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# Review of Latin American Cinema, by Stephen M. Hart

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Hart, Stephen M. *Latin American Cinema*. London: Reaktion Books. 2015. 223 pp. ISBN 9781-7802-3365-9.

*Latin American Cinema* is an excellent overview of the major films to come out of Latin America since the arrival of cinematography to the continent. Stephen M. Hart focuses on the most well known films from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Cuba, with some exceptions, including Bolivia and Peru. Hart contextualizes the films he discusses within the “major paradigm shifts which have occurred in camera technology” (7). This approach allows for an understanding of Latin American production’s significance in world cinema as well as its advancements in film technology. This edition also boasts several quality photographs of films and directors, many in color. The final chapter is the most extensive and gives an in-depth account of Hart’s theory of contemporary Latin American cinema from 2000 to 2014.

In the Introduction, Hart establishes his methodology for this study; namely, he traces the history of Latin American cinema alongside the technological advances in cinematography throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. According to Hart, leaving out this aspect is detrimental to film criticism and produces “‘timeless’ and ‘static’ interpretations of films” (7). The introduction recognizes previous works on Latin American film, although it ignores theory in Spanish and Portuguese from Latin America. Finally, as Hart emphasizes in the introduction, he has chosen to focus on technology rather than what he terms “the sociological turn.”

Chapter 1, “Inauspicious Beginnings (1895-1950),” draws upon Gilles Deleuze’s concepts to describe how early cinematography gradually shifted from ‘images in movement’ to the ‘movement-image,’ whereby the development of montage techniques creates a more nuanced presentation. As in each chapter, Hart relates these developments to Latin American film specifically and identifies Enrique Rosas’s *El automóvil gris* (Mexico; 1919) as a prime example.

He also affirms that this film's combination of fiction and documentary would be one of the defining characteristics of Latin American film taken as a whole. In this chapter, Hart also discusses Pedro Sienna's *El húsar de la muerte* (Chile; 1925); Sergei Eisenstein's *¡Qué viva México!* (Mexico; 1931); Fernando de Fuentes's *Allá en el rancho grande* (Mexico; 1936); and Luis Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (Mexico; 1950), among others.

Chapter 2, "Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano and the 'Time-image' (1951-1975)," examines New Latin American Cinema and the filmic shift to the "time-image." This movement's unique factors include everyday reality, on-location shooting, non-professional actors, and a documentary feel (32). Hart also touches upon the theories and manifestos of this time period, including Julio García Espinosa's "For an Imperfect Cinema," Fernando Birri's "Cinema and Underdevelopment," and Glauber Rocha's "The Aesthetics of Hunger." This chapter includes discussions of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and García Espinosa's *El Mégano* (Cuba; 1955); Birri's *Tire dié* (Argentina; 1958); Glauber Rocha's *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* (Brazil; 1964); Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (Cuba; 1968); Miguel Littín's *El Chacal de Nahueltoro* (Chile; 1969); and Patricio Guzmán's *La batalla de Chile* (Chile; 1973), among others. Hart places each film within the context of New Latin American Cinema, examining the directors' innovative approaches and political motivations. The most extensive section is on *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, where Hart affirms: "Gutiérrez Alea's work deconstructs the performativity of the flashback and creates what Deleuze would call a 'time-image'; in other words, an image that simultaneously encapsulates time and reflects upon it" (51).

In Chapter 3, "Nation-image (1976-1999)," Hart makes the connection between the "emergence of the protagonist-as-nation genre" and what he calls the 'nation-image' (65). In this period of Latin American cinema, films explore national identity with the protagonist as the symbol of the nation. In this chapter, Hart examines Gutiérrez Alea's *La última cena* (Cuba; 1976); Héctor Babenco's *Pixote: a lei do mais fraco* (Brazil; 1980); María Luisa Bemberg's *Camila* (Argentina; 1984); Luis Puenzo's *La historia oficial* (Argentina; 1985); Ricardo Larraín's *La frontera* (Chile; 1991); Guillermo del Toro's *Cronos* (Mexico; 1993); Gutiérrez Alea's *Fresa y chocolate* (Cuba; 1994); Walter Salles's *Central do Brasil* (Brazil; 1998), among others. As Hart comments, it was during this period that many Latin American governments reduced their financial support for film.

The last chapter, "The Slick Grit of Contemporary Latin American Cinema (2000-2014)," is by far the longest and most in-depth. In this chapter, Hart analyzes the effects of the digital revolution on Latin American film, specifically in terms of the editing process, which allowed for more flexibility. According to Hart, Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Amores perros* (Mexico; 2000) represents a shift toward digital film and a new era of Latin American cinema that combines what he terms the 'political grit' of the Nuevo Cine of the 1960s and 1970s with "slick editing and acting performances" (108). There is also more dependence on private funding in films during the era. Hart focuses on the following films: González Iñárritu's *Amores perros*; Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* (Mexico; 2001); Fernando Mereilles's *Cidade de Deus* (Brazil; 2002); Andrés Wood's *Machuca* (Chile; 2004); Walter Salles's *Diarios de motocicleta* (Brazil; 2004); Lucrecia Martel's *La niña santa* (Argentina; 2004); Claudia Llosa's *Madeinusa* (Peru; 2005); Guillermo del Toro's *El laberinto del fauno* (Mexico; 2006); Juan José Campanella's *El secreto de sus ojos* (Argentina; 2009); González Iñárritu's *Biutiful* (Mexico; 2010); and Carlos Reygadas's *Post tenebras lux* (Mexico; 2012), among others. One recurring aspect in this latest period is the prevalence of English-language films and Latin American directors in Hollywood.

Overall, *Latin American Cinema* is a very useful outline of Latin American cinema from beginning to end. As with any project of this scope, there are missing elements, including more female directors and the expertise of film theorists in Latin America. However, Hart's book is a major contribution to the scholarship of Latin American cinema and will prove to be a valuable resource for scholars, educators, and general audiences.

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