

ANDRÉS LEMA-HINCAPIÉ AND DEBRA A. CASTILLO, EDS. *Despite All Adversities: Spanish-American Queer Cinema*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2015. 307 pp.

Despite All Adversities: Spanish-American Queer Cinema is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship on Latin American film and queer studies. As the introduction states, the anthology was “conceived for use by instructors and students of the college and university courses on Spanish-American cinema,” while at the same time seeking to “maintain intellectual sophistication” (5). The volume strikes the balance successfully. The chapters offer nuanced, in-depth film analyses that are also clear, intellectually generous, and accessible to the general reader. The themes explored give a sense of the diversity of current queer cinematic production: they range from queer subjectivity and desire to gay authorship, bisexuality and lesbian experiences, and relations with families and the nation.

The volume boasts major scholars in Latin American queer and film studies. The sixteen chapters focus on one film each (with only one exception), which allows for thorough analysis and increases the volume’s appeal as a resource for instructors and students. A few essays are devoted to canonical queer films such as *El lugar sin límites* (Arturo Ripstein, 1978), *Señora de nadie* (María Luisa Bemberg, 1982), *Doña Herlinda y su hijo* (Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, 1985), and *Fresa y chocolate* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1993), while others discuss more recent but well-known films such as *No se lo digas a nadie* (Francisco J. Lombardi, 1998), *Plata quemada* (Marcelo Piñeyro, 2000), and *La virgen de los sicarios* (Barbet Schroeder, 2000) – the last three all based on commercially successful novels. The chapters by David William Foster on *Señora de nadie*, Daniel Balderston on *Doña Herlinda y su hijo*, Cristina Venegas on *Fresa y chocolate*, and Claudia Schaefer on *El lugar sin límites* provide outstanding analyses of these classic films and succeed in breathing new life into discussions of works about which much has been written already.

Many of the essays cover relatively recent films, ranging from 2000 to 2007. Paul Julian Smith explores the question of gay auteurism in Julián Hernández’s *Mil nubes de paz cercan el cielo* (2004). Debra Castillo on *XXY* (Lucía Puenzo, 2007) and Andrés Lema-Hincapié on *Plata quemada* unfold the multilayered textures and resonances of these films. Similarly, David Oubiña develops a rich and insightful reading of Lucrecia Martel’s *La ciénaga* (2001). These essays are intellectually rigorous and make strategic use of ideas by Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler without overusing film theory or critical jargon – a comment that may be extended to the whole collection. The volume has a unity of tone that goes beyond

the common theme of sexuality and that results from a historically and geographically situated approach to cinema.

It is perhaps not surprising that eight of the chapters are devoted to films from or connected with Argentina, a country with a highly developed film industry and significant gay and lesbian visibility. Four essays deal with Mexico, while the remaining chapters cover films from Cuba, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela. The editors note the very limited body of Spanish-American cinema with lesbian themes, which is reflected in the collection. However, the chapters by Cecelia Burke Lawless on the French-Venezuelan film by Fina Torres, *Mecánicas celestes* (1995), and by María de la Cruz Castro Ricalde on the Mexican films *Así del precipicio* (Teresa Suárez, 2006) and *Todo incluido* (Rodrigo Ortúzar, 2009) represent important contributions in this regard.

There are also very valuable discussions of lesser-known films. An interesting case is *La venganza del sexo* (Emilio Vieyra, 1967), which Esteve Rimbau describes as a “horror fantasy” film from Argentina that mutated into a “sexploitation film” when distributed in the US market. Robert Deam Tobin explains how Anahí Berneri’s *Un año sin amor* (2005) reconfigures our received ideas about homosexuality, HIV, and S/M leather culture in Argentina. In her analysis of *Mecánicas celestes*, Burke Lawless explores questions of space and transnationalism through the protagonist’s journey from Venezuela to France and the film’s turning inside-out of the Cinderella story.

The volume achieves a unity of tone and style through historically and geographically situated discussions and through strategic decisions such as devoting an entire chapter to each film and focusing exclusively on fiction films. Queer experiences are not treated as universal but rather as strongly embedded within national, cultural, and filmic traditions. This is not to say that the essays overlook the critical importance of global networks both for the characters and for the process of film production itself. The impact of globalization and transnationalism is especially evident in Chris Perriam’s chapter on the Spanish-Argentine film *En la ciudad sin límites* (Antonio Hernández, 2002) and in Dieter Ingenschay’s analysis of *Ronda nocturna* (Edgardo Cozarinsky, 2005), which he sees as an homage to Buenos Aires’s nocturnal character as well as its queer culture by Cozarinsky, a writer and filmmaker based in Paris and Buenos Aires. Transnationalism also plays an important part in discussions of *La venganza del sexo*, *Mecánicas celestes*, and *Todo incluido*, as mentioned above. The anthology is a testament to the vibrancy of queer cinema in Spanish America and demonstrates how it has come of age “despite all adversities,” as the title suggests. There is no doubt that this collection is destined to become an indispensable point of reference for Latin American

film and queer studies and an important resource for scholars and students.

IGNACIO LÓPEZ-VICUÑA
University of Vermont

IRAIDA H. LÓPEZ. *Impossible Returns: Narratives of the Cuban Diaspora*.
Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015. xiv + 294 pp.

While return to the home country by several groups of émigrés has often been the subject of inquiry in post-colonial literatures and migration studies, it has only recently begun to be addressed in American literary studies. Social mobility, economic opportunity and favorable post-Cold War geopolitics have turned immigrant artists and writers into potential “returnees” and homecoming has become a salient issue in the art and writing of recent decades. Iraida H. López’s timely volume addresses the understudied issue of return and the politics and poetics of homecoming in several recent Cuban-American works of the “one-and-a-half generation” by adeptly inserting them in the post-Revolutionary history of the Cuban diaspora. While in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, Cuban-American authors like Reinaldo Arenas and Magali Alabau approached the desired return as a dystopian experience, changes in the diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba in the 1990s and the subsequent viability of brief visits to the island have brought the possibility of returning to the foreground. The progressive coming to terms of writers and artists with their exile predicament and their willingness to re-connect with family and friends in Cuba accounts for the proliferation of fictional and autobiographical works dealing with real or imagined returns.

The volume is a well-researched contribution to Cuban and Cuban-American studies that inquires into the “roots and routes” of Cuban diaspora in a style that is at once personal and carefully sensitive to the nuances of each author’s relationship to the homeland. López untangles the complexities of the ethos and pathos of Cuban exile by addressing the emotional underpinnings of the changing, discontinuous relationship between the Castro government and the various U.S. administrations in the last five decades, all of which are necessary to understand the diversity of the politics and poetics of return. Homecoming in Cuban-American writing and art is framed within theories of diaspora and transnationalism, two slippery terms that are frequently conflated in the critical idiom of post-colonial, migration and American ethnic studies. The author expresses appropriate concern regarding the ease with which these theories become