

Cortínez, Verónica, and Manfred Engelbert. *Evolución en libertad: el cine chileno de fines de los sesenta*. Santiago, Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2014. 2 vols. ISBN 9789-5626-0681-3

The Chilean film industry, while currently creatively dynamic and modestly successful commercially, has not been one of the powerhouse centers of Latin American filmmaking. In terms of sheer numbers, including international distribution, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico continue to lead the way (despite the fact that Brazilian films must travel elsewhere in Latin America with subtitles). Cuban filmmaking, which for ideological reasons, at one point enjoyed considerable prominence, has waned in recent years. Most of the countries of Latin America have made some impressive contributions in terms of individual films, but they do not reference a vigorous industry. Colombia, like Chile, has a quite impressive record of notable films, and also like Chile, is given prominence by an array of outstanding directors who enjoy international recognition, in part because of their own agenda of political resistance in the context of being forced to work abroad because of right-wing dictatorships or uncontrolled political violence. To a certain extent, this is neither a surprising nor an unfortunate circumstance. There is much to be said against speaking of a unifying Latin American cinema (beyond geographical accident) because of the overwhelming material and imaginary-based differences between the Latin American republics: a general commitment to left-wing, anti-authoritarian, and populist causes is a questionable unifying force, and the decision to work in globalized venues that often means also not even always working in one's native language (particularly true in the case of major Mexican directors and actors) challenge's any essentialist criterion of a so-called Latin American identity.

While there are those who might, in the name of a Latin American continental solidarity, decry an alternative emphasis on national filmmaking, the simple fact is that, in terms of the primary bibliography and going beyond those production codes that are transnational in the context of the Cuban Revolution, authoritarian/neofascist U.S.-supported dictatorships, redemocratization, and, most recently, the so-called Pink Tide, it is important to look more at what is differential than continuous between national projects.

Speaking from the basis of a "continuidad precaria," Cortínez and Engelbert organize a masterful analysis of Chilean cinema since the 1960s. This is a project that is very broad in scope—fifty years of production—in no small measure because of the enormous sociopolitical and accompanying cultural transformations that have taken place during that period. The idea of Chile as a relatively tranquil and stable society, alongside its neighbors in the Southern Cone, has long been set aside, not only because of the ruptures in the civic discourse that have taken place since the mid-1970s, but because of the way in which those ruptures called into question the myths of a preceding stable democracy.

The organization of the volume adopts two interrelated focuses that work exceptionally well in tandem. On the one hand, there is the identification of what one can call micro topics in the intersecting civic discourses and filmic production, with the Allende years and the resulting neofascist dictatorship being points of reference both *ad quem* and *ab quo*. This is reasonable, since the Allende-Pinochet axis not only spurred an enormous expansion of Chilean filmmaking, but give it the impetus to become truly international in stature. Now even relatively minor-key, but nevertheless excellently executed films, like Sebastián Silva's *La nana* or Sebastián Lelio's *Gloria* have enjoyed international distribution.

The other axis is the one that is particularly to my liking, as I confess to have used it in my various studies on Latin American film, is to select major texts for in-depth analysis. "Major" is, of course, a squishy term, unless one goes strictly on the basis of box office numbers or audience demographics, which are hardly useful critical markers. Yet, one does have a sense of those texts that have had a profound impact on the languages of filmmaking, which in my interest on documentary filmmaking meant in the case of Chile films like Patricio Guzmán's now legendary *Batalla de Chile* or Miguel Littin's *Acta general de Chile* to mention two films from

the Allende-Pinochet axis. As one might expect, however, in the case of a work as ambitious but balanced as this is, an overreliance on that axis is avoided. Thus, for example Miguel Littin's stunning *El chacal de Nahueltoro* (from 1969; it has important connections with the famed Brazilian Cinema Novo) is featured in one of the eight principal chapters. Another chapter, perhaps surprisingly, given the number of pages dedicated to it, is to the 1968 Germán Becker Ureta musical spectacular *Ayúdeme usted compadre*, which the authors call "Un bodrio que gustó." Yet it is an important *bodrio* because of the way in which music is used for the loose political purpose of low-brow cultural nationalism, making it the most successful film in Chile for the next thirty years. A DVD copy of the film is included at the back of the first volume of *Evolución*, a delightful bibliographic discovery. And included at the back of the second volume is Alejo Álvarez Angelini's 1968 *Tierra quemada*, a veritable Chilean entry into the spaghetti Western genre, which the authors also analyze at length.

Profusely illustrated with photos and photograms, *Evolución* is, thus, a significant and model study. It does not just focus on what we have come to call art films, those forged under the aegis of auteur concepts or committed to major ideological agendas (although, to be sure, even low-brow cultural production is part of an ideological agenda). Rather, there is the sense here of the totality of a national cinematic production that goes far beyond a few major texts that one is likely to teach even in a specialized course on Chilean filmmaking (perhaps not much of a likelihood in U.S. programs). However, beyond the strictly scholarly, there is much to enjoy in reading the analyses included in these two volumes, providing the reader who may have hung out more in Argentine, Brazilian, or Mexican movie houses, with the intelligently informative experience of "going to the movies" with Chile.

David William Foster, Arizona State University