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Cuban Cinema. Michael Chanan.  
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota  
Press, 2004. ix+ 538 pp. (Review)

by Tamara L. Falicov

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things. However, in less than 150 pages of prose, this is not possible. By the end of the book, it is not even clear who Goldberg is trying to address within the academy. Shakespeare scholars can find more successful accounts of the play's reception within postcolonial contexts, while postcolonial and Caribbean students and academics can certainly find a plethora of texts addressing the patriarchal and heterosexist bias of the European literary tradition. *Tempest in the Caribbean* feels like Goldberg desperately in search of a subject suitable for his talents.

*Cuban Cinema*. MICHAEL CHANAN. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. ix + 538 pp. (Paper US\$ 25.95)

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There is no other English-language book as comprehensive in chronicling the history of Cuban cinema as Michael Chanan's. Originally published as *The Cuban Image* in 1985, it examined Cuban cinema to 1979. Revised and republished under its new title in 2004, it includes three new chapters describing contemporary Cuban cinema through 2000.

The book charts Cuban cinema from its rocky beginnings as a small industry in the Hollywood studio vein, to later films adopting a European aesthetic, to the twenty-first century. Six chapters are devoted to demonstrating how central the development of a revolutionary cinema was within Cuban culture during 1959 and through the euphoria of the late 1960s. The ICAIC (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry) was established a mere three months after the revolutionary government's founding and played a key role in creating, exhibiting, and distributing cinema throughout the country and the world. Chanan's book is rich with detail and is solidly grounded in an effort to situate the production of films in a sociohistorical context. For example, he maps the narratives of classic 1960s films in the chapter "Four Films," which examines what are arguably the most famous works of Cuban revolutionary cinema, including "the most-written about" film *Lucia* (1969, dir. Humberto Solás) and *Memorias del subdesarrollo* ("Memories of Underdevelopment," 1968, dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea). A major strength of this work is the level of

attention given to ICAIC's political battles, debates, and creative processes over different time periods. The production processes of various films, along with their popular reception, are also included. Chanan performed extensive archival research and conducted in-depth interviews with film critics, directors, historians, and producers. His level of access was extremely valuable in uncovering the political nuances of ICAIC's inner workings.

What is less nuanced is the way Chanan dismisses Cuban cinema made before the revolutionary period (during the studio era of 1930-50). Citing the work of Enrique Colina and Daniel Díaz Torres from the 1970s, he dismisses prerevolutionary melodrama as the "expression of reductive one-dimensional ethics" (pp. 78-81). His critical treatment of the "old" Cuban cinema is reductive in that it labels a whole oeuvre as the product of false consciousness and fails to take into account new scholarship that has been written on the subject (e.g., by scholars such as Ana M. López and Julianne Burton-Carvajal) since the first edition of his book was published. Chanan may not agree with these newer approaches to conceptualizing melodrama, but he could have acknowledged them. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss the first feature films of the 1960s, and the ways in which Italian neorealism and the French New Wave influenced the new experiments. In interviews with Chanan in 1980, Sergio Giral said that in retrospect he considered his *La jaula* ("The cage," 1964) to be "too influenced by Godard," and Humberto Solás and Oscar Valdes, who co-directed *Minerva traduce el mar* ("Minerva interprets the sea," 1962), said they looked back on that film as "a naive experiment" (pp. 164-65). These anecdotes make compelling reading because these early films flesh out the evolution of Cuban cinema but are not often described in the canon of classic works.

A book on this subject could not be complete without mention of Julio García Espinosa's treatise "For an Imperfect Cinema" (1969) which dominated the discourse on Cuban cinema throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Chanan describes the importance of this essay by linking it to a larger pan-Latin American cinema movement characterized by a gritty style and militant sense of urgency. This was a cinema that did not want to foster a glossy aesthetic and "lull the audience into passive consumption" (p. 305). It was cinema with a purpose, characterized by film director Sara Gómez as "inevitably partial ... the result of a definite attitude in the face of problems that confront us" (p. 306).

Chanan deftly recounts the major debates surrounding the role of art and the artist within a revolutionary socialist state, discusses Castro's oft-cited 1961 speech entitled "Words to the Intellectuals," and compares differing accounts of the series of speeches given at the National Library. The final speech in that series culminated in the famous statement that "within the Revolution, everything, outside it, nothing" (p. 140), signaling that if artists were clearly adherents of the revolutionary project, they could be critical (in dialectical fashion) of how society was developing, but that those working

outside the system should not create art to potentially undermine the revolutionary project. This debate is central to discussions of films such as T.G. Alea's penultimate film, *Fresa y chocolate* ("Strawberry and Chocolate," 1993) (pp. 463-74), and the biggest debate on this topic – the subsequent banning of *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* ("Alice in Wondertown," 1991, dir. Daniel Díaz Torres) – is well rendered in the final chapter.

Filmmaking in the face of Cuba's "Special Period" is detailed in the final chapter. In addition to issues of co-production, Chanan touches on newer themes found in more recent films, such as what critic Désirée Diaz calls "The Ulysses Syndrome": the trope of the journey, found in these films in a myriad of forms ... migration, departure, return, internal exile, the impossible promise" (p. 22). Discourse on Cuban nationalism has expanded to include the diasporic (read: exile) community. This invokes what Ana López calls "Greater Cuba," that is, how the exile community is in dialogue (or lack thereof) with artists on the island.

Despite a few minor shortcomings, *Cuban Cinema* provides an indispensable aid for teaching and researching the history and cultural politics of Cuban cinema.

*Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Reality or Illusion.* GEMMA TANG NAIN & BARBARA BAILEY (eds.). Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003. vi + 247 pp. (Paper US\$ 20.00)

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How far have CARICOM (Caribbean Community) countries come and how much further do they have to go to improve the status of women and to achieve gender equality in the region? *Gender Equality* comes eight years after the fourth UN-sponsored Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. A document known as the "Platform for Action" (PfA), which details the policy recommendations developed at that conference and ratified by CARICOM countries, is the basis of this examination. *Gender Equality* continues the local conversation between activists from women's movements