

Ordaz, a partir del cual los presidentes llegan a arrepentirse de sus delfines). Ávila Camacho fue el colaborador más cercano y leal a Cárdenas durante casi 20 años, con lo cual Cárdenas estaba poniendo las bases para la continuación de su poder político; la corrección ideológica es una ficción, porque Cárdenas se declara izquierdista hasta los años 50, muy lejos de su presidencia, aunque nunca deja de promover la Revolución Mexicana.

La última conclusión es inadecuada, porque parte de la base de que el PRD estaba en la lona y que no tuvo la posibilidad de negociar la rendición, mientras que la situación actual del PRD muestra lo contrario, al grado que hoy este partido sufre los problemas del crecimiento: en ciertos Estados creció de una manera inesperada hasta para algunos de sus miembros, pero éste es un tema que la autora ni siquiera se imaginó.

Con todo, es un libro importante, que contribuye a la historización contemporánea de México y a la explicación de la turbulenta transición a la democracia mexicana.

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DONALD F. STEVENS (ed.): *Based on a True Story: Latin American History at the Movies*. Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1997.

Anyone who has ever had to teach an introductory course in colonial or modern Latin American history has grappled with the question of whether to use historical films, and if so, to what extent. The historian's aversion to films as a way of depicting the past is well known. Nevertheless, today's teachers are increasingly attracted to the use of films as an incentive to study history, recognizing that more and more undergraduates have trouble coping with large quantities of reading and that "more people today get their history in movie theaters, from broadcast and cable television, and on prerecorded videocassette tapes than from reading print" (p. 4). What is more, one need not be a post-modernist to feel uncomfortable with the idea that "fact" and "fiction" are clearly distinguishable categories.

Consequently, this collection of essays will come as a useful guide for many of us in conducting classroom discussions about films focusing on Latin American history. The editor's choice of films (13 in all, about a third dealing with the colonial period and the rest with the national period) is good, as are the introduction and most of the essays, which are by historians rather than researchers in the field of cinema studies. Donald Stevens did well to include James Schofield Saeger's fine essay, "The Mission and Historical Missions: Film and the Writing of History"; originally published in *The Americas* in

1995, it has already benefitted many teachers. Saeger convincingly argues that Roland Joffé's film about Jesuit missionaries in Paraguay attempting to transform Guaraní Indian lives and beliefs in the mid-eighteenth century "displays paternalistic attitudes like those of an earlier generation of North American academic historians. The film's voice is a white European distortion of Native American reality" (p. 63).

Donald Stevens himself examines María Luisa Bemberg's fascinating film, *Camila*, produced in 1984. This film protests patriarchal terror while introducing the audience to Argentine values, concepts, social institutions and culture during the dictatorial regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829-1852). Stevens presents Bemberg's rendering of the true story of Camila O'Gorman, a young woman from a wealthy family who eloped with a Catholic priest named Ladislao Gutiérrez, and compares it with other interpretations. The attitude of Camila's father, who was so worried about the family's honor and good name, is explained within the confines of the contemporary social context, since "clearly, if Ladislao were not a priest and were able to marry Camila, her family would suffer no disgrace" (p. 96). To give the reader an alternative to Bemberg's view of the father, Stevens appends to his essay the text of a letter the real Adolfo O'Gorman sent to Rosas in December, 1847, before the lovers had been caught. In any case, Rosas's decision to have Camila and Ladislao executed was "meant to warn others not to keep secrets from him, not to doubt patriarchal authority, and not to accept passion as an acceptable guide to choosing a mate" (p. 98).

Mark D. Szuchman's essay analyzes two Argentine films produced in the 1980s: *Miss Mary* (1986), directed by María Luisa Bemberg, and *La Historia Oficial* (1985), directed by Luis Puenzo. Both films challenge conventional beliefs, questioning authority and received historical truths. Szuchman intelligently situates these films in the wider context both of socially and politically conscious filmmaking in Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s, and of the political debates taking place at the time of production—a time when the monstrous dimensions of the military dictatorship's brutal repression were beginning to come to light, as well as the inefficiency and corruption that accompanied the 1982 defeat of Argentina's armed forces in the Falklands/Malvinas war.

Miss Mary takes place in the 1930s and 1940s, a period of transition from an oligarchical to a populist regime, and portrays the oligarchy's moral decadence and political corruption. However, the film was originally perceived above all as a protest against war and political violence, and as a criticism of Catholic conservatism and its links to different shades of authoritarianism in Argentina. *La Historia Oficial*, in contrast, is about efforts to uncover historical truth, conveyed through the painful experience of

a history teacher, Alicia Marnet de Ibáñez, who discovers that her adopted daughter is in fact the child of one of the *desaparecidas* kidnapped and murdered by agents of the military dictatorship. The film is in particular an indictment against the many Argentines who had at least some inkling of the horrors going on around them, yet did not try to protest or combat them.

The last essay in the book, by Robert M. Levine, focuses on Héctor Babenco's *Pixote* (1980). Levine not only discusses the film itself, which "depicts the violent world of abandoned and outlaw children in Brazil's cities and the failure of the system to offer any remedies" (p. 201), but he also tells the tragic story of the film's main protagonist: after the boy's moment of fame passed, he drifted into petty crime, was arrested twice for minor offences, and finally, in August, 1987, at the age of 19, he was shot to death by the police. The essay examines social and political conditions in Brazil during the 1980s, and shows how the film faithfully depicts the harsh, cruel side of urban life there. Nonetheless, Levine, like other critics before him, emphasizes that "Babenco's film avoids making any global statement about Brazilian society" (p. 212) —an omission that may have lessened the film's effectiveness as a means of arousing the spectator to critical self-examination.

Other films discussed in the book are Ridley Scott's *1492: The Conquest of Paradise*, Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, María Luisa Bemberg's *I, the Worst of All*, Sergio Giral's *The Other Francisco*, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *The Last Supper*, Humberto Solás's *Lucía*, Bruno Barreto's *Gabriela*, and Alfonso Arau's *Like Water for Chocolate*. In short, this collection of essays offers an invitation to make greater, if cautious and critical, use of films in Latin American history courses.

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SERGIO RAMÍREZ: *Hatful of Tigers. Reflections on Art, Culture and Politics*. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1995.

Hatful of Tigers is a series of memories and reflections about literature and revolution linked by the emblematic figure of Julio Cortázar. The epigraph—a poem by Cortázar, *Notice to Travellers*, followed by an *Envoi* describing Roberto Armijo's little apartment with its overflow of books—triggers Ramírez's memories of his journey of apprenticeship into literature and the Nicaraguan revolution. This narrative account, divided into a BEFORE and an AFTER (the revolution), starts and concludes on February 17, 1985, in Paris, at the cemetery of Montparnasse, where Sergio visits Cortázar's tombstone, a few days after the first anniversary of Julio's death.