

Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First Century World

Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer

reseñado por

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In the past decade, Chilean cinema has been internationally acclaimed as one that portrays intimate and personal stories that connect with a global audience. Sebastián Lelio's *A Fantastic Woman* (2017) won the Best International Feature Film Academy Award and, before that, Gabriel Osorio's *Bear Story* (2015) made history as the first Chilean animated short film to win in that category. More recently, Maite Alberdi's *The Mole Agent* was nominated for Best Documentary Feature. Despite receiving such recognition, Chilean cinema has struggled to reach a larger global audience, both academic and non-academic, particularly when compared to other Latin American film industries such as Mexico, Argentina or Brazil. *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First Century World* aims to offer readers a critical analysis of contemporary Chilean films to establish it as a reference in the public debate. As editors Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer point out in the introduction, "this book thinks about Chilean cinema in the context of its own national development, even as it also addresses the ways in which it has positioned itself internationally." (20)

The national/international, local/global dynamics are the common denominator. Production, distribution, film festival, and audiences are examined throughout the book as they define Chilean cinema's standing in today's world. Maria Paz Peirano's "Learning to be "Global": Chilean Filmmakers at International Film Festivals" reflects on Chilean cinema as it consolidates its presence in the film festival circuit. She argues that, even though international festivals still act as "gatekeepers for contemporary world cinema" (38) they have become a source of "social, cultural, and symbolic capital" for some Chilean filmmakers. As the first article of the section "Mapping "Mapping Theories of Chilean Cinema in the World" and of the book itself, Peirano's article provides a good starting point to delve into the past and future of Chilean cinema. The other four sections touch on genre, aesthetics, gender and memory. However, the editors implicitly acknowledge in the introduction that they could have organized the book based on the four principal

currents of cinema since 1990s: genre film, the Generation of 2005, current filmmakers with a political albeit more personal approach, and highly political films. The actual organization, though, showcases the seeming influence of affects as a theoretical framework that underpins most of the critical approaches that examine the local/global dynamics of Chilean cinema.

Chilean drama and documentaries, particularly those reflecting on political issues, have gotten the most attention internationally. However, Chilean horror and martial arts movies have as well inserted themselves in the global market. Jonathan Risner's "The Reach of Genre. The Emergence of Chilean Horror Cinema" describes how festivals and specialized websites have become a reliable distribution platform for Chilean horror movies. As Risner states, "one must account for both the international horror cinema that is consumed in Chile and the Chilean horror films that are consumed domestically and abroad" (109). Along those lines, Moisés Park examines Marko Zaror's successful career in martial arts films in "The Latin Dragon Going Global. Marko Zaror, Martial Arts, and Stardom." Zaror, an Arab-Chilean actor, has been usually cast in various roles due to his mixed racial background which has also allowed him to participate in international productions. His stardom, Park suggests, "mirrors Chile's humble but steadily growing global neoliberalism as a developed country" (131). His Greek-god-like body has also incarnated a "gay-seeing" masculinity that has helped him reach a larger audience.

This circumstance serves as a perfect segue into the next section of the book, "Other Text and Other Lands. Intermediality and Adaption Beyond Chile(an Cinema)" whose focus is aesthetics. Probably, the article that more clearly embodies the intersection between genre, aesthetics and gender is Arturo Márquez-Gómez's "Video Built the Cinema Star. Alex Anwandter's *Nunca vas a estar solo*." Back in the 1990's, MTV managed to turn music videos into a visual genre themselves, easily recognizable. It also triggered what Steve Drukman calls the "gay gaze." Anwandter's film narrates the killing of Daniel Zamudio, a 25-year-old Chilean man, who was tortured and beaten to death in 2012. That same year, Chilean Congress passed an antidiscrimination bill named "Zamudio Law" in his honor. Márquez-Gómez looks into Anwandter's music videos and the use of this aesthetics in the movie as a new language for the LGBTQ community to "express themselves in the face of the fear that pushes them to hide, and their willingness to challenge the cultural imperatives of conformity, apathy, and passivity" (192).

Gender is the topic of the next section of the collection. Both articles in this section analyze trans* films that go beyond trans identities as they also represent transnational production, circulation, and distribution. But it is Carl Fischer's "The International (Un) Intelligibility of Chilean Trans* Film" the one that specifically tackles trans* representation in Chilean cinema and its appeal to a global audience. The article compares Sebastián Lelio's *A Fantastic Woman* international success and recognition to Camila José Donoso and Nicolás Videla's *Naomi Campbell* less distributed, locally set and more politically oriented. Fischer concludes that Chilean trans* cinema seems destined to drop challenging narratives and local references if it aims for global recognition and a broader viewership. Despite the short length of this section, the relevance of the themes discussed would be worthy of an anthology about LGBTQ Chilean cinema.

The last section turns to memory, affects and politics. Claudia Bossa's "Filmmakers to the Rescue of Chilean Memory. Representations of Chile's Traumatic Past in Contemporary Documentary" sets the tone of the section. The article examines six films that represent, according to Bossa, the "various stages of grief and trauma following dictatorship" (269). Its main argument clearly relates to the other articles in this section, such as Camilo Trumper's "Displacement, Emplacement, and the Politics of Exilic Childhood in Sergio Castilla's *Gringuito*" which focuses on exile and return.

Even though the book ends with articles that focus on more clearly political movies, Barraza and Fischer do a great job of compiling a book that touches on relevant topics and introduces Chilean cinema to a readership that might not be aware of the quality and diversity of the films. Not only does *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First Century World* dissect the role of Chilean cinema in the international film circuit and its dilemma between local narratives and global appealing, but it also provides some insight as to why Chilean cinema has recently become more diverse and one to look forward to.