INTRODUCTION

ARGENTINE HORROR CINEMA
A Constellation of Miracles

In June of 2008, I briefly ventured to Buenos Aires to research Argentine horror cinema after reading about several low-budget productions in *Variety*. Shortly before departing from Buenos Aires, I entered *Mondo macabro*, a small store that sat tucked inside an unassuming *galería comercial* on Avenida Corrientes. Now shuttered, *Mondo macabro* was a horror/fantasy movie store that provided me with a confounding firsthand introduction to Argentine horror cinema and how its cultural and economic links stretch out to parts known and unknown. Entering the store, DVD and VHS cases lined the shelves with fantasy, exploitation, science-fiction, and horror films from all over the world. Amid the cases, Argentine horror titles that I had read about online caught my eye: *La casa de las siete tumbas*/ "The House of the Seven Tombs" (Pedro Stocki, 1982), *Chronicle of a Raven* (aka, *Jennifer's Shadow*; Daniel de la Vega and Pablo Parés, 2004), *The Last Gateway* (Demián Rugna, 2007), *Habitaciones para turistas*/*Rooms for Tourists* (Adrián García Bogliano, 2004), and *Plaga zombie* (Pablo Parés and Hernán Sáez, 1997), among others.[1] I asked the clerk if it would be possible to purchase copies of the films, and he explained I could give him some pesos to receive a bootlegged version by the week's end. Since I was leaving Buenos Aires the next day, I refrained. The clerk asked where I was from, and I answered, "Los Estados Unidos." He explained that the more recent Argentine horror movies in the store were distributed in the United States and just as easily could be purchased there. Dumbfounded, I thanked him for pointing this out, and continued to peruse the shelves before exiting the store. That evening an online search indeed corroborated what the clerk had said. I found Argentine horror DVDs on amazon.com, and I purchased the DVDs while still in Argentina. My first brush with Argentine horror cinema was a range of flows and exchanges. Argentine horror films circulated "legally" in the

United States and "illegally" as bootlegged copies in Argentina proper. Capital, the Internet, scales of distribution—all components of a well-oiled machine of media and commerce—enabled me to purchase films made in Argentina, and the DVDs would be arriving at my doorstep in the United States within days.

Contemporary Argentine horror cinema (roughly 1997 through the present, a periodization that I explain below) is a tale of two economies—a formal and informal one—which overlap and must be taken together to ascertain any comprehensive understanding of Argentine horror and its consumption and circulation. As Ramon Lobato and Julian Thomas have written, "While television studies, media policy studies, and the political economy of communications tradition have tended to focus on large-scale, nationally regulated industries, this does not always help us to understand what lies outside this space—pirate DVD and VCD [Video Compact Disc] economies, off-the-books cable TV systems, video-hosting sites, BitTorrent, user-created virtual worlds, and so on" (379–380). Argentine horror cinema resides both within and outside nationally regulated industries. If a coupling and blurring of informal and economies are a prerequisite for a discussion of Argentine horror cinema, then so is a blurring of ostensibly distinct horror film cultures that potentially disperse according to any number of factors, such as differing and uneven modes of distribution (DVD, YouTube, informal markets), exhibition (commercial cinemas, film festivals, museums, rock concerts), and/or marketing (professional marketing, social media).

Argentine horror cinema fragments according to its relationship with INCAA (Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales; National Institute of Film and Audiovisual Arts), the national government's production agency. INCAA is charged with myriad tasks, such as supporting productions and coproductions through contests, grants, and scholarships; regulating exhibition, or at least attempting to do so; and promoting Argentine cinema abroad. INCAA operates as one, if not the primary, filmic gatekeeper for national cinema production. As Perelman and Seivach write, "La particularidad de promoción argentino es que las decisiones sobre qué tipo de cine fomentar está totalmente concentrada en manos del Estado, a través del INCAA" ("The unique nature of promoting film production in Argentina is that the question of which films will be made rests exclusively in the hands of the state through INCAA") (30). Given INCAA's central role, it possesses the capacity to determine which films reach domestic and transnational audiences, how, and when. As Sean Cubitt argues, "Nations' role in distribution is shaped by the same priorities as corporations: promoting some flows and delaying or denying others"

(203). Prior to the 2008 theatrical release of *Visitante de invierno*/*Winter's Visitor* (Sergio Esquenazi), twenty years passed without a single nationally produced horror film appearing in commercial cinemas in Argentina.[2] During the 1990s and early 2000s, INCAA's support for domestic horror cinema production was null; Argentine horror cinema was largely off the grid and unfolded beyond the confines of commercial cinema. Argentine horror cinema was nevertheless sustained and flourished by a confluence of factors that initiate and enable an outpouring of horror cinema: inexpensive camcorders and digital cameras; home computer editing software; the Internet as an exhibition circuit, publicity mechanism, and forum for critique and creation of a virtual fan culture; the formation of alternative exhibition venues for horror in Argentina and beyond.[3] During the late 1990s and early 2000s, such facets would make visible a heretofore obscured production of horror cinema within Argentina that would play out largely within national and transnational cultural zones of horror consumption. In other words, with its emergence, Argentine horror in its low-budget form would register in online forums, websites, and film festivals in Argentina, with various seismic cues being recorded elsewhere, such as *Fangoria* magazine in the United States, Sitges Film Festival in Spain, horror fan websites in Japan,[4] DVD distributors in Germany, and the ubiquitous gray zone of the Internet.[5]

While INCAA largely refrained from supporting domestic horror film production for two decades, its relationship to horror cinema has drastically changed.[6] To allude to one indication, as of September 2016 INCAA has sponsored the production or coproduction of fifteen horror films since 2008. INCAA, abetted with a range of production and distribution companies in Argentina and beyond, must be credited for exponentially increasing the level of visibility for Argentine horror cinema and positioning it within a commercial juncture that facilitates its domestic and transnational reach. INCAA ostensibly stabilizes a flow of horror. Yet, not all horror cinema comes under the productive auspices of INCAA. Underground punk cinema that possesses salient moments of horror—such as the films of Gorevisión, Sarna, and Mutazion—remains beyond its INCAA reach, though, as I describe below, select films nevertheless benefit from INCAA's small-screen exhibition initiatives such as CINE.AR PLAY and INCAA TV.[7]

Among other phenomena, Argentine horror augurs and embodies larger dynamics of contemporary cinema in general. In March of 2011, the film journal *Kilómetro 111* published a two-part essay by Silvia Schwarzböck that scrutinizes the relationship between cinema and the state. In the second essay, titled "La

posibilidad de un arte sin Estado: El cine después de Internet," Schwarzböck ponders the question of the Internet's consequences for cinema, one of which being the possible obsolescence of a government film agency, such as Argentina's own INCAA. The Internet as a distributive and viewing platform could obviate INCAA as a body regulating exhibition, among other facets of the country's film industry. While many of Schwarzböck's observations are valid, low-budget Argentine horror cinema—films made for less than $20,000—anticipates the author's observations by more than a decade.[8]

The critical blind spot that elides low-budget horror from studies of contemporary Argentine cinema begs the question of whether a genre film cycle exists if films rely on marginal exhibition venues and alternative forms of distribution which occlude those films from particular echelons of film criticism that would endow a genre with a certain visibility and cultural cachet. The short answer is a resounding yes. As I describe in chapter 1, Argentine horror cinema culture has long possessed its own critical mechanisms and articulations within that film culture which, among other tasks, create canons, chart the genre's history, and recover classical Argentine horror films.

Over the past fifteen or twenty years Argentina has emerged as a producer of genre films that diverge from more established national film genres, such as melodrama, detective cinema, auteur cinema, and documentary. Screwball comedies, animation, martial arts, horror, trash cinema, and science fiction all compose a loosely conceived "wave" of contemporary filmmaking that is periodically dubbed "Cine Independiente Fantástico Argentino" ("Argentine Independent and Fantastic Cinema") and "Nueva Ola de Cine de Género Argentino" ("New Wave of Argentine Genre Cinema"), among other monikers. At first glance, such a wave appears to exist parallel to that of commercial cinema. Scores of genre films are produced on microbudgets and rely on exhibition and distribution that is largely independent of INCAA. Other higher-budgeted commercial films made with the support of INCAA—such as the superhero spoof *Kryptonita* (Nicanor Loreti, 2015) and the giallo *Necrofobia 3D* (Daniel de la Vega, 2014)—nevertheless are couched as part of a larger surge of genre cinema that unabashedly traffics in and reworks transnationally established genres with a stated objective of filmmakers almost invariably being to "entertain" the audience. In an article describing the creation of La Liga de Cine de Género ("The League of Genre Cinema"), a collective of directors, script writers, and various professionals devoted to the promotion of the fantasy genre (horror, fantasy, thriller, science fiction) in Argentina, director

Gustavo Cova stated, "Queremos que el público se divierta, reencontrándose con un cine que le habla directamente, sin intermediarios, que se realiza de manera consistente en nuestro país" ("We want the public to have fun, reconnect with a cinema that speaks to them directly without intermediaries and a cinema that is produced consistently in our country") ("Se presentó La Liga").

The goal to make cinema to "entertain" flies in the face of a domestic critical apparatus that elevated a neorealist auteur cinema over genre cinema produced in Argentina, a point to which I will return in chapter 1. And while I hesitate to assign Argentine genre cinema, or even Argentine horror cinema, a high level of coherency based on filmic style, the current wave of genre cinema assumes the form of a "movement" through the rhetoric of filmmakers, programmers, and fans. In a recent article appearing in *Haciendo Cine* about the trajectory of Argentine genre cinema (science-fiction, horror, and action films), the headline reads "El próximo movimiento" ("The Next Movement") (Oliveros). Likewise, in the prologue to Matías Raña's *Guerreros del cine: Argentino, fantástico e independiente*, director Pablo Parés repeatedly alludes to a low-budget genre cinema made without the support of INCAA as "un movimiento" ("a movement") (13) and "nuestro movimiento" ("our movement") (15) that has come to include those genre films made with INCAA's support. Genre cinema, irrespective of budget, becomes the calling card that makes for a national film culture centered around genre cinema.

Owing to the volume of films belonging to the genre, the breadth of audience reception registered on fan websites in Argentina and in other countries, alternative and commercial exhibition, the circulation of films in Argentina and beyond, horror cinema is the most salient of genres that compose the aforementioned genre film wave in Argentina. It is crucial to note that the emergence of horror is a resurgence of sorts that achieves a sustained rhythm. Argentine horror does not emerge from a vacuum. As Carina Rodríguez, Darío Lavia, Pablo Sapere, and Fernando Pagnoni, among others, have demonstrated, horror and horror/detective and horror/science-fiction hybrids dating back to the 1930s precede the current crop of productions, even anticipating some of contemporary Argentine horror's dynamics. Though León Klimovsky worked in genres other than horror, his transatlantic movements as a director precede Adrián García Bogliano's more recent transnational trajectory and productions in Argentina, Mexico, the United States, and Sweden. Moreover, the dubbing into English of Emilio Vieyra's horror and exploitation productions (e.g., *La venganza del sexo*/*The Curious Dr. Humpp* [1969]) to appeal to US English-speaking audiences during the late 1960s and

early 1970s, anticipate the crop of contemporary Argentine English-language horror films (Dapena 95–98). What distinguishes the contemporary Argentine horror cinema from the past is the sustained rhythm of production resulting in a score of horror productions. At present, Argentine horror is not defined by a single great film or an iconic ghoul that internationally defines the country's horror output. Instead, Argentina asserts its presence in a transnational chain of global horror and other genre cinema through consistent production, as evident in a November 2016 headline about Blood Window that appeared in *Variety*: "Latin America genre powerhouses Argentina and Mexico dominate section" (Mayorga).

Production and consumption provide a guiding axis of the study of Argentine horror cinema here. Argentine horror films and their multitude of circulatory paths set into motion the potential of poaching on a transnational scale. Albeit most associated with Henry Jenkins's seminal *Textual Poachers*, de Certeau coins the notion of poaching to describe those activities that readers or viewers perform with the consumption of a text or television program. In lieu of reading conceived as a passive and inert exercise, "readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves" (de Certeau 174). Reading can entail the "advances and retreats, tactics and games played with the texts" as well as affective resonances: "subconscious gestures, grumblings, tics, stretchings, rustlings, unexpected noises, in short a wild orchestration of the body" (de Certeau 175). I depart from de Certeau (and Jenkins) by conceiving poaching as a scalar concept that entails not only the activities of individual fans, but also those activities enacted by entities. INCAA, private production and distribution companies, exhibition venues, presses, film publications, retail stores, cable companies, and "media pirates" *do things* with Argentine horror films and arguably exercise a stronger degree of poaching that push the relay of a film across space and time. Taken concurrently, entities and fans fashion a transnational Argentine horror film culture whose coordinates stretch across geographies.

The notion of production and consumption illuminates the emergence of Argentine horror cinema as an instance in which a sufficient number of consumers of horror become producers of horror to such a degree that horror registers nationally and transnationally as a critical mass. While Argentina lacks a sustained horror cinema tradition of production, horror cinema has long been consumed among a range of other genres. *Sábados de Súper Acción* was a television program broadcasted from 1961 to 1993 on Teleonce (which became Telefé in 1990), and

consisted of marathons featuring a vast range of film genres (Westerns, horror, science-fiction, dramas, action films, comedies, giallos, B cinema) from all over the world.[9] While numerous Argentine channels imitated Teleonce's program, several Argentine horror directors and programmers have alluded to *Sábados de Súper Acción* as an inspiration (Rugna 2009; Sapere 2009; Raña 2014).[10] The advent of cable television, VHS, DVD rental stores, Video-on-Demand, and the Internet likewise enabled an expanding catalog of viewing platforms in Argentina that exposed consumers to horror cinema from elsewhere as well as permitting the recovery of national horror films, such as *Una luz en la ventana*/"A Light in the Window" (Manuel Romero, 1942) or *Si muero antes de despertar*/"If I Die Before I Wake" (Carlos Hugo Christensen, 1952). Factors such as the advent of digital cameras and home editing software, combined with a remarkable tenacity on the part of filmmakers to make films, enable Argentina to become a node of horror production.

Argentine horror films evince a keen understanding of transnational horror cinema subgenres (zombie films, vampire films, slashers, trash horror, rape-revenge, body horror, Gothic horror, etc.) that have become transnational owing to a transnational mediatic circuit. The reach of that circuit at the level of film content perhaps is most evident in the end credits of several films directed by Adrián García Bogliano's, in which he acknowledges the "Ayuda espiritual" ("Spiritual guidance") of different films of various genres, directors, and other media (e.g., comics), such as Lucio Fulci, Frank Miller, Kaneto Shindô, and Nicolas Roeg, to name a few. Such a convergence of influences can be witnessed in other Argentine horror films, and complicates any notion that Argentine horror is a composite copy of US horror. Indeed, US audiovisual media (films and television) dominate Argentine commercial cinemas and various private viewing platforms, such as cable television (Getino 240; 332). Argentine horror, however, is a product of the multiple flows of transnational cinema which, in turn, "[. . .] mov[es] beyond any tendency to reduce the centers and peripheries of present-day capitalism to the past familiar binary of cultural imperialism" (Newman 9). The Argentine horror films hardly constitute an imitation of cinema arriving from elsewhere. Instead, the films rework transnational horror codes and bend the syntax of various horror subgenres to conjoin with a larger global flow of horror cinema.

A second axis of my examination of Argentine horror cinema is the question of the pleasures of horror. Numerous critics of horror cinema have attempted to understand what Julian Hanich describes as "the paradox of fear" (3), or how

a fear-inducing genre such as horror could even be deemed pleasurable. Isabel Cristina Pinedo, for instance, posits that horror affords its spectator, especially its female spectators, "a simulation of danger that produces a bounded experience of fear not unlike a rollercoaster ride" (5). In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Noël Carroll locates a pleasure of horror in narrative: "For what is attractive—what holds our interest and yields pleasure—in the horror genre [is] situated as a functional element in an overall narrative structure" perhaps best exemplified through the gradual revelation of a monster over the course of a narrative (179). Special effects and intertextuality among horror films, likewise, provide other sources of pleasure. Most significantly for my purposes, however, Hanich and Matt Hills contend that horror affords a multitude of pleasures, and enumerating those pleasures runs the risk of essentializing particular spectatorial dynamics of horror (Hanich 8; Hills 51–52). Akin to Hills and Hanich, I refrain from stating that Argentine horror cinema affords its audiences a finitude of pleasures. Yet, while refraining from preemptively closing the possibility of other pleasures, Argentine horror cinema and its various subgenres afford new kinds of pleasures that range from hermeneutical pleasures, such as allegory and paranoia, or affective ones, in which low-budget punk/horror gore potentially undermines any settled pleasure. Finally, I conceive of such a catalog of pleasures not as a "construction of pleasure hierarchies" (Frost 22) in which affective or somatic pleasures are conceived as lesser than intellectual, but rather as a cluster with the chance that the affective can feed into the hermeneutical and vice versa.

As a circulating media object, Argentine horror cinema offers unprecedented kinds of pleasures to distinct audiences. For Argentine viewers, the films may appeal to a pleasure of seeing *argentinidad* coded within a horror film made in Argentina by Argentine filmmakers and actors. Director and actor Pablo Parés has described his youthful admiration for films such as the *Star Wars* trilogy and *The Neverending Story* (14). Behind such admiration, however, Parés expresses a desire "ver el cine que más me gusta, pero hecho en mi país" ("to see the cinema I like the most but made in my country") (14), which inspired him to actually make films. Argentine horror films not only provide the pleasure of seeing a horror film that adheres to genre conventions, but also achieve a level of national or local specificity through language, cinematic landscape, and/or humor. For audiences elsewhere, pleasure may come with the drop of an ax and the ensuing spectacle of blood, witnessing the motifs of a horror subgenre twisted and reworked, seeing a film realized on a shoestring budget, and/or taking delight in panning or praising an Argentine horror film in an online comments section.

This question of pleasure departs from and is entangled with already existing scholarship on Argentine and Latin American horror cinema. Carina Rodríguez's seminal *Cine de terror en Argentina: producción, distribución y mercado, 2000–2010*/ *Horror Cinema in Argentina: Production, Distribution, and the Market, 2000–2010* (2014) provides a crucial foundation for a discussion of contemporary Argentine horror's political economy. The anthologies *Horrofílmico: Aproximaciones al cine de terror en Latinoamérica y el Caribe* (eds. Rosana Díaz-Zambrana and Patricia Tomé, 2012) and *Latsploitation, Exploitation Cinemas, and Latin America* (eds. Victoria Ruétalo and Dolores Tierney, 2009) provide additional cornerstones, namely for their positioning of Argentine and Latin American horror cinema or particular films among national, regional, and transnational film cultures and endowing the films with the capacity of horror to allegorize national sociocultural crises.

An analysis of cinematic pleasure does not omit an engagement with the political economy of Argentine horror or the question of allegory. Pleasure sustains the production, distribution, and exhibition of cinema. Commenting on film history's capacity to make "visible" the films and industries "that produce the renewable and repeatable side of the cinema experience" (50), Thomas Elaesser observes, "These [histories] point not towards a finite object, but, if anywhere, towards a finite subject, namely the spectator, whose desire sets into motion the other machines of the institution [of] cinema" (50).[11] I, too, read allegorically and rely heavily on Walter Benjamin's theories of the "antimonies of allegory" (*Origin* 174) in which "the false appearance of totality is extinguished" (*Origin* 176). Totalities of meaning and pleasure buckle under weight of the films' transnational circulation. However, at the same time I circumscribe my own tendency to view Argentine horror cinema purely as allegories of national crises in a mode of reception that I concisely designate as "crisis eyes." Argentine horror cinema initially can be received as a doubling down of crises—first, as an Argentine film, and, second, as a horror film.[12]

While select critics have associated Argentine cinematic history with crisis,[13] recent studies on contemporary Argentine cinema, particularly *New Argentine Cinema*, only tighten a formula in which the national cinema is denoted in shorthand as Argentine cinema equals crisis. Noting the low-budget filmmaking characteristic of New Argentine Cinema, Joanna Page writes, "The 'new' filmmaking techniques of New Argentine Cinema have, then, as much to do with a crisis in film as they do with a crisis in society" (36). Jens Andermann comments how on "production process, subject matter and film form have collapsed into one" (New Argentine Cinema 10) in New Argentine Cinema, and how "political

crisis is encountered not at the level of film content but, rather, any sort of content becomes actively and self-consciously political in the way it is taken through a production process and its formal resolution, in which cinema inscribes [. . .] its contemporariness and reasserts its autonomy" (10). In other words, political crisis inscribes itself in the very process of producing the film and in the film's formal elements. Similarly, in *Desintegración y justicia en el cine argentino contemporáneo*, Gabriela Copertari privileges select Argentine films—both those associated with New Argentine Cinema and commercial productions such as *Nueve reinas*/*Nine Queens* (Fabián Bielinsky, 2000) during the late 1990s and early 2000s—for their capacity to register "transformaciones políticas, sociales, económicas y culturales que marcan distinctivamente la década de los noventa [. . .] y que habrían de culminar dramáticamente en la crisis del 2001" ("political, social, economic, and cultural transformations that mark as distinct the 90s and which would culminate dramatically with the crisis of 2001") (1).

Likewise, numerous critics, including myself, endow horror cinema with a capacity to allegorize societal dilemmas or crises. Carol Clover famously deemed slasher films from the 1970s and 1980s to be "a transparent source for (sub)cultural attitudes toward sex and gender in general" (22). Adam Lowenstein locates national traumas through allegorical moments in horror films and contends that "the modern horror film may well be the genre of our time that registers most brutally the legacies of historical trauma" (*Shocking Representation* 10).[14] While asserting that most contemporary horror productions have lost their critical edge, Christopher Sharrett Holder observes, "[T]he horror film is the most honest and forthright art form in discussing the relationship of the Other to the heteronormative, the bourgeois family, 'normal' community life, and/or 'functional' society under capital" (56).[15]

Given its geography and generic tagging, Argentine horror tenders a horizon of expectation that potentially overdetermines a critical tendency to receive a film as making visible or allegorizing economic and/or cultural crises: the carnage reaped from the imposition of neoliberal policies, the economic and political collapse of 2001, and the legacies of the last dictatorship. Again, crisis eyes. And a critic's charge, in turn, is to tease out which crisis, or crises, manifests themselves on-screen. To be sure, instances of Argentina's political and economic crises are present at times in Argentine horror. In *Mala carne*/*Carnal* (Fabián Forte, 2003), one briefly sees *cartoneros* making their rounds at night as the two male protagonists return from a restaurant. Yet, at the very least, the question of Argentine horror cinema's relationship to a single or multiple crises

varies with each film. To receive Argentine horror cinema exclusively as allegories of crises brings to mind Page's notion that Argentine cinema is expected to "supply a First World demand for images of poverty and social unrest in the Third World" (56). Particular Argentine horror films can satiate such a demand, although horror also provides a possible out from such an exclusive reception. Reading Argentine horror allegorically is not wrong per se. However, I position reading allegorically and reading crises in Argentine horror film as part of a larger horizontal mass of pleasures.

Argentine low-budget horror cinema offers a corpus of films that further diversifies the precarious modes of Argentine filmmaking noted by Andermann and others and, which, at times, predate many films associated with New Argentine Cinema. A crop of Argentine horror films were made without INCAA's support starting in the late 1990s and required filmmakers and their crews to be incredibly innovative with little money. While economic strictures understandably prompted select New Argentine Cinema filmmakers to emulate the likes of Italian neorealism, John Cassavetes, and US independent cinema from the 1980s (Wolf, "Las estéticas" 37–38), among others, as models for filmmaking, directors of low-budget horror productions have longed imbibed lessons from low-budget genre productions by the likes of Peter Jackson, Lloyd Kaufman, John Carpenter, and Sam Raimi. Making horror, or even genre cinema, on a shoestring budget in Argentina has become a collective identity among particular directors and producers. The sentiment is perhaps best captured by a kind of slogan once emblazoned on Paura Flics's website and, for filmmaker and producer Hernán Moyano, boils down the ethos of genre filmmaking in Argentina: "Nosotros los desconocidos, trabajamos para los ingratos. Estamos tan acostumbrados a hacer tanto con tan poco, que ahora somos capaces de hacer todo con nada" ("We, the unknown, work for the thankless. We are so accustomed to working with so little that now we are capable of doing everything with nothing").[16]

With the possible exception of the trash-gore-underground cinema of Germán Magariños, Argentine horror filmmakers making low-budget productions do not aim for an aesthetic of "strategic carelessness" (Aguilar 15), or play up a precariousness characteristic of New Argentine Cinema. And while one can only do so much to mask budgetary strictures, genre filmmakers do their utmost to make a quality film. Many of the low-budget horror films gain DVD distribution in Argentina, the United States, several European and Asian countries, as well as circulate through YouTube and digital piracy networks, an achievement that constitutes a miracle of sorts; hence, the introduction's title.

In chapter 1, I map the reaches of contemporary Argentine horror cinema culture across physical and virtual sites of production and reception on national and transnational scales. Irrespective of its origin, the horror genre yields a multiplicity of pleasures for global audiences. Abetted by an ever increasing range of distribution and viewing platforms (theaters, festivals, pirated and "legal" DVDs, cable, streaming, downloads), flows of horror accord Argentine horror cinema a timely and auspicious instance in which it, too, can circulate and be consumed nationally and transnationally. The construction of an Argentine horror cinema culture hinges on how the films are consumed in multiple geographies. The flow of Argentine horror films through physical and virtual sites of consumption enables the films to potentially incite "secondary forms of production" (de Certeau 31) around a film or corpus of films; the film, in turn, constructs a culture. The "paper trails" and virtual traces of exhibitions, distribution deals, and range of critiques illuminate the films' movements within Argentina and beyond and, if taken as a map, connect different publics (i.e., audiences at public film screenings) and otherwise atomized consumers (i.e., those who watch the films via the Internet).

Chapter 2 begins with the notion that violent film spectacles operate as a source of pleasure, with horror possessing its own spectacular facets (i.e., gore, music, choppy editing, active camera movement) that are distinct from other genres such as action films or musicals. In Argentine horror cinema, spectacle operates as a means of forging new kinds of filmic spaces, and I analyze how spectacle and spatial dynamics in select horror films allegorize socioeconomic transformations and crises that have unfolded under neoliberalism. Argentine cultural production, including its cinema, has often been viewed through Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's foundational text *Facundo*, and hinges on the dyad of city as civilization versus country as barbarism. Argentine horror conforms to and departs from Sarmiento's city/country binary in significant ways, and the chapter's three sections consider how screen violence upends ostensible spatial divisions. Spectacular violence in the *Plaga zombie* trilogy (1997, 2001, 2012), reconfigures the on-screen urban spaces and engages with national (e.g., neoliberalization and the 2001 economic crisis) and transnational events (e.g., the War on Terror). The chapter's second section takes up the rural imaginary in the rape revenge film, *No moriré sola*/*I'll Never Die Alone* (Adrián García Bogliano, 2008). Highlighting the films' adherence to the rape-revenge subgenre, female characters wield forms of violence that are traditionally conceived as

masculine to survive, and reflect the changing status of women and gendered spaces in Argentina. In the final section, I examine the suburban environs of *La memoria del muerto* and how the film queers the haunted house genre and forms of masculinity.

To date, there are twelve English-language Argentine horror films, and in chapter 3 I perform close readings of three: *Dead Line* (Sergio Esquenazi, 2005), *Death Knows Your Name* (Daniel de la Vega, 2007), and *The Last Gateway*. Though filmed in Buenos Aires or Buenos Aires province, the on-screen narratives are set in anonymous US cities, and Argentina generally is obscured. A generic United States is constructed through props, cultural allusions, brand placement, English, and, most crucially, paranoia, which in the past decade has become a source of global visual pleasure as signaled by the popularity of television programs and films that fit under the broad rubric of the "thriller."[17] The imagining of the United States and US characters from Latin America happens to a degree never seen in any non-US cinema. If the rest of the world and its stories have long figured into mainstream US cinema, then Argentine English-language horror turns the table, so to speak, and projects the United States from the Global South. The films embody a form of what I call "body snatching" that attempts to mimic US culture amid the War on Terror. All three films were made on incredibly low-budgets and feature occasional flaws. Yet, flaws are not problems per se, but rather an opportunity to alert a viewer that something is off.

My examination of Argentine punk/horror cinema in chapter 4 contends that punk film production is pleasurable for directors and spectators, given that the films operate largely beyond a market logic by eschewing mainstream distribution, narratives, and aesthetics that would appeal to large audiences. In short, punk cinema is made for a love of cinema in lieu of a profit. Over the past five years, Argentine punk/horror filmmakers and collectives, such as Germán Magariños of Gorevisión, Mutazion, and Sarna have attracted attention from publications such as *Rolling Stone* in Argentina and various national newspapers for their unconventional films. In addition to marking out what is punk about Argentine punk/horror, I consider how punk and horror meld through modes of gore that are distinct from Argentine films that fit more squarely into the horror genre. The gore in punk/horror films is crude and makeshift and drastically differs from the spectacles of gore in films with higher budgets. Focusing on a particular scene of gore from Magariños's *Goreinvasión* (2004), I treat punk/horror gore as a potential cinematic form of affect by invoking a fundamental definition of affect as arising "in the midst of in-between-ness" (Seigworth and Gregg 1), that is, between emotions.

Chapter 5 addresses the complicated relationship between film violence in Argentine horror cinema and the Dirty War, which lasted from 1976 to 1983 and during which nearly thirty thousand people were kidnapped, tortured, and killed by a brutal dictatorship. Argentine horror cinema's relationship to the Dirty War varies, and, over three sections, I position select films and the question of pleasure vis-à-vis the tragedy. In the first section, I consider how Argentine horror filmmakers contend with a cultural saturation of filmic memories of the Dirty War, and how horror operates as a pleasurable and resistant genre in order to move away from the theme of the Dirty War. For directors, horror potentially allows for an escape from the dominance of Dirty War films. In the second section, I focus on Adrián Caetano's *Crónica de una fu*ga/*Chronicle of an Escape* (2006), a film that draws on motifs of escape films, Westerns, thrillers, and horror to loosely adapt to film a testimonial account written by Claudio Tamburini, one of the only prisoners to ever escape from a detention center during the Dirty War. A mainstream film that was made with the help of INCAA, *Crónica de una fuga*, established the possibility of using horror in a pleasurable, compelling, and ethical mode to represent the Dirty War in a filmic genre other than documentary, melodrama, or political thriller, all of which have repeatedly narrativized the Dirty War. In the final section, I analyze four specific films that are unprecedented in their mode of representation of the last dictatorship. *Nunca asistas a este tipo de fiesta* / "Never Go to This Kind of Party" (Pablo Parés, Paulo Soria, and Hernán Sáez, 2000), *Nunca más asistas a este tipo de fiesta* / "Never Again Go to This Kind of Party" (Pablo Parés, Paulo Soria, and Hernán Sáez, 2010), *Sudor frío*/*Cold Sweat* (Adrián García Bogliano, 2010), and *Malditos sean!*/*Cursed Bastards* (Fabián Forte and Demián Rugna, 2011) rely on humor with slapstick gore while caricaturing police and torturers of the dictatorship by frequently portraying them as buffoons. The four films evidence different modes of filmmaking and film receptions among younger audiences in Argentina who reside at a temporal remove from the atrocities of the last dictatorship. The dictatorship becomes less a source of fear and more a source of comedy in these four films.

In diagnosing the consequences of the critical narrative surrounding New Argentine Cinema, Jens Andermann locates a lacuna.

> [. . .] what this critical narrative missed was the wider, more contradictory and multilayered landscape of film-making in Argentina, including for example the recent resurgence of a middlebrow entertainment cinema or the boom of political documentary and of activist film and

> video, not to speak of ongoing work by film-makers established well before the 1990s such as Hector Olivera, Fernando Solanas or Leonardo Favio. (*New Argentine Cinema* xii–xiii)

Argentine horror cinema supplements such a landscape of emerging filmic strains that compose a national cinema and add to the filmmaking practices and cultures that escape critics who inevitably cannot perform the Panopticon-like charge of surveilling all that is cinematic within Argentina. With low-budget productions and a catalog of genres, Argentine horror cinema is a shape-shifting entity that continues to morph with time and has effectively emerged into the cultural fields of national and transnational cinema.