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**Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer, editors. Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century World. Wayne State UP, 2020.**

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Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer, editors. *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century World*. Wayne State UP, 2020.

**Abstract**

Review of Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer, editors. *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century World*. Wayne State UP, 2020. 376 pp.

**Keywords**

Chilean cinema, transnational, film festivals, documentary, horror, trans\*

Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer, editors. *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century World*. Wayne State UP, 2020. 376 pp.

Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer's collection reads more speedily than its nearly 400-page length might suggest. It hangs together more coherently than the range of topics (film festivals, horror cinema, documentary, trans\* film, memory) in its table of contents might suggest. And what appears at first to be a rather straightforward and perhaps clunky or redundant title—*Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century World*—actually rather cleverly highlights this volume's ability to weave together multiple threads and illuminate the complexities related to, for example, a cinema that is both of a nation and in the world, and both engaged with its past and able to be read separately from it. The editors should be credited not just for the cohesion of the volume within its larger framework (not easy to accomplish across fourteen contributions) but also for the volume's consistent clarity and readability throughout (not easy to accomplish in the academic world).

Barraza, Fischer, and their contributors wrestle throughout with the reasons, opportunities, and implications for a national film industry that is in many ways dependent upon the international and transnational world and markets for its inspiration, education, funding, distribution, interpretation, and reputation. There are, of course, the obvious influences of films and filmmakers that originated in Hollywood and elsewhere: for instance, Moisés Park traces the Chilean "specters" of Bruce Lee (130), and Jonathan Risner notes the obvious international influences on Chilean horror film. But contributors also show that significant figures in Chilean cinema live and work outside of the country, engage with transnational family histories in their films, attain funding and training from programs sponsored by international festivals, shape their films for international festival audiences, and find even their local distribution through international streaming giants (like Netflix). From the opening pages of the introduction, the editors and the contributors ask, suggest, and ask again—often rather explicitly, through multiple series of rhetorical questions—what implications, trade-offs, opportunities, and missed opportunities are at play in such an arrangement?

In the case of scholars, should Chilean film be interpreted from a global or national perspective? Both, it turns out. Even chapters that seem resolutely turned toward straightforward readings of a single film through a relatively focused set of theoretical lenses—such as María Constanza Vergara Reyes's "The Life of Things," which uses affect theory and thing theory to revisit a Vivienne Barry film—reveal themselves as unexpectedly good fits for the larger collection. That analysis was always going to be engaged in the international: Barry is a Chilean journalist, and the film is *Atrapados en Japón* ("Trapped in Japan"). But this seems at first a different, narrower brand of "in the world" than the rest of the collection. The documentarist is reimagining and retracing her father's own travels in east

Asia, putting a Chilean perspective to work on another, imagined Chilean perspective on travel, displacement, and global politics. The documentary follows well-established, global trends familiar to this brand of film. But even here, the chapter's author sees the simultaneous, complicating presence of the national: devices and structures clearly indebted to Chilean literature and film. With this move, "The Life of Things" quickly rejoins threads set out by earlier essays: Risner's globally-indebted Chilean horror film industry, for example, which frequently sees its directors work outside of the country or in foreign languages, but which "nevertheless" signifies aspects or bears clear traces of what must be understood as "Chileanness" (110).

Words like "nevertheless," "however," and "although" abound in this collection about a marginal film tradition engaged with and often constructed by cultural centers. María Paz Peirano's "Learning to Be 'Global'" offers a rather deep dive on an international film festival culture that offers distribution and prestige for Chilean films while using those films—and the tame, palatable brand of diversity they represent—to generate prestige and credibility for the festivals themselves and their elite, educated, self-congratulatory audiences, who value a low-risk engagement with a predictable otherness that confirms expected brands of not-so-different difference. (Peirano, like some others in this collection, openly aims to build on thinkers like Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover, Tamara Falicov, and David Martin-Jones and María Soledad Montañez on these issues.) Co-editor Barraza's chapter ("Intimacies and Global Aesthetics in *Vida de familia*") reads a filmic parallel to the *McOndo* writers who refused a fetishized, predictable, commodified local-ness in favor of a globally-engaged flux. The chapter offers a close reading of strategies that make Chilean film legible and palatable for international festival audiences while nevertheless (however, although) subtly speaking to fraught domestic political concerns.

Co-editor Fischer lays out the risks and erasures inherent in attempting to steer such a course, though. In "The International (Un)Intelligibility of Chilean Trans\* Film," Fischer contrasts the more legible, palatable, relatable trans\* politics of a film like *Una mujer fantástica* (*A Fantastic Woman*), with the engaged, radical, disruptive, and so less internationally successful *Naomi Campbell*, which focuses on specific, historical, community-based action rather than a personal trajectory more easily consumed and translated as "universal." There are implications here not just for film, then, but for the people and issues portrayed in those films. Trans\* people, Fischer argues, are similarly expected to fit into, rather than problematize, an established audience imaginary about trans-ness—for instance, one that adheres to an uncomplicated linear temporality, and so does not complicate familiar narratives and narrative structures. Fischer—and many other scholars in the contribution—hold out hope for the potential of formal disruptions that sometimes seem pretty familiarly modernist. One can imagine some ways in which even these

disruptions might be translated into self-congratulation by international festival audiences who recognize them, but these contributors certainly make the case that there is potential for positive aesthetic and political impact here.

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