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Latin American Film

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[TT]Latin American Film

[A]Mirna Vohnsen, Technological University Dublin

[H2]1. General

The scholarship on Latin American film in 2019 speaks of the rich and diverse critical studies that are being conducted in the field. This year the studies encompass a wide range of topics, like the role of Netflix in the production, distribution and consumption of Latin American films; the contention between national cinemas and transnationalism; and the re-examination of films made in the last century. Although publications showcasing the cinemas of Argentina, Mexico and Cuba continue to dominate the field, two special issues have been published shedding light on lesser-studied cinemas, *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas* has dedicated an issue to Uruguayan cinema whereas *Secuencias: Revista de Historia del Cine* has devoted its 2019 issue to Bolivian cinema.

[H4]Latin America

Tamara L. Falicov, *Latin American Film Industries*, London–New York, Bloomsbury on behalf of the British Film Institute, xi + 193 pp., is an illuminating and well-researched volume that focuses on the common problems that affect the production, exhibition and distribution of contemporary Latin American film. The book opens with a chronological overview of the three major film industries in the region, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, examining the role of the studio system model of filmmaking as well as the pros and cons of foreign investment in Latin American cinema. The socialist model of film production is also highlighted in the first chapter, so it is not surprising that Cuba's Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos and Venezuela's Villa del Cine are included. The rest of the book explores the crucial role of state funding in furthering the Latin American film industry; the way the private sector contributes towards film production in the region; the channels through which Latin American films are distributed in the region and worldwide; the challenges of film exhibition with a focus on mobile cinemas; and film legislation, including funding, protectionist policies, screen quotas and piracy practices. Falicov succinctly concludes that the engagement of the different stakeholders is paramount for the future of the Latin American film industry. The volume is an invaluable guide to both academics and filmmakers interested in this burgeoning industry.

Deborah Martin, *The Child in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, viii + 245 pp., is a welcome addition to the growing scholarship on the figure of the child in the cinemas of Latin America. Martin explores 'how contemporary representations of the child are rooted in long-standing cultural imaginaries of childhood and Latin American cinematic traditions, whilst also showing how representations of the child are changing, especially in relation to their political meanings and aesthetic modes' (2). The volume offers an in-depth analysis of various Latin American films that cover the period from the late 1990s to the 2010s. Of particular interest is the comprehensive introduction, which outlines the theoretical perspectives adopted in the analysis and presents a historical overview of the child in 20th-c. Latin American film. The following six chapters address such themes as child death, children's journeys, the child as a national hero, the child in post-dictatorship, children's bodies and authenticity. Martin contends that representations of childhood in Latin American cinema show a tendency of greater subjectivity and agency of the child. This perceptive volume will be equally relevant for specialists and newcomers to the field.

Cinema Between Latin America and Los Angeles: Origins to 1960, ed. Colin Gunckel, Jan-Christopher Horak and Lisa Jarvinen, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers U.P., vi + 180 pp., is a timely publication of an under-researched area of Latin American film studies, namely the bonds that were forged between Latin America and Los Angeles in relation to the development of Latin American cinema in the 20th c. The collected volume builds on the premise that the city of Los Angeles in the United States has been crucial in the history of Spanish-language cinema as a hub for the exhibition and distribution of Latin American cinema between 1930 and 1960. With a strong focus on Mexican cinema, the book rethinks not only the historiography but also the geography of Latin American cinema during the aforementioned period. The seven essays that make up the book deal with an array of themes that include the prominent role of the *teatro de revistas* in building bridges between Mexico and Los Angeles and its influence on the development of Mexican cinema; the figure of the Mexican actress Dolores Del Río and her significance for racial issues in Los Angeles; the role played by the Calderón family in early Mexican cinema on both sides of the border; the production of films in Spanish in Los Angeles; the importance of the Los Angeles-based film production company Cantabria; the exchange between Hollywood and Mexican cinema; and the Mayan Theater, which opened in Los Angeles for Mexican films and live performances. Key images of both the advertisements and the films discussed are reproduced to good effect in the book.

Two articles take a comparative approach to the study of Latin American cinema. Pablo Piedras and Sophie Dufays, ‘Canción popular, melodrama y cabaret en *Bellas de noche* y *El pez que fuma*’, *Chasqui*, 48:53–70, have written an interesting piece on the role of popular music in two Latin American films from the 1970s, Miguel Delgado’s *Bellas de noche* (1975) – a Mexican film – and Román Chalbaud’s *El pez que fuma* (1977) – a Venezuelan film. Piedras and Dufays contend that the diegetic music in both films link them to the melodrama, a (sub)genre that has had a long history in Latin American cinema. However, the authors also pinpoint that the inclusion of tango, bolero and son in these films has been instrumental in enhancing the potential for reaching a wider audience and transforming these national productions into transnational films. Júlia González de Canales Carcereny, ‘Repensar la categoría de cine poético como propuesta estética transversal en la obra fílmica de Carlos Reygadas y Lisandro Alonso’, *Hispanic Research Journal*, 20:272–288, provides a new perspective on the study of the cinema of the Mexican director Carlos Reygadas and the Argentine filmmaker Lisandro Alonso. González de Canales Carcereny moves away from the analytical framework based on auteur theory and instead she posits that their work can be considered poetic cinema. To this end, the study engages in a theoretical discussion on the notion of poetic cinema before demonstrating how Reygadas and Alonso practise this type of cinema.

[H4]2. Individual Countries

[H4]Argentina

Mirna Vohnsen, *Portrayals of Jews in Contemporary Argentine Cinema: Rethinking Argentinidad*, Woodbridge, Tamesis, xi + 193 pp., is one of the latest additions to the burgeoning field of Jewish Latin American cinema. The volume considers the representation of Jews and Jewishness in relation to issues of national and ethnic identity. Six key feature films by Jewish and non-Jewish directors are examined, paying particular attention to three overarching themes: the Jewish gaucho, the bombing of the AMIA (Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires) in 1994 and the Jewish-Gentile family. To examine these topics Vohnsen draws on theories of masculinity, memory and cultural identity. Before looking in

detail at the three overarching themes, Vohnsen traces the history of the Jewish community in Argentina and chronicles the development of Argentine cinema in the context of the notion of *argentinidad*. This establishing chapter not only contextualises the study but also shows that contemporary Argentine film offers a counter-narrative to the anti-Semitic sentiment still present in Argentine society. Vohnsen concludes that the films claim ‘a place for Jews in the imagined community of Argentine and, in doing so, they rethink the discourse of *argentinidad*’ (157).

Four publications revisit 20th-c. Argentine cinema. Iván Morales, “‘Las sombras llaman a mi puerta’: John Alton y el melodrama en *Puerta cerrada* (1939)”, *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas*, 16:295–314, surveys the collaboration between American cinematographer John Alton and Argentine director Luis Saslavsky in *Puerta cerrada* (1939). Morales hinges on the synergy between Alton’s noir photography style, Saslavsky’s use of melodrama and Libertad Lamarque’s performance in the film. The article also points out how Alton introduced Hollywood lighting techniques into the Argentine cinema of the 1930s, but also how the Argentine film industry contributed to developing A.’s own style, which would make him one of the most sought after cinematographers in Hollywood. Alejandra Karina Carballo, ‘Estrategias subversivas: el silencio y lo asumido en *Primaveras* y *La historia oficial*’, *Chasqui*, 48:56–70, explores the role of silence in two works scripted by Argentine scriptwriter Aída Bortnik, the theatre play *Primaveras* and the Award-winning film *La historia oficial* (1985). Carballo’s interest is to show how Bortnik translates into her works the silence that permeated Argentine society during the last military dictatorship which governed the country from 1976 to 1983. To this end, she provides both an overview of the detrimental effects that the dictatorship had on society and biographical details of Bortnik’s life. Another publication that touches upon silence is Martin Sorbille, ‘La ética de la voz-Real y la autoamputación de la lengua en *Tiempo de revancha*’, *Bulletin of Spanish Visual Studies*, 3:21–45. Sorbille offers a Lacanian reading of Adolfo Aristarain’s film *Tiempo de revancha* (1981), claiming that the autoamputation of the main character’s tongue is much more than a metaphorical interpretation of the modus operandi of the military regime, as has been argued so far by other scholars. Sorbille delves into the father-son relationship represented in the film to provide a convincing explanation as to the reason for the autoamputation. Jorge Sala, ‘Territorios en disputa: modernidad, figuración urbana y recepción de la reescritura fílmica de *Los de la mesa 10*’, *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas*, 16:213–232, is a study of rewriting in which Sala examines the screen adaptation of the stage play *Los de la mesa 10* by Osvaldo Dragún. The article gives a detailed account of the choices made by Dragún, who was also the scriptwriter of the film, in terms of the mise-en-scene and the editing of *Los de la mesa 10* (Simón Feldman, 1960). Of particular interest is the discussion on the city of Buenos Aires and its role in the film. Apart from stylistic considerations, Sala includes an analysis of the reviews of the film.

Three articles offer novel readings of recent Argentine films. Guillermo Abel Severiche, ‘From the Face to the Crotch: Intersubjectivity, Affective Schemas and the Politics of the Close-Up in *Los labios/The Lips* (Fund and Loza, 2010) and *Plan B* (Berger, 2009)’, *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas*, 16:271–288, offers an innovative take on the use of the close-up shot. Severiche posits that this shot establishes a physical and emotional experience between the Self (the viewer) and the Other on the screen. According to Severiche, the intersubjective experience in *Los labios* (Iván Fund and Santiago Loza, 2010) is felt as ‘a shared sense of sickness to be experienced by an engaged audience’ while in *Plan B* (Marco Berger, 2009) it is perceived in the building of ‘a gradual sense of (homo-) erotic desire and sexual arousal’ (274). Severiche concludes that these films make cinema ‘an embodied act of agential engagement’ (287). Carlos Amador, ‘Dark Rurality and Dark

Ecology in Recent Argentine Film', *A Contracorriente: Una Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, 16:427–455, has written a thought-provoking essay that explores the rural landscape or *land-space*, as Amador calls it, in Albertina Carri's *La rabia* (2007) and Lisandro Alonso's *Los muertos* (2004). A. proposes that these filmmakers have created a language close to Timothy Morton's term 'dark ecology', which is the interconnectedness of all living and non-living things. Amador maintains that Carri and Alonso are transgressing traditional readings of the rural landscape by challenging the cultural/natural divide. To build up his argument, A. draws on the ideas of Jens Andermann, Gilles Deleuze and Fredric Jameson. Inela Selimović, 'Unorthodox Homes in Pablo Trapero's *Leonera* (2008) and *El clan* (2015): Shattered Lives, Political Selves', *Chasqui*, 48:34–52, is an insightful essay that examines the theme of broken homes in Pablo Trapero's films *Leonera* (2008) and *El clan* (2015). Selimović notes that 'while *Leonera* displays its female protagonist's recalibration of home-like settings in an all-female prison and elsewhere, *El clan* exhibits its featured family's struggles with the increasingly prison-like environment of their home' (34). Centring on the main characters of the films, Selimović discusses both their attempts to break away from their normative homes and their search for what she calls 'unorthodox homes'. Selimović claims that the prison in *Leonera* and the athletic club in *El clan* constitute unorthodox homes. Following Sigmund Freud's notion of 'the uncanny', the article touches upon issues of motherhood, imprisonment, family relations history and ethnicity.

[H4]Bolivia

Secuencias: Revista de Historia del Cine has devoted issues 49 and 50 to the history of a film collective, the Ukamau group. Aside from the articles, the double issue features interviews with Cergio Prudencio, Patricia Suárez and Fred Coker. Published as one single issue, the publication is an inspiring and cohesive study that will be of great interest to scholars and students of Bolivian cinema, political cinema and indigenous studies alike. David Wood, '¿Ukamau antes de *Ukamau*? Nuevos acercamientos a la historia del cine en la Bolivia de los años sesenta', *ib.*, 15–31, considers the promotion, historization, production and exhibition of cinema in Bolivia in the early 1960s by the group of filmmakers who later established the Ukamau group. The article concentrates mainly on the founder of the Ukamau group, Jorge Sanjinés, and his filmmaking during the abovementioned decade. Isabel Seguí, 'Las mujeres del Grupo Ukamau: dentro y fuera de la pantalla', *ib.*, 33–56, repositions the understudied role of women in front and behind the camera in the Ukamau group. Seguí argues that despite being active participants in the film collective since its inception, women have been airbrushed out of its history. The study adopts a feminist methodology that highlights the work of Beatriz Palacios in Ukamau, the performance of non-professional actresses such as Benedicta Mendoza Huanca and the active participation of women as members of the audience. Ana Daniela Nahmad Rodríguez, 'La nación Ukamau: apropiaciones de la técnica cinematográfica y actuación indígena en *La nación clandestina* (1989)', *ib.*, 57–78, is an in-depth study of one of the most significant films in Bolivian cinema, *La nación clandestina* (1989) by the Ukamau group. Nahmad Rodríguez explores the performance of indigenous people, the context in which the film emerged and actor Reynaldo Yujra's contribution to the development of the film and to the theorization of the integral sequence shot. The essay demonstrates that filmmaking is indeed a collective undertaking. Miguel Hilari Sölle, 'Reflexiones sobre el lenguaje a partir del plano secuencia integral', *ib.*, 79–96, offers a critical reading of Andean cosmovision, questioning the existence of cultural differences in time perception. Hilari Sölle argues that Western and Andean cultures perceive time in similar ways. The article also problematizes the use of the integral sequence shot as a means to translate the cosmovision of Andean culture. Marco Arnez Cuéllar, 'Proyecto emancipador y agenda política en el cine de Jorge Sanjinés: colonialismo, indigenismo y subjetividades en

disputa', *ib.*, 97–115, examines the films *La sangre del cóndor* (Yawar Mallku, 1969), *El coraje del pueblo* (1971) and *Fuera de aquí* (1977), all of which were made by the Ukamau group, to interrogate the interplay between the filmmakers and the indigenous people they filmed. Arnez Cuéllar draws on the concepts of internal colonialism and collective memory to argue that the asymmetric relations between the urban filmmakers and the rural people question the collective trait of the Ukamau group. María Aimaretti, 'Entre imágenes y reflejos... o despeñarse en la alucinación identitaria: a propósito de *Para recibir el canto de los pájaros* (Jorge Sanjinés, 1995)', *ib.*, 117–138, examines the narrative and visual strategies of S.'s film *Para recibir el canto de los pájaros* (1995) to reveal the presence of colonialism in Bolivian national identity. Aimaretti prefaces her examination by addressing the history of the Ukamau group and providing a review of the concepts of 'internal colonialism' and 'lordly paradox', introduced by Pablo González Casanova and René Zavaleta Mercado, respectively. Aimaretti explains that the film contributed to the discussion of the legacy of the Spanish conquest in Bolivia in the context of the 500th anniversary of the Spanish arrival in the Americas.

[H4]Colombia

Manuel Betancourt, 'Alejandro Landes's *Monos* and the Once and Future Colombian War Film', *Film Quarterly*, 73:26–32, introduces his insightful review of Alejandro Landes's third feature film, *Monos* (2019), by pinpointing that the figure of the *guerrillero* has been absent in Colombian cinema until recently. Betancourt notes how *Monos* makes a timely contribution to the emerging canon of war films in Colombia. Referring to other recent Colombian war films such as *La sirga* (2012), *Siembra* (2015) and *Los silencios* (2018), Betancourt contends that the representation of violence, guerrilla warfare and *guerrilleros* in the new cinema of Colombia is a step forward. According to Betancourt, *Monos*, however, stands out as it problematizes the dichotomy between victims and victimizers as the *guerrillero* here embodies both.

[H4]Cuba

New ways of distribution and the study of documentaries have captured the attention of scholars. Michelle Leigh Farrell has penned two perceptive articles on Cuban cinema. In 'Representing Their Young Selves: The Case of Cuba's Cámara Chica Youth Audiovisual Program', *Chasqui*, 48:91–103, F. explores how the children's national film initiative Cámara Chica in La Conchita, Pinar del Río Province, in western Cuba, revisits filmmaking by turning the camera on the audience. Farrell argues that in making the audience participant in the filmmaking process, the young filmmakers establish a dialogue with Julio García Espinosa's film manifesto 'Por un cine imperfecto' from 1969. For Farrell, the filmmakers of Cámara Chica also contest the portrayal of passive rural audiences as seen in *Por primera vez* (Octavio Cortázar, 1967), a documentary that captures the wide ranging effect of the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos and chronicles the mesmerizing effect that the projection of a film has on a rural audience. In 'Piracy, Access, and Production in Cuba's Media Distribution Platform *El Paquete Semanal*: The Case of *MiHabanaTV*', Farrell reflects on the *paquete* phenomenon, which is the Cuban alternative to online streaming platforms. For Farrell, the *paquete* is a novel use of piracy to distribute international and domestic content, including audio-visual material. Drawing on Ramón Lobato's idea of 'piracy as access', Farrell argues that the *paquete* is a 'means to reach audiences for emerging local voices' (422). Luisela Alvaray, 'Digital Access, Genre Bending: *Four Seasons in Havana* (Viscarret, 2016) and the Ibero-American Audio-Visual Space', *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas*, 16:155–175, interrogates the notion of national cinema *vis-à-vis* the

transformation of the Latin American mediascape through the emergence of online platforms such as Netflix. According to Alvaray, one of the ways this transformation can be observed is through the way *Four Seasons in Havana*, directed by Félix Viscarret, has been designed as both a feature film and a TV miniseries. Analysing the miniseries *Four Seasons in Havana*, A. contends how the casting of Cuban actor Jorge Perugorría, the popularity of the noir genre and the filming on location in Havana, among other elements, have contributed towards the international success of the series. This leads Alvaray to conclude that the digital mediascape facilitates a de-territorialisation of viewers. Julio Ramos, 'Sonidos del trabajo: los montajes de Guillén Landrián en *Taller de Línea y 18*', *A Contracorriente: Una Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, 16:79–98, deals with one of the most controversial documentaries by filmmaker Nicolás Guillén Ladrián, *Taller de Línea 'Claudio A. Camejo' y 18* from 1971. Ramos explains that the documentary made Guillén Ladrián so unpopular that he was expelled from the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos. R. sets the film in the *politico-historical context* of the 1960s and early 1970s before examining the role of sound in the film. The essay pays special attention to the asynchronous sound and the disjunctive editing, which R. reads as a form of criticism of the Cuban regime.

[H4]Ecuador

Traci Roberts-Camps, 'Entrevista a Alex Schlenker, cineasta alemán que hace cine en Ecuador', *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 37:217–228, conducts an in-depth interview with Schlenker, focusing on his film *Distante cercanía: la ley del más vivo* (2013), a black comedy on political corruption in Ecuador. Aside from explaining the use of irony in the film and how the idea behind the film emerged, Schlenker also recounts how photography has influenced his films and refers to the current situation of Ecuadorean cinema. The interview is prefaced by a discussion of the film.

[H4]Mexico

Issue 72 of *Film Quarterly* devotes a special section to the Academy Award-winning film *Roma* (2018) directed by Alfonso Cuarón. Carla Marcantonio, 'Roma: Silence, Language, and the Ambiguous Power of Affect', *ib.*, 38–45, is an informative essay that centres around the lead of the film, Yalitza Aparicio, the indigenous Mexican woman who plays the maid in the film, and Marcantonio's own experience as Aparicio's official interpreter in Los Angeles. Aside from reporting the answers given by A. at Q&A sessions and connecting them to key scenes from the film, Marcantonio argues that the film and A.'s performance speak volumes of the conditions of employment for domestic workers in Mexico and beyond. The essay also touches upon the political context represented in the film as well as the themes of patriarchy, masculinity and violence. Sergio De la Mora, 'Roma: Repatriation vs. Exploitation', *ib.*, 46–53, situates the film within a trend in modern Latin American cinema that portrays the relations between the domestic worker and the employer. Mora also points out that *Roma* differs from other domestic worker films due to its reception, camerawork, as well as Cuarón's reputation and intention to effect changes. To show the far-reaching effects of the film, the article includes the debates, controversies and criticism that the film unleashed. Amelie Hastie, 'The Vulnerable Spectator – An Act of Will, a Testimony of Love: Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*', *ib.*, 54–60, draws on Cuarón's eight feature films to unveil recurring elements in them, such as their focus on women's experiences and their intertextuality. However, the main focus of the essay is on *Roma*'s affective dimension, especially love. H. makes a point of showing how the film is imbued with love originating in Cuarón's love for cinema.

Productions distributed through alternative platforms are at the centre of two publications. Pablo Zavala, ‘The Perfect Spectatorship: Culture and Criticism in Mexico’s *La dictadura perfecta/The Perfect Dictatorship* (2014) and *Ingobernable/Ungovernable* (2017)’, *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas*, 16:251–269, has written a timely article that addresses the interplay between Mexican politics and filmmaking. The study explores Luis Estrada’s film *La dictadura perfecta* – a political comedy – and the Netflix series *Ingobernable* – a political melodrama – arguing that through the former ‘one can gauge social criticism and censorship in Mexican cinema’ (252) while the latter, in its pursuit to cater to an international audience, falls short of social criticism. Following Jacques Rancière’s notion of ‘the emancipated spectator’, Zavala offers an explanation as to why *La dictadura perfecta* struck a chord with Mexican audiences. Zavala explains that the film emancipates audiences by tapping into Mexican’s disappointment with the democratic transition in their country. According to Zavala, *Ingobernable* makes also an attempt to connect with Mexican audiences through the pervasiveness of prints from the legendary Taller de Gráfica Popular that appear in the background of several scenes. Paul Julian Smith, *Multiplatform Media in Mexico: Growth and Change Since 2010*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, ix + 204 pp., is the first study to consider film, television and transmedia in Mexico during the 2010s, offering close textual analysis of the texts examined in the book. Divided into three parts – cinema, television and transmedia – the volume looks to go beyond the study of auteur cinema and television statistics by exploring commercial cinema, TV dramas and web series. The volume’s strength comes from its focus on highly popular but insufficiently studied films and shows. One of the most notable aspects of this publication is the incorporation of star studies in every chapter, with the exception of the first two.

Livia K. Stone, *Atenco Lives! Filmmaking and Popular Struggle in Mexico*, Nashville, Tennessee, Vanderbilt U.P., xi + 202 pp., engages with the power of documentaries for political activism and asks ‘What do these films *do* in the world? How do people use the production and circulation of film as political tools? How do they work (or not work) as a field of action and a medium of political organizing?’ (3). Stone’s response to these questions is a well-researched and thematically organised investigation that explores how both the content and the circulation of documentaries foster activism and seek to create new ethical values. Stone witnessed the activities of Frente de Atenco – one of the most contentious social movements in Mexico – as she undertook fieldwork in that country from May 2008 to November 2009. The result of her field research is a work of scholarship that sheds light on, among other themes, the symbolic value of the machete, the idea of *compañerismo*, the experience of oppression and the fight for autonomy. S. draws on pertinent films, the process of filmmaking and film distribution.

In ‘The *Permanencia Voluntaria* Archive and the Historical Study of Mexican Cinema’, *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas*, 16:383–401, Colin Gunckel provides an insight into the archival materials held at the non-profit archive Permanencia Voluntaria in Tepoztlán, Mexico. Gunckel draws on the extensive paper collection of the production company Cinematográfica Calderón to examine the marketing, censorship and international distribution of Mexican cinema during the 1950s and 1960s. By shifting the focus from the study of films to the examination of, for example, posters, photo stills and promotional materials, Gunckel seeks to open up new avenues for research. The article constitutes one of the first steps towards this kind of investigation that has remained overlooked.

The Films of Arturo Ripstein: The Sinister Gaze of the World, ed. Manuel Gutiérrez Silva and Luis Duno Gottberg, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, xvii + 341 pp., is an engaging publication that contributes to the scant scholarship on one of the most prolific Mexican filmmakers,

Arturo Ripstein. The book is organised into three sections. Centring on Ripstein's early films, the first section, titled 'Slicing the Nationalist Gaze: Arturo Ripstein in the History of Mexican Film', underscores Ripstein's efforts to disengage from the patriarchal representations during the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. The second section, entitled 'The Sinister Gaze: Pathos, Abjection, and Blood', addresses how the three themes mentioned in the title are portrayed in Ripstein's oeuvre. The third section, 'Undoing the Melodramatic Gaze', focuses on how Ripstein together with his wife, screenwriter and long-time collaborator Paz Alicia Garciadiego has reworked the traditional genre of the melodrama. Each of the three sections is prefaced by an extensive and informative interview conducted by the editors of the volume. In the first interview, Ripstein talks about his early career as a filmmaker while, in the other two, Ripstein and Garciadiego refer to their collaboration and the subversion of the melodrama. This book promises to become a key entry in the world of Ripstein.

Adela Pineda Franco, *The Mexican Revolution of the World Stage: Intellectuals and Film in the Twentieth Century*, New York, SUNY Press, xxxii + 253 pp., explores the transnational impact of the Mexican Revolution's cultural legacy on global cinema and revolutionary thinking from 1940 to 1970. By analysing *The Forgotten Village* (Herbert Kline and Alexander Hammid, 1941), *Viva Zapata!* (Elia Kazan, 1952), Italian Westerns and *Mexico, la revolucion congelada* (Raymundo Gleyzer, 1972), Pineda Franco focuses on a group of North American, European and Latin American intellectuals who reshaped episodes and figures of the Mexican Revolution 'to explore and debate the political, aesthetic, social, and/or economic impact of modern revolutions' (xviii). Accordingly, discussions of fascism, communism and populism are raised throughout the volume. The book is a painstakingly researched study that concludes with an epilogue discussing the reason for the decline of the relationship between intellectuals, film and revolution as well as the neo-Zapatista movement.

[H4]Puerto Rico

Naida García-Crespo, *Early Puerto Rican Cinema and Nation Building: National Sentiments, Transnational Realities, 1897-1940*, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, Bucknell U.P., ix + 226 pp., is based upon the notion that it is possible to identify and craft a national cinema in a stateless nation, as is the case of Puerto Rico. To this end, García-Crespo. looks into an understudied theme, namely the early history of Puerto Rican cinema by studying cinema-related materials made in and outside Puerto Rico. According to García-Crespo, Puerto Rican cinema had a key role in the process of shaping and maintaining national identity during the American occupation and in the absence of a state. There are excellent discussions of the national vis-à-vis the transnational and how the two have a role in cultural productions and identity. The book is thus a poignant example of rethinking the national in terms of the transnational.

[H4]Uruguay

Issue 16 of *Studies in Spanish and Latin American Cinemas* is the first collective work in English dedicated to Uruguayan cinema. Written by scholars undertaking research both inside and outside of Uruguay, the articles interrogate contemporary Uruguayan filmmaking vis-à-vis national and transnational cinema in intellectually stimulating ways. David Martin-Jones, María Soledad Montañez and William Brown, 'Introduction', *ib.*, 3-24, provide an informative overview of the current state of the scholarship on Uruguayan cinema. Of particular interest is the emphasis they put on the glaring absence of academic studies devoted to the film of Uruguay. William Brown, 'Fede Alvarez and the Impossibility of

Uruguayan Cinema’, *ib.*, 49–71, is a thought-provoking article that takes *¡Ataque de pánico!*, a short by Uruguayan-born filmmaker Federico Álvarez, as a starting point for a discussion of the invisibility of Uruguayan cinema in a globalized world. Brown argues that the short typifies that invisibility, or rather impossibility, because it was circulated online and not in cinemas; it addresses the theme of destruction from different perspectives; it embraces Hollywood aesthetics; and it propelled the departure of Álvarez from Uruguay. Brown explains that Álvarez is now building a successful career in Hollywood. Brown provides other examples through which Uruguayan cinema shows self-effacement. The erasing of identifiable landmarks and the transformation of the country into an exotic place are worth mentioning. Rosario Radakovich, “‘One Cinema, One Country’: Cultural Value and Public Recognition of Uruguayan Cinema in the Early Twenty-First Century’, *ib.*, 89–110, examines the construction of symbolic value in the cinema of Uruguay according to the opinions of moviegoers who were invited to review 10 films online. After studying their opinions, R. concludes that the views of the moviegoers – grouped as scholarly and amateurs – unveil a huge difference in their assessment of Uruguayan national cinema. Mariana Amieva, ‘Uruguayan Film Criticism in the Post-Dictatorship Era: Traditions and Ruptures, Theoretical Perspectives and Relationships Within the Critical Field’, *ib.*, 73–88, analyses two periodicals devoted to cinema, Cinemateca Uruguay’s *Cinemateca Revista* and *El País Cultural* – the cultural supplement of the Uruguayan newspaper *El País* – by focusing on the writings of two key journalists, Manuel Martínez Carril and Homero Alsina Thevenet. A. pinpoints that there are similarities and differences between the two publications. One of the most notable similarities, A. argues, is that ‘film criticism of the post-dictatorship period assumed a conciliatory, moderate tone, especially through suggestions for a *compromiso*, or “third position”’ (74). A. discusses at length the differences between the publications and includes an extract from a dialogue between Martínez Carril and Alsina Thevenet to illustrate their different perspectives on cinema. David Martin-Jones and María Soledad Montañez, ‘What is the “Silent House”? Interpreting the International Appeal of Tokio Films’ Uruguayan Horror *La casa muda/The Silent House*’, *ib.*, 25–47, examine Gustavo Hernández’s film *La casa muda* from 2010. After providing an enlightening synopsis of the film, Martin-Jones and Montañez consider how the film achieved international prominence thanks to the teaser uploaded to YouTube. The article also recognises that the universal themes of abortion and incest, which the film addresses, contribute to enhancing its worldwide appeal. However, the authors also go on to provide a national-allegorical reading by revealing how the film evokes the atrocities committed by the last dictatorship that ruled Uruguay from 1973 to 1985 and the illegal appropriation of the children of *los desaparecidos* during the military regime.

[H4]Venezuela

Rebecca Jarman, ‘Queering the *Barrios*: The Politics of Space and Sexuality in Mariana Rondón’s Film, *Pelo malo* (2013)’, *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 38:158–180, is one of the latest additions to the increasing scholarship on *Pelo malo*. Jarman locates the film within a current tendency in contemporary Venezuelan cinema that has seen a marked preoccupation with non-heteronormative gender and sexuality. With a focus on the setting of the film, the Caracas high-rise housing complex El 23 de Enero during the Chávez era, Jarman provides a compelling reading of space and time in which the queer child protagonist resists dichotomous categories. Jarman cogently concludes that the film cuts across ‘temporal and geographic limitations and political subscriptions’ (175).

