamado “fantástico” mas mantém sempre um pé na realidade palpável.

NG: Aluísio Azevedo não foi então importante para você?

LR: Tem um livro do Azevedo em que ele não faz concessões ao Naturalismo: *O cortiço*. Ele vai muito além do Naturalismo nesse livro. Nos outros livros ele perde força. Ele seria um escritor mais importante se não tivesse tentando seguir escola.

NG: Você deu aulas de escrita criativa em Berkeley e em São Paulo. Quais são os temas que preocupam os jovens brasileiros que começam a escrever?

LR: O primeiro que querem saber é “*onde é que vou editar o meu livro?*” Eu sou muito pessimista em relação a isso. No final de novembro vou fazer um novo curso na biblioteca de Villa Lobos lá em São Paulo. O interesse maior das pessoas em tomar o curso comigo é que o “Luiz Ruffato deve saber o caminho das pedras.” A fórmula da escrita mas principalmente os contatos. Isso é frustrante. Eu acho que um curso de escrita criativa não vai despertar talentos. Ele contribui para quem já tenha talento possa encurtar o caminho da descoberta. De maneira geral eu não sinto que as pessoas procurem a literatura como uma forma de expressão para criar um discurso crítico em relação à sociedade. Em geral o que propõem é um discurso fraco e muito monótono. Repetem-se as preocupações, limitadas a uma visão do mundo burguesa ou “aburguesante.” Cada lugar e cada grupo tem a sua especificidade, claro, mas passa bastante por **NG:** Falar de ‘Lusofonia’ faz sentido para você? Eça, Machado pertencem à “Lusofonia”?

LR: Para mim não faz sentido. Não faz sentido sequer a categoria de “literatura latino-americana.” Em 2007, num encontro de lusitanistas na Galiza, eu propus que se falasse em “Galeguia.” Isso resolveria uma série de problemas. “Lusofonia” está muito ligado à colonização. Se eu fosse um autor angolano ou moçambicano, não aceitaria o termo “Lusofonia.” Essa palavra está totalmente relacionada à dominação portuguesa “Galeguia” manteria a unidade da língua mas sem a carga ideológica da colonização. Mas imagine, os portugueses nunca estariam de acordo. Não sei o que pode unir por exemplo Guimarães Rosa a um autor português como substrato...

NG: Alguns autores como Jorge Amado foram importantes para a formação cultural de muitos autores africanos que escrevem em português.

LR: Sim, talvez existam alguns casos de influência. Mas o que une um autor timorense como Luís Cardoso com o Brasil? Eu não consigo ver. O Brasil me pareceu sempre o país mais longe de tudo isso.

NG: Em relação ao seu trabalho como organizador de antologias literárias tem algum aspecto que queria destacar?

LR: Em 2013 saiu a minha primeira antologia: *25 mulheres que estão fazendo a nova literatura brasileira*, uma tentativa de oferecer uma contribuição paralela a respeito de algumas questões que me incomodam: a invisibilidade das mulheres na literatura brasileira, o racismo, a homofobia. Como organizador de antologias, você esbarra com alguns problemas. A maior parte dos leitores entenderam que aí estava sendo proposta uma reflexão a partir de *textos literários*. Uma minoria certamente discordou e questionou a validade deste projeto não sendo eu nem mulher nem afrodescendente nem homossexual. Nas introduções às antologias, eu tentei oferecer uma perspectiva panorâmica. Tentei estabelecer uma relação de continuidade no tempo. O meu parâmetro foi sempre Machado de Assis. Ele discutiu todos os problemas brasileiros. No caso de *Entre nós: contos sobre homossexualidade*, a editora teve alguns problemas na hora de negociar direitos do conto “Frederico Paciência” de Mário de Andrade e do “Alfredo” de Murilo Rubião. As famílias deles proibiram até mencionar os nomes deles na antologia. O conto do Rubião é sobre um sujeito expulso de um povoado dele. Não deixa claro por que foi expulso. Nem acho que seja assim tão alegórico. Tem vários momentos em que a leitura do viés homossexual é absolutamente possível. Alguns machadianos fizeram também críticas bastante assertivas contra a minha leitura do conto “Pílades e Orestes.”

NG: Este ano vai sair no Brasil o seu novo romance, *O verão tardio*. A sinopse do romance disponível em rede sublinha como um dos episódios centrais do romance será sobre o suicídio de uma jovem. Você quis estabelecer algum diálogo com o romance *O resto é silêncio* (1943) de Érico Veríssimo cuja narrativa também é desencadeada pelo suicídio de uma moça?

LR: Creio que a coincidência encerra-se apenas no fato de haver um suicídio motivador da narrativa. De resto, tudo é diferente. O suicídio mesmo, que no romance de Erico Veríssimo é individualizado e serve de motor das várias reflexões, em *O verão tardio* é posto como um conceito. Na verdade, a morte da personagem Lígia, no meu romance, é fundamental para entendermos suas consequências na vida de cada uma das pessoas que com ela conviveram, mas o leitor não fica sabendo a motivação dela, até porque isso não é tratado no livro. O leitor pode imaginar o que levou Lígia a se matar, mas isso não é isso que importa para o desenvolvimento da trama, e sim como a morte dela afetou a família, ou melhor, a destruiu...

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Serrano, Carmen A. *Gothic Imagination in Latin American Fiction and Film*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2019. 245 pp. ISBN 9780-8263-6044-1

Carmen A. Serrano nos invita a redescubrir los recovecos lúgubres del Gótico desde el lente de la literatura y el cine latinoamericano. Desde sus orígenes a finales del siglo XVIII, el género gótico ha disfrutado de una aceptación amplia entre el público. El fenómeno contradictorio de sentir atracción y repulsión hacia lo perverso y ominoso, ese disfrute del miedo, ha tocado una

fibra en el ámbito popular. Sin embargo, el género gótico ha sido devaluado consistentemente entre las élites intelectuales y los críticos literarios. Este menosprecio intelectual es particularmente llamativo en los estudios latinoamericanos que proyectan la mayoría de la literatura con temática sobrenatural bajo la sombrilla de lo fantástico, realismo mágico o incluso lo real maravilloso. Ante el discurso que insiste en tildar el Gótico de género menor sin valor estético más allá de estimular aquella fascinación hacia lo morboso, Serrano primero afirma la existencia y familiaridad de temas góticos entre los escritores latinoamericanos desde el modernismo hasta la contemporaneidad. Luego demuestra cómo los escritores utilizaban el Gótico para canalizar las ansiedades sociales desde la distancia, con alegorías y metáforas monstruosas.

En los estudios latinoamericanos ha sido importante combatir la noción de que la tradición literaria es heredada de Europa. La mirada eurocentrista invisibiliza el legado de las culturas indígenas y africanas, además de devaluar las contribuciones latinoamericanas. Debido a su origen europeo, las conversaciones sobre el gótico en Latinoamérica corren el riesgo de participar en estas tendencias eurocéntricas, una razón adicional para su rechazo entre la crítica latinoamericana. Serrano resiste firmemente la noción del gótico como una tradición heredada, al comenzar su primer capítulo con una declaración sobre los orígenes americanos de los primeros hombres-murciélagos. Cuando describe el origen folklórico y biológico, la crítica explica cómo los intelectuales europeos, en un acto de imperialismo cultural, se adueñaron de la imagen del hombre-murciélago sin reconocer su origen americano.

Los puntos de encuentro entre Europa y las Américas son un eje central en este libro y Serrano tiene mucho cuidado de no privilegiar las aportaciones europeas por encima de las culturas indígenas y africanas que históricamente han sido devaluadas e invisibilizadas. Muchas de las lecturas en el libro presentan ejemplos de criollización del gótico, particularmente en el análisis de *El reino de este mundo* (1949) de Alejandro Carpentier. La crítica señala las formas en que el escritor caribeño hace uso de temas góticos, como espíritus que atormentan y los entierros vivos, y los posiciona en el marco del folclor haitiano. Serrano también enfatiza la subversión de tono y temas tradicionales del gótico en el contexto latinoamericano, a través de su lectura sobre cómo se trabajan los tropos góticos de entierros vivos en *Pedro Páramo* (1955) y *La amortajada* (1938), así como el de la transfiguración animal, también en la obra de Carpentier. En este caso los escritores remueven el miedo de estas escenas que tradicionalmente han sido terroríficas. La angustia y el pánico de sentirse enterrado en vida es sustituida por la tranquilidad y libertad después de la muerte.

Es evidente que Serrano tiene muy presente la perspectiva de género en su análisis. Su lectura cercana sobre los personajes Susana San Juan (Rulfo) y Ana María (Bombal), ambas conscientes de su entierro, demuestra cómo ellas preferían la paz de la tumba y el entierro en lugar de la confinación que sentían en sus vidas como mujeres reprimidas. La crítica sostiene su análisis de género en el Gótico latinoamericano en su estudio de las vampiresas del Modernismo. Serrano detalla cómo la vampiresa representaba a la mujer transgresora que no cumplía con los roles de género que exhortaban la sumisión, delicadeza y domesticación. El mayor pecado de una mujer era superar al hombre con su fuerza e inteligencia. Una mujer adiestrada era la antítesis del “ángel del hogar” que preferían.

Por otro lado, Serrano analiza el vampiro masculino como metáfora del dictador en Latinoamérica. El famoso *Drácula* (1897) de Bram Stoker estableció al vampiro como figura de la antigua aristocracia. Así como el vampiro utiliza su poder para desangrar sus víctimas, los dictadores abusan de su poder para desangrar al pueblo. En su examen de *Yo el supremo* (1974) del paraguayo Augusto Roa Bastos, Serrano analiza el uso de la distancia temporal al comentar

sobre la naturaleza vampírica del entonces dictador Alfredo Stroessner. Además de la figura del dictador, Serrano identifica metáforas de la cultura de narcotráfico que consume a México en la novela breve *Vlad* (2010) de Carlos Fuentes. Al igual que Drácula, Vlad viene de lejos en busca de víctimas nuevas. De manera astuta, Serrano describe las similitudes entre el vampiro inmortal, y la figura del capo que infecta el pueblo y jamás desaparece puesto que, si muere, es inmediatamente sustituido por otro capo aún más devastador.

Además de trabajar los temas mencionados, este libro incluye análisis extensos sobre la influencia del cine en el Gótico latinoamericano, el manejo del Doble en la literatura latinoamericana y cómo la obra de Carlos Fuentes se aferra al género. Este libro sirve tanto para críticos literarios como para estudiantes. Además de proveer análisis profundos que invitan a repensar muchas obras y autores canónicos, Serrano desafía los marcos rígidos de géneros literarios en los estudios latinoamericanos; invita a pensar más allá de lo fantástico y a no devaluar lo gótico cuyo impacto cultural siempre ha permanecido. El libro es apropiado para estudiantes, particularmente porque la primera parte contextualiza de forma pedagógica los alcances de la imaginación gótica en Latinoamérica. Además, la segunda parte, que trata sobre ansiedades culturales, invoca temas de importancia en los estudios latinoamericanos. Con este libro de guía, un profesor podría crear un curso para estudiantes principiantes e introducir la cultura y literatura latinoamericanas desde el referente popular del Gótico. De esta manera podrían ampliar su conocimiento sobre las dictaduras perpetuas del continente y comprender mejor la crisis del narcotráfico en México, a partir de su carácter desgastador y vampírico.

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Triviño Anzola, Consuelo. *Transterrados*. Valencia: Calambur Editorial, S. L., 2018. 266 pp. ISBN 9788-4835-9450-6

Con esta nueva novela la escritora colombiana Consuelo Triviño Anzola (Bogotá, 1956) cambia de registro. Tras la publicación de interesantes novelas y libros de cuentos, entre los que destacan las novelas *Prohibido salir a la calle* (1997), que ha merecido hace poco un volumen colectivo que conmemora sus veinte años de publicación, por la editorial Mirada Malva, y *La semilla de la ira* (2008), sobre el modernista colombiano José María Vargas Vila, al que la autora dedicó su tesis doctoral, Triviño realiza ahora una novela policial y de denuncia sobre la condición de los emigrados o “transterrados” latinoamericanos en España, quienes en general malviven lejos de sus lugares de origen. Triviño dedica la novela al poeta y profesor español Jorge Urrutia, y quizás su huella se advierta en el cuidadoso lenguaje del que hace gala el texto narrativo.

La novela está dividida en 47 capítulos breves, en los que cuenta, mediante un perspectivismo narrativo, las circunstancias del asesinato de la ecuatoriana Patricia Valdivia, supuestamente por el periodista colombiano Luis Jorge Peña, y sus vicisitudes como pareja. La autoría del crimen y sus motivos, que semeja un caso de violencia de género, van desentrañando la novela, manteniendo el suspense hasta el final del relato. Uno de los personajes que interviene en la obra como voz narrativa es la española Constanza Estévez, claramente *alter ego* de la autora, quien había acordado con Peña realizar un libro con biografías de latinoamericanos residentes en España, al que iban a llamar *Los transterrados* (211), de modo metaliterario.

A lo largo de la obra conocemos las vidas que llevan en España los emigrantes latinoamericanos, a través de lo que se cuenta sobre la pareja principal y su círculo de amigos o

conocidos, varios de los cuales están vinculados a una publicación titulada en la novela *El Emigrante Latino*. Por sus páginas pasan historias de emigrantes latinoamericanos que deben aceptar trabajos de rango inferior a su capacitación, como sucede al propio Luis Jorge Peña, que deben improvisar para sobrevivir fuera de su patria, que sufren abusos de familiares con los que conviven en España o de familiares en los respectivos países de origen, a los que mandan dinero, con mucho sacrificio, mientras que ese dinero no se emplea para lo que se envió sino que se dilapida, así como algunas cuestiones políticas que los han conducido al exilio o a la emigración. Este último es también el caso de Peña, quien salió de Colombia como testigo de una matanza, para dar en España con uno de sus responsables.

En la construcción de la obra, a manera de puzzle narrativo, Triviño intercala tres textos en cursiva de índole muy diferente al resto, que se justifican como artículos de *El Emigrante Latino*. El primero, titulado “¡Tierra! ¡Tierra!” (43-46), nos habla del expolio que llevan a cabo los poderosos. En el segundo, “Fronteras y origen” (73-75), Triviño recoge un párrafo que explica el sentido de su novela:

Los transterrados, que descienden del mono, aparecen como víctimas. Apátridas peligrosos, se arrancan las raíces. Son aves migratorias sin ningún asidero. Atraviesan desiertos en busca de un territorio ajeno, sin legítimo derecho a ser ni a estar. Verbos que ya no podrán conjugar. Hambrientos, escarban comida en los basureros del planeta. Desesperados arañan las fronteras. Aguardan la oportunidad para saltar las alambradas. Cuando consiguen entrar no encuentran un lugar donde hacer su nido.

Esta dramática visión coincide con lo que decía Carlos Fuentes, en una de las páginas finales de *El espejo enterrado* (Madrid, Santillana, ²1997, 514), al referirse a sus compatriotas, inmigrantes en los Estados Unidos, cuya situación se agrava con la diferencia idiomática:

El inmigrante es la víctima perfecta. Se encuentra en una tierra extraña, no habla inglés, duerme a la intemperie, lleva consigo todas sus pertenencias, teme a las autoridades, empleadores y abogados sin escrúpulos tienen en sus manos sus vidas y libertades. A veces son brutalizados, a veces asesinados. Pero no son criminales. Son sólo trabajadores.

En el tercer texto intercalado, “Demasiado mayores para recordar, demasiado jóvenes para entender” (207-209), se habla del desconocimiento en Europa de la problemática de los emigrantes, sean latinoamericanos o de otros orígenes, realidad que intenta paliar esta novela. La intriga trata de acompañar a los personajes en su arriesgado salto al abismo, con una verosimilitud que realza el final abierto del relato.

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Tumbaga, Ariel Zatarain. *Yaqui Indigeneity Epistemology, Diaspora, and the Construction of Yoeme Identity*. U of Arizona P, 2018. 215 pp. ISBN 9780-8165-3588-0

The Yaquis—eight indigenous communities that reside near the Yaqui River in Sonora, Mexico and Arizona—are central to Ariel Zatarain Tumbaga’s crafting of *Yaqui Indigeneity Epistemology, Diaspora, and the Construction of Yoeme Identity*. This book will be of interest to scholars of Chicano/a literature, Indigenist studies, Mexican cultural studies, and Transborder studies. Tumbaga’s monograph greatly expands our historical understanding of this Native community as previously presented in Raphael Brewster Folsom’s *The Yaquis and the Empire: Violence, Spanish Imperial Power, and Native Resilience in Colonial Mexico* (2014) and Paco

Ignacio Taibo's *Yaquis: Historia de una guerra popular y un genocidio en México* (2013). Brewster Folsom and Taibo's recent and noteworthy monographs chronicle and analyze historical events from colonial Mexico through the nineteenth century, which differs from Tumbaga's interdisciplinary approach. Here, Tumbaga, concerned with the representation of Yaqui indigeneity, keenly traces the literary characterizations of the Yaquis, or Yoeme people, in Mexican and Chicana/o cultural production of the twentieth- and twenty-first century.

What do we know about Yaqui communities? And how have we gained this knowledge? These are the underlying questions to which the author returns throughout the five chapters. In answer to these questions, he deftly shows how the Yaquis, like other Native people in Mexico, have been imagined through nonindigenous ways of thinking. In the case of the Yoeme, they have often been stigmatized as fearless warriors or solely admired for their deer dance tradition. These simplistic renditions have been iterated in many Mexican foundational texts and other cultural symbols, which Tumbaga complicates: "Yoeme political and cultural agency, history, and race are represented in dominant culture through an indigeneity severed from a deeper notion of their material and spiritual realities" (5). In response to previous superficial treatment of the Yoeme people, his readings privilege a Native-centered point of view that also draw from Yoeme oral traditions and other myths.

The initial chapters pave the way for readers to understand Yoeme culture by giving a brief historical overview, which is especially helpful for those unfamiliar with the Yaqui people and their relationship to the various Mexican central governments. In his chapters, he reminds readers how the Yaquis rebelled against successive government administrations to preserve their lands, which has contributed to their stigmatization as a bellicose nation. Tumbaga underscores how the Yaqui people relocated to the United States and established new vibrant communities beginning in the late nineteenth century. Mainly, as a result of the extermination campaigns against them under the presidency of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1910), many were forced to flee from Sonora and reestablish new communities in southern Arizona and other parts of the Southwest. He reflects upon how historical events and national discourses about the Yaquis have resulted in overemphasizing the Yaqui penchant for warfare as seen in monuments, national literature, and other cultural symbols that eclipse the complex community's epistemology.

In order to delve deeper into Yaqui cosmology, Tumbaga turns to the understudied Yoeme origin stories, in Chapter Two, providing the cultural context to explain their ongoing arduous defense of Yaqui territory. He closely reads foundational stories that speak to indigenous cosmology and worldview, such as "Yomumuli and the Little Surem People," "Leyenda yaqui de las predicciones," and "Omteme." Collectively, these understudied stories emphasize the notion of what Tumbaga calls, *arraigamiento*, or rooting, a reference to a deep rooted connection to ancestral lands—the Hiakim territory (Yoeme homeland) in which the Yaquis are anchored. These stories indicate a divine bond to the land, the home to ancestors and other sacred entities that reside within these territories. Tumbaga moves beyond Yaqui stereotypes and emphasizes a rich history and mythology, as well as contesting prevailing discourses.

In Chapters Three and Four, Tumbaga thoroughly traces how nonindigenous authors created notions of *lo yaqui* in novels of the Mexican Revolution and the *indigenista* texts of the twentieth century. He argues that the representation of the Yaqui resistance and warriorhood have been the subject of historical novels that treat the Mexican Revolution as in the case of Martín Luis Guzmán's *El águila y la serpiente* (1928) and Gregorio López y Fuentes's *Tierra: La revolución agraria en México* (1933), among others. Even though the Yaquis fought on several fronts during this rebellion, they are vaguely presented and usually characterized as fierce, indomitable, and

stoic. He also underscores how *indigenista* texts, which were born out of state *indigenismo*, reaffirmed national aims to incorporate indigenous people into mainstream mestizo society, as illustrated in Francisco Rojas Gonzalez's "La triste historia del pascola Cenobio" whose work offers yet another problematic rendition of the Yoeme people.

In the final chapter—the most striking contribution in the book—he makes a geographical leap to analyze texts produced by Chicano/a writers. That is, he goes beyond northern Mexico and addresses the cultural realities of transborder writers of Yaqui descent. "Chicana/o-Yaqui Borderlands and Indigeneity in Alfredo Vea Jr.'s *La Maravilla*," first addresses how Chicano/a writers in the 1960s and 1970s have approached Yaqui themes. While Chicano writers have celebrated their indigenous ancestry, they have also, at times, reproduced simplified myths of warrior prowess and exotic dance when it comes to the Yaqui people. As Tumbaga argues, they have replicated some of the stereotypes found in the work of non-indigenous writers in Mexico. Tumbaga also contributes to US Chicano/a studies by questioning the Chicano/a privileging of Aztlán as the sole mythic homeland that eclipses living Native peoples land and cultures, as in the case of the Yaquis. However, and most exciting, Tumbaga focuses on contemporary Chicano-Yaqui writers who are contesting and nullifying the superficial renditions of the Yaqui people like that of Alfredo Vea Jr.'s *La Maravilla*; and in the works of Miguel Méndez, Alma Luz Villanueva, Luis Valdez, and Michael Nava. The aforementioned indigenous diaspora-based writers form part of a new literary group examining and rewriting what we know and how we know *lo yaqui*.

The book's innovative exploration is well crafted and thoroughly researched citing important anthropologists, ethnographers, and historians who have worked with the Yoeme people and culture in the past (Evelyn Hu-DeHart, David Delgado Shorter, Edward H. Spicer, for example). His groundbreaking analysis of the representations of the Yoeme in literary texts and other cultural objects is certainly worthy of attention. This is the newest contribution to the growing field of indigenous studies and to Yaqui studies, in particular, and offers a rich bibliography that could foster new readings about this sometimes forgotten community.

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Vanden Berghe, Kristine. *Narcos y sicarios en la ciudad letrada*. Valencia: Albatros, 2019. 270 pp. ISBN 9788-4727-4363-2

Publicado en la colección *Palabras de América*, el libro *Narcos y sicarios en la ciudad letrada* supone una interesante aportación a la ya extensa nómina de estudios dedicados a las relaciones entre narcotráfico y literatura. Vanden Berghe parte del cuestionamiento de algunas ideas más o menos asentadas entre la crítica: que las obras de temática narco o sobre el sicariato tengan garantizado de antemano su éxito internacional gracias al interés que suscitan fuera de América Latina la marginalidad, la violencia del continente y que ese éxito esté basado en criterios exclusivamente comerciales. Apunta, así, a que, por un lado, la mayoría de estos textos no alcanza a salir de su país de origen y, por otro, al hecho de que, junto a los personajes marginales o criminales, sean frecuentes, al menos en las obras por ella analizadas, los personajes letrados: "escritores, intelectuales, artistas y profesores de literatura" (13). Además, contra la presunta transnacionalización de las tramas, arguye que la mayoría de ellas tienen una geografía local y que, pese a la presencia de ciertas marcas para un hipotético "lector global", en la mayor parte de las

novelas la globalización no tiene un lugar determinante en la trama ni ofrecen una visión de conjunto del negocio del narcotráfico o del sicariato.

Con eso en mente, la autora elige un corpus amplio y heterogéneo de novelas colombianas, mexicanas o incluso bolivianas para analizar las relaciones sugeridas en ellas entre el universo letrado y el criminal. Vanden Berghe recurre a una metodología variada, que se adapta a las necesidades de cada uno de los textos estudiados, aunque siempre acudiendo al *close reading*. Así, aplica las teorías de Huizinga o Caillois sobre el juego a textos como *Mi nombre es Casablanca* (2003), *El resucitado* (2016), *Cartas cruzadas* (1995) e *Hijos de la nieve* (2000); o analiza los imaginarios nacionales tanto en distintos narcocorridos como en *Te están buscando* (2004), *Tierra blanca* (1996), *La maldición de Valverde* (2006), *Balas de plata* (2008), *Hielo negro* (2011), *Aquiles o El guerrillero y el asesino* (2016), entre otras, buscando los elementos recurrentes en las “gramáticas nacionales”. Estudia, de ese modo, algunos de los imaginarios y estereotipos más recurrentes en los textos y sus posibles interpretaciones.

Siguiendo con la teoría sobre el juego de Caillois, en concreto, con lo relativo a la *mimicry*, Vanden Berghe explora la presencia de narradores de fiabilidad discutible, cuya actitud relaciona con la presencia del disfraz. Esto le va a permitir, entre otras cosas, un acercamiento alternativo a *Rosario Tijeras* (1999), *La virgen de los sicarios* (1994) y a *Mi nombre es Casablanca*. Su sugerente lectura la lleva a afirmar que algunos de esos textos, con frecuencia calificados de paraliteratura o de literatura *light* (con la excepción del caso de Vallejo), permiten lecturas más profundas en las que la crítica social sí estaría presente. Desde su punto de vista, *Rosario Tijeras* y *La virgen de los sicarios* ofrecen una visión controvertida de la figura del letrado, una figura que no hace sino apuntalar el *statu quo*. De forma velada, ambas novelas estarían apoyando la idea de que en las sociedades en las que el narcotráfico predomina resulta complicado tener acceso a la verdad y determinar claramente quiénes son los inocentes y quiénes los culpables.

El pensamiento nietzscheano, por un lado, y la polifonía bajtiniana, por otro, le sirven a la autora en el tercer capítulo para analizar dos novelas del controvertido escritor Gustavo Álvarez Gardeazábal. En *El divino* (1986) y en *Comandante Paraíso* (2002) encuentra rasgos del superhombre tal y como Nietzsche lo perfila en *La genealogía de la moral* (1887). A pesar de que, arguye, el *ethos* autorial es ambiguo y diverso, encuentra algunas constantes que lo acercaría a otras obras de la cultura popular, en particular a los narcocorridos: una enorme sensibilidad anti-elitista y subalternista, un férreo vitalismo y una clara tendencia al *carpe diem*. En lo que atañe a la polifonía, considera que tiene una función ambivalente en los textos, ora como recurso al servicio de la mimesis, ora como estrategia para difuminar el punto de vista del autor ante un tema controvertido y con posibles consecuencias para el mismo.

Por último, la autora dedica sendos capítulos a *Cartas cruzadas* (1995), *Delirio* (2004) y *El ruido de las cosas al caer* (2011), por un lado, y a la obra de Héctor Abad Faciolince, con especial atención a *El olvido que seremos* (2006) y a la construcción de un proyecto anti-sicareco, por otro. En ambos capítulos presta atención no solo a la violencia vinculada al narcotráfico y al sicariato sino también a cómo estos textos perfilan la nación colombiana. Algunos de los aspectos más relevantes en estas páginas son las reflexiones de la autora sobre cuestiones de género y acerca de la visibilización de grupos tradicionalmente marginados en el imaginario nacional, como los homosexuales; o sobre cómo en algunos de estos textos existe una flagrante discrepancia entre tema y forma, al utilizar un lenguaje sumamente elaborado, que se aleja de lo esperable en las narrativas del trauma, justamente para abordarlo.

A pesar de la heterogeneidad de los capítulos, siempre encontramos uno o varios hilos conductores que otorgan unidad al libro. Además del *leitmotiv* de la continuidad entre la violencia

y la ciudad letrada, hay otros elementos que son comentados transversalmente, como el valor *testimonial* de las obras, el problema de la visibilidad/invisibilidad del narco, cuestiones vinculadas al eje limpieza/suciedad o el común escepticismo ante la inminencia de cambios en la sociedad. Teniendo en cuenta el carácter transnacional y transgenérico de su corpus, quizás hubiera sido interesante la presencia de otro tipo de productos no exclusivamente literarios en los que aparezca lo narco en alguno de sus múltiples avatares, mencionados tan solo de pasada en el libro. Sin que constituya un demérito en un libro en el que los aciertos son ya de por sí abundantes, esto le habría otorgado a la autora la posibilidad de estudiar fenómenos relevantes como el de la pérdida de la centralidad de la escritura o el de la imbricación genérica en las distintas manifestaciones de la narcocultura. Entre las muchas virtudes de *Narcos y sicarios en la ciudad letrada* destacan tanto la amplitud del corpus analizado y el ya mencionado carácter transnacional como la variedad de enfoques de análisis, la minuciosidad de las lecturas o el talante dialogístico de su discurso, que conversa ampliamente con la crítica precedente del campo, en ocasiones para discrepar, pero que abre así nuevas y sugerentes preguntas en el ámbito de la literatura del narcotráfico y del sicariato y que, a buen seguro, seguirá dialogando con los estudios venideros.

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Zamora Calvo, María Jesús, ed. *Mujeres quebradas. La Inquisición y su violencia hacia la heterodoxia en la Nueva España*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana, Vervuert, 2018. 330 pp. ISBN: 9788-4919-2018-2

El presente volumen ofrece una valiosa aproximación interdisciplinaria en torno a la presencia femenina en los archivos inquisitoriales novohispanos. Viene a enriquecer el caudal de las aportaciones publicadas en las dos últimas décadas gracias a la variedad y calidad de las fuentes primarias y de las metodologías manejadas por un conjunto de investigadores procedentes de universidades mexicanas y españolas, al calor de un proyecto de investigación oficial (“La mujer frente a la Inquisición española y novohispana”, FEM2016-78192-P) dirigido por la editora. María Jesús Zamora Calvo, profesora en la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, es una experta en este ámbito, como prueban sus monografías previas sobre magia y brujería en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII, por ejemplo.

Muy probablemente sea por tan poderosa razón que varios de los doce trabajos compilados se centren en cuestiones vinculadas a la brujería, la hechicería y las supersticiones: así, Manuel Pérez y Paola Monreal abordan la tradición de la hechicería erótica en un proceso inquisitorial en San Luis Potosí, en 1629, o Graciela Rodríguez Castañón despliega la variedad de prácticas registradas por el Santo Oficio en Zacatecas contra curanderas, parteras y hechiceras.

La mayoría de los capítulos manejan documentación mexicana procedente del Archivo General de la Nación, en ocasiones inédita o poco estudiada hasta la fecha. Dada su tipología, pueden centrarse en expedientes concretos: Alberto Ortiz ofrece un estado de la cuestión sobre el binomio mujer / brujería de la mano del proceso contra la castellana Catalina de Miranda, considerada un “chivo expiatorio” a la zaga de las teorías de René Girard. María Jesús Torquemada, en cambio, se sirve del proceso contra la panadera mulata María de Rivera, en Puebla de los Ángeles en 1659, para describir las similitudes de los procesos a un lado y a otro del océano. José Enciso y José Juan Espinosa analizan el proceso contra la castellana María de Valenzuela y sus socios en el Sombrerete de 1666 para ilustrar el dominio de algunas familias poderosas en una

región de la frontera minera. Cecilia López explora las contradicciones del proceso contra la mulata María Guadalupe en el San Miguel de 1760, acusada de maleficar mediante fetiches—uno de los cuales, con tela, estambre y cabellos, aún se conserva en el expediente como evidencia acusatoria. Anel Hernández narra parte del proceso contra una capuchina de Oaxaca, sor María Coleta, muy admirada en su tiempo—pues las elites novohispanas habían encumbrado sus visiones y profecías hasta rozar la santidad—, a partir de las cartas que la monja dirigió a sus confesores entre 1751 y 1775.

Otros trabajos ofrecen síntesis ambiciosas a partir del análisis de diversos procesos. Así, Yadira Munguía reflexiona sobre la escasa presencia de versos de poetas novohispanos durante el siglo XVIII. Esther Cohen Dabrah (pp. 105-121) se aproxima al criptojudasmo novohispano de mediados del siglo XVII a través de las prácticas de la circuncisión practicadas en el hombro de mujeres. Robin Ann Rice valora diversos juicios que le permiten sugerir que algunas prácticas supersticiosas entre castellanias, negras e indígenas fueron en parte el resultado de las costumbres populares auspiciadas por los clérigos. Mariana Masera ofrece una generosa panorámica sobre la presencia de conjuros y oraciones de carácter tradicional en los archivos inquisitoriales que dan buena cuenta de las adaptaciones novohispanas de un caudal de carácter folclórico, como igualmente constata José Manuel Pedrosa, quien, a partir de una denuncia contra dos hermanas por brujería en la Guatemala de 1706, constata la más antigua documentación del cuento *El suelo del tesoro* (ATU 1645A) en tierras americanas.

Si bien, como se indica en la introducción, el control político-religioso del Santo Oficio en los virreinos americanos durante el período que se extiende entre 1571 y 1820 no resultó tan virulento como en tierras castellanias, no cabe duda de que los procesos conservados confirman el interés del volumen para nuestra mejor comprensión de las múltiples dinámicas que se interrelacionaron, en clave sexual y de género, sin dejar de contemplar interseccionalidades tan poderosas como la raza, la edad, la región o el grupo social, muy presentes en la Nueva España de los siglos XVII y XVIII.

El orden de aparición de los capítulos intenta respetar la cronología de los testimonios. A nuestro juicio, tal vez hubiera sido acertada una ordenación que atendiera los contenidos, habida cuenta de que varios de ellos abordan cuestiones similares y sin que la documentación ofrezca cambios significativos sobre el origen de las denuncias, el proceder del Santo Oficio o sobre las sentencias. En este sentido, el capítulo de María Jesús Torquemada resulta especialmente útil para lectores poco avezados, pues resume de manera muy acertada, desde un enfoque que parte de la Historia del Derecho, las dinámicas internas de los procesos inquisitoriales. Otros trabajos, en cambio, como los de Alberto Ortiz, José Manuel Pedrosa o Yadira Munguía, parecen querer escapar del tema o del tono central del volumen.

Se trata, en todo caso, de una valoración puntual que no empaña el interés ni de estas aportaciones ni del volumen en su conjunto. Si, como se afirma en la presentación, el propósito es mostrar “diversos retratos de mujeres que, bajo acusaciones tan diversas como la brujería, la bigamia, la falsa beatitud, la herejía, etc., se presentaron ante la Inquisición novohispana para responder de su vida”, con el objetivo de “estudiar el estatus social, concretar sus motivaciones, determinar las características de su procesamiento, conocer las razones que justificaron la violencia ejercida sobre ellas, etc.” (12), resulta más que evidente que nos encontramos ante una aportación que ultrapasa estos límites y aporta una mirada renovadora de una encrucijada de análisis y reflexión que, además, dialoga implícitamente con nuestro presente.

Invited Outstanding Scholar Review Essay: Recent Monographs on Latin American Film

- Arenillas, María Guadalupe, and Michael J. Lazzara, eds. *Latin American Documentary Film in the New Millennium*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. xvii + 302 pp.
- Burucúa, Constanza, and Carolina Sitnisky, eds. *The Precarious in the Cinemas of the Americas*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. xxii + 301 pp. ISBN 9783-3197-6807-6
- George, David, and Gizella Meneses, eds. *Argentine Cinema: From Noir to Neo-Noir*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018. 181 pp., illus. ISBN 9781-4985-1186-5
- Glickman, Nora, and Ariana Huberman, eds. *Evolving Images: Jewish Latin American Cinema*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2018. 256 pp. ISBN 9781-4773-1426-5
- Holmes, Amanda. *Politics of Architecture in Contemporary Argentine Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 162 pp. ISBN 9783-3195-5190-6
- Lie, Nadia. *The Latin American (Counter-)Road Movie and Ambivalent Modernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 245 pp., illus. 9783-3194-3553-4
- Losada, Matt. *The Projected Nation: Argentine Cinema and the Social Margins*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2018. xxii, 197 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-7063-4
- Maguire, Geoffrey, and Rachel Randall, eds. *New Visions of Adolescence in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 228 pp., illus. ISBN 9783-3198-9380-8
- Martin, Deborah. *The Child in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. xii, 245 pp., illus. ISBN 9781-1375-3060-8
- McClennen, Sophia A. *Globalization and Latin American Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. xiii + 544 pp. ISBN 9783 3195-7060-0
- Page, Philippa, Inela Selimović, and Camilla Sutherland. *The Feeling Child: Affect and Politics in Latin American Literature and Film*. London: Lexington Books, 2018. 184 pp. ISBN 9781-4985-7440-2.
- Rocha, Carolina. *Argentine Cinema and National Identity (1966-1976)*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2017. 250 pp., illus. ISBN 9781-7869-4054-4
- Romero, Eva Karene. *Film and Democracy in Paraguay*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. xiii + 169 pp. ISBN 9783-3194-4813-8
- Sandberg, Claudia, and Carolina Rocha, eds. *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Resisting Neoliberalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. xix + 278 pp. ISBN 9783-3197-7010-9
- Selimović, Inela. *Affective Moments in the Films of Martel, Carri, and Puenzo*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 263 pp. ISBN 9781-1374-9641-6
- St-Georges, Charles. *Haunted Families and Temporal Normativity in Hispanic Horror Films: Troubling Timelines*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018. 198 pp. ISBN 9781-4985-6335-2
- Tompkins, Cynthia Margarita. *Affectual Erasure: Presentations of Indigenous Peoples in Argentine Cinema*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2018. 357 pp. ISBN 9781-4384-7098-6
- Wood, David M. J. *El espectador pensante: el cine de Jorge Sanjinés y el Grupo Ukamau*. Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, La Carreta E.U., 2017. 187 pp. ISBN 9786-0702-9570-6

This review essay undertakes to discuss eighteen diverse monographs of Latin American film studies from the period 2017-2018, although I have included one 2016 monograph, Eva Karene Romero's groundbreaking examination of contemporary Paraguayan filmmaking because of how important a model it is for the field. This is essentially coverage of film studies in English—mostly from the United States, although, again believing in the importance of asymmetry, I have included David M.J. Wood's study in English of the Bolivian filmmaker, Jorge Sanjinés. These two studies are included here in large measure to affirm the importance of discovering and praising film studies that go beyond the privileged production of a small handful of national enterprises.

Holmes's study is quite clever and suggests all sorts of avenues for research on the presence of urban space in films. As is well known, Argentine architecture is enormously varied, a reflex of that country's extensive participation in the project of modernity. While deeply historical buildings—that is, those going back to the colonial period—are not much in abundant evidence in Buenos Aires, the array of structures reflecting successive periods of exceptional prosperity and the desire to compete with Western European models and, subsequently, international paradigms, alternates with a broad spectrum of vernacular constructions that gives evidence of the extensive working class and modest middle-class presence in the city. Since so much of contemporary Argentine film deals with issues defined in sociopolitical terms, it is inevitable that the built and inhabited spaces of the individuals associated with those issues be persistently present in the visual scope of the film frame.

Holmes does not attempt a comprehensive registry of architectural spaces, but rather focuses on a tight inventory of six contemporary films in which the narrative action involves a significant interaction with constructed space. For example, Adrián Caetano's and Bruno Stagnaro's 1997 *Pizza birra faso*, a film that examines unflinchingly the lost emptiness of the lives of a spectrum of marginal-class young adults in the Argentina of the mid-1990s, the heyday of triumphalist neoliberal economic prosperity, moves around a Buenos Aires of imposing decay. Holmes makes much of the importance of the presence of the Obelisco, a dominant symbol of urban identity and a monument to the first founding of the city of Buenos Aires in 1536. Often read as a phallic symbol of Argentine masculinity—and, therefore, aggressive impositional power—the Obelisco is clearly an icon of the young men's exclusion from the hegemonic summits of Argentine socioeconomic power. Ironically, the area around the Obelisco has, twenty years later, become the anchor of an area of Buenos Aires that is definitely reminiscent of the paradigm of seediness, the New York Times Square area of thirty years ago, a phenomenon that one might well want to read as allegorizing the apparently unending decline of Argentine economic prosperity whereby the marginalization of the young adults in the film is a harbinger of the expanding marginalization of the majority of Argentine society. This is one example in the film of what Holmes provides as the overarching characterization of *Pizza*: "The film represents the possibilities for manipulating architectural symbolism by exploring the relationship between the built environment and marginalized social groups" (17).

Another example Holmes pursues is the use of the glass palaces of late capitalism in Fabián Bielinsky's 2000 box-office hit, *Nueve reinas*, particularly the Hilton Hotel in the flash renovated port neighborhood of Puerto Madero, the dense architectural cluster that is a monument to the brutalist economics that has gripped Argentina for the past thirty years. This cluster is as much a symbol of contemporary Buenos Aires as the Obelisco was to early twentieth-century prosperity, although, ironically, it was constructed in 1936 when that prosperity had declined notably because of the Great Depression. Puerto Madero remains still a highly vital project within the parameters

of brutalist economics, and its model is quite appropriate for Bielinisky's representation of the traditional Creole banditry exemplified by the film's main character's checkmating by a banditry of a far higher order. As Holmes points out, these two levels of scamming (it is only incidental that the "higher" scam is meant to be seen as a morally rightful revenge) are represented by two different registries of Buenos Aires architecture: what I am calling legendary Creole banditry by the 1936 art-deco Kavanagh Building in the traditional Recoleta area of Buenos Aires (on the edge of the old financial center) and the Hilton Hotel of the neoliberal project of Puerto Madero. In reality, the two buildings are quite close to each other, but they represent different histories of the city: the latter one might call tastefully stated glitz, while the former, if not yet gone to seed, is by now stagnant and indeed stale.

Holmes's monograph is, as I have said, very clever. Primarily, she reminds us that these films deal with lives in a very complex city and that it is important to understand how there is an acute sense of the city present in them via the symbolic manipulation of its architectural paradigms. As much as many of the films—including many Holmes does not discuss but which are susceptible to her model of analysis—have enjoyed international success among audiences unaware of the lived material texture of Buenos Aires and other cities in Argentina (e.g., Lucrecia Martel's 2004 *La niña santa*, which she discusses), it is important to appreciate the way in which the visual narrative plays out against a real built human environment. I have elsewhere commented in passing on how some of Marco Berger's films "naturalize" a queer perspective on sexuality by projecting the human action against the backdrop of everyday middle-class Porteño life (rather than, say, trendy gay bars and discos, which promote the imagery of a marginalized, if privileged, minority) or conventional rural settings. One looks forward to further critical analysis of Argentine films based on Holmes's perceptive model.

The relationship between film and nation has always been a complicated one, and not just because of sociocultural debates over the relationship between the heightened reality effect of images that impose themselves on the large screen on a spectator that is passive in many ways. There is much to be said regarding the ways the government controls filmmaking directly and indirectly: even when filmmaking, enormously costly when measured against many other forms of cultural production, is not directly paid for by the government, there are, nevertheless, many indirect ways in which government sectors can exercise control over filmmaking. These forms of control extend from circumscribing access to primary materials and shooting locations, to determining access to exhibition sites and the economics of distribution, to the way that such a visually impactful medium is open to multiple forms of censorship, chastisement, and punishment by authorities for violating often spurious criteria. If American filmmaking collaborated openly with the U.S. war effort in the 1940s and 1950s, in order to enhance respectability and to ensure legitimacy for the preponderantly undesirable Jewish immigrant majority in the industry, in Mexico filmmakers collaborated directly with post-1920 revolutionary ideology to affirm and impose a tightknit ideological project. (Carlos Monsiváis once said that Mexicans went to the movies to learn how to best be Mexicans.)

In the case of Argentine, fascistoide Perón, like his Brazilian counterpart Getúlio Vargas, did much to manipulate filmmaking without directly censoring it. And the respective dictatorships of both countries were quick to exercise brutal strongarm tactics to impede filmmaking from exercising the sort of social criticism associated with both independent and studio filmmaking after the war, especially, in the case of Argentina, through the influence of Italian neorealism. Rocha's monograph covers the period that extends from the authoritarian dictatorship that comes into

power in 1966, up to the time of the unabashedly neofascist regime that comes to power in 1976. In reality, three periods are involved: the period between Perón's fall in 1955, followed by a dreary cycle of military power and ineffective democracies, culminating in the initially effective dictatorship 1966-73, which, ultimately a failure in achieving political compromise, permits another round of ineffective democracies between 1973-76, only to see the unstinting brutalist dictatorship that emerges in 1976.

Filmmaking across this agenda has undoubtedly many highlights—it is a period in which the great Leopoldo Torre Nilsson affirms his as status as Argentina's great auteur director—and it is a period in which a notable amount of dross and dreck is produced that enable producers and crews to keep in business without running afoul of the censors. Rocha focuses on the 1966-76 period because important work continues to get done, while during the neofascist regime, the so-called Proceso, between 1976-83, the industry declines precipitously, many members of the Argentine industry go to work abroad. (To Spain, in particular: Franco's death in 1975 leads to a rebirth of important work emanating again from what had always been one of the major Spanish-language capitals of filmmaking). After 1983, it should be noted, Argentine filmmaking recovers rapidly and has not flagged since, with especially vibrant feminist work virtually unknown before that time.

There is another reason for this selective period, and it forms the core of Rocha's book: the emphasis on cultural nationalism, especially as regards named historical figures and various mythical personifications of the Gaucho. Much can be debated as to whether the Gaucho is an untroubled icon for Argentine nationalism (just as one can most assuredly back far away from the John Wayne frontier cowboy as an American icon), but the nationalism of the Argentine right as administered by governments controlled by the military begins to intersect with the search for cultural authenticity of the Argentine left (one must remember that after 1959 Che Guevara is a perennial nightmare of the right, and his death in 1976 is celebrated by the right as though its greatest enemy had been miraculously eliminated), such that national historical figures like Rosas or mythic ones like Martín Fierro and Juan Moreira have their value as oppositional icons strengthened. Sometimes not always explicitly, but via representational strategies that open up interpretations of the value for the national discourse. (One recalls how Juan C. Castagnino's illustrated edition of the Martín Fierro [1962], very much emphasizing the Christological representation of the man, is an enormous bestseller).

In sum, Rocha's book is rich in historical and cultural contexts. I would very much like for her to publish a similar analysis of the more draconian period of the Proceso, although I suspect the result would be a much slimmer volume.

Latin American film studies have gone very much beyond the sort of scholarship prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s, which consisted, as several of my own works did, of inventories of national film production, particularly in intersection with the return to constitutional democracy after the long period of authoritarian and neofascist dictatorship, especially in the Southern Cone, between the mid-1960s and the early 1990s. This was an important body of scholarly production because it showed how Latin American film could vie for international attention while at the same time dealing sociopolitically with themes and narrative that intervened directly in the debates over the effects of dictatorship and the principles of redemocratized societies. Important films were produced and, in studying them, a whole solid critical establishment devoted to filmic studies was created in the Latin American republics and as components of U.S.-based Hispanic studies programs. Any decent U.S. department today includes individuals like Matt Losada, who has

created a whole academic career centrally grounded in film studies, replacing those of an older generation who were trained exclusively in literature, but sensed the strategic need to create collegial space for individuals like Losada. The result has been very satisfying, and we are now seeing the exploration of much more focused research that deals with the social role of film, the processes of the industry caught between auteur styles and commercialization, and, finally and most importantly, the intervention of the film genre in the social and cultural ideologies of national and regional projects.

Much of *The Projected Nation* rests on issues dealing with Argentina's much vaunted entrance into nineteenth-century modernity, so much so that it really remains an outlier society in Latin America throughout most of the century, with Buenos Aires becoming so much a symbol of the modernist project that little remains of any shred of a feudal past, unlike other major cities like Mexico, Rio, Santiago, Lima. The rupture between national capital and the still mythologized patriarchal landscape beyond it becomes earlier pronounced enough for one to begin (even if erroneously) to speak of an Argentine national literature in terms of its centralized base, which in turn fostered in a very emphatic form genres of cultural production that were necessarily associated with capitalist resources, such as the enormous flowering of theater in Buenos Aires and, of course, technologically-based filmmaking. It is not, therefore, surprising that *The Projected Nation* deals with many overlapping issues of space, from the vast primitive nature of the Pampas to its carving up into the grand estancias, the economic pathways that overlay it, particularly in the extensive British-driven railroad system, the conflictual issues over its remaining the nationalist heartland vs., as in the case of important Jewish settlements, its utilization to absorb immigrant populations in the project of populating the nation. While some important films are made that reference these issues, this is often a far different filmmaking inventory that dominates the imagination of urban filmgoers, many of whom have only a sketchy relationship with a heartland that is not theirs, as citified newcomers or which they have renounced in the massive in-migration to Buenos Aires sponsored by Peronismo in the 1940s, whereby urban slums become their lived heartland. In sum, this is an important study, and the commentaries on the films are highly judicious in seeing them as functioning filmic structures of enormous importance and interest, not just as alternatives to a more highly-prized urban production.

Argentina has, as one might expect, excelled in all sorts of film genres, with especially strong contributions in documentary film making, family romance (whether comedic or tragic, pathetic or redemptive), and sociopolitical allegory with a strong strain of Jamesonian political unconsciousness. However, no film genre seems more to describe Argentine filmmaking than noir. Noir is a persistent and recurring modality since the early days of classic or Golden Age Argentine filmmaking, coincidental with the so-called *Década Infame*, the 1930s, which provided unending material for a view, as much jaundiced as trenchantly critical, of Argentine life. If noir insists on the dirty reality lying behind the façade of social and cultural sophistication, on the inherent corruption of power and the institutions that exist to protect the dynamics of power, and on the intractable hypocrisy of an official discourse meant to hide the dirty reality of corruption, and that very hypocrisy, then the bibliography of Argentine noir would seem to be endless.

George's and Meneses's monograph is predicated on the assumption that, while Anglo-American noir is the most visible face of the genre, there is neither the need to measure other noir productions only against the Anglo-American inventory, nor is there the need to pigeonhole noir as corresponding to a particularly Anglo-American timeframe, that of the Great Depression and the years of World War II. In the latter estimation, noir ends with the dual-helix cleansing effect of the vaunted victory of the Allies and the American way of life and presumably ennobling effect

of the Cold War, understood proleptically to confirm the nobility of that American way of life. Regrettably for such categorical thinking, social life in Argentina, while prospering in a co-terminus fashion with the United States, took a disastrous turn with the Peronista experiment and with ensuing social and economic instability, accompanied by the rise of military authoritarianism and, eventually, neofascism. Viewed in this way, noir might be seen in Argentina to have had little reason to abate, little reason to be seen as having been left behind by the triumphalist attitudes of American life and popular cultural genres it generated in conjunction with the paradigm of Hollywood extravaganzas.

The authors' recourse to the term "neonoir" has the effect of underscoring the renewed interest in noir in Argentina at a time when it has become *démodé* in the United States, while it has the disadvantage of hiding the very real continuity of noir in Argentina, despite whatever is happening with aesthetic decisions in Los Angeles. In any case, the very real value of this study is to emphasize noir as an essential ingredient of Argentine filmmaking and not such a period style to be viewed in conjunction with Anglo-American genre concepts. In this vein, six films are examined in detail, with Carlos Hugo Christiansen's 1946 *El ángel desnudo* enjoying the pride of place as exemplary classical noir, followed by Héctor Babenco's 1985 *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (date also given as 1984). The film presents all sorts of issues as to its sociohistorical contexts, although I agree on its inclusion here: nothing much is to be gained by arguing over whether it is "really" an Argentine film.

The bulk of the book, however, is made up of essays on four important films spanning less than a decade, Fabián Bielinski's 2005, *El aura*; Eduardo Mignogna's 2007 *La señal*; Juan José Campanella's 2009 *El secreto de sus ojos*; and Luisa Puenzo's 2013 *Wakolda*. These are all fine choices, and the analyses are convincing in bringing out the vital role the filmic language of noir plays in advancing the film's sociohistorical interpretation of the texture and underlying ideologies of Argentine life. I am particularly drawn to Puenzo's *Wakolda* because of the way in which it intersects with very important conversations Argentines must now hold, thanks to the advent of DNA testing, over their inherent racist views as predicated on the much ballyhooed whiteness of Argentine metropolitan society. In this sense, Puenzo's original novel and her film version of it demonstrate the extremely vital role the noir genre still has to play in Argentine cultural production.

Tompkin's monograph is perhaps one of the most outstanding of this batch of film studies, undertaking as it does to recover, order, and interpret the representation of Latin American first peoples in Argentine film. The record dates back to the earliest days of Argentine filmmaking, giving evidence of how, despite the strong, recurring mechanisms of denial and repression of the indigenous roots of Argentine society, the treatment of indigenous issues constituted an important dimension of film culture. The earliest film that Tompkins analyzes is Alcides Greca's *El último malón* (1917), a film that underscores how the white so-called civilized society of the country continued to view indigenous peoples as a violent, invading threat (an ideologeme that, of course, justified their repression and elimination). It also underscores how effective film becomes in portraying marauding Indian attacks—a sort of primal scene of the civilizing project of the Argentine frontier—as something like the quintessence of the action film: prior cultural representations of *malones* had to depend on the static character of words and painted images, which, no matter how effective they were, necessarily yielded to the enormous plastic opportunities provided by film.

Fifteen chapters cover approximately one hundred years of filming the indigenous, from Greca's film to Sebastián Liongiardi's 2010 *Las pistas-Lanhoyij-Nmitaxanaxac*, a film that attempts to chart, through the influence of the astronomical heavens and its interpretation of native peoples, forms of resistance to Western dystopia. Described as a thriller, the film makes use of numerous experimental procedures in order to emphasize nonlinear and unconventional, i.e., hegemonic Western, approaches to human experience. By "going against most of the tenets of classic Hollywood films" (260), *Las pistas* stands in dramatic contrast to *El ultimo malón*, which makes use of emerging tenets of classic Hollywood films, much in the fashion of the nascent Western, to depict the violent threat of remaining indigenous peoples.

Tompkin's specific focus is through the important examination of affect, which involves examining how the language of cinematography is deployed to produce a particular affectual stance toward the filmed object. Her title is particularly eloquent, because it signals how the representation of the indigenous peoples in Argentine film, as elsewhere in the Americas, has mostly served to justify the erasure of the indigenous. This is as much so in the sense of ideological echoes of the founding stain of Argentine social history, Roca's 1879 Conquest of the Desert in which enterprising economic agents underwrote the Argentine army's wholesale slaughter and enslavement of the indigenous peoples of the Pampas, as it is in the acquiescent depiction of indigenous people succumbing to implacable encroachment of Western dystopia. Tompkins is very effective in bringing out the dynamics of affect, and the social and ethical implications are particularly pertinent today: not only is this a scholarly exercise in making a significant adjustment in the historical record of Argentine filmmaking, but it touches on the disastrous ecological consequences that record has to teach us and the complicity of filmmaking in if only passively justifying those consequences in the name of unchallenged priorities of so-called European civilization that has long been a compelling criterion of Argentine society.

Romero's examination of Paraguay films is one of the most notable titles examined in this essay, beginning with the importance of the publication of a solid analysis of filmmaking from a country that remains marginal in so many ways to the central issues of Latin American cultural studies, including its virtual nonexistence in film studies in particular. I expected a conventional collection of essays around the broad topic of recent filmmaking in one of the Latin American countries—perhaps narrowly focused around a cluster of themes; perhaps broadly representative of the current work—with the added and passing interest of a collection of essays on a so-called "minor" country about which one hardly concerns oneself as regards its cultural production. How many of us who mostly work on Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, maybe even Chile wonder if Paraguay has a film production? It is difficult to escape the commonplace that, during the period of nation formation in Latin America in the nineteenth century, Paraguay had no publishing house—but it did have a playing card publisher.

However, this is far more than a collection of essays about films that probably might never circulate outside Paraguay. Rather, it is a series of essay on cultural issues in general with respect to Paraguay, and that film is first and foremost the organizing principle for research into larger cultural issues. Moreover, only to ramp things up, one also quickly perceives that *Film and Democracy* has a specific ideological orientation, a specific commitment to a sociopolitical agenda involving the power of cultural discourse. It is one that aligns itself with social producers—specifically, in this case, with film directors and their production coterie—that are deeply imbricated with the consolidation of democracy in Paraguay and with the nourishment of those institutions. This will guarantee that Paraguay never lapses into the sort of black hole of

dictatorship that characterized in in most of the latter half of the twentieth century—indeed, in one way or another—throughout its national history.

Of particular concern—and here my own personal commitment to the matter of language ideology becomes profoundly engaged—is the turn to Guarani as the language of Paraguay film, in great measure because, quite simply, Guarani and not Spanish is the language of the Paraguayan people. Spanish is the language of internal and external oppression/exploitation, and this linguistic option speaks eloquently to the bridge between Spanish and Paraguay's most appalling historical experiences. Moreover, the use of Guarani not only sets Paraguay off from other Latin American filmic productions in which indigenous languages, if they are present at all, seem only to serve to contextualize and give local color, such as the particularly important use of Bolivian Aymara in Jorge Sanjinés's 1969 *The Blood of the Condor* (indeed, in this film there is a triangulation between Aymara, Spanish, and American English). However, the idea that the unique sociopolitical agenda of these films involves their inaccessibility—at least without subtitles, for the rest of the Hispanic world—is a stunning ideological gesture, one that underscores how Paraguayan film is not simply a marginal production that is dependent on the hegemonic cultural centers of the Latin American continent, in a way in which one might argue that Uruguay is vis-à-vis Argentina or the Dominican Republic vis-à-vis Cuba, or the Central American countries vis-à-vis Mexico (at least Mexican independent filmmaking, not the vast commercial enterprise).

This whole ideological sphere is encapsulated in the eloquent header “Small Cinemas and Small Countries that Matter.” Small, indeed: this huge volume (huge in its ambitions and huge in its accomplishments) is veritably a call for a whole new approach to Paraguayan studies and the place of Paraguay in Latin American studies. The ensuing five chapters deal with major thematic clusters: I particularly appreciate the attention to films dealing with feminist issues, queer issues, and non-adults. The analyses are intelligent and make judicious use of important theoretical materials. In sum, this is a superb critical project. The author argues persuasively for the importance of studying Paraguay cinema and for the importance of the individual films, especially within the overarching framework of the promotion and sustainment of democracy and popular identity—as opposed to an overarching national identity that serves the interest of a national ruling class and an international capitalist dynamic. This is a strongly argued, original study that makes a significant contribution both to Latin American film studies and to the strengthening of an imperative for Paraguayan cultural studies.

Nora Glickman and Ariana Huberman, editors of *Evolving Images: Jewish Latin American Cinema* are, like Naomi Lindstrom, who writes the afterword, founding members of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association, and many of the contributors are longstanding colleagues in that organization. LAJSA has had as one of its fundamental commitments the affirmation of how Jewish culture is much more than a minority enclave in Latin America and that Jews have been central to cultural production in many ways that are immediately evident and may have, in fact, been willfully ignored. Certainly in Mexico and Argentina—and Brazil, to a lesser extent—Jews have been crucial to the filmmaking industry. This may not necessarily be so to the extent of the Jewish presence historically and contemporaneously in Hollywood, but in many cases their involvement in the industry has exceeded their proportional representation in national demographics.

While the films examined here date from the mid-1970s, given all the multiple parameters Lindstrom describes in her Afterword, the editors could well have found important titles retrospectively, especially when thematic dimensions are taken into account. Someone once

observed that the Jewish directors of Hollywood took naturally to Westerns because they saw how the conflicts represented there mirrored their history of ethnic persecution and that, indeed, attacks on pioneer settlements reminded them of the pogroms that repeatedly devastated *shtetl* settlements. Yet, it is reasonable that the editors have chosen to focus on a production that only extends back to the late twentieth century, as it is the postmodernity of that era that to a large extent made it possible to seriously promote, in a format as costly as a movie, an ethnic identity that was a challenge to notions of a unified nationalistic culture. Mexico is most prominent in this regard. Some very good Jewish-marked films have come out of Mexico. Even Argentina, with the most prominent production, can point to the military dictatorships of the twentieth century as fierce attempts to (re)affirm cultural nationalism in the context of which Jewish-marked filmmaking (and even non-Jewish-marked filmmaking by Jews) constituted important examples of resistance. In any event, the relative recentness of the production surveyed here means that the reader is likely to find most of the films readily available for future research and/or classroom use.

One of the most important aspects of this volume is the fact, that in addition to bringing together a significant number of those scholars who have written on Jewish filmmaking, important films are examined in detail. Where previously, one might have expected to find a panoramic survey of filmic production (one thinks of Carl Mora's book on Mexican filmmaking, Michael Chanan's volume on Cuban cinema, or Randal Johnson's and Robert Stam's comprehensive survey of Brazilian film), and where even the most important texts rarely get more than a few pages and lots of space is devoted to productions one is never likely to get around to seeing, the sort of model represented by Glickman's and Huberman's volume means that films the interested reader is likely to have seen are discussed in detail in essays that can, in turn, serve as the basis for classroom teaching as well as for subsequent new scholarship that both reacts to them or takes up issues that they raise in their own critically complex discussion. This has been my own model for writing about film, so it is understandable that I applaud its adoption here.

In view of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the scholars represented here are experienced film critics, one is not surprised to find that the scholarship is sustainedly solid and that the pertinent theoretical and critical bibliography is cited. What I find particularly satisfying is that technical aspects of film production are not emphasized nor is there much attention paid to the so-called French model of complex theorizing about the nature of film. Perhaps this is because the majority of the films are "realistic" in nature, grounded in an interest in documenting Jewish life—this is true both for "straight" documentaries and for films that are narrative fictions—or of establishing parallels between Jewish life and Latin American sociohistorical parameters in general. Sociohistorical parameters are repeatedly evoked, and the plot of most of the films is pinned in one way or another to those same parameters. By the same token, the veritable bane of so much American film criticism, psychoanalytical approaches, is absent here. This does not mean that the films are viewed as transparent reports on Jewish life and related issues, but rather that ideological parameters of the construction of cultural texts inform the dominant way in which the films are examined. Where this becomes important is in the utility of a collection such as this in the teaching of Latin American culture where a particular segment of cultural production can be used to contribute to more effectively teaching global awareness if it is ideologically grounded than if it is tied to epistemological issues of art form and knowledge.

In sum, this is a significant and useful contribution to the field. It is an important entry in the prospering field of Latin American Jewish studies, and it contributes to one of the many different optics that can be brought to the now immense body of Latin American film for purposes of research and teaching. There is no other competing work available on the subject, and thus this

is very much of a grounding text for the field. I recommend it enthusiastically for publication, and I am confident that it will be enormously influential.

The topos (conceptual commonplace, or, in more modern parlance, ideologeme) of life as a road and a human being as a traveler along the road of life (the *homo viator*) is as old as cultural imagination itself, and one could cover pages with examples, beginning with Homer's epic poem, passing through the *Quijote* and wrapping up with paradigmatic examples like Ernesto Guevara's *Diarios de motocicleta*. These journeys allegorize, if not all of life itself, particularly significant versions of it, driven or not by specific sociopolitical commitments. For modernity, Lie would have us understand, the road movie is linked to a proleptic narrative of spiritual and psychological fulfillment, appropriately synchronized with modernity's illusions of progress, accomplishment, and prevalence. Although Ernesto Sabato's 1961 *Sobre héroes y tumbas* is not the characterization of a road voyage, it ends with Martín, the main character, pulling free from the clutches of a crumbling Buenos Aires society to set out on a road trip to the new Argentine frontier, the south, where presumably the noble and manly virtues that have withered away in the metropolis can once again spring forth with renewed vigor from the soil the two men—Martín and the truck driver who has picked him up—pee on as they undertake their journey south. Cinematographically, we have something of this neo-patriarchal male-male bonding—or the aspiration to it—in Fernando Solanas's lyrical postdictatorship “travel in quest of the father” odyssey, *El viaje* (1992).

In Lie's excellent survey of the genre, one is struck by the overwhelming number of thematic examples: I was particularly impressed by the quantity that can be grouped around the powerful imaginary of the Argentine Patagonia, which is both a specific geographical region, but more importantly the mythical alternative universe to the omnipotent, all-consuming presence of Buenos Aires (see Amanda Holmes's monograph discussed above). Necessarily, Lie must devote significant space to Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* (2001), a film that absolutely dominates writing about contemporary Mexico with its hard-edged feminist and queer dimensions—and, equally not to be missed is the wickedly feminist *Sin dejar huella* (2001); missing, for the time being, is an equivalent queer road movie of equal influence.

Lie organizes her monograph in terms of geographical configurations, which seem like a more concrete conceptualization, as opposed to alternative schemes based on the type of road and more abstractly, the sort of ideological point to be made about the journey. Thus, in addition to the chapter on Patagonia, there are chapters on the Mexico-US border, internal migrations, and Latin America as a whole as symbolic spaces connected by the synapses of borders. Films about specific nations in crisis that motivate displacement and quest, tourists with the powerful destructuring and damning gaze of the outsider, and films more specifically devoted to diasporic forces round out the various geographic configurations. Although so many of the films Lie characterizes fall under the category of road movies in one way or another—with (pseudo)epic or (pseudo)tragic arcs—she pays particularly attention to what she calls counter-road movies: projects in which an accrual or implied journey is truncated, vitiated, disrupted, or in other ways non-realized. To be sure, such examples directly undermine the road movie as figuring the eventual triumph of modernity through movement and renovation, and, as seen in an outstanding example like Pablo Trapero's 1999 *Mundo grúa* (note the urban icon of modernity of the crane, seen almost as a living entity in its movement, and its “flocking together,” across the urbanscape). Here, physical and emotional immobility and the paradigmaticization of the realms of the non-space are the antitheses of the many roads to the redemptive and restorative Oz pictured in the works they are countering.

One of the abiding confusions among those outside queer scholarship is that queer refers essentially to “deviant” or “nonnormative” sexuality; this is hardly accurate. Queer refers to a deconstructive challenge to the social normative; it is only because the social normative is customarily so obsessed with sexuality that sexuality is often foregrounded in queer contestations to the social normative. One fundamental aspect of the social normative that is tangentially related to compulsory heteronormativity and its inherent reproductive imperative is the mythification of childhood. Only gingerly does the heteronormative back away from the reproductive imperative, since such an imperative is its fundamental justification: supposedly heteronormativity is essential to society for the orderly reproduction of the species, and hence reproduction proleptically justifies the institution of heteronormativity, as though reproduction could not take place outside of compulsory heteronormativity nor could heteronormativity ever do without reproduction—even when it, increasingly, does. Indeed, reproductivity itself becomes an imperative in order to maintain the reproductive couple: without it, such a couple collapses, apparently losing irrevocably its reason for existence. Because the program of reproduction, and the heteronormativity allegedly necessary to insure it, is predicated on a narrative schema—the successive generations of the human species, with deviations from it stridently foreclosed—there is a putatively intelligible timeline associated with it: agents are engaged in an action that develops over time and generates new agents who, in due course, repeat the narrative schema.

St-Georges’s subtitle, then, refers to a question of that timeline: a structural ambiguity (is it Gerundive + Noun or is it Gerund + Noun?). The reference is as much to times that are troubling/troublesome as times that are being troubled/disruptive by unspecified agents. Both senses apply to the films that St-Georges analyzes. By dealing with films that are, first, exemplars of the use of the gothic horror story as a narrative base (that is, a story involving unknown forces expressed in terms of the uncanny, the gory, the horrifying), and second, the use of children (either as they are now or as they were then) as victims of the horror, St-Georges analyzes a range of topics that question the assumptions of heteronormativity. More specifically, in these films, time is queer(ed) to the extent that the arch of the heteronormative storyline is disrupted when past/present/future become confused as to what and who—and how—is the agent in the first instance (procreator) and what and how—and how—s/he is in the second instance (procreated, destined to become, in orderly fashion in turn a new creator). Certainly, queer sexuality disrupts the heteronormative narrative because of the implied break in the circuit of first and second-instance procreators, and perhaps queer sexuality is, then, the dominant manifestation of the horror of heterosexist nightmares.

But what if it is not queer sexuality that disrupts this circuit, but rather flaws, errors, deviations and the like in the circuit provoked by other forces of unknown or unknowable horror, such as the assault on the individual, on family formations, on loving human interrelationships by the hidden hands of spiraling forms of societal oppression, authoritarian ideologies and their empowered practices, military dictatorships and neofascist tyranny, and the overall disaster of unchecked late capitalism? Given the fact that St-Georges’s monograph deals with films made in the shadow of repressive regimes in Argentina, Spain, Mexico, one can easily see how such filmic production—part of larger configurations of contemporary cultural production in those countries and others from whom parallel examples can be drawn—provides a rich archive from which to pursue issues of the horrors of childhood viewed from the perspective of the disruption of the heteronormative timeline.

Concomitantly, St-Georges’s subtitle refers to how these films undertake, in a transitive way, to trouble the sense of heteronormative time and the orderly progression of the human

species. If times are troubled by the events being portrayed, film and its fluid ability to shift, parallel, counter and alter timelines, with ominous flashbacks and foreshadowings, serve as a particularly supple narrative modality for the portrayal of normality queered. That that queering in the end may be more “effectively” engineered not by queer subjects but by presumably heteronormative ones (e.g., the agent of military repression who terrorizes families, tortures and kills parents, manipulates pregnancies, and “redistributes” newborns) is the ultimate ironic horror of the films St-Georges so effectively analyzes. There is much in this rich monograph that is suggestive of future research.

Given the ideological emphasis placed on children, a necessary corollary of the hegemonic heterosexist imperative, it is not surprising to see them as major figures in narrative filmmaking. Indeed, evolving concepts and classifications of formulations of childhood, often constructed around the ideologeme of “the future belongs to our children,” provides rich alternative ways of viewing childhood, especially because of the ways in which the hegemonic heterosexist imperative (which includes the categorical sub-imperative to propagate) is intimately imbricated with narratives of the Nation. Furthermore, the current crisis in reproduction, where Spain and several Latin American countries are threatened demographically by negative population growth—or, where the over-production of the young in Mexico has at times been viewed with alarm—only serves additionally to explain films where children are so particularly prominent. After all, the most famous film ever produced in Spanish—Luis Buñuel’s 1950 *Los olvidados*—is about children.

Moreover, while children are an important reference for overall sociohistorical processes in any society, with special attention given to their crucial existential evolution: pre-adult sexuality at the present moment is of exceptional concern in the awareness of childhood development in many societies today. In Latin America, of course, childhood has a particularly prominent marking due to the way in which they were often a combination of pawns of great affective pathos and horrendous collateral victims of political processes, especially those involving draconian authoritarian and neofascist regimes: if the films referencing the Spain of Franco were notably populated by children, the films referencing the neofascist dictatorship in Argentina that valued so many of Franco’s policies were equally prominent.

New Visions of Adolescence, then, is not an unexpected contribution, and its scope is not unexpected. The matter of “new visions” refers not to new ways of seeing children, but rather to a sampler of recent scholarship on the topic that underscores the wealth of primary texts that can lend themselves to profitable critical analysis. Nine studies undertake to cover the terrain: all nine are excellent contributions, well-grounded theoretically, and all have important analytical points to make. What for me is most impressive is that two of the nine essays concern themselves with Brazilian films, thereby making good on the Latin American designation of the title. This is not just a circumstantial matter regarding the politics of Latin American studies, but rather of great importance as regards film, since Brazilian films circulate internationally and in Spanish-speaking markets far more than traditional prose literature does, and to fail to cover Brazilian production suggests a linguistic compartmentalization far less true of film. Moreover, in the specific matter of children, migration patterns for economic and political reasons are likely moving young people around the continent more than ever: the closed uniform Mexican society of Buñuel’s film is hardly the case anymore in major urban areas of the continent.

A particularly notable feature of this collection is the emphasis on sexual and gender issues, which in the main are being treated by these filmic texts in a frank and unhyprocritical way that is

truly admirable. Concomitantly, the various critics are able to address these issues in an equally frank and unhypocritical manner. This conjunction is prominently on display in the lead essay, Geoffrey Maguire's discussion of Marco Berger's 2011 *Ausente*. It is difficult to think of an American director taking the same ideological risks Berger engages in. For this film, it is an adolescent boy who is a very efficacious sexual instigator, against a teacher who is virtually an allegory of the central-casting macho's hysterical resistance to his own homoerotic potential. The critic is most effective in detailing, to put it bluntly, the truly sexy configurations of the haptic gaze of the camera.

I only regret that the editors fail to front in their title this emphasis on gender and sexuality in their essays. It would likely have led to a corresponding Library of Congress subject heading that would enable the identification of the book on this basis.

Selimović's study also examines the child as the affective grounding in the work of three major Argentine feminist filmmakers, Albertini Carri, Lucía Puenzo, and Lucrecia Martel. Although she is neither interested in focusing on the way in which these films queer childhood nor in bringing to the analysis of an abidingly heteronormative romance of the child queer analytical frames, Selimović's detailed discussion of their major work unquestionably underscores the child as the site of a critical and often apocalyptic vision of Argentine society. While she places the three filmmakers in a genealogy of important work by Argentine women directors (Matthew Losada's forthcoming monograph will flesh out the history of their efforts before the breakthrough for feminism represented in film by María Luisa Bemberg's work in the 1980s and 1990s), she makes an excellent case for how these three women constitute an affective trilogy in their particularly effective and consistent way in foregrounding the role of emotions and the haptic as integral to a contemporary film practice: "Affective moments in these films indeed 'provide access to knowledge,' particularly by disallowing fixed intersubjective boundaries and by making certain intimate encounters momentous, visible, unprotected, or unmasked. In so doing, affective moments also distinctively brim with sociopolitical implications [...]" (20).

It is important to focus on the affirmation that closes this quote. Of course, all Latin American filmmaking "brim[s] with sociopolitical implications," and in a Jamesonian fashion all filmmaking undoubtedly does, but we certainly expect this of Latin American filmmaking in its fundamental decision to leave Hollywood to Hollywood and to make films that, even though most Latin American filmgoers may not prefer to see them over Hollywood megaproductions, diligently address deep reaches of the political unconscious. Argentina is not particularly more fraught in its political unconscious than elsewhere in Latin America, but it is as regards the crucial issue of demographics. In a society where abortion remains the only legendary Judeo-Christian taboo, and arguably more for demographic reasons than for moral ones (actual raw statistics are not alarming, but they need to be assessed in terms of the older population base of the black hole of national consciousness that is Buenos Aires), the figure of the child is a nexus of numerous layers of ideological work regarding the definition and future of the Nation. And one needs to give full measure to the way in which the figure of the child was made a particularly hysterical (and for unimpeachable reasons) point of reference in the record relating to the practices of the neofascist state under military tyranny. I am referring, of course, to the disappeared children of allegedly subversive parents; the accounting for such children, who are now all adults if they are not dead, remains an open wound in the national psyche. The organization of Selimović's monograph does not, clearly, include, as Argentine filmmaking has done incessantly, a discussion of *Historia oficial* (1985), the key film on the subject, directed by Luis Puenzo and on which his daughter Lucía

Puenzo had some participation as an assistant. Although *Historia oficial* cannot be included because it was not directed by one of the three women directors examined in *Affective Moments*, it casts a long shadow over the monograph because of the way in which it is child-centered and, even if in the rather too often mawkish language of Hollywood sentimentality, it is necessarily a crucial example of the Argentine child as the point of confluence of sociopolitical implications.

Indeed, one of the most salient characteristics of the films Selimović examines is the way in which soap-opera-time emotion is avoided: affective emotions may be involved, but they are not the stuff of facile response on the part of the film spectator, especially when there are themes of incest, rape, transgendered/transsexual identity, sexual voyeurism, sexual sadism, along with the assorted psychoses that make up the narrative base of the continuing Argentine commitment to psychoanalysis. This is a grab bag of sexuality, with specific reference to the child as participant or witness, and the issue cannot be which ones are legitimate and which are criminal in contemporary society: the issue is which are inherently shocking to the Argentine *moyen* and how they are used as plot devices for effecting a sociopolitical interpretation. Part of the grim irony, for example, that underlies the child's witness of sexual sadism in Carri's *La rabia* (2008), one of the most affectively jarring Argentine films ever made, is the way in which the spectator can, and must, understand that it is a figure for the sociopolitical sadism of not just the neofascist dictatorship in Argentina that all Argentine children had to witness. It deals as well with the violence that is integral to Argentine history and of which its record of cultural production has given witness since the earliest days of national identity: Esteben Echeverría's story *El matadero* (ca. 1830) is a founding text of an apocalyptic vision of Argentine social history. The genius of these directors, and the effectiveness of Selimović's monograph is to demonstrate how effective film is in affectively engaging an understanding of this fact.

Selimović's monograph is well complemented by the collection of essays of affect, the child, and Latin American culture she organized with Philippa Page and Camilla Sutherland. Six essays focus on individual films or a tight group of films to examine this intersection. The initial premise is that "Children and adolescents have become potent tropes for drawing and manifesting political and sociocultural implications in Latin American cultural production over the past two decades" (2). Although the volume does have the opportunity to survey the use of children in Latin American filmmaking, it is amply evident that their appearance is often merely circumstantial, with no attempt to individuate their feelings or to give those feelings any substantial role in the execution of a film. This is nowhere more evident than in a film like Luis Puenzo's 1985 *Historia oficial*, where the entire point of the film turns on the plight of a child iconic as regards the fate of hundreds of children during the 1976-83 military tyranny in Argentina, with absolutely no screen time whatever devoted to what that child might be feeling—in fact, very little screen time at all is devoted to the child at all. Rather, what the introduction accomplishes very well is theorizing regarding the feeling child, toward an understanding of how such a child is not merely an allegory of so-called adult society, but an integral part of a sociopsychological process of understanding and relationship with the sociohistorical circumstances of life. Certainly, the figure of the child, when one speaks of the use of the affective in cultural production, can reference facile sentimental views of childhood (or adolescence) and its many accompanying pathetic circumstances. However, in the films analyzed here—and it is important to mention that some of the contributions discuss literary texts, so that film is not the exclusive province of the collection, although it is much fronted—there is a particular subtlety and density to the image of children such that their lived experience is convincingly portrayed as unique and intrinsically valuable as a motivating principle

for the text. One of the best of these films is Paula Markovitch's widely praised 2011 *Los premios*, and Selimović's essay superbly sets the tone for the other texts studied in the volume. Indeed, one of the most effective—and, therefore, affective—dimensions of *Los premios* involves the clash between different “scripts” of socialization for the child who is at the center of the film, a clash that is devastatingly indicative of the past fifty years of Argentine social history.

Taking a different tack from Selimović and St-Georges, for whom the figure of the child in Latin American cinema is a figure for the issues of the adult world, psycho-sociological, on the one hand, historic-political and queer on the other, Martin chooses a more thematic approach in which the emphasis is on the documentary sense of children's lives in Latin America. These lives, of course, are part of a continuum with the adult world, which controls them and into which they transition as social subjects. Martin is as much concerned with generalities regarding childhood in Latin America as she is in specific national contexts, with their own social and economic dynamics. Although truth be said, there is a dismal continuity regarding the lives of children in impoverished circumstances throughout Latin America, and Martin places her emphasis on this social sector, with no display of interest in the lives of children as manifested, for example, in the upper-middle-class settings in the block of films Leopoldo Torres Nilsson adapted from his wife, Beatriz Guido's novels. Luis Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (1950) is the ur-filmic text here: Buñuel left an enormous legacy that has taught several generations of Latin American film makers how important it is to speak of the marginalized child not just as a metaphor for universal social failures in a society, but as a figure whose pathos is as unendingly effective because it is so profoundly affective within the parameters of the mythification (or mixtification, to use a solid term from the vocabulary of the left in the 1960s and 1970s) of the child. There is hardly a tradition of Latin American filmmaking that does not possess an inventory of films on the child, which stands so much in stark contrast to the relative absence of the marginalized child in American filmmaking. Indeed, perhaps one of the allures of Hollywood filmmaking in Latin America is the image of a range of young lives that exists only sporadically and often precariously in Latin American societies.

Martin analyzes about three dozen films, which means a handful get no more than cursory commentary: *Los olvidados*, of course, along with *Central do Brasil*, *La rabia*, *José Martí: el ojo del canario* deserve several passing references. But this is in contrast to the decision to focus five main chapters on ten films, while one central chapter takes on the very large number of films emanating from the Southern Cone countries that have, concomitantly, attracted extensive international attention. It is in these chapters where Martin develops close readings of a core of films drawn essentially from the last twenty-five years. Martin does an admirable job in general in characterizing the importance of these films and the contours of the various filmic projects. Film theory does not make much of an appearance here, nor does there seem to be much of an effort in bringing in the scholarly bibliography of childhood studies in the different Latin American societies. Thus, what we have is straightforward thematic analysis via close reading which is certainly valuable in giving a sense of why these particular films deserve prominent display. Additionally, Martin is judicious in making sure that there is a representative coverage of Latin America and, although not as vigorously represented as one might like, Brazilian titles are included, although one might quibble as to whether Brazil is a Southern Cone country or not.

The comprehensive filmography is marred by the regrettable decision to list films whose titles begin with definite and indefinite articles under those articles.

Despite all its prominence for Latin American filmmaking, documentary remains woefully understudied. Guadalupe Arenillas and Lazzara refer only to a handful of predecessors in their endeavor (Foster 2013 being one of them), and while their collection of essays principally justifies itself on the premise that the new millennium necessarily brings with it a new sociocultural consciousness, it is certainly an outstanding contribution to grasping this most protean dimension of Latin American filmic production. Certainly in the new millennium, Latin American films have never been in wider distribution, at least in the west, and it is difficult to keep up with the enormous array of film festivals being held in Latin America and elsewhere featuring Latin American films: indeed, such festivals are more often the preferred venue of documentaries, since, despite the centrality of the documentary to the history of Latin American filmmaking, it is not that modality that can usually be found in the venues featuring narrative films. Perhaps with the problematical status of the left in Latin America and the banality of current versions of authoritarian rule by comparison to the strident malevolence of the late mid-twentieth-century dictatorships, one cannot except works of the stature of Fernando Solanas's *La hora de los hornos* (1968) or Patricio Guzmán's *Batalla de Chile* (1975-79).

Sixteen essays make up this volume, and the ones that are the most satisfying are those that reflect in broad terms about the nature and sustained possibilities of the documentary, such as Lazzara's own essay on "What Remains of the Third Cinema": it turns out, quite a bit, despite the relentless professional commercialization of Latin American filmmaking, mostly because of the endurance of the commitment of the genre to grounding principles of the social documentary—even narrative films so often seem, one might insist, essentially social documentaries, as can be amply seen by the context of Alfonso Cuarón's recent success with *Roma* (2018), a film that seems to have a diminished resonance with non-Latin American viewers unfamiliar with those contexts, e.g. the continued marginalization of the indigenous populations, the "misidentifications" of indigenous women, the irreflexive brutality of modernism "in the tropics," the presence of right-wing paramilitary groups, the exploitation of affect across social classes as a tool for power.

Several essays deal with reflexivity and the various positionings of the documentary narrator, and more specifically with the problematics of first-person accounts, as in Antonio Gómez's essay on "Displacing the 'I': Uses of the First Person in Recent Argentine Biographical Documentaries," where it is not surprising to find evidence of a shaken faith in the ability of the observant subjectivity to organize a coherent interpretation of the documented universe. Such discussions seem to ground themselves in Albertina Carri's, *Los rubios* (2003), which turns on the impossibility/futility of reconstructing the past—at least from the perspective of a stable, superiorly perceptive subject. Gomez proceeds to discuss subsequent examples of the "effort to transcend the hegemony of the 'I' in recent Argentine documentary" (5). His essay interacts with several others along the same line, but I wish to mention in particular Jens Andermann's "Performance, Reflexivity, and the Languages of History in Contemporary Brazilian Filmmaking," not only because of the focus on Eduardo Coutinho's important range of works, but also because of the pertinent comments on João Moreira Salles's *Santiago* (2007), a film in which the ostensible intent to provide a documentary of the other turns out to be a merciless endorsement of the filmmaker's self. It is interesting, however, to note that Andermann does not pick up on how the most violent silencing of Santiago's self is the trampling of his attempts to voice his homoaffective history—as though that attempt could not hope to survive the relentless patriarchal privilege the director embodies.

The concluding essay to this collection, the co-editor's own "Toward a Nondiscursive Turn in Argentine Documentary Film," is one of the finest. Demonstrating the use of nondiscursive

procedures by filmmakers Jonathan Perel and Martín Oesterheld (the latter's family name will have much resonance for those familiar with the history of cultural repression during the recent Argentine dictatorships) is a filmic modality that purportedly is all about the preeminence of the discursive—at least the unabashedly explanatory discursive. Turning away from the paradigmatic parameters of first-person narration, voiceover, and carefully constructed historical or contextual coherence, the films studied here, while not yet representative of a major trend, nevertheless exemplify a sense that the traditional “grand style” (i.e., that of Solanas, Guzmán, and company) can no longer do the work of adequate interpretation of sociohistoric events. In this their films, certainly, connect to the problematics of reflexivity and the altered/fragmented “I” examined by other essays in the volume. This, then, is an excellent concluding essay because it suggests to the reader the task of seeing to what extent this refreshingly audacious take on documentary filmmaking will come to constitute a significant manifestation in Latin America.

The organizing proposition of Burucúa's and Sitnisky's collection of essays is straightforward: although the New Latin American Cinema projects, as elaborated throughout the sixties, focused on portraying, in terms of lived human experience of the narrative film or the interpretive grid of the documentary, the poverty and underdevelopment of Latin America. While the notion of the “precarious” (*precariousness*, *precarity*, *precarization* in various formulations) is not specifically articulated, it provides a powerful position from which to view Latin American sociohistorical realities, and even more so, one might add, as that group of filmmaking practices confronts the horrors of military tyranny, the vagaries of redemocratization, and the overarching blight of economic malfeasance, e.g. internal corruption and international exploitation. Judith Butler's *Frames of War* (2009) provides some guiding distinctions: “Thus, whereas precarity [according to Butler] ‘designates [a] politically induced condition,’ precariousness ‘implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other’” (93).

The fourteen essays whose film analyses derive from the Introduction's development of the concept of the precarious mostly showcase either individual Latin American films or groups of national films, although there is one essay devoted to the Canadian. One is not sure why Canada figures in here, since the use of the qualifier “Americas” does not extend to U.S. films, but no matter, as the other thirteen essays expand in all sorts of directions with regard to the precarious in Latin America. Certainly, from an economic standpoint, the precarious seems to be aptly appropriate to discussing Latin American life, although one can hardly deny that there is an impressive amount of U.S. filmic production dealing with precarious lives whether as cast against the presumed “superior wealth” and stability of U.S. lives or as allegoric fables of how false the façade of wealth and stability is in these postcapitalist and apocalyptic times. What is often disquieting about Latin American filmmaking is how, when spectators are able to get beyond the silliness of Latin American life as inherently chaotic and violent, it is not really dealing with anything different from the so-called First World, except perhaps in details of texture and matters of degree. When Fortune spins the wheel, it is always humankind that loses, and on an immediate level or in terms of profound metaphysical impact, it little matters whether that loss is due to the arbitrary nature of the universe or to an identifiable structure of social repression—especially so when there has been such a steep, dramatic loss of faith in the solutions offered by the Left that inspired the New Latin American Cinema.

Although a couple of the essays deal with major contemporary Latin American films, like Pablo Larraín's *No*, the bulk of the essays deal with groups of films defined in national terms. This is especially valuable when discussing national film traditions that are not often given

representation because of the dominance of Argentine, Mexican, and Brazilian filmmaking (or, at one time, a highpoint of post-Revolution Cuban productions). Indeed, some national productions have been particularly notable for their recent resurgence: for example, Chile, which has a sustained film history and has produced some excellent films in recent years after a depressing hiatus, or Paraguay, which has never had much of a film industry but which is now producing some strikingly excellent and important texts. Unquestionably, an essay on Bolivian indigenous filmmaking would seem to iconize the precarious in every sense—from the production point of view and from thematic perspectives. Not to mention the precariousness of the market, in the sense of how precarious distribution channels remain for Latin American films, as much (or even more so, given the crushing dominance of Hollywood films in local Latin American markets)

In sum, this is a very mixed bag of issues, because so much of lived human experience is inherently precarious, no matter how you look at it (pace happy endings, which are meant to pretend life isn't precarious after all, but who are we kidding here?). One might look at the precarious from other more thematic points of view, such as that of children's lives, the topic of so many recent studies, as evidenced by several monographs reviewed here. Or, at the other end of the generational spectrum, that of senior citizens (*tercera edad* [third age] in Spanish; *melhor idade* [best age] in Portuguese, but, again, who are we kidding here?). There are many innovative social configurations being explored sociopolitically in Latin America that might well provide for especially dynamic vistas on the precarious: the significant matter of migrations, new family configurations (like single-parent families), and the queering of compulsory heteronormativity. All three of these topics have generated major films in Latin America, with their own unique inflections of the seemingly immovable precariousness of human life.

Any sense of the way in which Burucúa's and Sitnisky's emphasis on the precarious extends to the actual production circumstances of the New Latin American Cinema (a term not evoked by *Globalization and Latin American Cinema*) must be weighed against the enormous globalization of Latin American filmmaking, especially with the return to democracy in the Southern Cone, beginning in the early 1980s, and the incursions of neoliberalism, first with the neofascist government of Augusto Pinochet in Chile in the 1970s and with the new democracies in the Southern Cone, Mexico, and elsewhere in the 1990s. McClennen does an impeccable scholarly job in executing in detail the solidification of Latin American cinema around the promise and advantages of neoliberalism and its spatial correlative, globalization. Put succinctly, what this means is that the global north becomes interested in producing and distributing (in various combinations) the filmic production of the global south and in identifying and promoting (both within complex industrial, financial, and ideological parameters) high-valued commercial products that, for whatever reason, will sell. What this means is, in perhaps overly generous generic terms, a product that is neither the hard-edge Latin American imperfect cinema often seen internationally in art houses after World War II nor the ersatz Hollywood productions (many of which were financed by Latin American arms of Hollywood) of the prewar years and which are a norm of commercial filmmaking in Latin America ever since. Some of the latter, noticeably more polished than their progenitors, do make it to the American market: here in Phoenix, where I am writing, we get a modest stream of Mexican comedies of this ilk.

Rather what is at issue are films that are highly professional, often with the involvement of well-known actors and with scripts of impeccable cultural origins, that provide thought-provoking interpretations of Latin American life without being overly threatening. A classic example here is Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's y Juan Carlos Tabío's *Fresa y chocolate* (1983), which breaks the taboo

of homosexuality in post-Revolutionary Cuba, but without pushing the queer envelope in any really threatening ways (see by contrast the Cuban Enrique Pineda Barnet's 2012 *Verde, verde*, one of the rawest queer films ever made in Latin America and one you can count on never seeing at your local AMC). Although McClennen's study is not organized as a case study of texts like *Fresa y chocolate* (or, to give another major example, Alfonso Arau's 1992 blockbuster *Como agua para chocolate*), it might well have been, given how much there is to say about the industrial, critical, academic, and sociopolitical dimensions of the impact of these films in the history of U.S. viewing of foreign films, and the very significantly minor category of Latin American ones in the national consciousness.

Rather, McClennan amasses a trove of information organized along two axes: I. Process (including sections of Coproduction, Distribution, and Exhibition), and Part II. Place (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico—the three major producers of film in Latin America: one could rank these three countries in various ways). A final delightful chapter teases the reader with the proposition of James Cameron's 1997 *Titanic* as a Mexican film because of its having been produced in Mexico thanks to advantageous studio costs. This proposition is meant to evoke the way in which globalization has brought with it some crumbling of national/border distinctions, and parallels the question of whether Mexican filmmakers like Alfonso Cuarón, Guillermo del Toro, and Alejandro González Iñárritu are really doing Mexican filmmaking when they film abroad and in English (AGI is now conveniently known as Iñárritu because double surnames are a problem for the Hollywood imaginary and, if one may be a bit snarky here, González is, well, just too Mexican).

The chapters on the individual national conglomerates (for lack of a better word) are exemplary in their synthesis and documentation and how well globalization has worked to stimulate film production tied back to national cultural parameters. Of course, it is impossible to homologize the experience of the three countries because there are so many social and cultural variables involved, and there is much to think about as to how, say, the Brazilian film industry might have evolved without globalization, especially since globalization allowed Brazilian productions to overcome the tremendously isolating phenomenon of language difference: even today fewer Portuguese-language films make it across the Tordesillas divide into Spanish-language markets, although more Spanish-language films make it to Brazil (as a consequence, one must stress the Brazilian cultural establishment's inflexible determination to be international at all costs). And certainly, one must necessarily bear in mind that it is equally unreasonable to attempt to homologize sociocultural history among the three major cultural centers of the continent. But, then, one can indulge in the generalization that, thanks to globalization, probably more American audiences are seeing Latin American films than are Latin American audiences, because, when all is said and done, Hollywood still calls the shots at Latin American box offices.

Sandberg and Rocha's volume of collected essays stands in implicit contrast to McClellan's study. Where most of the Latin American films McClellan mentions (even though hers does not intend to be an analytical study of film texts but a material analysis of the globalized film industry's featuring of a highly select number of productions), Sandberg and Rocha return categorically to the concept of a Third Cinema, one poised between the European-style connoisseur art films and the Hollywood blockbuster. The consequence is that, regrettably, few of the films represented in the essays in the latter collection are extensively known and several might be hard to get for a university-level film course interested in featuring this spectrum of resistance to neoliberalist parameters. Fourteen essays look at individual films or films grouped by national identity. The latter is of some importance when talking about how filmmaking from countries that

do not have a strong industrial tradition exemplifies resistance to current commercial emphases. I have mentioned above the notable resurgence of film in Chile, with only a weak sustained industry, or the truly remarkable if still modest output from Paraguay, a country for which until very recently the phrase Paraguayan film was a nonce category.

Icíar Bollaín's 2010 *También la lluvia* is the exception, because it did attain some international and critical traction. A film about exploitative filmmaking by a "neoliberal" crew in Bolivia and involving the recreation of a devastating chapter in the Spanish conquest, its metaquality is reduplicated to the extent that one might argue that Bollaín's film is equally exploitative—at least in its use of violent affect to denounce the "inner" film crew. With a Spanish director and a Mexican megastar (Gael García Bernal), it certainly exemplifies more of the globalized filmmaking McClellan discusses than a resistance to it. The same can be said of Pablo Larraín's 2012 film *No* (discussed in an essay by María Paz Peirano), which is featured in essays in a number of the studies covered by this review essay, and which also utilizes García Bernal as tie-in with the star-quality tastes of international audiences. *No* may be a critique of neoliberalism (the ironic use of clever, glitzy advertising to defeat Pinochet, the guardian angel of neoliberalism in Chile), but it is itself an example of neoliberalist filmmaking, a point that Paz Peirano covers well, and a fact indexed by how it is the only one among Larraín's otherwise outstanding oeuvre of hard-edged critiques of the Chile forged by military dictatorship and neoliberalism (these films are analyzed in a separate essay by Walescka Pino, under the apt denomination of "macabre baroque").

Unquestionably, the transient pleasure experienced when one finds that a Latin American film has made its way to a local theater complex (a singularly rare pleasure, I might add, from the perspective from where I write, despite the enormous film market the Greater Phoenix area represents), is quickly extinguished upon perceiving the inevitable glibness of these productions and the degree to which they rarely accomplish anything like a meaningful critique of Latin American society. Concomitantly, much of the truly fine filmmaking analyzed by the studies in Sandberg and Rocha's collection will unlikely be seen in U.S. markets and, what is more disheartening, in Latin American ones either. If film festivals have their own indelible mark of neoliberalism, at least they provide some venue for the circulation of the sort of films examined here.

The essays gathered in *Contemporary Latin American Cinema*, thus, accomplish two goals. One is to showcase important work that can legitimately be called independent with ample leeway, therefore, to engage in unfiltered critical analyses of Latin American lived human experience. The other is how much of this filmmaking is essentially inaccessible, which only contributes to its absence in so many scholarly accounts of the genre.

Latin American filmmaking has never had a particularly hefty investment in the *auteur* concept of textual production, although some international criticism has been effective in identifying certain filmmakers as appropriately deserving of that term. But the effective utilization of film, especially documentary film, in the pursuit of the mid-century left's intense commitment to historicization and, in the process, providing an adequate portrayal of revolutionary imperatives did promote the profile of individual directors and their commitment to those imperatives: Fernando Solanas, Raymundo Gleyser, Patricio Guzmán, Eduardo Coutinho, Helena Solberg, Lourdes Portillo as representing auteorial quality. And Jorge Sanjinés, a towering figure in Bolivian filmmaking whose work demonstrated that it was possible to create remarkable work of international resonance beyond the privileged centers of Buenos Aires or Mexico City.

Wood's hypogrammatical title is particularly significant: while the substance of Sanjinés's filmmaking deals with autochthonous culture and the conflicts of social and symbolic power in Bolivia, his cinema is designed to promote, in the most fundamental Marxian sense, an intellectual analysis in the spectator. And while his work, which goes back to the 1950s, has extended well into the realm of the Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, so much of which relies on the processes of affect discussed in monographs and collections discussed in previous segments of this review, it continues to be driven by the documentary criteria of principled historical analysis. It is for this reason that Wood can conclude by insisting that "Sanjinés se ha presentado en el pasado como un mediador más que un autor, y recientemente ha rechazado rotundamente el estatus de auto cinematográfico" (160). Wood's study is a classic analysis of the trajectory of a director's career, his most significant work, and his relations with the crosscurrents of film history. Even when it is clear how much Sanjinés distances himself from *auteur* theory, it is also quite clear how much of an impact he has had on Latin American film history and the way in which he exemplifies highly effective and influential cinematic projects that are not necessarily anchored in the privileged urban centers of Latin American filmmaking.

The collective scholarship of these essays unquestionably affirms the level of importance Latin American film studies has attained, especially among North American scholars (including a large array of Latin American scholars working in the U.S.) While Brazil remains underrepresented and the inclusion of Romero's study is meant to argue implicitly but pointedly for greater attention to those countries "on the margin" of hegemonic national productions, there is no question that there is much to praise in this critical production in its interpretive sophistication and theoretical grounding. And it also serves to underscore the importance that a commercial publisher like Palgrave Macmillan, with its nevertheless solidly academic film series, is making to the record of Latin American film scholarship (ten of the eighteen titles examined here).

David William Foster, Arizona State University

FILM REVIEWS

As Boas Maneiras. Dir. Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra. Brazil-France, 2017. Dur. 136 min.

Through a blend of genres, including horror, fairytale, and musical, the film *As Boas Maneiras* presents the transgression of the good manners expected by white, upper class Brazilian society and highlights the dualities and contradictions of modern life. The film, which premiered in 2017, is a Brazilian-French co-production and was co-written and directed by Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra. Rojas and Dutra have collaborated since they were students at the University of São Paulo and directed another full-length horror film together, *Trabalho Cansa*. In their collaborative and individual work, Rojas and Dutra have created space in Brazilian cinema for a unique blend of horror and fantasy. *As Boas Maneiras* won the Special Jury Prize at the Locarno International Film Festival and the Jose Luis Guarner Critic's Award at the Sitges-Catalonian International Film Festival. The film is available for streaming on the website Kanopy, as well as Amazon Prime, YouTube, and Google Play.

The film has a clear division between two distinct halves: the first tells the story of Clara and Ana's relationship as employer-employee and as lovers throughout Ana's pregnancy and the

birth of her son, and the second portrays the childhood of Joel, the werewolf boy, as Clara raises him and tries to contain his hunger and violence. From the opening scene, when Clara, a black woman from the periphery of São Paulo, goes to a job interview in which she meets Ana, a white woman, at her luxury apartment in the city center, *As Boas Maneiras* presents contrasts of race, class, and location. Despite these differences, Clara and Ana begin to fall in love, bending the expectations for a relationship between an apartment owner and the domestic worker she hires. At the same time, the film builds suspense and mystery as it becomes apparent that there is a supernatural nature to Ana's pregnancy, particularly her violent sleepwalking and hunger for human blood, which Clara provides her. This first half of the film culminates in a dramatic, violent scene of horror as Ana's werewolf baby claws his way into the world, killing his mother. While Clara considers abandoning the monstrous baby, she ultimately takes him home as her own son and breastfeeds him her blood.

The theme of motherhood continues in the second half of the film, which opens with Joel's seventh birthday. He is now a frail, vulnerable child whom Clara feeds only vegetables and chains up during the full moon, in hopes of protecting him and keeping his werewolf nature secret from the world. Joel has love and support at home and friends at school, but as Joel grows, his hunger also grows greater, and he kills his best friend during a transformation into his werewolf form. The dramatic end of the film involves Joel transforming into a wolf at the school dance, just as Clara arrives and shoots him in the leg, before taking him back to their home and chaining him up. The neighbors, however, hear of his transformation, which through their religious lens is a sin and abomination, and form a violent mob, chasing after them. In an interview with AdoroCinema, Juliana Rojas points out that this religious understanding of the werewolf is particular to Brazilian folklore and was intentionally emphasized in the film. Ultimately, Clara declares to Joel, "I don't want you to feel hungry" and releases him from his chains. He takes her hand, and in the last frame of the film they stand together ready to face the mob outside.

One of the clearest themes in the film is the repetition of duality and contradiction. In an interview with Papo do Cinema, Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra share that there are distinctions of race and social class, as well as polarities of mood and tone, in every scene of the film. They point out that it is these types of contrast which have made werewolf stories so common across cultures. The juxtapositions of place, of race, of social class, the combination of genres (horror, musical, and fairytale), the contrasts between love and violence, between innocence and evil, all are brought together in Joel's character and his relationship with his birth and adoptive mothers. As a werewolf, Joel exists in a hybrid place between human and monster and transgresses the boundaries of modern society. The good manners expected in a society constructed for the benefit of white, Christian, wealthy people, are bent and broken throughout the film, particularly as Clara frees her monster son from his chains.

The film's visual techniques are also noteworthy in their variety and in the incorporation of both digital and analogue visual effects. The inequalities across São Paulo are demonstrated through beautiful matte painting backdrops created by Eduardo Schaal, which are utilized in many scenes and bring a subtle surrealism to the film, and through digital visual effects produced through CGI and motion capture which two French companies provided. The blend of genres in the film is accentuated through the use of Disney fairytale-like opening credit backdrops and the incorporation of several musical numbers which provide insight into the character's emotions. The abrupt tonal shifts in the film further reveal its dual, hybrid nature.

As Boas Maneiras is a film that uses allegory and metaphor to explore the dualities and contrasts in society and to present complexities that transgress social boundaries and good manners. Its unusual blending of genres and techniques further emphasizes these coexisting oppositions. Through a supernatural werewolf tale, *As Boas Maneiras* touches on universal themes of human relationships in modern society, including motherhood, romance, and relationships at work, school, and with neighbors. In each of these relationships, there are dualities of violence and love and of oppression and freedom, which are brought together and into question through the use of fantastical elements.

Carrie Vereide, The Ohio State University

Era o Hotel Cambridge [The Cambridge Squatter]. Dir. Eliane Caffé. Brazil, 2016. Dur. 99 min.

Era o Hotel Cambridge centers around the daily lives of squatters of a building called Cambridge Hotel (a former hotel that was abandoned and became a shelter for homeless people after a real occupation in 2012) in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. These squatters who include low-income Brazilians, immigrants and refugees from a variety of nations are confronted with an impending eviction after a 15-day notice ahead of the building's repossession. They have no option than to mobilize and fight for their shelter, even as this involves confrontations with the police and a contempt of the legal eviction served them. The film is directed by Brazilian filmmaker Eliane Caffé, who is a São Paulo native, and director of the films; *Kenoma* (1998), *Storytellers* (2003) and several others.

In *Era o Hotel Cambridge*, the art of cinema meets with social justice, as the film focuses on squatters' experiences of precarious living as well as their struggles for survival in a building that lacks even the most basic facilities for a dignified form of living. In this struggle, the film highlights the pivotal role played by social movement collective *Frente de Luta por Moradia - FLM* (Front for Housing Struggle) whose activism for the right to shelter for homeless people is the basis of the film's principal theme. Responsibilities discharged by the collective such as; internal coordination of residents, building maintenance, community support, and engagement with external institutions as a representative on issues that affect the squatters constitute the foundation for the development of the film's plot.

The film's opening scenes capture the exterior view of the Cambridge hotel building and other occupied buildings. In this, what stands out are the unreadable painted inscriptions on the walls and the details of fire ravaged windows. The view of the building that follows is from the street, and it captures the movement of people. And on the sidewalk leading to Cambridge hotel, the camera focuses on a woman pushing her cart through the building's entrance. The first shots from the interior of the building are images of rusted irons, broken walls, cracked windows, broken wall tiles and several exposed electric cables – details which highlight the building's insanitary and dilapidated condition. Notwithstanding the dilapidated state of this building, the film reflects how these squatters manage to live their lives happily and survive the hardship of living in a tenement through mutual collaborations. This is exemplified when power goes out in the building, Brazilian squatter, Apollo (Jose Dumont) goes to call Ngandu (Guylain Muskendi Lobobo), a Congolese refugee to join them to fix the energy and asks him, "where is your contribution?" to which Ngandu goes with him to fix the energy problem.

While the film features Brazilians, its principal focus are refugees. The cast is comprised of members of the São Paulo-based *Grupo de Refugiados e Imigrantes Sem Teto* – GRIST (Group of Homeless Refugees and Immigrants) who feature as both main and secondary characters. The film employs a combination of techniques such as flashback and vlogs to capture the stories of these refugees. Through these mediums, they narrate some of the circumstances that led to their displacements from their countries of origin. The film also creatively uses live video calls to extract real-time personal accounts of the refugees, as some of them were recorded while they speak with families back in their countries about situations at home and their experiences in Brazil. It is important to say that these narrative techniques contributed to the realistic character of the film as it combines acting with discourses provoked by real events that have affected these squatters. One example of such discourses in the film is seen during the video log session with Palestinian refugee Hassan ([Isam Ahmad Issa](#)), he speaks about the war between Israel and Palestine, and alleges the involvement of Europe and the US in the long-standing war between the two nations, saying, “Israel will never make two states. Never! - Europe and the US will not let it. To whom are they going to sell guns? - War is the air that Europe and the US breathe.”

Era o Hotel Cambridge is more interesting not only for its realistic and documentary style, but also for its political content, in the way it denounces social inequality. One of the factors that distinguishes the film is that its cast consists of real people who interpret themselves, such as Carmen Silva (current leader of the FLM collective), the Brazilian squatters and the refugees. It also features a crop of professional actors who interpret fictional characters like Jose Dumont (Apollo) and Suely Franco (Gilda). Since the release of the film, it has won several prizes in Brazil and abroad, some of the notable ones are; winner of San Sebastian Films in Construction (2015); best film and popular vote in the International Film Festival of São Paulo (2015), and best film, popular vote and best editing in the FIPRESCI CRITICAL Award (2015).

Era o Hotel Cambridge dialogues with an older Brazilian documentary entitled *Dia de Festa* (2005) by Toni Ventura. Here, the word “*festa*” in the title refers to the moment of the occupation of a building by homeless people led by social movement collectives. Like *Era o Hotel Cambridge*, this documentary also focuses on the experiences of homeless people through the collection of personal accounts. Another unique feature of *Era o Hotel Cambridge* is the use of art forms. Through community events organized by the collective, art forms such as dance, drumming, acting and spoken word poetry were performed by the squatters in order to bond together and create a sense of collectivity as they prepare to confront their impending eviction. According to the director Eliane Caffé, when queried about the motivation for the film, she expresses that “O que é importante para mi, é juntar dois polos, movimento social e um discurso da arte” (what is important for me is to bring together two poles, social movement and the discourse of art).

While the focus of the narrative is on refugees, the problem of homelessness is quite prominent in Brazil. According to figures released by the Institute of Applied Economic Research in Brazil (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada – IPEA), “In 2015 there were 101, 854 people in homeless condition in the country, with 15, 905 in the city of São Paulo.” This way, one significant merit of the film is that it exposes viewers to the different situations that cause the refugees to migrate and portrays their experiences of co-habitation and survival in Brazil. Specifically, how the experience of living on the margins of society unites both immigrants and Brazilians.

Ayodeji Richard Olugbuyiro, The Ohio State University

Mandume. Emicida ft. Drika Barbosa, Amiri, Rico Dalassam, Muzzike e Raphão Alaafin. Dir. Gabi Jacob. Brasil, 2016. Dur. 8:47 min.

Sobre crianças, quadris, pesadelos e lições de casa, lançado pela gravadora Laboratório Fantasma, é o quarto álbum da carreira do rapper Emicida. O videoclipe *Mandume* faz parte deste álbum conceitual que tematiza o retorno às origens africanas e valoriza as influências afro na cultura popular brasileira. O título é um tributo ao líder africano Mandume ya Ndemafayo, último rei de Kwanyama, atual Namíbia. Se o rap é conhecido como uma narrativa da população negra, periférica e pobre; *Mandume* expande a narrativa das populações marginalizadas para abarcar mulheres, LGBT e crossdressers.

Mandume se inicia com uma câmera que segue duas mulheres que caminham por uma calçada. Elas olham para trás e encaram o espectador. Nas cenas posteriores, ocorre a mesma expressão do encarar: um olhar de confronto e resistência. É um olhar que lembra Zózimo Bulbul em *Alma no olho* (1973). Enquanto o rap é caracterizado pela arte das palavras, das sonoridades, *Mandume* apresenta seu discurso mais potente no silêncio que parece encarar o espectador na alma. O olhar vem de diversos grupos, estéticas e negritudes. Esta multiplicidade de narrativas sobre as populações marginalizadas é demonstrada nas micronarrativas apresentada por diferentes rappers que compõe o vídeo.

A primeira parte, apresentada por Drika Barbosa, oferece a imagem de duas mulheres treinando boxe, uma metáfora para a força e luta do feminismo. Logo em seguida, tais mulheres aparecem andando pelas ruas e sofrendo assédio de homens, uma cena comum no cotidiano brasileiro, no entanto, elas estão “treinadas” e nocauteiam os assediadores. A segunda parte, apresentada por Amiri, descreve a dominação do padrão de beleza eurocêntrico e exalta a valorização da identidade negra. No trecho do clipe, um casal negro jovem observa uma banca de revista repleta de capas de revistas com homens e mulheres brancos. Os jovens colam fotos de ícones afro-brasileiros. Em outra cena do videoclipe, a câmera dá um *close* num casal se beijando, fazendo referência à campanha do Movimento Negro Unificado que divulgou uma foto de um casal negro se beijando com trecho do poema de Lande Onawale: “Reaja à violência racial: beije sua preta em praça pública”. Ao final, há um cartaz do curta metragem “Cores e botas” (2010) curta de Juliana Vicente que conta história de uma menina que quer se tornar uma *paqueta*, mas que não consegue por ser negra. A terceira parte é apresentada por Rico Dalassam que é considerado o primeiro rapper homossexual brasileiro. Sua música expõe as experiências do homem homossexual em um contexto conservador e opressor como o universo do rap, das periferias urbanas e da sociedade brasileira. O clipe narra o conflito psicológico do homem negro estigmatizado pelo excesso de masculinidade, mas que quer se expressar livremente como *crossdresser*, vestindo-se assim com roupas marcadas pelo feminino e usando maquiagem, cabelos longos e salto alto.

Já a quarta parte, apresentada por Muzzike, descreve o estigma a respeito dos jovens de periferia estigmatizados como “bandidos” e no trecho do clipe apresenta várias cenas do chamado *rolêzinho*. O *rolêzinho*, uma manifestação dos jovens de periferia de diversas partes do Brasil, tinha como objetivo criar e ocupar um espaço de lazer para os jovens nos shopping centers. O clipe apresenta a demonstração do *rolêzinho* no Shopping Itaquera em 2014, que contou com a presença de 6 mil jovens que enfrentaram a ação da polícia militar. A justificativa de alguns lojistas do shopping center seria que alguns jovens eram “suspeitos” e “roubavam” suas mercadorias. O Muzzike apresenta as cenas da opressão policial contra os jovens enquanto

corta para cenas de um grupo de jovens que dançam funk e olham para a câmera com sorriso no rosto.

A quinta parte, apresentada por Raphão Alaafin, descreve os conflitos entre as religiões afro-brasileiras e as religiões pentecostais. No trecho do clipe, há duas mulheres negras com vestidos brancos dançando em volta de uma fogueira. Enquanto elas celebram seus orixás, um homem branco de terno aproxima-se e ergue a bíblia. O fogo se apaga e as mulheres caem ao chão. No entanto, o fogaréu retorna com ainda mais força derrubando o homem que carrega a bíblia. As mulheres se levantam vagarosamente com uma expressão serena em seus rostos. Este fogaréu é o mesmo que se apresenta na abertura do videoclipe. No candomblé o fogo é símbolo do orixá Xangô que encarna a luta por justiça.

Mandume apresenta-se como um manifesto pela luta por uma justiça histórica contra o apagamento realizado pela colonização da história, memória e identidade da diáspora africana no Brasil. O manifesto de Emicida faz jus à referência ao líder africano Mandume ya Ndemafayo, uma das principais figuras de resistência africana de Angola e Namíbia. O videoclipe se encerra com a poeta Mel Duarte que sintetiza o significado de *Mandume* nos seguintes versos: “Entenda que descendemos de África e temos como legado ressaltar a diáspora de um povo oprimido. Queremos mais do que reparação histórica, ver os nossos em evidência. E isso não é um pedido. Chega de tanta didática, a vida é muito vasta pra gastar o nosso tempo ensinando o que já deviam ter aprendido. Porque mais do que um *beat* pesado é fazer ecoar em sua mente o legado de Mandume”. *Mandume* representa um marco de referência da ancestralidade africana na cena musical do rap brasileiro.

Henrique Yagui Takahashi, The Ohio State University

La odisea de los giles. Dir. Sebastián Borensztein. Argentina, Spain. Dur: 115 min.

In her book *Masculinities in Contemporary Argentine Popular Cinema* (2012), Carolina Rocha demonstrates how, in the 1990s, in the midst of an economic context of increasing unemployment, stagnation, and widespread poverty, a series of successful films focused on male protagonists who felt disenfranchised, emasculated, and displaced. The economic crisis, Rocha argues, challenged the dominant discourse on traditional masculinity that prevailed in Argentine society, and this was reflected on national cinema. More than two decades later, in 2019, after the economic meltdown of 2001 and a subsequent recovery in early 2000s, Argentina is once again facing high levels of unemployment, poverty, and rampant inflation. It is not surprising, therefore, to see a new film informed by the same logic that Rocha described: *La odisea de los giles*. It portrays a group of characters who, facing financial hardship, see their social roles as authority figures and economic providers sharply tested.

The film, to be released in English as *Heroic Losers* (a literal translation would read something like *The Odyssey of the Fools*), features some of the key stars in contemporary Argentine cinema: Ricardo Darín, Luis Brandoni, Chino Darín, and Rita Cortese – among many others in what is ultimately a choral story. It is based on the novel *La noche de la usina*, by Eduardo Sacheri, a successful writer who also wrote the book on which the Academy-award winning *The Secret in Their Eyes* (Juan Jose Campanella, 2009) was based. The plot is straightforward: in August 2001, in a small town in the Province of Buenos Aires, a group of nine people (significantly, eight men and one woman) decide to establish an agrarian cooperative

business. Most of the partners are lower middle-class people struggling to make ends meet in a context of recession and deprivation: they are the *giles* the original title refers to. In Argentinean Spanish, *gil* stands for somebody who is somewhat slow, who lacks intelligence and is not savvy. By extension, the film tell us, it can be applied to any honest, a hard-working person who plays by the rules and pays taxes, but is unable to enough money to be comfortably middle class.

After pooling their savings together, the partners manage to gather 150,000 dollars. The leader of the group, Fermín Perlassi (Darín), is persuaded by the manager of the main bank in town to deposit the money into an account, rather than keeping it in a safe-deposit box as they originally intended. The manager, it will turn out, has insider information about new economic measures the government is about to implement. Within the diegesis, this scene takes place on the eve of the *corralito*, a true event in recent Argentine history that took place on December 1st 2001, when the Ministry of Economy froze all bank accounts in the country, imposing very tight limits on the amounts of cash customers could withdraw. Originally designed to stop the fall of the banking system amid increasing public distrust, the measures backfired and worsened the crisis. When several banks collapsed, millions of people lost their savings.

In the film, however, the bank manager authorizes, on the same day Perlassi makes the deposit, a substantial loan in US dollars to Manzi (Andrés Parra). Since, the bank goes out of business, nobody is left in charge of reclaiming the loan and Parra becomes a millionaire. But he cannot keep the cash within the banking system, so he has a secret, highly-secured vault built in the middle of an isolated cattle field. By accident, the protagonists find out about this, and are driven to action. After careful planning and intelligence, they come up with a plan to breach the vault and take the money, but intending to keep only what is theirs, and give the rest of the money to charity.

La odisea is overall a light-hearted and self-conscious mainstream film. While conventionally edited and photographed, it is still far from the style of Hollywood production, avoiding sophisticated visual effects, action sequences and big spectacle, while drawing somewhat on realism. But the result, which mixes comedy and *costumbrismo* with some elements of the thriller (and a small dose of romance), can still be situated within the parameters of a commercial, unchallenging film, with a happy ending and Manichean characterizations. Some critics have compared the work of Sacheri with the literature of Osvaldo Soriano, another important popular writer in Argentina, and it is indeed possible to see the connection in the film in a number of premises: the small-town location in the interior of the country, characters who are marginalised and poor, the nostalgic aura about a better past that surrounds Perlassi, once a moderately good football player. All of this could be connected to the benign stereotypes of male Argentinean identity that underscore the ethos of a hard-working person, family values, and the sense of community.

Another interpretation of the film could see it as a revenge fantasy, similar to *Bombita*, the episode in *Wild Tales* (Damián Szifrón, 2014), also starring Darín. If in that film the revenge was purely individual, in *La odisea* it is somewhat more collective. But ultimately, only the small group of *giles* succeeds. None of the other customers of the bank will receive their money back (they can no longer be identified). A traditional sense of masculinity may be restored at the end, but only for a few characters (who again can become workers, providers, fathers). Therefore, the film can still represent a small-scale wish-fulfilling fantasy in response to a real crisis that affected the large majority of Argentineans. Could the film be considered a symptom of the socio-economic crossroads Argentina finds itself, once again, in 2019? Or is it trying to dispel the fears the public may have about a repetition of the 2001 crisis? At the time of writing, *La*

odisea has been watched by over 1.7 million people in Argentina, a very important number for a national production. At one stage in the film (a few days before the *corralito*), Perlassi dismisses the risk of starting the business. Things, he argues, cannot really get any worse. Watching the film in Buenos Aires, the knowing audience erupted in laughter at this stage. They all now, clearly, things can always get worse.

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O processo. Dir. Maria Augusta Ramos. Brasil, 2018. Dur. 150 min.

Lançado em 2018, dois anos após o *impeachment* que retirou do poder a presidenta eleita Dilma Rousseff, *O processo* (Maria Augusta Ramos) é um documentário brasileiro que narra os bastidores políticos dos eventos que culminaram no afastamento de Dilma. O filme de Maria Augusta Ramos teve uma carreira exitosa em diversos festivais, passando por Berlin International Film Festival de 2018, Buenos Aires International Documentary Festival – vencedor do prêmio de Melhor Documentário, IndieLisboa International Independent Film Festival – vencedor dos prêmios da audiência e do Silvestre Award como Melhor Filme, Madrid International Documentary Film Festival – vencedor do prêmio de Melhor Documentário, e nomeado para o Premios Fénix em 2018.

Através de uma montagem que mescla imagens inéditas captadas pela equipe de produção, com imagens de arquivo de diversas reportagens e transmissões televisivas, o filme acompanha alguns personagens centrais de tal processo, com destaque para os senadores Gleisi Hoffman e Lindenberg Farias da base do Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), o advogado de defesa José Eduardo Cardozo e a advogada Janaína Paschoal, responsável pela petição que deu início ao processo de *impeachment*. Para sua realização, a diretora Maria Augusta Ramos passou meses reunindo mais de 450 horas de material captadas durante as votações, comissões e conversas – sobretudo da base do Partido dos Trabalhadores, até a decisão final pela destituição da presidenta.

Durante as gravações, a câmera proposta por Ramos no filme tenta colocar-se o mais invisível possível, como se os fatos acontecessem ali independentes da presença da equipe do filme. De fato, tal artifício consegue sucesso em grande parte da narrativa, exceto quando os “personagens reais” dialogam com a câmera quase como num desabafo da situação que estão vivendo. Exemplo disso é o momento em que a senadora Gleisi Hoffman recebe a notícia da condução coercitiva de seu marido, o que fica marcado como um golpe fatal para aqueles que lutavam pela permanência de Dilma Rousseff no poder. Visto sob o arco narrativo proposto por Maria Augusta Ramos, esse momento é mais um dos que evidencia que a luta por provar a inocência da presidenta eleita é uma luta em vão, pois a decisão final do julgamento já estava tomada muito antes dele começar. Essa percepção também fica evidente no apagamento e falta de interesse que, gradativamente, o espectador vai notando na defesa argumentada por Cardozo. Participando de um julgamento com deliberação já ditada, Cardozo – aos poucos – terceiriza sua argumentação para seus assistentes, como se estivesse, numa metáfora a uma partida de futebol, apenas cumprindo tabela.

Sem utilizar-se da técnica de entrevistas o que vemos da narrativa que o filme conduz é aquela enviesada pelas escolhas da diretora quase como um contraponto da narrativa que era transmitida pela mídia tradicional na época. Ramos opta por uma construção em camada de cada

um de seus personagens, sem que de fato sejam escolhidos “mocinhos ou vilões”, com isso a identificação com cada um dos lados do processo está muito mais ligada aos afetos do espectador e suas convicções políticas do que um jogo de certos ou errados. Apesar disso, por acompanharmos muito mais os momentos em que a estratégia da defesa é traçada, se torna mais fácil a empatia pelo lado dos “perdedores”. De fato, no momento em que Janaína Paschoal menciona a família da presidenta Dilma Rousseff – quando a advogada diz que está processando a presidenta para uma melhor vida dos netos de Dilma, num Brasil com um futuro melhor – em uma de suas argumentações finais do processo, fica bastante claro que a crise política vivida no Brasil neste momento é extremamente calcada em interesses pessoais dos diversos grupos em jogo.

A tentativa de não posicionamento claro da diretora revista hoje com poucos anos de distância do *impeachment*, contudo, nos faz perceber que algumas apostas estavam mais certas do que outras. Quando o senador Lindemberg, por exemplo, afirma que Janaína Paschoal está fazendo política quando deveria estar fazendo direito e que a vê nas próximas eleições concorrendo a uma vaga no Congresso, tal fala funciona quase como uma premonição daquilo que veio a ocorrer nas eleições de 2018. A derrocada do PT do poder também já era prevista por aqueles que jogavam pela derrota desde o começo como o documentário reforça. O que não se previa, contudo, é o tamanho do inimigo que surgiria. Jair Bolsonaro, que no documentário aparece quase como um figurante cumprindo um papel tragicômico dentro da narrativa, durante seu voto pelo *impeachment*, hoje se apresenta como a figura principal na política brasileira, o atual Presidente da República.

O engessamento formal do documentário parece ser então a escolha mais correta para se contar uma história conhecida, de final previsto, na qual os próximos capítulos apresentam-se com o temor dos sons de balas de borracha e conflitos entre manifestantes e policiais que vemos ao final do filme.

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El proyccionista. Dir. José María Cabral. República Dominicana, 2019. Dur.: 96 min.

Tras la buena acogida en el Festival de Miami a principios de año, existía una merecida expectación por la nueva película de José María Cabral, el director de *Carpinteros* (2017). *El proyccionista* (2019) es fiel a las señas de identidad que caracterizan la filmografía del joven cineasta. Por un lado, Cabral parece pertenecer al tipo de directores que en cada película se reinventan. Con el suspense como hilo conductor, el director ha explorado diversos subgéneros como el policiaco (*Detective Willy*, 2015), el thriller (*Jaque mate!*, 2012, y *Despertar*, 2014) o el drama carcelario (*Carpinteros*). Por otro lado, el gusto por la mezcla de géneros, muy destacable ya en *Arrobá* (2013), una comedia de ciencia ficción en torno al atraco de un banco, en *El proyccionista* alcanza su grado máximo. La hibridez itinerante del filme hace que su clasificación sea problemática, pues contiene, entre otros elementos, un viaje en carretera, historias de amor imposible, paisajes de realismo social, una mirada nostálgica metacinematográfica, resonancias de mitos griegos, traumas freudianos y, como no podía faltar, el misterio de un crimen por resolver.

Al principio de la película, conocemos a Eliseo (Félix Germán), un hombre que vive “acompañado” por las grabaciones filmicas de una mujer, Koda (Lia Briones), a la que proyecta

obsesivamente sobre una tela. En su peculiar colección, aunque parece haber cintas de celuloide para cada ocasión, como la hora de la cena, abundan los materiales de carácter erótico. Esta rutina cambia en una noche de tormenta, cuando la casi totalidad de sus cintas arde en un incendio provocado por un cortocircuito. Eliseo llora sobre las cenizas en una escena con tintes de tragicomedia del subdesarrollo. Sin embargo, no todo está perdido, pues en uno de los rollos que sobrevivieron al incendio puede verse a Koda montando a caballo en un camino rural donde hay dos letreros de lugares. Con la ayuda de un mapa, Eliseo decide adentrarse con su camioneta en lo más profundo de la República Dominicana y seguir esa pista que le puede llevar al paradero de la mujer.

A partir de ese momento, la película se transforma en una *road movie* en la que no falta la acompañante, la buscavidas Rubi (Cindy Galán), que hace de contrapunto al cascarrabias Eliseo. Debido a su delicada situación económica, Eliseo paga la gasolina organizando sesiones de películas dominicanas al aire libre, en las que congrega, con ciertas argucias, a multitud de personas. La nostalgia por la experiencia comunitaria del cine antes de la era Netflix es uno de los temas más recurrentes de la película. Es en estos episodios de transición cuando la película desvela otra de sus aristas, la más realista, en la que se trasluce el comentario político. Al no caer en la sobreexposición de episodios violentos o luctuosos propios del realismo social, Cabral logra mantener el difícil equilibrio poliédrico del filme, aunque no faltan los detalles en los que se muestra la dureza del medio rural dominicano. Esto es visible, por ejemplo, en el control de la calle que mantienen las bandas de tígueres, a las que Eliseo tiene que sobornar para poder proyectar sus películas, o en la situación de violencia doméstica en la que Rubi está inmersa al principio.

La capacidad aglutinadora de las proyecciones al aire libre lleva consigo una promesa de cohesión nacional, e incluso insular, como sucede en una escena que, aunque parece estar fuera de la poética del filme, no deja de ser un elemento integrante más en su ecleticismo. Hacia el final, Eliseo no puede asistir a una proyección cerca de la frontera con Haití y le cede el puesto de proyectorista a Rubi. Ésta, desobedeciendo las estrictas indicaciones de Eliseo, decide proyectar la película en el puesto fronterizo sobre el río Dajabón o Masacre, en la que se agolpan decenas de haitianos que quieren cruzar el puente que les llevaría al país vecino. Dicho escenario, como cualquier dominicano o haitiano sabe, soporta una gran carga histórica, pues en las fincas agrícolas cercanas a la frontera se produjo en 1937 la Masacre del Perejil, ordenada por Rafael Trujillo. La proyección logra lo que parecía imposible, que las personas a ambos lados del río se sientan emocionalmente unidas a través de la experiencia catártica del cine. Lo explícito de esta alegoría tan optimista y poco verosímil posibilita una lectura irónica; sólo un milagro podría hacer posible una reconciliación entre ambos países. La película termina y la frontera sigue cerrada.

La convivencia de los dos personajes, Eliseo y Rubi, desvela pulsiones eróticas opuestas. Mientras que para Rubi el sexo es un desahogo fisiológico, Eliseo, como James Stewart en *Vertigo*, persigue a una mujer fantasmal. En un par de ocasiones, se hace mención del mito de Pigmalión, el escultor que se enamora de su propia estatua, Galatea. En el mito la estatua se acaba metamorfoseando, gracias a la intervención divina de Afrodita, en una mujer de carne y hueso. Estas claves de interpretación explícitas se revelan como un indicio engañoso en el último tramo de la película. Ni Koda(k) pasa del 2D al 3D, ni hay ninguna mujer esperando pacientemente, cual Penélope, la aparición del héroe. Más bien, lo que Eliseo encuentra es la escena de un crimen que esconde una terrible anagnórisis: Eliseo-Pigmalión-Odisseo era en realidad Eliseo-Edipo.

El proyccionista es un collage cuya originalidad radica en la relación cinética de sus *topoi*, que, como la vieja guagua de Eliseo, siguen funcionando a pesar de todo. Cabral nos recuerda que en la narración cinematográfica, como en cualquier arte, la forma determina el contenido. En este caso, la acumulación de capas superpuestas de significantes hace emerger significados imprevistos. Por ejemplo, el apego (post)aurático por la máquina reproductora, el proyector, se entrecruza con el deseo secreto por la madre. El conjunto parece moverse como algo novedoso, aunque a veces los viejos moldes por los que discurre se hagan visibles, revelando la mano del proyccionista.

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