

RIELLE NAVITSKI: *Public Spectacles of Violence: Sensational Cinema and Journalism in Early Twentieth-Century Mexico and Brazil*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017.

*Public Spectacles of Violence* is an extensively researched and highly accessible account of early cinematic culture and its relationship to public violence in Brazil and Mexico in the 1910s and 1920s. Film scholar Rielle Navitski does an excellent job of blending historical insight and film analysis with sharp reflections on the role of visual culture in framing narratives of progress in the two largest and most influential cinema industries in the region. The work focuses on early cinema's confrontation with emerging discourses of state-building around matters of urban space, crime, and politicized violence, and draws from a rich base of archival sources including consumption data, industry periodicals, published interviews, and popular reporting.

Navitski's work is a critical addition to the fields of film history and film studies in Latin America for several reasons. First, she draws attention to the understudied genre of the serial film, opening up a new lens on what it meant to be a spectator during these decades and pushing understandings of film's role in shaping public attention to the ills of modernization. This kind of serialized viewing of real-life crime stories, which often involved reenactments, took on state narratives of social hygiene and positivist interpretations of urban criminality and offered audiences a more nuanced way of understanding these phenomena. The work also draws attention to the way in which the aesthetic forms within this filmmaking resembled and hinted at later forms of realism, often deliberately blurring the lines between real and "realistic" forms of violence. This is an important corrective to much of the scholarship that has viewed violence during the era of silent and early cinema through the frame of melodrama and as disconnected from later cinematic movements. Navitski also portrays the period's viewing public in its sophistication: as able to both comprehend and contextualize the interconnected tragedies of drug addiction, poverty, racial and class divisions, state policing, public and private violence, without having to resort to hyperbole or oversimplified tropes.

The second major contribution of the work is in its ability to uncover a richness in early cinematic engagement with the failures of both the Mexican and the Brazilian states to adequately deliver the social change promised in campaigns for progress. In the case of Mexico, Navitski reveals how violence is used in critiques of the failures of post-Revolutionary nationalism to eliminate pernicious inequalities that left certain groups, such as indigenous people and the working poor, more vulnerable to physical peril, particularly in the very same urban corridors that were held up by figures like Porfirio Díaz as emblematic

of modern progress. These films turned a critical eye on state corruption and, in recreating infamous crimes, encouraged a subversive critical viewpoint. The book also examines the details of fight scenes and sets them within the framework of depictions in the popular press of physical violence both on- and off-screen, uncovering the manner in which the enactment of physical injury and actual injuries on set would become a form of validation of a certain kind of masculinity through toughness and willingness to enter into danger.

Structurally, the work is divided into two roughly parallel parts, the first two body chapters focus on Mexico, and the second part contains three chapters on Brazil. The comparisons and contrasts between the two national cinemas' experiences are set out in such a way as to be easily identified, although each chapter and part could also be fruitfully read independently of the others. The central argument that Navitski develops regarding the spectacle of violence and the modernization of public life through these two examples draws much-needed attention to the differences between cinema industries, illustrated presses, and urban audiences. In Brazil, the particularity of film distribution strategies had important impacts on the expansion of urban cultural forms to new local markets, whereas in Mexico both the focus on national topics like high-profile crime and the use of identifiable filming locations highlighted a Mexico grappling with and asserting itself against the cultural imperialism of United States. Like in Mexico, Brazilian films that dealt explicitly with sensational crime tended to include new social groups, particularly recent immigrants and women, whose situation in urban life challenged gender relations inherited from the pre-independence period. In contrast to Mexico, however, Brazil's early cinema, reflecting its more recent and less violent arrival at independence, dealt less with the ongoing struggle to fulfill revolutionary goals and more explicitly with the rise of the newly independent nation's European-descended elite, using violence and crime to highlight the way in which working city dwellers were regarded within the project of state formation led by a belle-époque, enlightened, aristocratic class.

The work concludes with a discussion of early cinema's relationship to journalism, arguing that its depictions of current events, particularly of real-life crime stories, validated journalists' claims to accurately represent events that both mattered to and critiqued the state's efforts to govern new urban audiences and new city inhabitants. This finding is reinforced by a reflection on later spectacular portrayals of urban crime and public violence, such as during Brazil's 1964 military coup and, later, with respect to drug trafficking in Mexico after NAFTA.

*Public Spectacles* is an artful and enthralling reflection on the interaction between urban visual culture forms and the violence of modernization. It reveals the subject of crime film as a rich genre, worthy of greater prominence within national cinema histories. Finally, its reflections on the way in which serialized

cinema was received by audiences, and in turn shaped them, opens up a new means of interpreting the difficult question of reception. While this book will certainly be regarded within the fields of Latin American film studies and visual culture history as an outstanding contribution to scholarly understandings of representations of violence and the sensational, it will also make for an excellent text to assign to advanced students to help explain the complicated relationship between state violence, new urban spaces, and the cultural forms of modernity.

**Jessica Stites Mor**

*University of British Columbia*

AUSTIN ZEIDERMAN: *Endangered City: The Politics of Security and Risk in Bogotá*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016.

Sobre Bogotá hacía falta un libro que, como este, no se encerrara en Bogotá. *Endangered City* abarca genéricamente los estudios de las ciudades del siglo XXI más allá de la localización específica en la que se centra. Los argumentos del libro provienen de las ciencias sociales y su metodología es etnográfica. El planteamiento es claro y la actitud del autor frente a sus hallazgos en el trabajo de campo es abierta.

Desde el día en que Zeiderman regresó a Bogotá para emprender la investigación, tuvo “un sentido penetrante de la ciudad como un espacio de peligro,” que lo acompañaría durante toda su permanencia, desde agosto de 2008 a abril de 2010. Después de otras visitas breves y una intensa conversación con colegas, Zeiderman publica este estudio antropológico sobre las ciudades del siglo XXI.

Al llegar a su sitio de trabajo etnográfico, la población de las colinas del norte de Ciudad Bolívar, una ciudad periférica dentro de la capital colombiana, Zeiderman encuentra que los guardianes no son ni los porteros ni los vigilantes privados que tanto abundan en otros lugares bogotanos, sino perros callejeros que, en grupos de dos o tres, protegen a los habitantes. Además, durante su estadía en Ciudad Bolívar no le pasó nada malo; allá, a la par de los perros callejeros, grupos de auto-defensa de tipo paramilitar se hacen cargo de vigilar, eventualmente parando a los transeúntes para interrogarlos. Quizás identificaron al antropólogo como persona de fiar.

A partir de estas vivencias Zeiderman formula el concepto de *endangered*, la condición de *estar en peligro*, que es diferente de *haber peligro*; se trata de una situación que permanece en el tiempo, que no es inmediata ni condiciona directamente como lo hace el peligro.

*Endangered* delimita “el campo donde se encuentran el estado y la ciudadanía urbana alrededor de la amenaza y el peligro.” Este campo crea el marco en que