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Title	Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature, edited by Maricruz Castro Ricalde, Mauricio Díaz Calderón and James Ramey
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Publication date	2021-08-04
Original Citation	Rocha, C. (2021) 'Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature, edited by Maricruz Castro Ricalde, Mauricio Díaz Calderón and James Ramey', Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media, 21, pp. 219-223. https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.21.17
Type of publication	Review
Link to publisher's version	10.33178/alpha.21.17
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Download date	2026-11-01 21:30:32
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/11643

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Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media
no. 21, 2021, pp. 219–223
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.21.17

Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature, edited by Maricruz Castro Ricalde, Mauricio Díaz Calderón and James Ramey. Peter Lang, 2017, 312 pp.

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In the early twenty-first century, scholars began examining Mexican films as part of a large network of exchanges and influences. While Hester Baer and Bryan Long analysed Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mama también* (2001) as a prime example of transnational Mexican cinema, Laura Isabel Serna explored the relationship between Mexican and American cinemas in the early twentieth century and Nancy Membrez examined *Macario* (1960). With the creation of the journal *Transnational Cinemas* in 2010, the study of cinema as an endeavour that involved multiple countries/regions gained further ground. For instance, in her article in a special issue dedicated to Transnational Latin American Cinemas, Jean Anne Lauer focused on the support for Mexican cinema in national and international contexts. Following this trend, *Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature* is a collection of essays on literature and film that were presented at the conference of the American Comparative Literature Association in 2016, whose theme was cosmopolitanism. Two chapters of this bilingual volume are in English while the other fifteen are written in Spanish. This review focuses on the chapters about film.

In the introduction, the editors raise the question about whether the nation can be taken as a valid category for visual representation. This is analysed around three axes forming the different sections of the book: the transnational; the nation and the national; and the representation of the local and the global. In the first section, James Ramey's opening chapter establishes a dichotomy between national cinema and transnational film. The author builds his argument on Andrew Higson's and Stephen Crofts' ideas and adeptly points out that "the very concept of a national cinema has the potential to infuriate the authoritarian, hegemonic, racist, nationalist, reactionary forces of an individual" (21). Ramey highlights the reception and cultural consumption of audiences that can be national or part of "transnational interpretative communities" (30), such as those in film festivals. The reception of cultural goods by different audiences is explained by Cary Wolfe's concept of posthumanism and Mikhail Bakhtin's heteroglossia, thus leading to the suggestion that transnational cinema could be understood as "a language of heteroglossia" that speaks to different groups of spectators (29). In her chapter, "Plural Perspectivism", Eunha Choi examines Carlos Reygadas's films—*Japón* (2002), *Stellet Licht* (*Silent Light*, 2007), and *Post Tenebras Lux* (2012)—with special emphasis on *Batalla en el cielo* (*Battle in Heaven*, 2005). Reygadas's counter-cinema, Choi proposes, "undercut[s] the unified self-identity of the modern bourgeois self" (53). She insightfully states that the Mexican director moves away from the

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political identification with the national flag to concentrate on the body of the male character Marcos. In addition, montage, the absence of sound, and multiple views of the human body contribute to a political and aesthetic perspectivism that escapes the narrow confines of the nation. Silvia Álvarez Olarra also studies *Post Tenebras Lux*, relying on Laura Marks's concept about the significance of cinema's languages to promote a haptic image. Quite lucidly, Alvarez Olarra admits that the techniques that cause disorientation in Reygadas's fourth film are not always well-received. However, with a detailed analysis of technical aspects, the author stresses the sensorial quality of *Post Tenebras Lux*.

The second section entitled "Textual Movements and Displacements" opens with Maricruz Castro Ricalde's chapter on loans and exchanges in Mexican popular visual culture during Mexican cinema's Golden Age. The author investigates calendars from the 1936–1955 period featuring photomontages of actors, thus helping disseminate images that promoted a type of Mexicanness. Castro Ricalde proposes that the attention to loans and exchanges between the different visual media (calendars and films) is a fertile ground for also exploring the interconnections between different regions. Also in this section, Carlos Belmonte Grey carefully considers the development of national stereotypes in Mexican cinema in the 1930s. Through the exploration of four films: *Viva Villa!* (Jack Conway, 1934), *El compadre Mendoza* (*Godfather Mendoza*, Juan Bustillo Oro and Fernando de Fuentes, 1934), *Redes* (Emilio Gómez Muriel and Fred Zinneman, 1936), and in *Así es mi tierra* (*Such Is My Country*, Arcady Boytler, 1937), Belmonte Grey argues that in the Six-Year Plan (*plan sexenal*) the representation of Mexico's past coalesced with images that also suggested the country's entrance into modernity. In the following chapter, Álvaro Vázquez Mantecón offers a lucid chronicle of writer Mariano Azuela's in film productions. Azuela served as consultant and adapted *Mala yerba* (Gabriel Soria, 1940), based on the novel published in 1909. Vázquez Mantecón clearly demonstrates not only the evolution of Azuela's views about the cinematic adaptation of his novels, but also the enriching exchanges between literature and cinema in Mexican cinema's Golden Age. Lauro Zavala's contribution centres around the identification of formal similarities and ideological differences between Mexican and American cinema in the 1940s and 1950s, focusing on classical genres such as film noir, romantic comedies, musicals, melodramas, and social cinema. The author cogently argues that the differences in these film genres are evident in dissimilar representations of love, marriage, family, and law in these two national cinemas. In the next chapter, Álvaro Fernández explores the cosmopolitan features of *Crepúsculo* (*Twilight*, Julio Bracho, 1944) and *El hombre sin rostro* (*The Man without a Face*, Juan Bustillo Oro 1950) by paying special attention to the director's aesthetic choices and oneiric scenes. By examining the combination of noir features with those of the melodrama, Fernández lucidly demonstrates the end of a period in which Mexican cinema was based on nationalism and its subsequent openness toward new generic influences.

The third section is devoted to migrations and borders. Danna Levin Rojo and Michelle Aguilar Vera contrast *El Norte* (Gregory Nava, 1983) with *Norteado* (*Northless*, Rigoberto Pérezcano, 2009). The authors argue that these coproduced films share the depiction of the difficulties of Mexican migrants and the allure of the American Dream, but also astutely state that they face a problematic classification as part of national cinemas—American and Mexican, respectively—because of the diverse ideological contexts that influenced these films. In his chapter, Diego Salgado Bautista analyses the documentary *Eco de la montaña* (*Echo of the Mountain*, Nicolás Echevarría, 2014), suggesting that this historical documentary presents a

parallel in which the human body becomes a universe that allows Wixárika cosmology to be displayed. Roberto Domínguez Cáceres turns his attention to *Rosa Blanca* (Roberto Gavalón, 1961) and *La jaula de oro* (*The Golden Dream*, Diego Quemada Díaz, 2013), which depict violence, proposing that in *Rosa Blanca* the injustices against poor Mexicans are rectified by the presence of the Mexican state that is non-existent in *La jaula de oro.* Itzá Zavala-Garrett offers an original reading of Patricia Riggen's film *La misma luna* (*Under the Same Moon*, 2007) in which she focuses on Los Angeles street murals. The author interprets the figures of La Malinche, The Virgen of Guadalupe, and La Llorona, making the distinction between Mexican and Chicano ideologies and reminding readers about the deep ties for Mexican immigrants between country of origin and country of residence. A particularly compelling chapter is Alicia Vargas Amésquita's contribution on the film *El traspatio* (*Backyard*, 2009), which argues that the victims of femicide are a metaphor for the nation. Vargas Amésquita posits the relation between the female police who investigates the deaths of femicide victims and the political power that allows the installation along the Mexican border of transnational corporations that benefit from cheap labour; hence her reading stresses the denunciation of violence. The collection closes with Mauricio Díaz Calderón's in-depth analysis of Jorge Pérez Solano's film *Espiral* (*Spiral*, 2009), stressing the social erosion of regional and national areas that are now considered part of "Empire" as defined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.

Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature is a collection of innovative essays of high quality and broad scope. In addition to comprehensive film analyses, several essays provocatively explore the crossings between twentieth and twenty-first century Mexican film and literature. This anthology is bound to become indispensable for scholars interested in both Mexican and transnational cinemas.

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Suggested Citation

Rocha, Carolina. “*Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature*, edited by Maricruz Castro Ricalde, Mauricio Díaz Calderón and James Ramey.” Book Review. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 21, 2021, pp. 219–223, DOI: https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.21.17.

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