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***ReFocus: The Films of Lucrecia Martel (2022)* edited by Natalia Christofolletti Barrenha, Julia Kratje and Paul R. Merchant (review)**

Daniel Mourenza, Radboud Universiteit, Netherlands

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Natalia Christofolletti Barrenha, Julia Kratje and Paul R. Merchant (editors), *ReFocus: The Films of Lucrecia Martel*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. 211 pp. ISBN 978-1-4744-8522-7.

The Films of Lucrecia Martel is one of the latest additions to the ReFocus series from Edinburgh University Press, which focuses on international film directors. This edited collection joins the two monographs on Lucrecia Martel written in English, Deborah Martin's *The Cinema of Lucrecia Martel* (Manchester University Press, 2016) and Gerd Gemünden's *Lucrecia Martel* (University of Illinois Press, 2020), editor Natalia Christofolletti Barrenha's own *La experiencia del cine de Lucrecia Martel* (originally in Portuguese, Prometeo Libros, 2020) and an ever-growing number of articles, chapters and books that have been published on the Argentine filmmaker. Indeed, Martel has arguably become one of the most widely acclaimed auteurs in Latin American cinema, and this book is yet further proof of such recognition and of the growing scholarly interest in her work.

The book consists of an excellent introduction that thoroughly tracks Martel's career, 13 chapters written by prominent and emergent scholars and an interview with Lucrecia Martel, who always has something smart to say about her own work. The most important contribution of this book is the breadth of its scope, beginning from the wide-ranging introduction. The chapters cover not only her four feature-length films released to date, but also her short films (three chapters focus specifically on them), her work for TV and one contribution even analyses her role as art director of Björk's concert tour *Cornucopia* (2019). The topics analysed in her films range from sound to colour, from gender to horror, showing the diversity of approaches that Martel's cinema allow.

Most of the chapters are written by scholars and film critics from Argentina and Brazil (among them, regular names in Martel studies such as Ana Amado, Gonzalo Aguilar, and David Oubiña), in addition to three scholars based in the US and the UK (Ana Forcinito, Dianna C. Niebylski, and Deborah Martin). Most of the chapters have been originally written for this book. However, the first chapter, Ana Amado's "Speeds, Generations and Utopias: On *The Swamp*," is a translation of a text written in 2004 and reprinted in 2006, becoming since a canonical article to understand the temporality of *La ciénaga* (2001).

As in any edited book, the quality of the contributions is uneven. In this review, I would like to highlight the three chapters that, in my opinion, stand out over the rest. In "Sounding Class, Race and Gender in *The Swamp*," Dianna C. Niebylski contributes to the large body of scholarship on sound in Martel's films with a chapter in which she thoroughly analyses the use of music in *La ciénaga*. She explores the ethnic connotations of the cumbia songs that appear in the film and the political subtext of Jorge Cafrune's folk song "El niño y el canario," which is played from a tape recorder in two scenes. Although Niebylski argues that Martel does not impose a particular interpretation with this music (Martel is very critical of conventional film music), she offers very interesting readings of the use of these songs within the film. Also addressing sound, in "Being Unable to See and Being Invisible: Unrecognisable, Inaudible Voices in *Fish*, *New Argirópolis* and *Muta*," Ana Forcinito continues with her ground-breaking research on the voice in Argentine cinema, focusing here on three shorts made by Martel. She argues that, in these films, murmurs, whispers, echoes and intelligible sounds act as resistance to the acoustic control of articulated discourses. In these shorts, Forcinito claims, these intelligible forms of resistance are not relegated to the margins of the visual field, as in her feature-length films, but are a central part in the transformations that the audience perceives acoustically and haptically. In "'A kind of bliss, a closing eyelid, a tiny fainting spell': *Zama* and the Lapse into Colour," Deborah Martin focuses instead on colour. Through interesting and relevant theories on colour in art history and film theory, Martin analyses the use of colour

in *Zama* and argues that, in the film, intense colour is used “to challenge the subjective and corporeal boundaries of the white male colonial position” (166). She pays particular attention to the last third of the film, with its red-orange and green palette, in which the white colonisers “descend” into colour and are absorbed by nature.

There are also other notable contributions in the book, such as Danyler Cunha’s analysis of non-diegetic sounds in *Zama*. However, the problem with this and other chapters is their substandard English. Indeed, this is the main criticism that can be levelled at this book. Translations from Spanish (to a lesser extent from Portuguese) generally sound clumsy, including a number of mistakes, a too literal rendering of language structures and of academic conventions from Spanish-speaking academia that should have been nuanced. Emilio Bernini’s article, written originally in English, is almost unintelligible—to use a word amply mentioned in the book. Overall, the volume would have benefitted from more careful revision by the editors and, particularly, by a native English speaker.

Despite these linguistic weaknesses, this book offers a very wide and thorough approach to Martel’s cinema and her other visual productions. The introduction and final interview provide very interesting and thorough information to any reader who wants to dive into Martel’s films. And many of the chapters will surely become leading references in the study of her cinema.

*Daniel Mourenza
Radboud Universiteit*