

Roberts-Camps, Traci. *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Social and Cultural Perspectives*. University of New Mexico Press, 2017. 208pp.

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The issue of female representation in Latin America is an extremely timely one, particularly given that no women presidents currently remain in power in the Americas. Traci Roberts-Camps, in *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, discusses the film production by women in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile—which have all had female presidents in recent years—as well as in Mexico. As Roberts-Camps points out, female filmmakers deal with many of the same challenges that women in other fields (including politics) experience, such as patriarchal notions of the workplace and hesitations about women’s abilities (xii). With the entertainment industry, both in the US and around the world, currently reckoning with sexism and a lack of inclusivity—rallying around causes like #MeToo and #TimesUp—Roberts-Camps makes a welcome, relevant contribution. Moreover, she provides a template for how the anti-establishment impulses of the feminist films she discusses can extend beyond women to other minorities (xii-xiii), and, hopefully, beyond film itself.

The book’s corpus focuses on films by women directors who have overcome difficulties and challenged established rules in order to broaden the scope of representation, both onscreen and off. Their films “test established boundaries and force the audience to focus on this transgression” (xiv). Indeed, the subversion of norms that Roberts-Camps discusses takes place not only at the level of industrial production, but also in terms of content. All of the films discussed in the volume focus on “challenging societal norms such as heteronormativity, ethnocentricity, sexism, and socioeconomic discrimination” (xii). She focuses on two filmmakers from each of the four countries in her study: María Luisa Bemberg and Lucía Puenzo from Argentina, Suzana Amaral and Tizuka Yamasaki from Brazil, Carmen Luz Parot and Alicia Scherson from Chile, and María Novaro and Dana Rotberg from Mexico. Her study thus covers multiple generations of filmmakers, and multiple film genres, including documentary and fiction.

Roberts-Camps offers excellent close readings of particular scenes in the films she discusses, which will doubtless prove useful to teachers of film seeking to show students how certain film techniques serve to highlight given thematic elements. Examples of this include the parallel between the separation of characters onscreen and the theme of isolation in Puenzo’s *XXY* (25-29); the

juxtaposition of archival footage and contemporary discussions of the dictatorial past as an evocation of affect in Parot's *Estadio nacional* (78); and the comparison of two similar but eventually divergent sequences in Amaral's *Hotel Atlántico* as a way of creating a sense of premonition in the viewer about a particular character's fate (123). Throughout, Roberts-Camps insists on incorporating not only discussions of the films from critics based in the countries where the films were made (xiv)—a gesture not always extended to Latin American film critics in English-language film studies—but also links these discussions to more general film criticism, from Brian Price (29) to Carl Plantinga (78).

Another of the book's helpful contributions is that it gives readers the opportunity to draw comparisons among filmmakers from different countries who aren't always compared with one another. For example, she shows how both Scherson and Puenzo portray the onscreen coexistence of surrealism with realistic portraits of contemporary life (97). Later, she discusses how Scherson, Novaro, and Puenzo all deal with ethnic tensions in Latin America (104). She also points out a specific technical approach shared by Amaral and Parot, in which the camera follows its subject until she disappears behind a building, instead of following her, thereby separating the viewer from the character and emphasizing the latter's isolation (115). Given that studies of Latin American cinema often only compare films and filmmakers within particular nations, Roberts-Camps's work will doubtless provide a template for broader comparisons tied less to nation than to gender and other thematic elements. By focusing on the shared theme of feminist transgression running through all the films in her study, Roberts-Camps concludes, she can draw attention to the methods of female filmmakers to "voice their discontent and raise awareness of ... disenfranchisement" (144). Adding to these thematic similarities, however, it would have been interesting to hear more about actual political networks and interactions among the women filmmakers studied, either within nations or internationally.

The scope of the corpus leaves the reader with some questions. Although Roberts-Camps refreshingly moves beyond the three "strongest" (xvi) industrial cinemas of Latin America, why is Chile the fourth country she focuses on, as opposed to Cuba or Colombia, which were also "on the forefront of cinematic innovation" in the 1960s (xvii)? By focusing on countries with more industrial cinemas, is Roberts-Camps making a commentary about the ingrained, institutionalized sexism of industry, film or otherwise? Or is it simply because countries with more developed film industries produce more films and are thus more likely to have women filmmakers? And, although some exclusions are necessary and inevitable in the creation of any corpus, the reader is left wondering how

Roberts-Camps formed hers: where are, for example, Lucrecia Martel, Lourdes Portillo, Marcela Said, Marilú Mallet, Valeria Sarmiento, and Albertina Carri (to name a few)?

Roberts-Camps ends with a look to the future of Latin American cinemas, with brief speculations about digital media, transnational and co-financed productions, and a move beyond film and television to new platforms and formats (143-44). In an era in which the representation of women and other minorities has taken on renewed urgency, one can only hope that in the digital era, the political critiques made by Latin American women filmmakers that Roberts-Camps has highlighted in her volume will continue, and indeed increase.