

(2002), delves into the intricate ties between memory and history. Using parallel editing, the director juxtaposes original footage and contemporary survivor testimony of the Chilean soccer stadium used as a camp of extermination and torture during the Pinochet regime. Alicia Scherson's work uses surrealism to emphasize the racial, class, and gender oppression of her female character in *Play* (2005). The author concludes that both filmmakers use form (juxtaposition, parallelism, nonlinear narrative) to criticize the archaism of Chilean society so oppressive to women.

Brazil is included in the last two chapters of the book. Considering iconic filmmakers Suzana Amaral and Tizuka Yamasaki, Roberts-Camps executes one of the best analyses in the volume. The female characters in these directors' films achieve self-realization through the experience of migration and regional and international displacement. Amaral's *A hora da estrela* (1986) or Yamasaki's *Gaijin: Caminhos da liberdade* (1980) emphasize the isolation these female characters suffer when confronted with new social environments and the elusiveness of happy endings in their personal stories.

The volume suffers from minor problems. The author does not address the selection criteria for including certain filmmakers and leaving others aside. A great variety of women directors has emerged in the past 15 years in the region, exploring documentary, narrative, and experimental form. A final chapter delving into the elements these directors have in common would have made a compelling case that the aesthetics and cinematic approaches of these directors are united by more than geography. Nevertheless, the book makes a relevant contribution to the scholarship on the subject, especially in the English language.

SUNY Purchase
Purchase, New York
Paula.Halperin@purchase.edu

PAULA HALPERIN

Public Spectacles of Violence: Sensational Cinema and Journalism in Early Twentieth-Century Mexico and Brazil by Rielle Navitski. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. 45 illustrations. Pp. xiv, 325. Illustrations. Notes, Bibliography. Index. \$99.95 cloth; \$27.65 paper.
 doi:10.1017/tam.2018.119

Life in rapidly urbanizing Brazil and Mexico could be both awe-inspiring and deadly violent. Resonating with high levels of danger, insecurity, and inequality, a wave of silent-era films that recreated notorious crimes and other high-risk activities offered the viewing public new forms of exciting, fast-paced entertainment as well as a novel means of making meaning in their own lives.

As Rielle Navitski observes, “Photography and cinema staged quotidian experience as thrillingly modern by spectacularizing violent and socially disruptive events” (128). Journalists at the time effectively made increasingly frequent use of graphic images in the production of newspapers and magazines. At the same time, filmmakers similarly seeking to craft a sense of excitement and newness presented “a rapid flow of unpredictable, contingent and disruptive events” (15). Taken together, Navitski argues, sensationalized media in Mexico and Brazil “worked to actively construct experiences of time as distinctly modern” (15). Further, she provocatively contends, sensationalism (much like melodrama) in early cinema and print journalism proved instrumental in “mediat[ing] the affective and moral dimensions of Latin American” life (16).

Navitski’s carefully crafted study dedicates nearly equal time to cinema and print journalism in Mexico and Brazil. Her first chapter on Mexico discusses the staging of public violence during the late Porfirian and Revolutionary Eras (ca. 1890–1930). Her second chapter takes up a series of “adventure melodramas” produced during the 1920s, including productions such as Gabriel García Moreno’s 1926 *El tren fantasma* which featured romance and intrigue on the Mexico City–Veracruz railroad. She observes how these pioneering works relied on techniques successfully used in various Hollywood productions, including on-location filming, daring stunts, and special effects to portray, among other things, a highly modern sense of “fast-and-furious action.”

Sensationalized films struck a collective chord. Perhaps this was because the emerging mass visual culture that early photojournalism and silent age movies engendered provided audiences a way to use produced images (either print or moving picture) to “tell stories about themselves” as they became part of a newly emerging public sphere. Joining in the mass consumption mediation of violent and related high-risk images through cinematic reenactments and highly visual print offerings, spectators managed to forge new social relations (just as fans do today).

Indeed, some of the most popular early films in Mexico and Brazil proved to be those that offered sensationalized recreations of actual events. The 1908 Brazilian film based on a true story of robbery and murder in Rio de Janeiro titled *Os estranguladores* (The Stranglers) “triggered a local craze for screen adaptations of real-life crimes”(1). A decade later, production of the Mexican *El automóvil gris* effectively restaged actual events in the nation’s capital by a notorious criminal gang with connections to high-ranking military officials. Amazingly, this work is said to have attracted more than 40,000 Mexico City viewers in only one day while also drawing significant crowds outside the capital during the film’s record-breaking run.

Navitski’s chapters on Brazil insightfully consider “reconstructed crime” in early film as well as related print culture, as seen in various sensationalized serial literature published in newspapers and magazines. Her final chapter shows innovation by considering related works developed outside of Brazil’s two major cities.

Building successfully on the pioneering work of other film and cultural historians, the author identifies her sophisticated approach as intermedial by seeking to both “recuperate the ephemeral artifacts of popular visual culture” and distinguish her perspective from that of previous studies, which have tended to concentrate on the influence of modernism and literary production more generally (4). In this endeavor, Navitski makes a most original and welcome contribution.

University of Tulsa
Tulsa, Oklahoma
andrew-wood@utulsa.edu

ANDREW GRANT WOOD

ART IN POSTREVOLUTIONARY MEXICO

The Power and Politics of Art in Postrevolutionary Mexico. By Stephanie J. Smith. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Pp. xi, 275. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$90.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.
 doi:10.1017/tam.2018.120

Stephanie J. Smith offers a superb new study of art in Mexico from the 1920s to the 1950s. It is remarkable for its incorporation of new archival sources and mastery of existing scholarship: its consideration of the institutional importance of the Mexican Communist Party (PCM, Partido Comunista Mexicano) in the artistic life of Mexico in the decades following the Mexican Revolution (1910-17); its careful delineation of the relationships among individuals, the Party, and various internal, external, and personal influences (thereby revealing the complexity of choices and strategies negotiated during these vibrant though tumultuous decades); and, perhaps most important, its detailed recovery of and thoughtful commentary on the participation of women in the avant-garde artistic and radical political movements of this time and place.

Formed in 1917 and largely absorbed into new political formations during the 1980s, the PCM played an important role in Mexican intellectual, artistic, and labor circles. This book can be considered a useful extension and updating of the pioneering work of Barry Carr on Marxism and communism in twentieth-century Mexico (1992). Smith’s book breaks new ground in its consideration of gender and sexuality and its incorporation of the cultural history approaches championed by Mary Kay Vaughan, Jocelyn Olcott, Gabriela Cano, Deborah Caplow, Masha Salazkina, Rick López, Stephen Lewis, John Mraz, John Lear, and James Oles, among others. The text is enriched by its deep and varied archival base, drawn from collections in Mexico, Europe, and the United States and including recently released internal security documents from Mexican intelligence agencies (19, 20). This reviewer especially enjoyed the reports by “internal security inspectors No. 20 and 58” on the “suspicious” content of a lecture on art by the painter David Alfaro Siqueiros; it included a careful description of the dress and appearance of the women in attendance (1), as well as the undercover agents’ reconstruction of the daily routine