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## Bridging Continents: Cinematic and Literary Representations of Spanish and Latin American Themes (review)

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Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies, Volume 10, 2006, pp. 270-272 (Review)

Published by University of Arizona  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/hcs.2007.0048>



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*Como agua para chocolate*. The most engaging part of the article is Lockhart's discussion of cartoons depicting Jewish and Argentine stereotypes. David William Foster writes on Gabriel Valansi, an innovative Argentine photographer whose nocturnal black-and-white urban landscapes evoke Holocaust associations. Foster shows that Valansi's eerie images constitute a commentary on Argentine neoliberalism. They suggest the impoverishment of a once prosperous country and force spectators to draw parallels between postwar Europe and contemporary Argentina. The section concludes with Ruth Behar's, "While Waiting for the Ferry to Cuba," in which Behar, a Jewish Cuban-American filmmaker, describes the genesis of her film *Adio Kerida*. As a Sephardic Jew, she wanted not only to explore her roots but also to challenge the Ashkenazi view of Jewish identity. Her research led her to a deep understanding of the multifaceted nature of Jewish Cuban society, resulting in a film that is thoroughly Cuban, yet focuses on Jewish identity. Behar concludes by lamenting that *Adio Kerida* has not been embraced by Jewish film festivals; she speculates that Jewish Americans, predominantly Ashkenazi, may not identify with it.

By bringing together essays on a splendid array of Jewish-related topics, Marjorie Agosin has greatly enriched our understanding of one of Latin America's most energetic and productive minorities. It is noteworthy that Agosin has included essays by both Jewish and non-Jewish writers, thereby demonstrating that Jewish Studies are not relevant only to a particular group, but to a broad range of scholars and readers.

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***Bridging Continents:***  
***Cinematic and Literary Representations***  
***of Spanish and Latin American Themes***  
**Chasqi: Revista de Literatura**  
**Latinoamericana, 2005**  
**Edited by Nora Glickman and Alejandro**  
**Varderi**

In his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, published in 1992, *Bridging Continents* is one of the first collections in the corpus of Peninsular and Latin American film criticism to take seriously the need for a triangular, that is, Trans-Atlantic view of the production of film texts. Many of its essays, written by a diverse group of scholars from Spanish and Latin American literature programs in both the U.S. and Spain, bridge the Atlantic using a variety of different methodologies. The coherence of the book, then, derives not so much from the sharing of a theoretical line, but from its convergence around a set of themes. Instead of seeing the transatlantic as an essence, it conceptualizes it as a debate, organized according to the following thematics: the colonial/the postcolonial; Spanish nationalisms; youth and gender; and the female vs. the male gaze. The transatlantic is here defined by its praxis. The individual essays constitute epistemologies of the Iberamerican ideal.

Understanding colonial and post-colonial histories and hybrid identities is crucial to a transatlantic studies approach whose ultimate aim is to un-think Eurocentrism. In light of this border thinking, the essays in the first section, "Reassessing the Heritage: Colonial and Postcolonial Connections Between Latin America and Spain," provide analyses of their films' historical and ideological contexts. Nina Gerassi-Navarro, for example, in her analysis of *Como era gostoso o meu francês*, directed by Nelson Pereira Dos Santos, not only considers the film's representation of cannibalism and the significance of cannibalism by women, but also observes the shift from Europe to Latin America of the historical reconstruction of the conquest, from the chronicles of European explorers to the Brazilian modernism of Oswald de Andrade's *Movimento Antropófago* of the 1920s. Cynthia Stone looks at how historical and literary texts have characterized the conquistador Lope de Aguirre's sixteenth-century exploits in the Amazon, and how these representations get played out in *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972), by the German filmmaker Werner Herzog, and in Carlos Saura's *El Dorado* (1988). Eyda

M. Merediz examines *Cuarteto de la Habana*, directed by Fernando Colomo in 1999, and demonstrates how the film interweaves the nineteenth-century Cuban novel *Cecilia Valdés* and Calderón de la Barca's seventeenth-century metaphysical drama *La vida es sueño* into the fabric of post-revolutionary Cuba (Bridging 5). The result of this hybrid process is not illustrated by a slave ship, as in Colonial times, but by a new type of transatlantic voyage on a charter plane, referred to as *la lechera*. The lechera plane carries the milk, or the semen of the white skinned Europeans to Cuba, so that they can search for their exotic mulata girlfriends. According to the film, however, the mestizaje of Spaniards and Cubans results in failure, because "as boundaries become loosened through globalization, the promise for another transatlantic voyage may well result in a massive exodus of Blacks and mulattos to Europe, in a process of reconquista" (6). The last essay of this section unearths the ravages of Spanish Imperialism by interrogating Arabphobia in Spain. In her comparative study of *Las Cartas de Alou* (Montxo Armendáriz 1990) and *Bwana* (Imanol Uribe 1996), Isolina Ballesteros rightly situates the representation of African immigrants within a xenophobic nationalism derived from Francoist national-Catholic discourse and post-Franco economic nationalism. This explicit racism, nevertheless, lies at the heart of a newer, institutionalized, "benign racism" that appears to be a defender of marginalized groups, but in reality finds excuses to oppose initiatives for equality on the basis of immigrants' illegal status.

As the essays of this first section show, a transatlantic understanding of cultural production must be able to transcend national perspectives in order to reassess the significance of the modern nation state and the idea of national borders. Indeed, co-productions such as the Spanish-Cuban *Cuarteto de la Habana*, which call into question the national identity of cinematic works through their "transnational trafficking" of actors such as Maribel Verdú, or the shopworn Antonio Banderas and Penelope Cruz, are products of regulatory regimes which frame audiovisual production in Europe and Latin

America and wield an increasingly powerful hold over transatlantic filmmaking (Smith 389).

Although several essays acknowledge transnational cinematic encounters, others refer pointedly to the fact that despite economic trans-nationalization and globalization, the state still impinges forcefully on film culture. The ultra-nationalism of the Francoist state and its imperialist film policies are thus dealt with in the book's second section, "Spanish Nationalism(s): Border Crossings and Shifting Identities." Here Alejandro Varderí studies the effect of kitsch and folklore films on an oppressed Francoist cinema-going public, while Samuel Amell discusses how, despite the large number of films adapted from literary works, Francoist control over film production excluded the significant works of exiled authors. Showing how recent Catalan cinema serves as an amendment to Spanish centralism, Jaume Martí Olivella takes Catalan film criticism to another level, linking the rhetorics in these films with the more globalized concepts of hybridity, migrant subjects, and "self-serving othering" vs. "joyful othering." His incisive reading of several Catalán-Spanish films interrogates the commodification of Barcelona and the complex and often contradictory regionalist identity politics of these films. In a similar vein, Anabel Martín reads *Urte Ilunak* [Los años oscuros/The Dark Years] (Arantxa Lazcano 1994) against the seminal texts of Basque nationalism and identity (those of Bernardo Atxaga and Sabino Arana, among others) with an aim to show how this film complicates the traditional model of citizenry based on the ideas of land, language, origin, and independence; her analysis demonstrates how Arantxa Lazcano reframes Basque identity within a non-essentialist epistemology.

The third section of the book, "Breaking Ground: Twisted Youth and Gender Twists in the Spanish-Speaking World," demonstrates how Hollywood genres such as the slasher film, and literary phenomenon such as Generation X or Queer theory might have developed in the US, but have been employed to subversively critique normative national cultures in Spain and Latin America. Patricia Hart, for example, argues that *Tesis*, the stylish thriller by Spaniard Alejandro

Amenábar (1996), “turns a series of generic conventions on their ear.” Not only does it anticipate Wes Craven’s 1996 *Scream*, but it “performs the remarkable surgical feat of excising the sexual titillation from the slasher gore” scenes endemic to the unending series of films like *Halloween*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, or *Friday the Thirteenth*. Amenábar thus constructs a “highly entertaining and commercially successful film, all the while” refusing to give the public their gore and sex. María Pilar Rodríguez provides a much-needed corrective to the Generation X label used to describe so much cultural production by young Spanish writers and filmmakers. In her study of *Historias del Kronen*, she reveals its fundamental incompatibility with Douglas Coupland’s novel, while responding to previous Hispanist criticism of this Spanish novel and film. Some critics have moralized about the nihilism of *Historias del Kronen*, but Rodríguez claims that the alienation of these characters vindicates the way in which young people are subverting the “aesthetic and moral norms [of] contemporary Spanish society” (131). In the same section, Michael Schuessler’s essay on the representation of homosexuality provides a vivid history of the iconography of, he writes, “vestidas, locas, mayates and machos” from early Mexican film to the present. His goal is to “illustrate how one may better interpret Mexico’s representation of and reaction to what is generally perceived to be a deviant—and therefore unacceptable—‘vice’” (132). David William Foster studies the homoerotic narrative, the queer gaze and the filmic genre of the bank robbery as they intersect in Marcelo Piñeyro’s *Plata Quemada* (made in Argentina in 2000).

The last section of the volume, “The Female Gaze-The Male Perspective: Spanish American Literature and Film,” illustrates “how cinematic techniques have been inspired by the novel and by drama” (5). Patrick Duffy demonstrates how the Mexican writer Mariano Azuela and the Spanish Francisco Ayala incorporated formal cinema techniques, such as the long shot and the close up, pioneered by European cinema *auteurs*. Gustavo Fares, in his attempt to find a redemptive image of women in either

Borges’s fiction or filmic adaptations of his work, concludes that not only is there not a positive role for women, but also argues that we should study all of Borges’s work from this negative vantage point. Nora Glickman’s essay looks more in depth at the bridging of film and literature. Her comparison of Juan Carlos Onetti’s short story “El infierno tan temido [Hell so feared]” and its film adaptation directed by Oscar Viale and Raúl de la Torre in 1987, observes how the film “recreates Onetti’s ‘tortuous language,’ his ‘degrading choice of nouns,’ its deliberately ambiguous phrases, fragmented syntactic constructions, and the overall nightmarish atmosphere” that overwhelms the short story (177). Finally, William Childers’s reading of *Tristana* and *Camila* argues that Spanish and Latin American cinemas stage an “encounter between the female body and the masculine gaze” that is mediated by “pre-cinematic forms of popular theatre and religious practices” (185).

In conclusion, the sixteen essays read fluidly, and are well-researched and nicely balanced in terms of exposition and analysis. Most importantly, the volume will be an indispensable tool for both researchers and teachers of Spanish and Latin American film.

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***A History of Afro-Hispanic Language***  
Cambridge University Press, 2005  
By John M. Lipski

Lipski’s contribution to the study of Afro-Hispanic language is remarkable. The book is accompanied by the largest known collection of primary Afro-Hispanic texts from the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America, Africa and Asia, all available in an online appendix.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first three chapters cover the initial contacts between Europeans and Africans, the early Afro-Portuguese and the Afro-Hispanic texts. The following two chapters cover the Afro-