



Shaw, Deborah, ed. *Latin American Contemporary Cinema. Breaking into the Global Market*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. 201p.

This book, edited by Deborah Shaw, presents a compilation of essays by different authors who offer an overview of contemporary Latin American cinema. The book divides the essays into three groups, and each one of them focuses on one film. The first group reflects on Latin American films that have been commercially successful on the global scene, while the second group contains essays on films that have participated in international festivals with some success, and have been shown in some theaters but at

the same time have failed in reaching a mass audience. The third group analyzes films that, though having achieved some local success, have failed in the process to reach international significance.

In the introduction, entitled "Latin American Cinema a Qualified Success Story." Deborah Shaw establishes what for her has constituted a recent and successful participation of Latin American cinema in a global context. She argues that this growth has increased the attention of international directors and producers to Latin American productions. This attention in turn has led to the rise of funding for the productions from the southern hemisphere, either in the form of co-production or through cooperative programs that provide funding and financial incentives such as scholarships and prizes.

Reflecting on the actual meaning of the term "Latin American Cinema" as a starting point for the analysis, Shaw argues that although the term generalizes productions from different countries, in any case it serves to introduce a category of analysis of regional production. In this sense, the essays in the book analyze deploying elements of the films in each group, and they try to find inside the films the elements that may identify and promote their success or failure. Failure in any case is not understood as a failure of the narrative or cinematic quality, but rather as the impossibility of transcending local exhibition.

The first group of essays discusses the films *Diarios de Motocicleta*, a Walter Salles's film, *Y tu mamá también* by Alfonso Cuarón, *Cidade de Deus*, from Fernando Mereilles, and from Belienksy, *Nueve reinas*.

Diarios de motocicleta reflects on the concept of the road movie genre and its use in presenting a general overview of South America. Regarding *Y tu mamá también*, the essay focuses on the ways in which middle and upper classes in Mexico share ways of talking and dress codes, and how the film establishes a dialog of the desire of middle and upper social classes to belong to a global community. The film intentionally tries to advocate for the need for internationalizing the Latin American world, and it serves as another common example of a road movie which displays elements of comedy and a sexual and political background as well. *Cidade de Deus* is presented as a film that borrows from the international audiovisual language and dialogue to easily achieve its acceptance by international markets. Similar to the article on Mereile's film, but considering the specific

relationship with the Argentine cinema, the article "Playing Hollywood at its Own Game?" analyzes the film *Nueve reinas* by director Fabian Belinsky. The film is considered as one of Argentina's most successful films of recent times due to its successful use of language and structure.

Within the second group of essays and films analyzed are films that have enjoyed moderate success in the international market: *Madam Zata* by Karim Ainouz, *Marcelo Kanchatka* by Pineyto, *Bolívar soy yo* by Jorge Ali Triana, and *Lista de espera* by Juan Carlos Tabio.

In treating *Madam Zata*, the essay accounts for the importance of the film as a document that reflects both identity and alternative cultures. In the essay about the Kamchatka film, the author analyzes the feature's portrayal of the topic of Argentinean military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983. The essay on the Colombian film *Bolívar soy yo* discusses how the movie shows Latin American reality and its current political situation by the use of the comedy genre. And finally, in discussing the Cuban film *Lista de espera*, the author analyzes the view of a Cuban nation divided into two worlds, the communist utopia and a resigned one which awaits a post-Castro Cuba.

In the third and last group of essays and films are the films *La otra conquista* by Mexican director Salvador Carrasco, and *El destino no tiene favoritos* by Álvaro Velarde. These two productions are utilized to investigate the elements and processes that have influenced a massive projection of these films in the international market place. The *La otra conquista* essay addresses problems within the Mexican production system, such as the profound differences in the conception of what is considered to be present and what has represented the country's identity. The Peruvian film *El destino no tiene favoritos* serves as an example to address the issue of lack of resources in film production and how this fact will eventually prevent the any distribution of further films, a fact which in turn will affect the development of other projects in that country.

Shaw's book takes an interesting approach to the subject of Latin American cinema as it establishes the use of this term as a marketing category. It is based on the recent rise of participation, input, and support of these products in the international market in recent years. Taking this into account, when it comes to international market, the market is mainly created by Hollywood. Following from this objective, and aiming at establishing an overview of the situation, the articles cover a variety of aspects related to

content and distribution of Latin American film productions. Even though the essays are very well-written, they tend to demonstrate the obvious: successful movies are those that meet the necessary elements to enter into international markets, the ones that use language and visual codes similar to Hollywood, and which also have resources and a solid production infrastructure.

The failed films are those that lack, to a greater or lesser extent, a solid combination of these elements. However, a separate film selection might be appropriate to fully develop the ideas brought up in these essays. A deep reading of this volume reveals some loose ends, not only in terms of the number of the films examined in the book, but also in the reflection on how films from such heterogeneous regions could establish and create a dialogue with international audiences and markets without altering their own personality. Another topic related to the thematics of this book that would require further development is the role of marketing and its relation with the creation of audiences.

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