Review of Latin American Cinema, by Stephen M. Hart

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between Europe and Africa, second, a national identity that has strong Afrocentric elements, and third that slavery was the reason for later social and economic inequality.

Gordon comes to a unique conclusion: that the vision of what is Brazilianness portrayed in these films is essentially a mixture of the ideas of two important influential Brazilian minds, the renowned white northeastern sociologist, Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987, author of Masters and the Slaves [1933]) and the Black activist, politician, and philosopher Abdias do Nascimento (1914-2007, author of O quilombismo [1980]). Even though the two have very distinct approaches and conclusions, Gordon suggests they were similar in their description of the essence of Brazilianness. The two authors intimated that all Brazilians recognize certain similar cultural attributes and values derived from Africa as part of their definition of who they are as Brazilians. The films he studies, though they come from different political frameworks, all support similar cultural attributes.

Gordon’s bringing together of two different approaches for the definition of Brazilianness is unusual but important because it goes beyond the obvious political message or purpose of the films. The suggestion that Brazilians recognize the uniqueness of their society is not new but something that has occurred throughout most of the history of the country. The conclusion is that Brazilians have a uniformity of belief about who they are despite significantly different racial, cultural, and political backgrounds.

This book is an important addition to the literature for a variety of reasons. The analysis of the films is in-depth and informative. The connecting of this media to the evolution of a national self-image is instructive. Finally, the analysis of the national consciousness using two significantly different approaches is creative and original. This is a valuable study that will be of interest to scholars of slavery, the social role of the film, and Brazilian Studies.

Mark L. Grover, Brigham Young University, Retired


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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Young adult Latina literature is essential for Latinxs in the U.S. in order to observe their varied ethnicities, generations, and socioeconomic backgrounds reflected within popular fiction. In the twenty-first century, the term “Latina/o” has been used by many women in the U.S. as a means of identification. However, this term has also overlooked other experiences within the Latinx community and, thus, has created divisions within these communities. Likewise, the identifiers of “Latina/o” and “Chicana/o” within literature have helped to establish and represent certain characteristics of Latina/o culture, such as that of Spanish speaker, which is indicative of many Latinxs’ experiences. Nonetheless, this representation has also left out many other Latinxs who represent a growing number of women with experiences that diverge from traditional representations of Latinxs, especially over generations, and overlooks the influence of neoliberalism on identity. In this book, the author expands the representation of Latina/o identities within popular fiction in the U.S. to account for the impact of neoliberalism on these identities, as well as the changes experienced within these communities over time.

*Chica Lit: Popular Latina Fiction and Americanization in the Twenty-First Century* by Tace Hedrick shares with the reader why it is important to identify and disrupt traditional stereotypes of Latinxs within popular fiction. Each chapter introduces the reader to various works of fiction that depart from those traditional representations of Latinxs that focus solely on their trials and tribulations, and reinforces stereotypes, by favoring fiction that showcases “young women who are successful, educated professionals or businesswomen, with access to material wealth” as they continue their journey in the Americanization process as proud Latinxs. In the prologue, “What’s a Girl to Do When...?,” the author introduces the genre of Chica lit fiction, describing it as a response to the lack of Latinx representation within popular fiction, and serving an audience of Latinx readers who are in the process of learning about themselves and their identities. In the Chica lit novel, *Becoming Latina in Ten Easy Steps*, the protagonist Angela “decides that her newly discovered ‘white blood’ is at fault for her not being Latinx enough, and constructs a list of ten things she must do to remedy the problem, among them learning Spanish, learning how to cook Mexican food, and most importantly finding a suitable Mexican American boyfriend” (xi).

In the introduction, “A Regular American Life,” the author affirms that Chica lit fiction is its own genre within the literary canon, and it gives insight into the experiences and histories of Latinxs who have historically been left out of literary works. Chica lit also reflects on “the intersection of genre constraints, the marketing of ethnicity at the neoliberal turn of the century, the mainstreaming of Latina/o difference, and the concomitant demonization of Latino poverty” (2). Chapter 1, “Genre and the Romance Industry,” offers that Chica lit is emerging during a time when it is necessary to disrupt stereotypical representations of Latinxs, and provides the opportunity to feature new elements of Latinx communities. Within the genre of contemporary romance novels, the author expands on the idea that Chica lit reflects a departure from traditional stereotypes of women, and instead showcases Latinxs overcoming obstacles associated with