

Salvadó Corretger, Glòria: *Spectres of Contemporary Portuguese Cinema: History and Ghost in the Images*

Leonard Muntaner, Barcelona, 2012, 324 pp.

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In the 1980s, Serge Daney defined Portuguese film-makers as 'archaeologists in love' that 'achieve to bring back the strange and glorious past of Portugal from very far away'. In *Spectres of Contemporary Portuguese Cinema: History and Phantom in the Images*, Glòria Salvadó focuses on how this past is shown in the images of the present. Through a comparative study of images by three essential directors (Manoel de Oliveira, João César Monteiro and Pedro Costa), Salvadó undertakes a broad journey through Portuguese cinema in parallel to the history and literature of that country.

The main reference of the book is French philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman, who elaborates his theory based on the works of Walter Benjamin, Aby Warburg and Carl Einstein. In books such as *Devant le temps*, *L'Image survivante* or *Devant l'image*, Didi-Huberman proposes to study the history of art through the search for connections, resonances and dialogue between images. Such method based on montage allows Salvadó to trace a new map of Portuguese cinematography, always from a non-chronological, nor linear perspective. At the same time, the book is highly accessible, as such methodology is used as a structural principle, and doesn't abuse theoretical references, as has become common ground in other recent studies inspired by Didi-Huberman.

The hypothesis of the research is that the cinema of Manoel de Oliveira, João César Monteiro and Pedro Costa resides, if unconsciously, in the historical survival (*Nachleben*) of the Portuguese imaginary, specifically that linked to the time of the sailors and the conquistadores. Such imaginary would always be accompanied by its own negative image, that is, colonial exploitation and slavery. As in Straub-Huillet's cinema, the image is responsible of burying these events in invisible layers, so that the function of montage would be to make these fissures visible, among which the spectres of these survivals manifest themselves. Hence we see how the historical memory of Portugal surfaces in the images of the present through a series of parallelisms, comparisons, oppositions between images, links to Portuguese literature and history, etc.

The study is divided in four chapters, which complement each other constantly. In the first chapter, Salvadó tackles the two main figures that live on in Portuguese cinema, two constant leitmotifs: the *counter-shot with death* and the *face to face with infinity*. The second and third chapters are respectively focused on the sea and the journey and the sailor. Finally, the final chapter is centred on the emergence of the fantastic and the phantom. In this itinerary, Monteiro's eye at the end of *Vai-e-vem* finds a correspondence with the final shot of *Um filme*

falado (Manoel de Oliveira), the boat of *A flor do mar* (João César Monteiro) lead to *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau), which in its turn takes us to the houses of Fontainhas (*No Quarto da Vanda* and *Juventude em marcha* by Pedro Costa), which then takes us to the shade of *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur). Resonances emerge in a natural manner between film-makers who belong to different generations and champion different styles. In addition to her in-depth study of the filmographies of Oliveira, Monteiro and Costa, Salvadó also establishes other connections, with non-Portuguese film-makers (Murnau, Tourneur, Straub-Huillet) as well as with Portuguese ones (António Reis and Margarida Cordeiro, Miguel Gomes, João Nicolau, Teresa Villaverde, João Pedro Rodrigues, etc.)

Recommended for those who want to gain familiarity with Portuguese film-makers as well as those who are already familiar with it, *Spectres of Contemporary Portuguese Cinema: History and*

Phantom in the Images has the virtue of tracing a map that can continue to be broadened by the reader: it is enough to think about recent films such as *O Gebo e a sombra* (Manoel de Oliveira), *Tabu* (Miguel Gomes), *48* (Susana de Sousa Dias) or *Sweet Exorcist* (Pedro Costa) to see that the structural principle of Salvadó's book lives on beyond the works she discusses and that the reflection upon these recurrent figures of the Portuguese imaginary (the counter-shot with death, the sea as an unexplored and unknown space, the zombie and the phantom...) will modify our way of seeing and analyzing Portuguese films. In this sense, this book will become a referent, specially at a time when Portuguese cinema lives its worst moment at an economic level (absence of market and audience, interruption of public support, crisis of the Portuguese Cinémathèque) but one of its best moments at a creative level, albeit always in a solitary manner and in resistance against the slogans of the industry (in contrast with most European countries, specially Spain). •