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Una historia comparada del cine latinoamericano by Paul A.
Schroeder Rodríguez (review)

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Schroeder Rodríguez, Paul A. *Una historia comparada del cine latinoamericano*. Traducción de Juana Suárez. Iberoamericano-Vervuert, 2020, pp. 481. ISBN 978-8-49192-093-9.

Paul A. Schroeder Rodríguez's *Una historia comparada del cine latinoamericano* is a translation of his *Latin American Cinema: A Comparative History* published in 2016 by the University of California Press. This latter work was the first comparative history of Latin American cinemas to be published in any language. Its competent translation to Spanish, by Juana Suárez, represents a laudable effort to make this author's in-depth, wide-ranging, and up-to-date research known to Spanish-speaking scholars who do not read English. Schroeder Rodríguez's methodological framework is a manifestation of the recent comparative tendency in the field of Latin American film studies. As he acknowledges, this trend has been prominently exemplified by film historian Paulo Antonio Paranaguá in his influential collection of essays entitled *Tradición y modernidad en el cine de América Latina* (2003).

Una historia comparada constitutes an ambitious and unusual work of synthesis since this researcher writes as a film historian, as a theoretician of comparative modernity studies, and as a film critic. Most histories of individual Latin American national cinemas have focused on fiction features; and Schroeder Rodríguez the film historian follows this precedent as he unfurls a chronological and comparative narrative account of the medium's socioeconomic, technological, and esthetic evolution from its beginnings to the present. The writer concentrates on the production of the three major movie-producing countries of the region: Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. All the major historical periods are examined according to the following periodization: the silent era, studio cinema, neorealism and art cinema, New Latin American Cinema, and contemporary cinema. The author's comparative perspective situates the region's national cinemas within the context of the century-old "triangular flow" of moving images amongst Latin America, Europe, and "Hollywood."

Prospective readers should be advised that Schroeder Rodríguez does not propose to sketch a more-or-less comprehensive historical survey in the manner of the standard texts *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (1990) and *Historia del cine latinoamericano* (1987) by John King and Peter B. Schumann respectively. Rather, Schroeder Rodríguez tends to concentrate on selected cineastes who have succeeded in creating unique cinematic worlds, such as the contemporary Argentine director Lucrecia Martel, or the Brazilian auteur Glauber Rocha. This approach tends to downplay certain important historical movements, such as Brazilian Udigrudi, and certain popular culture genres, such as the Mexican wrestling movies exemplified by the popular *El Santo* franchise. Cult figures, such as Alejandro Jodorowsky and José Mojica Marín (*Zé do Caixão*), also receive short shrift. Documentary production is not examined apart from a few notable exceptions, such as Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's celebrated *La hora de los hornos*.

Schroeder Rodríguez excels as a theoretician of the interdisciplinary field of comparative modernity studies. The scholarly question of Latin America's modernity remains an unsettled issue; and here he parts ways with Paranaguá in that the latter conceives of a single Latin American modernity while the former postulates multiple forms or discourses of modernity for the region, to wit: liberalism, socialism, corporatism, and the baroque/neobaroque. As Schroeder Rodríguez clarifies, the baroque/neobaroque version of Latin American modernity is the most problematic as its theorization continues to be on-going in the work of scholars such as the late Aníbal Quijano. These discourses of modernity are carefully elucidated by Schroeder Rodríguez; and they have been deeply researched—in the case of corporatism, for instance, from Saint Paul's description of the body politic (*I Corinthians* 12:12–28) to Thomism, the dominant ideology in colonial Latin America.

The author's evident abilities as a film critic are on display in the volume's approximately fifty close textual analyses of paradigmatic films. In the tradition of Marxist-influenced thinkers such as Raymond Williams and Fredric Jameson, Schroeder Rodríguez considers films as cultural texts

that are both social and political. His readings draw fruitfully on a variety of critical approaches such as genre criticism (e. g., melodrama in Humberto Solás' *Lucía*), feminist critique (e.g., *viveza criolla* in Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's Gothic Trilogy), and formal criticism (e.g., Michel Chion's "phantom audio-visions" in Martel's Salta Trilogy). However, the dominant critical approach is ideological as Schroeder Rodríguez analyses the ways in which selected films exemplify different modernist discourses in different historical periods. For instance, Emilio Fernández's *Río Escondido* is analyzed as an allegory celebrating education as a means to harmonize the factions of the national body politic of a corporatist nation. All these close readings are perceptive; and many prove markedly original, such as the Deleuzian-influenced radical critique of marriage, heteronormativity, and capitalism in Mário Peixoto's avant-garde masterpiece *Limite*.

The only subpar dimension of the English-language version of this comparative history was the overly brief penultimate chapter entitled "Latin American Cinema in the Twenty-First Century." Here the researcher detailed the explosive rise in the production of fiction features in the region—over 500 produced in 2011—and identified the causes of this increase: filmmakers' recourse to low-cost digital technology, supportive state economic policies, and the availability of fresh sources of capital, including funding from outside the region. In terms of modes of representation, Schroeder Rodríguez elaborates on a new and productive way of thinking about much of this production—as "melorealist cinema"—and he appropriately and provocatively focuses attention on the "rise of the woman director." However, his restrictive approach understates the artistic and thematic diversity of this vast production by omitting consideration of many key works and figures, such as Martín Rejtman, Lisandro Alonso, and Pablo Trapero, bright lights all of the New Argentine Cinema movement.

The Spanish-language version of this work has been slightly updated and expanded by offering in the aforementioned chapter in-depth readings of the masterworks *Nostalgia de la luz* (Patricio Guzmán, 2010) and *Roma* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2018). Another improvement: a bibliography that comprises an essential part of the volume's scholarly apparatus. Unfortunately, a filmography is not included. Many illuminative illustrations are present, but the quality is frequently poor. *Una historia comparada* is aimed at advanced students and all scholars of Latin American cinema. A course syllabus using the volume appears at https://content.ucpress.edu/ancillaries/13077/samplesyllabus_latinamericancinema.pdf.

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Linguistics, Language, and Media

Belpoliti, Flavia, and Encarna Bermejo. *Spanish Heritage Learners' Emerging Literacy: Empirical Research and Classroom Practice*. Routledge, 2020, pp. 205. ISBN 978-1-138-18213-4.

Spanish Heritage Learners' Emerging Literacy: Empirical Research and Classroom Practice provides the results of an empirical study on the writing abilities of beginner Spanish heritage language (SHL) learners. The study is a comprehensive analysis of a corpus of 200 essays produced by SHL learners placed at the lowest level of language proficiency by the "SHL Learners Credit-and-Placement Exam" at the University of Houston. The book is divided as follows: an introduction to the SHL field (chapter 1), an analysis of each of the levels of writing proficiency in the corpus of the study (chapters 2–6), and concluding curricular and general considerations (chapters 7 and 8).

The first chapter provides an overview of the issues that occupy the focus of SHL research and a thorough review of different definitions of SHL learners that account for both their heterogeneity and prototypical attributes. The chapter includes a general demographic background