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Cover Photo: Glauber Rocha

Presentation

Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema is a biannual publication founded in 2012. It is edited by Colectivo de Investigación Estética de los Medios Audiovisuales (CINEMA) at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), and focuses on comparative cinema and the reception and interpretation of film in different social and political contexts. Each issue investigates the conceptual and formal relationships between films, material processes and production and exhibition practices, the history of ideas and film criticism.

Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema addresses an original area of research, developing a series of methodologies for a comparative study of cinema. With this aim, it also explores the relationship between cinema and comparative literature as well as other contemporary arts such as painting, photography, music or dance, and audio-visual media.

Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema is published in three languages: Catalan, Spanish and English. The journal is biannual and the numbers are published in summer and winter. The journal is peer-reviewed and uses internal and external evaluation committees. The journal will also accept visual essays on the topic raised in the issue, both as part of a written article or as an autonomous work.

Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema is an open access scientific journal recognized by international indexes such as DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) and Latindex (Regional Information System for Online Scientific Journals of Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal).

Finally, each issue of the journal is complemented by documentary materials and texts published online, which facilitate and enrich the topics studied in each volume, thus establishing links between longer research projects and monographic focuses throughout this process.

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Eztetyka

Albert Elduque

In the introduction to his book *A Ponte Clandestina*, the late José Carlos Avellar established a firm connection between the theoretical fervor and the film production of the New Latin American Cinema in the 60s and 70s: the numerous manifestos signed by the directors Fernando Birri, Glauber Rocha, Fernando E. Solanas and Octavio Getino, Julio García Espinosa, Jorge Sanjinés and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea were in dialogue with their films, in an exchange of words and images, text and movement, theory and practice, in which both forms kept reinforcing one other. According to Avellar, 'we can try to perceive theory as a text close to the script. As a way of dreaming forms that still don't exist beyond thinking about lived experiences; as a way of generating images; of making cinema; of seeing a film not yet made but already sensed; of suggesting models of cinematographic dramaturgy the same way a script suggests a film' (1995: 7). That is, from text to film. And, as Avellar himself would suggest, the opposite is also possible: from the work to the theory.

Unfortunately, the New Latin American Cinema and its manifestos have often been considered to be inextricably linked to their countries of origin and the decades in which they appeared, written as they were during years that featured many movements of political and cultural emancipation. Now that the Viña del Mar International Film Festival (1967) –the symbolic foundation of a movement that had been underway for years– is almost 50 years old, this geographical and historical delimitation should be over. The theories and films of the New Latin American Cinema float free from their origins, not as museum pieces, but as interlocutors of the here and now. That is why in this issue we wanted to ask how effective these texts and films are today, how they can help us to think about our present, and how this present illuminates them and gives them a new energy.

It is time to ask how the theoretical vibrancy of these texts and films can be valuable in times of uncertainty, and to explore how their recovery in the form of myth can bring hopes and utopias back, as Eryk Rocha does in *Cinema Novo* (2016). It is time to revisit their critiques of cinema as an elitist and bourgeois institution, whether in the support of popular art, as in the case of García Espinosa, or in collective, non-professional acts of creation in marginalized areas, either in the indigenous communities to which Sanjinés gave a voice or in many cinema projects in schools. It is time to think how this cinema can transform reality, either through the newsreel formula or through fiction, as suggested by a beautiful text by Avellar we thought it was important to recover. And all of this while taking into account the cinema forms: figures, shots, montage.

The New Latin American Cinema forged a certain sensitivity between film and public, art and life, fiction and reality, aesthetics and politics. In the same way that each manifesto contains within it a potential film, and each film has a new reality that can germinate, the texts and images of that time are presented today as germs of new experiences in cinema and in life, and in the blurred border that unites them and keeps them apart. The power of text and film in the 1960s, from which emerged the tension between the real world and a possible world, is also the one created today between a historic past and a future to be imagined, between yesterday and tomorrow. The texts included in this issue, therefore, are frames of a thought that starts from known words and shots, but that is also open to new adventures of a reality yet to be brought into being. •

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Revolution

Jorge Sanjinés

TREATMENT

INTRODUCTION

- 1] The man lives in bad conditions. He lives in holes, among trash and wastes, in caves, in slums, in tenements, in the streets.
- 2] The garbage dump is the best substitute for everything that the beggar doesn't have or has lost. He finds in it the few objects he uses, he feeds from it, he dresses from it. He devotes his life to it. And he is there when death comes to him.
- 3] The man works like a beast. He carries wardrobes, pianos, huge and heavy loads. The man is thin and old. He is blind and he works, he works.
- 4] The man is lame, blind, poor. He doesn't have anything other than his sickness and his old age. He begs for money, he asks for help. People pass by him without hearing him, without seeing him. Nobody notices his existence. Slowly he consumes, he gets smaller, thinner.
- 5] And at dawn, kids who may be men tomorrow are sleeping in a hole. Their blankets are papers. They are cold.

SECOND SEQUENCE

- 1] There is a man who is working happily. He has a lot of work. He must work fast: he builds coffins for children. His workshop is full of coffins for children. Coffins that are awaiting their turn, that have already a name and an age.
- 2] There are mothers with the deaths of all their children printed in their eyes.

THIRD SEQUENCE

- 1] But people are gathering and listening to the leader's voice. People are shouting and clapping. They are enraged and aroused. They are claiming work, bread, a better life. The leader protests and denounces; he accuses and stirs the masses.
- 2] Soon the repression, the cane and the violence arise. Soon everything is chaos and darkness, tears, blood, agony...

FORTH SEQUENCE

- 1] The silence of the cell. The impassible firmness of the bars pointlessly shaken by defeated hands. And, suddenly, the

announcement of death of those who rebelled against famine bursts.

- 2] The announcement of death rises horribly, unbearably, and goes to the tragic looks of those soon to die...

FIFTH SEQUENCE

- 1] Drum roll, steady. Death roll. The people's feet aligned. Rifles aim. Each face is living the light in silence, intensely. Each man is alone facing his own death.
- 2] The people's feet aligned. The last glance at life. Arms fire and life flees, it collapses. Eyes fixed, glassy; opened, dark mouths. Everything is finished.

SIXTH SEQUENCE

- 1] Bells. A carrier has a big coffin on his shoulders. Widows, mothers, black clothes, tears: the vigil of someone who has left and lays unmoving.
- 2] The funeral is a parade. It is still tears, but is already a threat.
- 3] An old man crosses himself and prays for a soul. For the soul of the dead masses. That have died with José, with Dionisio, with Valerio, with Pedro, with Sandalio...

SEVENTH SEQUENCE

- 1] The siren rings at the factory. The stop signal is given. And again people tell to themselves: 'We have to conquer life by giving it! We have to die in order to live!'
- 2] And these ancient, tragic masses throw stones, wield sticks, pieces of iron, and knock soldiers and henchmen down. They conquer arms, emerge from walls, crosses alleys, their machine guns ready. They shelter, run, take positions. They are determined. Nothing matters anymore. There is a strange vital faith in the eyes of the ones who are about to die or live, in their pulse that doesn't tremble or yield.
- 3] People are now awaiting and observing. They are quiet, mortally...
- 4] Soldiers are coming from afar. They are moving forward, unstoppable. Their eyes are made with the same lead as their bullets. They are moving forward.

EIGHTH SEQUENCE

1] A frightened, dirty boy is looking at us. Another boy is looking at us. Another one comes, with his broken hat and sad eyes. And yet another one with messy hair and torn shirt...

2] Suddenly a fight bursts. The shots break the silence. A child, ragged and small, is frightened. A burst of gunfire makes him shiver.

3] Masses fight, fight for sadness, for that torn shirt, for those glassy eyes. Bullets are being fired and children are hungry, they know nothing. Children are sad, thin. Damn it, something must be done!

FADE TO BLACK •

Included in Sanjinés, Jorge and Grupo Ukamau (1979). Teoría y práctica de un cine junto al pueblo. México: Siglo XXI de España Editores.

Tricontinental

Glauber Rocha

Tricontinental, any camera that is open to the evidence in the Third World is a revolutionary act.

Tricontinental, the revolutionary act is the product of an action that will become a reflection on the struggle.

Tricontinental, the political choice of a filmmaker is born the very moment when light pierces his film. And that's because he chose light: a camera on the open Third World, an occupied land. On the streets or in the desert, in the jungle or in the cities, the choice is imposed and, even when the material is neutral, after editing this material becomes a discourse against substance. The discourse might be imprecise, vague, savage, irrational. But it is a tendentious *rejection*.

Tricontinental – is the film the important thing? What is a tricontinental film? A producer is like a General here. Instructors in Hollywood are like the ones in The Pentagon. No tricontinental filmmaker is free. I do not mean *free* from prison, or from censorship, or from financial obligations. I mean free from discovering within himself *a man from three continents*; but he doesn't become a prisoner in it; rather he becomes freer there: the prospect of individual failure fades away. To quote Che:

'Our sacrifice is conscious; it is the price of freedom.'

Tricontinental – any other discourse is beautiful but harmless, rational but exhausted, cinematic but useless, thoughtful but helpless, and even lyricism, while it floats in the air, is born from words and becomes architecture, it then becomes a passive or sterile conspiracy. Here, to recall Debray, the word is made flesh.

Tricontinental – auteur cinema, political cinema, *against* cinema, all this is guerrilla cinema; in its origins it is savage and imprecise, romantic and suicidal, but it will become epic/didactic.

Mexican cinema suffers from *nationalist* sickness. Mr. Luis Buñuel, an Ibero-American, considers *¡Que viva México!* to be an 'artistic' film. Eisenstein did not understand the spontaneity of Aztec architecture or the extraordinary magnificence of the desert or the volcanoes. His attempt at *aestheticising* the New World can be compared to an attempt to bring the Word of God (and the interests of the *conquistador*) to the Indians. *Culture* belonged to the Indians too. This Mayan, Aztec, Inca *Culture* was *discovered and civilized*. In the land of magic, the Indian was captivated by the walking volume that was the horse: this *four-legged animal* was a War Tank, a sacred and invincible animal. Nowadays, several centuries later, Ho Chi Minh is resisting the invader's technological advances.

Mexican cinema took the images of Eisenstein dressed as a Jesuit, then mixed these shots with an amazing Hollywood-like technique and transformed it all into *nuestro México*. The industry defended by laws and unions, *nuestro México*, romantic nationalism and the illusion of history, *nuestra revolución; sombreros, mujeres y sangre*¹.

Sun above natives: Murnau (Gauguin), Flaherty. In their works the natives turn into bodies and seas, smiles and tragedies, in the same way that these Latin American ports are a violent and liberating paradise; the ports where, *to have and have not*, Bogart feels and suffers from the exoticism of revolutions. Before Latin American filmmakers had the right to switch on the motor of their old cameras, the art and business of big companies had given us *their cinema* and the rules of *their business*.

In Mexico, anti-Mexican films were (and are) banned. Thus, a small fraction of the American production that treats Mexicans as cowards is banned. But the worst thing is that in most of the films from Churubuzco Studios², Mexicans are either cowards or naive creations of nature. The Mexican film industry, in order to defend itself from this slander, imitates it, in the same way that socialist cinemas imitate the Russian cinema that imitates the

1. In Spanish in the original.

2. The Churubuzco Studios were founded in 1944, with RKO Radio Pictures owning 50% of its shares.

American formula. Mexican nationalism isolated Mexico from Latin America. It is not by chance that, except for a few young filmmakers who have just begun to betray *nuestro México*, Mr. Luis Buñuel is considered a marginal filmmaker. But in his comedies and melodramas, also filmed in Churubuzco, we can find the earliest essays about Latin American civilization, after the Catholic, Zapatista and Eisensteinist apocalypses.

On both pampas and asphalt, Argentina brought everything, stone by stone, from Europe. Argentina, Che's mother country, while discussing in perfect French the aesthetic of the absurd, did not suspect that 'Perón's progress was not development...' Penniless aristocrats were willing to sacrifice food for the sake of a Dior tie. The isolation of the pre-Antonioni bourgeoisie in Argentinian films was limited by undernourishment. But they didn't say that word: while Borges'/Cortázar's writing foresees many of the *nouveau roman* experiences, time could not be articulated (or inarticulated) in pre-Resnais films. As it was solitary, Argentinian cinema discovered Style before History. A character by Torre-Nilsson, disciplined in a vague universe reminiscent of Bergman, achieves nothing more than *discipline*. It is an ahistorical discipline because it is acritical. It does not expose itself to the light, it does not allow itself to be distorted, but it conspires in the shadows around a world that does not exist culturally in its superstructure. Here, the word is not made flesh; it is shadow and light (gray and black) in a country that does not fit with America.

What remote guilty conscience of isolation caused within Che, a citizen from Argentina, the legendary existence of the Latin American man and –in a stronger impulse– of the tricontinental man?

A cinema that is already in decline before it has developed, in the same land and time as Che's, is a cinema that cannot be saved by technique or by an aesthetics manual. More than any other tricontinental cinema, Argentinian cinema needs a Vietnam.

Viva América, in Cuba there is a great deal to be done. It is a cinema that, while focusing on educational movies, has an important revolutionary contribution ahead: to completely detoxify itself from socialist realism. 'To simplify the terms of these controversies, which involved artists and certain functionaries: some championed an art relatively close to socialist realism, while some others (and most artists) championed an art that did not renounce the achievements

of the avant-garde. The defeat of the former viewpoint was confirmed when Che, in *Man and Socialism in Cuba*, harshly criticized socialist realism, but without considering the latter viewpoint entirely satisfactory: in his opinion, they should not be content with that position, they should go further. But to do so, one must begin from somewhere, and the avant-garde seemed to be a good starting point, if not a point of arrival.' (Jesús Díaz)³.

Other Latin American nations (Guarani, Amazonian and Andean) never possessed a camera or were rarely able to switch on its engine, except in official news footage showing *Generalísimos* and their medals.

Brazil, tricontinental, Latin American, speaks Portuguese. Regarding the practice of the so-called *Cinema Novo*, one must know that the Portuguese are less fanatical and more cynical than the Spanish, and they have left us a legacy that is less nationalistic. Maybe that is why Brazilians do not have the Mexican complex or the Argentinian frustration. And that is why Brazilian independent filmmakers lost their religious respect for cinema. They preferred not to ask for permission to enter this sacred universe and, even though they were left-handed, they grasped their cameras. Maybe because intellectuals and critics wrote it so many times (to the point of convincing the public to intimidate certain filmmakers) that 'Portuguese is an anticinematic language', *Cinema Novo* considered it absurd not to turn words (and music) into cinema: Brazil is a verbal nation, it is talkative, energetic, sterile, and hysterical. Brazil is the only Latin American country that did not have bloody revolutions (like Mexico), baroque fascism (like Argentina and other places) or political revolution (like Cuba). As a sad compensation, it has a growing cinema. Its production will total sixty films this year, a number that will increase, even double, next year. More than a hundred young filmmakers submitted 16 mm and 8 mm films in the last two 'amateur cinema' contests, and the public, disappointed by the recent footballing defeats, debates each national film with a passion. Rio, São Paulo, Salvador and other big cities have Art Houses, two film libraries, more than four hundred film societies (even in the most remote part of the Amazon there is a film society). In Rio and São Paulo, Godard is now as popular as De Gaulle, and there are moviegoers there who can compete with *experts* from the Cinémathèque Française. In Brazil, and especially in Rio, there has been a real cinema party going on for the last five years.

3. In French in the original.

Tupi is the name of an Indian nation that is characterized by its intelligence and lack of craft skills. *Cangaço* is an anarchic, mystical *guerrilla*, and it means violent disorder. *Bossa* is a *special style of style*, and also a style of feinting, of threatening to the right and punching from the left, with a rhythm and an eroticism. This tradition, whose values are questioned by *Cinema Novo* films, absurdly draws a tragic caricature of a melodramatic civilization. There is no historic density in Brazil. There is an ahistorical dissolution, created by coups d'état and counterattacks, which are directly and indirectly related to imperialists' interests, dragging the national bourgeoisie along with them. The populist left wing always ends up signing agreements with the repentant right wing in order to begin, once again, 'redemocratization.' Until April 1964 –the fall of Goulart– most Brazilian intellectuals believed in 'revolution through words.'

The Latin American political avant-garde is always led by intellectuals and here, very frequently, poems precede guns. Popular opera – music and revolution go hand-in-hand and the legacy comes from Spain. Today, in the Brazil of unforeseen reconciliations, the urban Left is defined as 'festive.' Marx is discussed to the sound of samba. However, this does not stop students from violently protesting in the streets, professors from being imprisoned, universities from being closed down, intellectuals from constantly writing protest manifestos, or unions from being occupied. Criticism is made at the moment it is produced, and on top of that: the advertising, the distribution and the exhibition are produced. Politics as the art of opposing oppressive systems.

With regard to audiences that are more illiterate than in developed countries, a cinema that has accumulated all the disadvantages of tricontinental cinema does not communicate easily. Communicating means, in the populist vocabulary, stimulating revolutionary feelings.

This cinema produces a shock at several levels, which represents a different way of communicating. A *Cinema Novo* film is polemical before, during and after its *screening*, and its very existence is a new element in the paradise of inertia. Thus, *Barren Lives* (*Vidas Secas*) documents farmers, while *The Guns* (*Os Fuzis*) is an antimilitarist attack that builds on the discourse in *Barren Lives*. In turn, this discourse is transformed into agitation in *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*), a furious political act that is later calmly discussed in

The Dare (*O Desafio*). While *Barravento* and *Ganga Zumba* talk about and with black people, and *The Deceased* (*A Falecida*) is the urban version of *Barren Lives*, this does not mean that they neutralize the possibilities contained in *The Unscrupulous Ones* (*Os Cafajestes*) and *The Big City* (*A Grande Cidade*). And though from *Plantation Boy* (*Menino de Engenho*) to *Land in Anguish* (*Terra em Transe*), or from the latter film to Dahl's next, *The Brave Warrior* (*O Bravo Guerreiro*), *Cinema Novo* seems to become destabilized in the difficult endeavor of individual expression, it soon restores a cinematic *concerto* that constitutes a political act in a continuous polemic.

The technique of past and present cinema in the developed world interests me to the extent that I can 'use' it, in the same way that American cinema was 'used' by some European filmmakers. What does 'using it' mean? Using, as a method, certain key cinematic techniques, general cornerstones that in the technical evolution transcend each individual author and become part of the aesthetic vocabulary of cinema: if a 'cangaceiro'⁴ is filmed in the desert, there is an implicit editing approach based on the Western. This approach is more related to the general style of the Western than to individual creators like Ford or Hawks. On the other hand, imitation originates from a filmmaker's passivity towards cinema, born out of a suicidal need to take refuge in the established language, and thinking that if he can save himself by imitating, then he will save the film. In an interview in *Cahiers*, Truffaut said: 'Almost every film that mimics Godard is unbearable, because it lacks the essence. It may copy his fluency, but it misses the desperation. It might copy his wordplay, but not the cruelty'⁵.

Most films by young directors are currently suffering from this 'mal de Godard.' Only by directly enduring reality and by a continuous exercise of dialectical criticism can one go beyond the mythological imitation of cinematic technique, by using the *wordplay* in progressive imitations. Brazilian films such as *Barren Lives*, *The Deceased* and *The Guns* show how *colonized* filmmakers can use the technique of the developed cinema to promote an international expression. The problem is not so radical for Americans or Europeans, but if we look at films from socialist countries, we notice that very few of them are *revolutionary*. The attitude of most filmmakers towards their reality degenerates into a kind of calligraphic, academic cinema that clearly reveals a contemplative or demagogic spirit. And festivals, especially in programs of short films, reveal a 'Cinema Ltd,' a series of harmless imitations that have been

4. *Cangaceiros* were bandits in the *sertão* region in the north-east of Brazil, particularly in the early decades of the 20th century.

5. In French in the original. In *Entretien avec François Truffaut*, by Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni. *Cahiers du cinéma*, 190, May, 1967.

innocently manufactured using a Moviola and which unravel during screenings. Cinema is an international discourse, and national eventualities do not justify, on any level, the denial of expression. In tricontinental cinema, aesthetics comes before technique, because aesthetics has more to do with ideology than with technique. Technical myths such as *zoom*, *direct*, *caméra à la main*, *couleur*, etc. are just tools. The Word is ideological, and there are no geographical borders any more. When I talk about tricontinental cinema and include Godard it is because, when he opens up a *guerrilla* front in French cinema and attacks repeatedly and suddenly, with relentlessly aggressive films, then Godard becomes a political filmmaker, with a strategy and tactics that are exemplary in any part of the world. However, this example is useful regarding behavior.

I insist that a *guerrilla cinema* is the only way to fight the aesthetic and economic dictatorship of Western imperialist cinema, or socialist demagogic cinema. *Improvisation based on circumstances*, free from all the typical morality of a bourgeoisie that managed to impose, from the general public to the elite, their right of access to art.

My ultimate aim of a didactic/cinema cannot prevail unless it merges with the didactic/epic poem played out by Che. An inverted Western, with the nouns of the new poetics that come from a comprehensive revolution, will destroy idealist frontiers in cinema. While Buñuel, precontinental, operated by means of precise tracking shots, in tricontinental cinema we need to demobilise it and blow it up. When Che's *mise-en-mort* becomes a legend, it cannot be denied, Tricontinental, that poetry has become a revolutionary praxis. •

Originally published as Un cinéaste tricontinental. Cahiers du cinéma, 195, November, 1967, and included later in Portuguese with changes in the compilation book Revolução do Cinema Novo (Rio de Janeiro: Alhambra, Embrafilme, 1981). The Spanish translation can be found in La revolución es una eztétyka: por un cine tropicalista (ed. Ezequiel Ipar; trans. Ezequiel Ipar and Mariana Gainza; Buenos Aires: Caja negra, 2011). The present version adds some minor modifications to this one based on the Portuguese text. English translation is ours.

Godard by Solanas. Solanas by Godard

Jean-Luc Godard and Fernando Solanas

Godard: How would you define this film?

Solanas: As an ideological and political film-essay. Some have described it as a book-film, and they're right, because we provide, along with the information, aspects to reflect on, titles, didascalics forms, etc. The actual narrative structure is constructed like in a book: prologue, chapters and epilogue. The film is absolutely free in terms of its form and language: we make use of everything necessary or useful for the educational purposes of this work. From live footage and reportage to other footage where the format is typically found in short stories, tales, songs or *'image-concept'* montage. The film's subtitle hints in advance that it is a document, serving as evidence of a reality: *Notes and Testimony on Neocolonialism, Violence and Liberation*. This is a documentary cinema of denunciation, though it is at the same time a cinema of knowledge and research. It is a cinema that contributes, above all through its orientation, because it is not for an audience within the 'coexistent culture', instead it is aimed at the huge numbers of people who suffer from neo-colonialist oppression. This applies especially in the second and third part, because the first one tells you what the masses already know, sense and experience, and it functions as the film's main prologue. *The Hour of the Furnaces* is also a *film-act*, an *anti-spectacle*, because it rejects the idea of itself as film, and instead opens itself up to the public to be debated, discussed and developed. Its screenings come to represent spaces of liberation, *'acts'* in which individuals become aware of *their situation* and of the need for a richer praxis to change this situation.

Godard: How does this *act* take place?

Solanas: The film contains highlighted pauses and interruptions, so that the film and its topics can travel from the screen to the audience; that is, to life, to the present. The old spectator –the one who just sat there passively, according to the traditional cinema that developed the bourgeois concepts of nineteenth-century art– this *non-participant* becomes a live *protagonist*, a real *actor* in the story of the film and in history itself, since the film is about our contemporary history. And a film about liberation, about an unfinished period in our history, must by definition be an *unfinished* film, a film that is *open* to the present and to the future of this liberation. That is why the film has to be completed and developed by the protagonists, and we are not ruling out the possibility of adding new notes and

film testimonies, if we find new facts that should be added in the future. The *'acts'* end when the participants decide that they should. The film is the *trigger* for the act; it mobilizes the old spectator. Furthermore, we agree with what Fanon said: 'Yes, everyone must be involved in the struggle for the sake of the common salvation. There are no clean hands, no innocent bystanders. We are all in the process of dirtying our hands in the quagmire of our soil and the terrifying void of our minds. Any bystander is a coward or a traitor'. Or rather, this is not cinema-expression, or cinema-communication, but *cinema-action*, a cinema for liberation.

Godard: How did you produce the film?

Solanas: By working hard and overcoming every difficulty we faced: financial, technical or artistic. The needs of the film determined a certain method and a way of working. Like most recent independent Argentinean films, it was produced using a small team; a few people did all the work. At the same time, I was working in advertising to cover the basic costs of developing and film. For 80% of the film we used 16 mm cameras, and two or three of us directed almost all the technical and production tasks. We also had the generous support of many friends and colleagues and locals; without that, it would have been impossible to produce this four-a-half-hour film.

Godard: The film I have just started, *Strike*, will be made by four people: my wife will be acting, I will be doing the sound, there will be one cameraman, and his wife will be editing. I'm doing it with this small TV camera...

Solanas: Nowadays, the myth that quality of expression was the property of the industry, of big teams and technical mysteries has been destroyed. We could also say that the progress being made by film technique is *liberating* cinema.

Godard: What problems did you have?

Solanas: Besides the typical problems you get in every economic production, I could say that the biggest problem we faced was a dependency on foreign cinematographic models. That is, to free ourselves as creators. This dependency, fundamentally aesthetic, on European and American cinema is the greatest limitation of our cinema. And it's something that cannot be understood outside the cultural situation of Argentina. The

official culture in Argentina, the culture of the neo-colonial bourgeoisie, is a culture of *imitation*, second-hand, old and decayed. It is built on the cultural models of an oppressive and imperialist bourgeoisie. It is a 'Europe-style' culture, now Americanized. Thus, most Argentinian films are built on the productive, argumentative and aesthetic model of US cinema or the so-called auteur cinema from Europe. There is no home-grown invention or searching. There's translation, development and copying. There's dependency.

Godard: American cinema is a cinema for selling...

Solanas: Exactly, a cinema that is linked to entertainment, to business; it is subordinated and conditioned by capitalist exploitation. All genres, techniques, languages and even durations in modern-day cinema were born out of this profit-oriented approach to production. Breaking with this conception, with this conditioning, was the hardest thing for us to do. We had to free ourselves: cinema possessed meaning if we could use it with the same freedom that a writer or a painter has when they work, if we could work by basing it on our needs. So we decided to take a chance, to try, to search, rather than letting ourselves be conditioned by the 'masters' of the so-called 'seventh art', who only express themselves through novels, short stories or drama. We began to liberate ourselves from the '*Viscontis, Renoirs, Giocondas, Resnais, Paveses*', etc. We wanted to find *our own style, our own language, our own structure...*, one that accorded with our need to establish a communication with our audience, and the need for the total liberation of all Argentinians. That is to say, this search was not just cinematic; it did not emerge as an aesthetic category, but as a category of our own liberation and the liberation of our country. Thus, a film began to develop, a film that relinquished the supports of plot-novel and actor; that is, the cinema of story and feelings, to become instead a film of concepts, thoughts and topics. The fictionalized story gave way to a story narrated using ideas, a cinema to be seen and read, to feel and think, a film of research similar to an ideological essay.

Godard: What is the role of this cinema in the process of liberation?

Solanas: In the first place, to transmit the information that we don't have. The media, the culture mechanisms, are all in the hands of the system, or they're controlled by it. The information we have available is what the system chooses to make available. The role of a cinema of liberation is, above all, to produce and spread our information. Once again, I highlight the idea of: *what is theirs* and *what is ours*. Meanwhile, the whole conception of our cinema –open cinema, participation cinema, etc.– has one basic purpose: to help *set free*, to liberate the individual. The oppressed, repressed, inhibited blocked individual. It is a form of cinema made for this struggle. To raise awareness

and knowledge among Argentina's most restless and inquiring levels of society. Can it only reach small groups? Maybe. But what is termed *mass cinema* only transmits what the system allows, which means that it is just another instrument of escapism, of mystification. The cinema of liberation, on the other hand, reaches small groups, but it reaches them deeply. It comes with the truth. It is better to transmit ideas that can help one single person to free himself than to contribute to the mass colonization of the people.

Godard: Cubans say that the duty of every revolutionary is to make revolution. What is the revolutionary duty of the filmmaker?

Solanas: To use cinema like a weapon or a gun, to turn the work itself into an event, an act, a revolutionary action. What is this duty or commitment for you?

Godard: To work wholeheartedly as an activist, to make fewer films and to be more of an activist. That is very difficult because filmmakers here are educated in individualism. But we have to start over in cinema, too.

Solanas: Your experience after 'May '68' is quite extreme; I would like you to share it with our Latin American colleagues...

Godard: 'May '68' was a fantastic liberation for many of us. 'May '68' imposed its truth on us, it forced us to speak and consider problems from another perspective. Before that 'May', here in France, all intellectuals had alibis that enabled them to live well, to have a car, an apartment, etc. But 'May' created a very simple problem: the problem of having to change your lifestyle, to break with the system. For the successful intellectuals, 'May' placed them in a situation analogous to that of a worker who had to abandon a strike because he had a four-month-long debt to the storekeeper. Some filmmakers –like Truffaut– admit honestly that they are not going to change their lifestyle, while some others carry on with their double standards, like the ones at 'Cahiers'.

Solanas: Are you still with 'Cahiers du Cinéma'?

Godard: No, I left it completely ever since they supported the Venice Film Festival (1968) in spite of the boycott declared by the Italian filmmakers. It's not that I'm against filmmakers meeting up together, but I am against what festivals represent these days.

Solanas: Have you relinquished the benefits the system gave you?

Godard: Yes, I have. I realized that I was oppressed, that an intellectual repression exists which is less marked than physical

repression, but it also has its victims. I felt oppressed. The more I wanted to fight, the more they squeezed my throat to keep me quiet. Apart from that, I was also completely repressing myself.

Solanas: Every filmmaker in Latin America suffers from this situation, with the additional problem that now there are tougher censorship laws, and in countries like Brazil and Argentina you can even be charged for expressing certain opinions. The current situation for the filmmaker is so grotesque that our frame of action and our options are now well defined. If a filmmaker explores every topic in depth, whether it be love, family, relationships, work, etc., he *reveals* the crisis of society, he shows the naked truth. And truth, given the political situation on our continent, is *subversive*. Thus, filmmakers are condemned to creative self-repression, self-censorship and self-castration. They play an impossible game of either being a 'creator' in the system or breaking with it and trying to find their own, independent way. Therefore, there are no options today: either you accept the truth of the system (that is, you accept its lies) or you accept the only truth, the national truth. And this is defined through our works: either complicity with the system, making sterile films, or total liberation...

Godard: It's true that it's easier to make a film in France than in Greece or Argentina. In Greece, if you don't do exactly what the Colonels' regime wants, they immediately send in the police and the repression. But in France there is a soft fascism which, after 'May '68', became harder... This soft fascism is the type that sends you back to your home country if you are a foreigner, or it sends you off to some remote place if you're a professor in the Sorbonne.

Solanas: And so, what's the situation in French and European cinema?

Godard: I would say that there is no European cinema, it's just American cinema everywhere. Just like there is no English film industry, only an American industry that works in England; in the same way that you said there is no Argentinian culture, just a European-American culture that operates through Argentinian intermediaries. There's no European cinema either, only American cinema. In the silent film era, a German film did not look anything like a silent film from Italy or France. Nowadays, there are no differences between an American film and a German or Italian film. There are lots of co-productions: Italian westerns, American films shot in Russia, etc. Everything is domesticated by the USA, everything is Americanized. What do I mean by Americanized? That all European cinema is a cinema made just for selling, for making money. Even art cinema and essay film. This is what makes everything fake. Even in Russia, where films are distributed in film clubs, they're *sold* through Politburo bureaucrats. So it's exactly the same.

This means that a film is not born out of a specific analysis of a specific situation, it's something else.

Solanas: What is it, then?

Godard: Well... it's an individual imagination, which is sometimes very generous or very 'left-wing', which is good, but at the same time it's made *to be sold* because it's the only way this imagination can continue to work and sell. That's why there are no differences between Antonioni, Kazan, Dreyer, Bergman, etc. and a bad filmmaker like Delannoy, in France. There are differences in quality, but not in content: they all make cinema for the ruling classes. This is what I was doing for ten years, though with a different intention. But I was used for the same purpose.

Solanas: Is the so-called European auteur cinema still a critical cinema, a cinema of opposition and progress?

Godard: At some point it was for every European filmmaker. But then there was a need to go beyond that; however, this evolution did not happen. The notion of the 'filmmaker' was a revolution at a time when filmmakers fought against the producers, a bit like in the Middle Ages, when a member of the bourgeoisie fought against an aristocrat. Now the bourgeoisie has become the aristocrat; the filmmaker has replaced the producer. So, auteur cinema is not needed anymore, because it is in itself a cinema for the bourgeois revolution. That is to say, cinema has today become a very reactionary media. Even American literature is much less reactionary than American cinema.

Solanas: So the filmmaker is a category of bourgeois cinema?

Godard: Exactly. The filmmaker is kind of like a university professor.

Solanas: How would you define this auteur cinema ideologically?

Godard: Objectively speaking, it has become a cinema that is an ally of reaction.

Solanas: Can you give me a few examples of this.

Godard: Fellini, Antonioni, Visconti, Bresson, Bergman...

Solanas: And what about the younger directors?

Godard: In France, me before 'May '68'; Truffaut, Rivette, Demy, Resnais... All of them. In England, Lester, Brooks... In Italy, Pasolini, Bertolucci... You know... Polanski... Everybody.

Solanas: Do you think these filmmakers are part of the system?

Godard: Yes. They are and they want to be part of it.

Solanas: And has the more critical cinema been absorbed into the system, too?

Godard: Yes, these films are also absorbed into the system because they are not strong enough in relation to its integrating power. For example, American Newsreels are as poor as you and me, but if CBS offered them \$10,000 to screen one of their films, they would refuse because they would be integrated. And why would they be integrated? Because the American television structure is so strong that it absorbs into the system everything that it screens. The only way you could maybe 'talk back' to US television would be to screen absolutely nothing for the two or four hours that the television company has paid for specifically to screen and 'absorb'. In Hollywood they are now getting ready to make a film about Che Guevara, and there is even a film about Mao Tse-tung, featuring Gregory Peck. If those Newsreel films were screened by French television, they wouldn't be absorbed, at least not completely, because they are foreign products. Similarly, perhaps, my films that are absorbed here in South America retain a certain value.

Solanas: I don't agree with your last point. I think that when a domestically-made film tackles an issue from the oppressed classes' point of view, when it is clear and deep on the issue, it's almost impossible for the system to digest. I don't think CBS would buy a film about Black Power, or one featuring Carmichael haranguing black people about violence, or that French television would show a film in which Cohn Bendit is saying what he thinks. In our countries, many things are allowed when they refer to foreign problems, but when these same problems are international, because they are political, then they cannot be absorbed, either. A few months ago, the Argentine censors banned Eisenstein's *Strike* and *October*. Otherwise, most European auteur cinema that deals with bourgeois problems is not only absorbed into the system, it is also the aesthetic and thematic 'model' for the neocolonialized auteur cinema in our countries.

Godard: I agree, but when the political situation here in France becomes difficult for them, they can no longer absorb like they used to. That's the case with your film, which I'm sure will not be absorbed and will be censored. However, it is not only in the political scene that this absorption takes place, but also in aesthetics. The films of mine that are most difficult to absorb are the last ones that I made within the system, in which aesthetic became politics, such as *Week End* and *La Chinoise*. A political posture has to align with an aesthetic posture. It's not

auteur cinema that we should be making, but scientific cinema. Aesthetics should be studied scientifically. All research, both in science and in art, adheres to a political line, even if you are unaware of it. So, there are scientific discoveries and aesthetic discoveries, as well. Thus we should be clear, consciously, about the path we have chosen, and to which we are committed. Antonioni, for example, did good work at some point, but not anymore. He has not radicalized himself. He makes a film *about* students, like it could be made in the USA, but he doesn't make a film *that comes* from the students. Pasolini is talented, very talented, he can make films *about* issues in the same way one learns to write compositions in school. For example, he can write a beautiful poem about the Third World. *But* it is not the Third World that wrote the poem. So I think you have to be the Third World, to be part of the Third World and then, one day, it is the Third World that is singing the poem, and if you are the one who's writing it, it's just because you are a poet and you know how to do it. Like you said, a film should be a weapon, a gun... but there are still some people who are in the darkness and instead need a torch to illuminate what's around them. That is precisely the role of theory. We need a Marxist analysis of the problems of image and sound. Lenin himself, when he was involved in film-making, didn't do a theoretical analysis, but an analysis that focused on production, so that cinema could be everywhere. Only Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov paid attention to this issue.

Solanas: How do you film now? Do you have a producer?

Godard: I never had a producer. I had one or two producers who were friends of mine, but I never worked with regular production companies. When I did it a couple of times, it was a mistake. I find it unthinkable now. I don't know how others can do it. I see colleagues of mine, Cournot or Bertolucci, for example, who are forced to knock on an idiot's door and argue with them. They accept that they have to argue with an idiot in order to save their film. But I never did that. Now I am my own producer, and I do it with what I have. I film much more than I used to, because I film in a different way, in 16 mm, or using my small TV equipment. And it's also different in another way, though it might seem pretentious to use the Vietnamese example. I mean, the way the Vietnamese use the bicycle in combat and for resistance. A cycling champion here could not use a bicycle like a Vietnamese does, at all. And well, I want to learn to use a bicycle like a Vietnamese does. I have a great deal to do with my bicycle, a lot of work ahead, and that is what I have to do. That's why I am filming so much. This year I made four films.

Solanas: What is the difference between the cinema you used to do and the cinema you're doing now?

Godard: Now I am trying to make films that consciously attempt to take part in the political struggle. I used to be thoughtless, sentimental... I was a left-winger, if you like, though I started from the right-wing and also because I was a bourgeois, an individualist. Later on, I evolved towards the left, sentimentally speaking, until I was not in the 'parliamentary' left, but in the revolutionary, radicalized left, with all its contradictions.

Solanas: And what about your cinema?

Godard: I have always tried to make films that nobody else was making, even when I was working in the system. Now I try to link 'what nobody does' with the revolutionary struggle. In the past, my search was an individual struggle. Now I want to know, if I'm wrong, why I am wrong and, if I'm right, why I am right. I try to do what nobody else is doing, because everything that's being done is virtually all imperialist. Eastern cinema is imperialist; Cuban cinema – apart from Santiago Álvarez and a couple of documentary filmmakers – is half based on an imperialist model. All Russian cinema quickly became imperialist or was bureaucratized, with the exception of two or three people who fought against it: Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov and Medvedkin, who is completely unknown. Now I make films with the workers and I do what they want ideologically, but I also tell them: 'Be careful!' It is important that, as well as making these films, they don't go out and consume the system's cinema on Sundays. This is our duty and our way of helping in 'the filmmakers' struggle'. In short, I have reached the conclusion that, as the situation with cinema is very complicated and confusing, it's important to make films with people who are not filmmakers, with people who are interested in seeing something on the screen that is related to them.

Solanas: Why do you work with people who aren't in cinema industry?

Godard: Because there are a handful of people in Hollywood or Mosfilm or wherever who impose their language, their discourse, onto the whole population. And it's not enough to walk away from this group and say: 'I'm making a different kind of cinema', because you still have the same ideas about cinema. Therefore, to overcome this, people who have not had an opportunity to make cinematic discourse should have the chance to do so. Something extraordinary that happened during that last 'May' in Paris was when people started writing things on the walls. The advertisers were the only ones who were allowed to write on walls. People had been made to believe that writing on walls was dirty and ugly, but I also felt like writing on walls, and I still do, ever since 'May '68'. It wasn't an anarchic or individualist idea, but a deep desire. We also need to start over in cinema. I made a film in which students were talking to

workers, and it was very clear: the students were talking all the time, but the workers never spoke. Workers talk a lot to each other, but where are their words? The words of the people who make up 80% of humanity cannot be found in newspapers, or in films. The minority who speak should be forced to give it up to this 80%, to let this majority express itself. That's why I don't want to be part of the minority that speaks all the time, or that makes films; I would rather have my language represent this 80%. And that's why I don't want to make films with cinema people, but with people from the great majority.

Solanas: What is the idea behind *Strike*, your next film?

Godard: It's about a woman who is talking about a strike. She has a son and that's why she talks from her home, about what a week on strike is like, and also about the relation between sex and work. Because when someone works for ten hours a day, whether he's an intellectual or a worker, he can't make love. And if the woman has to stay at home, then the opposite can happen. This situation poses many problems. In this film we talk about these issues. I am going to film it entirely with my TV camera. It's very cheap and practical. We can see what we have filmed straight away, both image and sound, without any need for a film lab, or montage, etc. If we don't like it, we do it again. I'm going to make almost the whole film in a single shot. The work will be in the script, in the dialogue.

Solanas: And how do you screen it later?

Godard: It's going to be shown on televisions in local bars, in manufacturing areas... We will discuss and talk about it with the people, and this will help us to grow.

Solanas: What is the role of cinema in the process of liberation?

Godard: A fundamental role. Like you said, informing and then, after you give this information, then comes reflection. Films should be clear and simple to help clarify things. And they should be simple films from a technical perspective, because technology is very expensive. If synchronization or montage are very expensive when we are filming, then let's work using not many shots, or with a voice-over. And if they are unavoidable, let's just accept them, but let's also keep in mind that it's important to simplify. That's all. •

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A combative cinema with the people. Interview with Bolivian filmmaker Jorge Sanjinés

Cristina Alvares Beskow

ABSTRACT

Jorge Sanjinés was the first film director to produce films in Aymara and Quechua in Bolivia, a country formed mostly by indigenous communities (Aymara, Quechua and Guarani) that until the 1960s had only produced films in the language of the colonizer. In 2013, I had the opportunity to interview the Bolivian filmmaker in the city of La Paz, Bolivia. Sanjinés, who wrote the classic manifesto *Theory and Practice of a Cinema With the People* (1979), spoke for more than an hour on different topics, from the militant cinema of the 1960s and the 1970s to his current productions. In addition to making a reflection on the relevance of the ideas that he advocated in those years, he spoke of the process of production and exhibition of the films he did about struggle together with indigenous people.

KEYWORDS

Jorge Sanjinés, Bolivian film, Latin American Cinema, political film, militant cinema, New Latin American Cinema.

Jorge Sanjinés was the first film director to produce films in Aymara and Quechua in Bolivia. In a country composed in its majority by indigenous communities (Aymara, Quechua and Guarani), it is surprising that until the 1960s all films were in the language of the colonizer. *Ukamau* (1966) was the first Bolivian film in Aymara. The title means 'It's like this', a word that later became the name of the filmmakers' group founded by Sanjinés. Since then, the Ukamau Group has dedicated its films to the cultural and political resistance of the indigenous communities of Bolivia. *Revolution (Revolución)*, 1963, directed by Sanjinés, can be seen as one of the seeds of this history. The short film was presented at the V Festival of Viña del Mar, Chile, in 1967. It coincided with the first meeting of Latin American filmmakers and the founding of the New Latin American Cinema movement, of which the filmmaker soon became one of the exponents. In 1968, at a meeting of documentarists in Mérida, Venezuela, Sanjinés stated that it was not enough to denounce, that it was necessary to make combat movies, to intervene in reality. *Yawar Mallku* (1969) and *The Courage of the People (El coraje del pueblo)*, 1971 were made in the light of this notion, becoming true instruments of struggle. In 1979, he wrote *Theory and Practice of a Cinema With the People (Teoría y práctica de un cine junto al pueblo)*, a work that has become a benchmark among political filmmakers. In time, Sanjinés has constructed a language of dialog with the indigenous culture, incorporating, for example, narrative elements that stress notions of community and circular time, like his famous 'integral sequence shot', present in *Clandestine Nation (La nación clandestina)*, 1989). In 2012, the film *Insurgents (Insurgentes)* interacts directly with the new political situation in Bolivia, ruled for the first time by a president who defines himself as indigenous. In January 2013, I had the opportunity to watch the film at the Ukamau headquarters, in the city of La Paz, in a small and charming projection room. That same day, I interviewed Jorge Sanjinés. The conversation dealt with cinema and politics, focusing on the ideas of yesterday and today, and topics such as the collective character, the genocide of indigenous peoples and the cinema committed to the popular cause warmed up the cold evening of the Bolivian plateau.

Jorge Sanjinés: Even the French Revolution owes the indigenous. Some French intellectuals visited me and I asked them: 'Do you believe that France and the French Revolution owe something to the indigenous?' They looked each other as saying: 'What is this crazy man asking us?' I told them the story of the theater play *The wild Harlequin* and Rousseau. *The wild Harlequin* is a play that was written in the 18th century and

was seen in Paris by Rousseau, who was quite young. In this work the playwright¹, who had lived with the Iroquois Indians, reflected the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity that they practiced daily... The Iroquois society was cohesive, articulated and carried out without State and without private ownership, with impressive spaces of individual freedom, spaces of freedom that the Europeans did not know because they came from the Middle Ages, even from the Renaissance. At that time, people had very little libertarian spaces, were cornered by the prejudice, by religious pressure, by the absolutist monarchies that used their bodies for the wars, and women, mainly, had no role, were censored, while the Iroquois gave them the same place as men and the Iroquois constitution rejected slavery. That is to say that the indigenous people were ideologically more developed than the Europeans and that is not taken into account. The ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity that appear in this play, *The wild Harlequin*, were seen in Paris by Rousseau, who hurried to write *The social contract*, the French Revolution bible. 'Then, Gentlemen', I was telling the French, 'you see how you owe so much to the indigenous and do not know about it'. In Bolivia, the greater part of the white Mestizo ruling society is a society that coexists with the indigenous (now, reluctantly, because it feels like out of power), but they don't know them and have always despised them due to ignorance and race prejudice: everything from the indigenous was not useful, was not worthy, was not important to know. Prejudices that have prevailed in the dominant collective memory to justify exploitation and genocide. In Brazil, it is the same. How can we kill the indigenous easily? This is the same as telling the people that the indigenous are not useful, are a nuisance, are people that have no value.

I think that we can start with your latest movie. Your movies are always inspired by the resistance of the people, especially the indigenous people, and now we have an indigenous in the presidency. Could you talk about the challenges of a militant cinema with the aristocracy of today in comparison with the aristocracy of yesterday, as you show in the film?

There is a very interesting sociological phenomenon that came about with the electoral triumph of the Aymara Evo Morales. In the first place, most of the ruling class that lost the elections in the year 2005 was completely convinced that this indigenous would not last three months in power, because he was an indigenous, an incapable person that by avatars of the democratic game suddenly pulled out more votes than them and was elected president. Very calm, they were very calm: I

1. Louis François Delisle de la Drevetière.

spoke with several of them to know what they thought and they told me that they were completely reassured, certain that it was going to be a total failure and it would be necessary to call for new elections. Not now, now they are perplexed, because Bolivia has never been economically better than today. We are almost the one that grows the most among Latin American countries: we are growing faster than Brazil, more than Argentina, more than Chile, more than Uruguay. After many years, dozens of years, we have a government that loves this country, who respects this country, who does not come into power to steal. Because before the government and the power were seen as places to enrich oneself personally. They used to take the power but were not thinking 'we are going to enhance our country, we are going to improve it', but 'how I am going to get rich now that I have the chance to come to power, and the sooner the better'; and those who did not think like that had to do it anyway, representing a social class which coerced and pressured them to take such a measure, to appoint certain people. Then it was like the model in the United States: the ruler was a kind of puppet of dominant power with little space for his own initiative. And when you came out of that social control it may happen what happened to Villarruel, who, being a mestizo with a white skin, was identified with the indigenous destiny and said 'No!'. I know that from very close by, because my father was a very close friend of President Villarruel: he was a senior economist and Villarruel asked him for advice on a project of radical agrarian reform, which I believe was the real reason why they killed him. He was not the only one. What happened to General Torres when he took the side of the people? What happened to him? He was killed in a street in Buenos Aires. So, the confusion the ruling class feels when faced with the irruption of the indigenous is very complex, because they are realizing that every day they are losing a bit more of that space, that political territory where they lived and ruled before, and were masters of. Every time we have in Bolivia more authorities of indigenous origin, indigenous who are taking up political responsibilities, ministers who are women from popular associations, or an indigenous governor, an indigenous president, a mayor of indigenous origin, and they do not like it, they are very angry. This is not a novelty; they were always angry with the country and have passed on that anger to their children. I recall a boy of 12 years at the airport who said to his father, 'Dad, at last we are leaving this shitty country!'. A 12-year-old child. Where did this little boy of 12 years learn that this is a shitty country? From his father, his family, his environment. Then there is a panic in Bolivian society with the irruption of an Aymara, not because it is an Aymara, but because it is a process that has emerged. I hope nothing bad happens, but if tomorrow something happens to President Evo Morales, I believe that what would happen

in other countries such as Venezuela, where the death of the leader can mean the end of the political process, would not happen here. Not here, here it is irreversible: if tomorrow Evo Morales fails, he can be replaced. The indigenous will retrieve the power and will not let it go, because this struggle, as shown in the film *Insurgents*, comes from very far back, very far: the idea of recovering the lost sovereignty has been permanently on their minds, of course, because they know that they are the majority, the 62-63% of the population, and have every right to manage their country, its territory. This process is very interesting, because I do not know if those who exercise power, even indigenous, are fully aware of what it means to regain power on the basis of the ideological and philosophical principles of indigenous culture, which is the most precious thing in the Bolivian process: the philosophy of a society that has prioritized the us over the I. That is the big difference, what has made October 2003 possible, without a leader, without a political party, because the 'us' acts as a collective entity. It is like the birds, which coordinate all at the same time and seem a single agency when they fly, because all of them know at what point they have to turn or move forward, and the picture is always the same. Indigenous cultures have preserved this, that sense of action, collective belonging. It is very difficult to understand this phenomenon, because, as we have been educated, or deformed, in western culture, we think 'I first, I, before the others'. And to take this leap is the great challenge of this process for politicians who managed the country, because most of them have been educated in the individualism culture and often act that way without realizing that they are fighting with the ideology that should guide their steps, the ideology of those majorities who think 'first us, then I'.

The Ukamau Group arose in the 1960s. What were the principles of its creation?

Well, before anything else, the interest to participate in the process of transformation of Bolivian society, that still was taking place as a result of the revolution in the year 1952. At that time, it had transformed the structures of a semi-feudal country into a bourgeois democratic country. This transit was generating new political and sociological expectations. The young people of that time were still very impressed by the processes of the revolution of 1952, positively impressed, although we were also critical with regard to what that process had failed to achieve, what it had betrayed. But we thought we were opening up revolutionary possibilities, particularly because the Cuban Revolution had triumphed. It was the Cuban Revolution which we felt soulful for: a country so close to the enemy, to the empire, that was liberated. Then it seemed

to us that the liberation of our country was just around the corner, that it was a matter of organizing and fighting. At that time, we thought and believed in the armed struggle, as all the revolutionary world, because it was the only alternative in view, and also an alternative that had triumphed. Therefore, we believe our work of filmmakers was a work of political militancy: we did not see the cinema as the place for our personal realization, but as a place to make the country, to contribute with our work to create greater awareness in the dominated society, with the cinema as an instrument of struggle.

In that period, the cinematographic movement New Latin American Cinema was also created. How was the participation of the Ukamau Group?

Well, the first surprise we had was when our movie *Revolution*, a small documentary, a short experimental film, was presented at the VI Viña del Mar Festival, in the year 1967. We didn't go, but the film did and had a good impact. There, the jury included the famous documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens, who loved the movie and took it for submission in the Leipzig Festival, where it won the grand prize. And then, we were told that in this festival there were several filmmakers who were making political films; not many, but some. Then, immediately, the following year, came to Bolivia Carlos Rebolledo, to invite us to attend the Latin American Cinema meeting organized by the Department of Cinema at the University of Mérida, Venezuela. And there we understood that we were living an extremely important process, because we discovered that several Cuban, Brazilian, Peruvian, Colombian, Venezuelan... filmmakers were working on a cinema committed to popular cause. Like the Brazilians, with Glauber Rocha looking for a cinema with a Brazilian identity, or like the 'Third Cinema' with Getino and Solanas; it was a big ideological party from the joy of finding other Latin American filmmakers displaying the same concern, with the same political project against imperialism. In Mérida, I improvised a small speech, like other filmmakers; I didn't know what I was going to say, but our films *Revolution* and *Ukamau* created a very interesting climate and I was asked to speak².

What was the impact of that speech?

Very good, because you see, it has been more than forty years since then, and throughout the subsequent process we tried to be consistent with those words, with that ideological postulate that we were already advancing. And because of that, the next film was precisely *The Blood of Condor* (*Yawar Mallku*), which

is the complaint against sterilization without consultation of peasant women.

That film had a great political impact.

Huge, huge. Until then, I was also in agreement that a movie does not make history, but that film, yes, changed history, because of what it led to... First there was a shock, because nobody could believe that the good and friendly and noble *gringuitos*, all the peace corps sent by Kennedy, the nice one, could do what they were doing. No one could believe they were sterilizing peasant women in a country with low population, with a high rate of infant and maternal mortality. What was that? Then it was easy to accept that it seemed a diabolical lie, a slander, and it triggered a controversy in Bolivian society and several articles were published, some in favor and some against. The Congress of the country and the University appointed commissions to investigate the facts. After a few months, almost at the same time, the two commissions assured that what the film was denouncing was true and that they had several tests, testimonies and documents. That helped the Bolivian government of General Torres to expel the peace corps from Bolivia, as did Evo with the DEA³. It was a good blow in the snout of the empire (*laughter*).

... as a result of a political film. In addition, your movies had an educational role in the exhibitions and in the debates. In the manifest *Toward a Third Cinema* (*Hacia un tercer cine*, 1969), Getino and Solanas say that the revolutionary cinema has the role of discussing politics together with the people and think on action. How was the process of producing and exhibiting the Ukamau films here in Bolivia?

Exactly. We realized that it was not enough to make the films, because the films could be very revolutionary but if they served to win prizes at festivals or to impress the people of the cities, they were contradicting their objective. Therefore, we set up a system of dissemination: while preparing another movie, all of us that were part of the Ukamau Group would advertise the films in the factories, in schools, in the countryside, in mines... For 18 years, we have done this work to bring our cinema to remote places of the country. It has been a process of great enrichment because we have learned a lot, as we learned with *Yawar Mallku* when we made the film and we understood for the first time that the indigenous people had a culture that was not individualistic, that they were organized around the idea of democratic power, which goes from the bottom up; we lived it

2. The full speech can be read at:
[Http://cinelatinoamericano.org/biblioteca/assets/docs/documento/497.pdf](http://cinelatinoamericano.org/biblioteca/assets/docs/documento/497.pdf)

3. Drug Enforcement Administration (United States).

in the flesh. We realized that the individual protagonist did not make sense in the Quechua or Aymara indigenous community and that we had to achieve a collective protagonist, that is what we have in *The Courage of the People*. We have a single protagonist in *The Clandestine Nation*, but it is premeditated, because that individual actor lives and dies to be integrated into the collective: the true protagonist of the film is the collective, and Sebastián tries to redeem himself in order to be part of it.

How was that process of thinking a political and militant aesthetics?

This question is important, because we also realized that if the film had as objective to reach the greatest number of Bolivian viewers, it had to be built according to the precepts inspired by the internal mechanisms of another vision of the world, the vision of the majority, the vision of indigenous cultures. And we were developing our own aesthetics, a language, a narrative that was to culminate later in *Clandestine Nation*, where we built the 'integral sequence shot', which is a way of showing an interpretation of the sense of circular time of the Andean world. Among the Aymara and Quechua, time is not linear, as with the Europeans, it does not respond to the Cartesian logic. A space where the time goes round and everything will be back, that is what makes the camera narration in each sequence.

Facing the future, the past is in front of us, isn't it?

Of course, the Aymaras understand it, so that the future is not always forward, it can be rearward, as shown quietly in the film. The last shot shows the burial of Sebastián, who has died in the dance of death, the body passes on and, when the camera returns without cuts, the last person following the funeral procession is him; but it is Sebastián reborn, he is the future, the future is back, facing the past ahead.

How did that develop into the 'integral sequence shot'?

We were looking for a shot where the protagonist was collective, a shot that could integrate all and that disregarded the close-up, which is characteristic of European language, where individuality is exalted. It is not that in *Clandestine Nation* we don't have close-ups, we do, but not by cutting, because we arrived at them in a natural movement with the camera, integrating everybody in the movement. That was crucial, because this shot comes from the way the indigenous people themselves tell stories.

I would like to know your influences in this process. In *Ukamau*, I see some influence of the soviet cinema and in *The Courage of the People*, I see something from the Italian Neo-Realism.

It is possible, but in the case of *The Courage of the People* it was not a premeditated thing, it was not that we watched *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette*, Vittorio De Sica, 1948) and then we decided to make a film like that. The positive influences and also the negative ones are settled in the minds of human beings, we are influenced by good things and bad things. And several times or many times, we are not very aware of that, we do something in a certain way and it seems original to us. And if we dig a little in the memory, we might discover that it comes from images that were very powerful, we were influenced by them at a given time and that settled unconsciously. The same thing with the Soviets. I have read the writings of Eisenstein and Kulechov, which were the first reference texts for my work, and surely their conceptions of the montage, the juxtaposition of elements to join two different concepts and give birth to a new one, penetrated powerfully, because we were precisely looking for a cinema without words, as *Revolution*. The same with *Ukamau*: *Ukamau* is a film that may well be understood without reading the subtitles, without speaking Aymara. That is something that we saw in the Festival of Marseille, where the directors of the festival were too afraid to screen it to the French public, and didn't want to; I told them: 'No, do not worry, that has already been thought, this film has to work with such public without subtitles.' And they were encouraged and released the film, there was a nice debate, no one from the public asked 'why it is not subtitled?'. They were not interested in that; it was not necessary.

How was the reception of the films in the communities?

One of the first films, *Yawar Mallku*, which was made to alert the indigenous of that act of criminal sterilization, didn't work very well; not because they didn't understand it (it was understood despite the fact that it is not linear and has flashbacks); what they all surely missed was the presence of the collective, because the film was focused on the individual. On the other hand, when we did *The Courage of the People*, the reception changed, the perception of the exhibitions was much more intense, and even more in *Clandestine Nation*. When we showed *Clandestine Nation* in the Cinemateca, Beatriz⁴ interviewed people and many asked her: 'And why does Sebastián appear again, wasn't

4. Beatriz Palacios was a director and partner of Jorge Sanjinés.

he already dead?' They did not understand that game, don't you think? That question was never asked in the popular bar in Lima, because the Aymara people who saw that reappearance thought it was very natural; this shows that we were matching the cultural codes of the Aymaras.

Your films are political already in the production process. So, how was the team work and the relationship with the communities?

First, it was necessary to fight the economic issue because, in the past, when we started, it was much more expensive to make movies than it is today. *Ukamau* was filmed in 35mm, we used a 35mm silent camera that was very large, very heavy, we needed 14 large battery packs to power it, the sound equipment used a perforated magnetic tape, everything was very expensive. We were able to do so because the state stepped in, but when we worked in *Yawar Mallku* we had serious economic problems, because we no longer had the support of the State, we were 'us' and nobody else. We had a tiny budget of \$300 to film, which is like \$1000 now, more or less, a camera with a single 35mm lens, and it was noisy, and we had no recorder... and used a rubber check (*laughter*). A rubber check, and there was a very strong argument among the team about that. Some companions, Soria for example, were very frightened because we were going to end up in jail. Then an idea occurred to me and I said: 'Well, we can leave the prison, with security we are going to be able to leave it at some point, but we will never leave behind the frustration of not making the film. So, we do it!' And so we did, and later faced enormous problems. I remember that when shooting ended in the Cata's community we still didn't have the money to pay the staff; the producer, who was Ricardo⁵, had made several trips to La Paz and had not been able to raise funds. On 30 December, with all friends wanting to return to celebrate New Year's Eve with their families, I told them: 'No, I will not go, I cannot leave because we are going to leave like always, we are going to repeat what they do, what whites and mestizos in society do, we use the indigenous people and then we disappear, no! Then I'm going to stay as a hostage, I cannot move from this community until you return from La Paz with the money to pay the people.' And one of the companions, an assistant, told me: 'I am not going to leave Jorge alone, I'm going to stay'. We stayed, and almost died. Almost died because on the 31st they held a tremendous party in the community, where everybody drank burning alcohol (*laughter*); they were unaffected by it, but it burned our tongues, it pulled out pieces of skin off our tongues. And we were so intoxicated that we

slept on the floor, we had no strength even to walk to the cot, we could have died; the fact that we were very young saved us. Nor could we say no to the people, it was not that we like to drink a lot, but that came and... 'companion, brother, brother'... with me, everyone wanted to toast with me, I had to drink with them all, with the collective. At that moment, the collective cost us dearly (*laughter*).

Was the team small?

It was small, very small. The team of *Clandestine Nation* was 12 people; in *Insurgents*, we were 84.

Was the script created collectively?

Yes. Well, it wasn't written by everybody, we didn't do this, because I do not believe in that. I believe that each creator has his or her specific field in the cinematographic work: the musician in his music, the photographer in his photography, the scriptwriter and director each in their field. Now, you can collaborate, you can observe, you can criticize, the work can be improved with interventions, and we have always done that. Alejandro⁶ knows about it very well, because he has intervened several times in the last film and with his wisdom has provided a number of very important things; so, if Alejandro hadn't contributed, the film probably would have been worse than it is (*laughter*). Then we are always ready to listen and to respond to critical comments and advice from the team's companions, for each one feels as participant and maker of the film. I also used to intervene in the photography and I told to Antonio Gino, for example: 'Here, why are you lighting it this way? If you change your reflectors we will see that part better', things like that; and Antonio told me: 'you are right', and he changed it, and we all felt like we were doing everything. That was important and it has always been like that.

Some cinema groups, like the Argentinian Grupo Cine de la Base, which Raymundo Gleyzer was part of, had a very strong relationship with revolutionary organizations... Was your cinema also in contact with organizations here?

No, for a very simple reason: the Bolivian left was, I believe that it still is, a very small left, a left made of rulers, that has not been cured of this ruler behavior in their relationship with the indigenous. That's why they despised the work we developed with the indigenous. I recall a discussion with a great intellectual, that I am not going to name to preserve his

5. / Ricardo Rada, which also was part of the Ukamau Group.

6. Alejandro Zárate Bladés, who worked as assistant director for Sanjinés.

image, a great man, a very intelligent man, who said to me: 'No, you're wrong, you all are wrong: it's wrong to exalt the culture of the indigenous people, we have to take the indigenous as proletarians, we must make them revolutionaries. Leave their traditions, they are things from the past, which harm them. They are petit bourgeois and land owners and we have to incorporate them and turn them into revolutionaries.' A great leader of the Bolivian left. How could we have relationship with people who thought like that? And that's why they have failed, they have never understood their own country, because they are racists, deep down they are racists.

How was the production process? Did your movies have direct relationship with the indigenous movement?

More than with the movement, with the communities directly, with the Miner Unions, for example. *The Courage of the People* was done this way, it could not have been done differently, and therefore they participated in the film in a creative way. How could we tell Domitila Chungara⁷ 'you have to say this'? How? It was impossible! We had to listen what she had said, respect what she had to say and say: 'Well, we are going to do it again.' Nothing more. And the involvement of the Miner Unions was decisive: without their support, the militant support, we would not have made the film. They protected us in many ways, because it was very dangerous to work there. At that time, the Siglo XX Mine was controlled by the Ranger⁸, which was ruled by Siles⁹, who had just murdered Che and all that. If such people had discovered us carrying arms and military clothing in the middle of the night, we would have been killed directly. We did it just because we had the protection of the population; they would warn us, come running and say: 'The army is coming'. Then, we would all hide the arms and get into the houses, let the patrols pass. This way, *The Courage of the People* was made, and it was made very fast: from the moment I went to write the script during two weeks in Yungas, until the film premiered in the Pesaro Film Festival, 4 months passed. A film with two and a half hours of duration when it was all finished, with thousands of extras and with pyrotechnics, with effects, with reconstructions of the war. I still don't know how we were able to do it, because today, if I thought to produce a film like that, I would say, at least, a year, we could not do it sooner.

And what was the impact of that film in that period?

7. Domitila Chungara was an important activist and worker leader of Bolivia. In 1967, she survived the massacre of San Juan, perpetrated by a military action of the government of René Barrientos against miners who fought for better working conditions. The massacre was reconstituted in the film *The Courage of the People*, with participation of the workers.

8. The Bolivian Army.

In Bolivia, it premiered seven years later, in the year 78. It was very strong, I think... The military were still in power and the film stayed for a week in the theaters, but when it started hitting society, the film was cut and censored. Before, two days after the premiere, as the film accused the commander of the army, General Arce, it was published in the newspaper a note saying that everything that slanderous movie said about the army was a lie, slanders from a terrorist group called Ukamau Group, and requiring the director of that group to issue a public retract. The next day, in the same newspaper, we presented our answer to the army commander: 'General Arce, we cannot retract the truth, and if you threaten us with a civil-military trial we are fully prepared to attend, because such a trial will give us the opportunity to disclose to the Bolivian society a series of documents and testimonies that we have not had time to put on film' (*laughter*). And that's how it all ended, the army commander kept quiet, and shortly after, the film returned to the theaters.

Did you have other problems with repression by the dictatorship?

Yes, of course. Threats by phone, many times: that I was going to be killed, calling me a red bastard, that they were going to shut my mouth. After that, a place we had in Sopocachi was robbed, and they took films and documents. We were included in the list of people that had to be killed, we were in the third place alongside Luis Espinal¹⁰. We had to hide when going along the city, as we were being pursued by the military, we had to leave the country illegally, we stayed seven years in exile... it cost us dearly.

What changed in your films since the group started?

The cinema of Ukamau Group's first stage is a cinema of direct confrontation, because at that time, for example, there was no television. When the events that inspired *The Courage of the People* happened in the year 1967, the newspaper only published a small piece about the massacre of San Juan, where three people had been killed in a scuffle between the police and some drunken miners. And nobody complained, nobody rectified that, no organization, not even the Miners Federation, nobody, nobody rectified that¹¹. It was then that we made the

9. Luis Adolfo Siles Salinas.

10. Luis Espinal was a Jesuit priest, filmmaker and social communicator. During the decades of 1960 and 1970, he supported the struggles of the miners' movements and fought against the dictatorship in Bolivia. In 1980, he was assassinated by the military.

11. Dozens of miners were actually killed in the massacre.

decision to make *The Courage of the People*, because that had been barbaric. It was a memory that was being lost and there had been a massacre of people there, it was politically motivated, because of imperialism... and nobody said anything. So we made this film, because I was playing that role then: the cinema as an instrument to preserve a memory, because there was no other way. Then came the democratic process, and since then we have left the cinema of direct confrontation and have made films of greater depth, as in the case of *Clandestine Nation* and other films that touch on issues of identity or racism.

It is very interesting to think about how the militant cinema can join emotion and reflection.

Emotion and reflection, of course, that is the great challenge and the permanent concern of our work. That is why we have started making semi-documentaries or fiction documentaries, because we believe in that, and we have been able to see that a person who is moved thinks, can think better. Because when they leave the theater, if people are not moved, they forget what they have seen, but if they are moved, they spent one, two or three days thinking, reflecting on that and then recall images that have touched their hearts.

I have two more questions... The New Latin American Cinema was a very important movement for all Latin America cinema, not only for political films. For you, what are the consequences of this movement in the Latin American cinema?

Well, I think that the art of cinema, for its massive influence in societies, has been gradually building and strengthening our Latin American identity. At least in Buenos Aires, they used *The Courage of the People* and *Yawar Mallku* very intensely before the repression of 1976; those films, together with *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos*, Octavio Getino and Fernando E. Solanas, 1968) and *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, Glauber Rocha, 1964) circulated in the factories, in schools, in institutions. And nobody said 'that Brazilian film', or 'that Bolivian film'. It was the film that was speaking to us, that was showing us our problems, which made

us reflect on our liberation, and that contributed enormously to create what today the Latin Americans feel when we see Chávez sick. All Latin Americans with a revolutionary commitment must be concerned about Chávez's life, because he's not only the president of Venezuela, he is a leader in Latin America, of the great motherland, he has opened up new paths, he has created very important institutions that will strengthen the process that will become a reality when Latin America becomes a giant, powerful, brotherly homeland; because we have more reasons to unite than the Europeans. The Europeans have made a formal unity because, deep down, they feel great enmity toward each other: for example, talk to a Frenchman about a German or to a German about a Frenchman. As far as I'm concerned they keep hating, though they are now with the same currency for practical reasons. But we have that great advantage, we do not hate: we Latin Americans love each other, and that is a revolutionary change, it is an enormous advantage; it is going to be much easier for us to build a big and really very solid fatherland. We are working on that.

Regarding Ukamau Group, what is the difference between the militant cinema of the time when it was born and the militant cinema of today?

Of today? There is no difference, we are in the same dire straits (*laughte*), in the same adventure, aren't we? And this is where we must continue, because the imperialism is also starting to disarm itself. What happens is that, when you put down a malignant giant like that, it brings along many misfortunes; we can still live very difficult and very dangerous times for the Latin American project, because the fall of the dominant system is inevitable, it is a self-destructive system in the way it exploits, it will burst. That's fine. I've spoken too much. •

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Conversation with Eryk Rocha: The legacy of the eternal

Carolina Sourdis (in collaboration with Andrés Pedraza)

ABSTRACT

This conversation deals with the prevalence of the ideas of Cinema Novo through the work of the filmmaker Eryk Rocha, by discussing his process of creation and his relationship with the legacy of this cinema movement in which his father, Glauber Rocha, was an essential figure. In addition, it questions the strength of collectiveness in art within the Brazilian and Latin American political context nowadays, and it stresses the relationships between politics and aesthetics highlighting the need to keep constructing a Latin American way of thinking from cinema.

KEYWORDS

Cinema Novo, New Latin American Cinema, Eryk Rocha, political cinema, cinematographic movement, Latin American thought, aesthetics-politics.

This conversation with the Brazilian filmmaker Eryk Rocha took place during the 18th International Documentary Film Exhibition in Bogotá (MIDBO), Colombia, held between the 24th and the 30th of October. We discussed with him about the validity of the ideas of Cinema Novo, about the aesthetic and political proposals of the current Brazilian filmmakers, and about the relationships that he has created with the legacy of this cinema movement through his films. Eryk Rocha has lived in several Latin American cities: Bogotá, La Habana and Brazil, where he was born and where he is currently living. He has made seven documentary features, including *Stones in the Sky* (Rocha que Voa, 2002); *Transeunte* (2010), about the Brazilian singer and songwriter José Paes de Lira; *Sunday Ball* (*Campo de Jogo*, 2014), and *Cinema Novo* (2016).

You recently released *Cinema Novo* in Cannes. It is a film entirely made out of excerpts of *Cinema Novo* films. What moved you towards the making of this film?

Now that some time has passed, I think I could say three things about *Cinema Novo* to start the conversation. In the first place, I made this film to understand better where I come from, not only regarding my affective origins, that is, where I come from as a person, but also regarding my origins as part of the cinematography and political history in my country. In the second place, I live in Brazil and we are now undergoing a very difficult political moment. I needed to understand why I want to keep making films, what I want to say and what is my need of making them; this is my seventh film already. My third point comes out from here, and it is to try to understand better my country nowadays. Even though the starting point of the film is Cinema Novo, I think it is a film about the present. It is a result of a dialogue between generations. It is based on the dialogue between my generation and the 60s generation, my father's and many other Brazilian filmmaking masters. I think that these three points are three motivations, three passions that made me do this film.

Even your first feature film, *Stones in the Sky*, was going in this direction. In a way you were already questioning the relationship between the cinematographic past and the political past, and the possibility of showing the current world, from the reconstruction of the generation of the 1960s and its cinema ideals. What bonds can you see now between *Stones in the Sky*, which you made 14 years ago about your father during his exile in Cuba, and *Cinema Novo*, which includes a whole generation of filmmakers?

I made *Stones in the Sky* after finishing my studies in San Antonio de los Baños, in Cuba, when I was 24 years old. I lived in La Habana for a year with two friends who had studied with me at university, one Brazilian and one another French-Uruguayan. Although the film has to do with *Cinema Novo*, the focus of *Stones in the Sky* was more opened to the Latin American and Cuban cinema and in particular to the relationship between my father, Glauber Rocha, and the Cuban cinema when he was exiled there for a year, in 1971, right in the middle of the military dictatorship in Brazil. So *Stones in the Sky* is more of a reverse shot of Cinema Novo, because it talks about another moment of Latin America. But of course, both films have a strong dialogue. I think they are complementary. Between these two films I made five feature films and several shorts, and many other projects; it is interesting that my first film was a declaration of love to my father, to cinema and to Latin America. I think that every cinema intended to be cinema is something very personal. It grows from one's relationship with the world; it is a necessity, an urgency. I went back to these origins 14 years later and I asked myself essential questions regarding why I kept making films and about what is now happening in Brazil. In this sense, I am very happy with the connection of *Cinema Novo* with the present. The archives of the film aren't dead archives... I even find the word archive a bit complicated. Many times I find of documentary film terms very complicated... 'Archives', it sounds like something from the police... It is related to 'depoimentos', testimonies. It sounds horrible! It is a term that immediately gives you a sense of past.

However, in *Cinema Novo* the archive is not the past, it is rather a memory in motion, just as the title of the festival¹ suggests. It is not a stagnant memory of the crystallized, idealized, romanticized past. We often talk about the 1960s and we tend to idealize, to romanticize, to the nostalgia... Fortunately my film has nothing to do with this. It is a memory, but in terms of the Brazilian poet Murilo Mendes, who stated that the memory is a construction of the future. This is the memory in motion, and this is what interests me the most about archives. Even for the film I shot many things that were discarded during editing. Everything that was shot today with Cinema Novo filmmakers, those who are still alive, everything was discarded. This is because, even if it is a paradox, those materials that were filmed today created a feeling of past for the film, whereas everything from the archive created a feeling of present. It has to do with the construction of language that we were looking for, with poetics, with a transfiguration of the Cinema Novo forms.

1. International Documentary Festival in Bogotá (MIDBO), where this conversation took place, had as a central topic 'Memories in motion'.

Yesterday we were discussing about the personal implication of the filmmaker, about how every film is, in a way, a personal discourse which is comprised by a collective portrait which at the same time determines certain visual forms. How do you face today in the editing these poetics of the Cinema Novo when you talk about the search of a language, and of transfiguration? How do you face this process of intervention of images from the past to activate what you feel that is still prevailing and can be shown in the future, as a memory of your country and its cinema, in a new structure?

It took us nine months to edit the images, and then three months to edit the sound. We worked full-time on the film for a year. Undoubtedly the body of the film is made of many segments, of dozens of fragments. The heart of the film is the montage, which from different segments and fragments results in a new dramatic and poetic body. I play a lot with that. I always say that it is not a film *about* Cinema Novo, it is a film *through* Cinema Novo and *with* Cinema Novo. I never had the ambition of making a film about anything; I think it is a wrong starting point trying to make a film *about* something. The *about* already anticipates some control, it is a totalizing idea, and I think that a film is not made to form a totalizing idea about anything; *about* anticipates control; it is a somewhat arrogant vision. I am much more interested in dialog, this *through*... How I go through the film and how the film goes through me.

The essence of the film is how we –I talk of we because it is me, the editor of the film Renato Valona, who is a fundamental person in the creation, and Edson Secco, who edited the sound with me– incorporated this creative, aesthetic, political and spiritual energy of Cinema Novo. How we incorporated this in the construction of the film. I was never interested in doing something about Cinema Novo that was biographic or incidental, in which I could explain what Cinema Novo is, because I feel it is very complicated to explain such a complex movement. 50 years had to go by for this film to be made, and it is not a coincidence, it is because it is a fundamental movement not only in cinema, but in Brazilian and Latin American culture. So I wasn't interested in trying to do something *about*, in drawing conclusions or finding a definition. It is rather a dialogue. That is why I think it is a film essay, because it suggests a dialogue about how to incorporate this energy of transfiguration. It is undoubtedly the most complex film I have ever made. There are at least 15 masters of Brazilian cinema, there are more, but let's say there are 15 fundamental filmmakers. We used 130 films, as well as archives of Brazilian and international television channels, home-movies of the filmmakers, sound archives, and some of the recordings of the interviews we filmed today, very few.

So the big challenge was how to connect with these materials, to settle the starting points of the montage, of this construction. The first starting point was to avoid creating any mediation between past and present. We didn't want to show the filmmakers, now old, talking about what Cinema Novo was. This was completely out from the montage. We wanted to create the film just with archives, which was a big risk. How can you renew the film in every sequence with only archives, with black and white films, often in a precarious state? Another fundamental starting point of the editing was to narrate the film in first person. This narrative polyphony emerges from the creators, the authors of Cinema Novo. There are no critics, no historians, no intermediation. We didn't include anything that could be used as interpretation, anything that could be used as a mediation to explain what Cinema Novo was. The film emerges, then, from within, from the emotion, the adventure of creation. It emerges from those authors.

Going back to one of the points you stated as a motivation to make *Cinema Novo*... A big part of the strength of this movement, and in general of the so-called New Latin American Cinema, lied in the need of constructing categories of thought which were strictly Latin American and which emerged from cinema itself, within creation. It is difficult to say whether this was achieved or not. Nowadays, so long after, how does your film deal with the possibility of putting together a Latin American thinking, in relation to what you said about searching a cinematographic and political past at the same time, in relation to the longed-for union between politics and aesthetics?

The 1960s are present today. There are characteristics and fundamental problems that are very similar to those we lived 50 years ago, problems that are still open and unsolved. But in every age there are very specific issues, and it is interesting to think about that. In Brazil we have just undergone a coup of the media, the parliament and the legal sector. Cinema Novo was a generation that underwent the interruption of the democratic process through a military coup, a coup d'état. So these cycles of interruption and starting over are a tradition in the Latin America tragedy. We undergo interruptions of the democratic processes all the time and we have to start over. And this tragedy, which happens not only in Brazil, but in many Latin American countries, is also a key to the inspiration for the montage of *Cinema Novo*.

Not only in Brazil, but all over the globe, this need of thinking about aesthetics and its relationship with politics is something very present, very urgent and very necessary. The 1960s generation planted a very important seed on that subject and

now it is returning very strongly, and it is very necessary. I think that my film is a small seed too, an attempt to contribute to this matter. Politics do not have a way out. The ordinary citizen that walks in the streets of Rio de Janeiro, of Bogotá, Caracas or Buenos Aires experiences politics intensely. Nowadays we are living something that I never thought our generation would experience. There was another coup, another interruption in the democratic process, a polarized country, a very violent and strong neo-fascism. A setback. Life comes first than cinema, and I live this intensity as a citizen. It is not only my concern, but that of any person walking in the street, who has to wake up to work in any area. It affects life, it affects any person and it affects cinema too. Cinema is nourished from that relationship with life. The contemporaneity of this aesthetic-political thinking of Cinema Novo lies there. What makes Cinema Novo an extremely original movement is not only to make films about political issues, but films with political issues and political forms. Politics is found in the language of films and in a new model of production. That is why this cooperation between politics and aesthetics is the big trace of Cinema Novo, and I think the big trace of the best cinema tradition in Latin America.

In this sense it is interesting to talk about your film *Sunday Ball*. You suggest very well there this kind of very intimate relationship between politics and aesthetics and, especially, the implication of politics in the daily life of the citizen, in his daily experience. This film uses body-language, it focuses on expressions of pain, of emotion, and it totally avoids the words. You don't do any interview, there aren't any testimonies or anything that tries to clarify or present the situation. However you can feel its dramatic progression, you can feel the rise of the collective ecstasy created through football. It is also felt as an ambiguous ecstasy with this insistence in the contact between bodies which is passionate and almost violent. How is this film still linked to the precepts of Cinema Novo, how does it renew its legacy?

One of my biggest passions is football and I always wanted to make a film through football and with football. During the investigation I realized I was not interested in industrial, multi-million dollar football; besides, the World Cup in Brazil was about to take place. We decided with my assistant that we would not shoot in the Maracanã Stadium: television does it every day. So we decided to make a film about popular football. Actually, Brazilian football was born in those popular fields, but unfortunately this has been forgotten and now Brazil wants to copy the European way of playing, despite the fact that Germany was inspired by Brazil to reinvent its football and become world

champion. Brazil began to imitate the worst of Europe. This is the complex of colonialism suffered in Latin America. We want to bring the worst while people are expecting something from us. The film, among other things, tries to be a metaphor of this.

At the beginning I wanted to make the film in several places in the suburbs of Rio, in several popular dirt fields. But we found a field in the neighborhood of Sampaio, in the north, which we felt that contained every field: it was surrounded by several favelas, there was an annual championship going on and it was two kilometers away from Maracanã. It is curious because it was a coincidence, but it was next to the big stadium. We arrived there, we started getting closer to the people, becoming friends, frequenting the area and, before we realized, we were already shooting the film. This is very common. The films are faster than you are. It is not you who make the film, it is the film that makes you. And you have the feeling that the film is pulling you to one direction. We shot the whole championship until the big final. There were 14 teams and each team represented a different favela. The final was between Geração and Juventude, the teams of two favelas that were historically rivals because of drug dealing issues.

At the editing when we tried to make a version of the film by editing the whole story of the championship, we realized that we got a very fragmented result, it became something incidental. It was when we realized that this great final of the championship, this final between Geração and Juventude, carried itself a real drama. It even had a dramatic structure, so we focused the whole film on it. The playwright Nelson Rodrigues said that even the smallest football game, in any corner, is a Shakespearean tragedy. Many times in the field, the space for happiness, for ecstasy, is also a space for war. In fact, I think this is a very strong characteristic of Latin America: the permanent coexistence of tragedy, war and happiness. I think it is something that strongly coexists in our nations.

So the film is first of all a counterpoint to official football: it is a field next to Maracanã where the final of the World Cup is played, and it collects millions of dollars. It is the richest industry in the world. It also has millions of cameras, so filming a popular field of street football, filming the final of a championship between favelas, filming that area of the city, where a majority of black youngsters live, most of them without jobs or opportunities, becomes a political act. Besides, these fields are disappearing. The spaces are being appropriated for the real estate industry. That is to say, they are also being robbed. The popular football field is, maybe, the last democratic space for the people, where the people can move around, meet

each other. If you watched the transmission of the World Cup, everything in high definition, in the end that is what it showed. You could see no black people in the panoramas of the stands because the tickets were very expensive. The working-class has been excluded from the stadiums in Brazil, which is supposed to be the country of football.

However, next to Maracanã, barely two kilometers from it, there is a field where there is still place for the popular resistance. This field becomes a reflex of the country. In these favelas there are only churches and drug trafficking, and therefore the field represents a lot: it represents these people's culture, the culture they possess. Every Sunday, as a ritual, they go there, they meet in this field to play soccer, to play this championship. This field is a space for celebration, for invention, a political and meeting place. There would probably be more violence without this field. Football is the way these young people can canalize their energy and their creativity, their anger and violence. Also playing football is a dance. Football has a very powerful, dramatic, extremely strong body and visual language; it is a trance. *Sunday Ball* is a highly political film through this perspective; it doesn't talk sociologically about what favelas are or how many deaths drug trafficking caused. The film doesn't need it, it confronts the spectator with this visual power. I wanted the film to be an almost theatrical suggestion, where the spectator was present like he was in that field, in that place in the neighborhood of Sampaio; that is also why it is very choreographic.

Besides this political and aesthetic search inside the cinematic language and the artistic forms, Cinema Novo and the New Latin American Cinema looked for a collective synchrony. There were some artistic movements established, movements linked to national projects, to an idea of country and continent. Specifically in Brazil, this idea of collectiveness was transplanted in a very rich and powerful dialogue between many artistic fronts: music, cinema, literature... It wasn't exclusively cinematographic. The forces and the movements affected every area. What happens now with this idea of collectiveness, with the possibility of common dreams in a whole generation of artists? Can we still think of a common cultural force, of an artistic impulse that creates a collective movement?

We now live in an age of collapse, an emotional collapse, an economic, social and political collapse. That is the current world. There is a collapse and the lack of collectiveness is a consequence of this. I think there are some embryonic movements that wish to reconstruct collectiveness. There may be some hints or signs of this in Brazil. There are some

groups and movements that seem to be being born, but they are still getting shape, we do not know where they are going. Nevertheless, I think that this idea of movement itself does not exist anymore, the idea of a movement like there was in Cinema Novo.

The idea of collectiveness that existed in Cinema Novo, where there were music, cinema, literature movements, is very present in my film. If you look at what Cinema Novo was, apart from being a group of very talented and courageous artists, there was a great fondness, a great and deep friendship between them. They were a brotherhood. There is a moment in the film when Carlos Diegues says something like 'We weren't friends because we made cinema; we made cinema because we were friends'. They were friends because they admired each other's films, in the essential sense, an admiration to one another. You rarely see that nowadays. I am part of a new Brazilian cinema, I have similarities with several authors, this exists but it is not strong enough to start a movement, we are still lacking that. We need more aggressiveness linked to a project, more deepness and more understanding of the age we are living in.

Nowadays projects are individual. In the 1960s there was this idea of national cinemas: Brazilian cinema, Argentinian cinema, Cuban cinema. I think that our generation has the challenge to reinvent and rebuild the idea of collectiveness. There are new models of communication, of technology, new ways of production and organization are outlined, there are some impressions of this. Some attempts. There are things forming, there are germs, seeds. But actually, which cinematography in the current world can be defined as so? At some point there was an Iranian cinema, now maybe it doesn't exist anymore. There was an Argentinian cinema in the beginning of the 1990s, but what about now? Much less a Brazilian cinema. There isn't the idea of a united movement, or a unity that can constitute a movement. I don't think so. However, there are individual searching projects and similarities between artists that work together. Maybe today is a more interesting moment in this sense than ten years ago.

One would think that this individuality following the economic openness in the 90s in Latin America is somehow broken by the development of left-wing projects, the fact that Hugo Chávez, Lula da Silva or Néstor Kirchner came to power. How does this affect the current Brazilian cinema? This vision of unity that is materialized in economic policies such as UNASUR or MERCOSUR... How are they brought to the fore in culture? Nothing is agglutinated from there?

I think this individualism is a result of the age that not only affects cinema, but everything. The challenge of cinema to create new aesthetic movements, new unions, it the same challenge politics has to reenchant politics. The emptiness in the idea of collectiveness exists in every area. What you said about the late 1990s, this big rehearsal of Latin America, this simultaneity existed in many countries, is something that happened especially in the sense of an economic integration and, maybe, of an ideology or a sense of being Latin American. Lula was essential for Brazil to look more at Latin America and yes, there were changes, it is true, there was another feeling. But this integration never was consolidated culturally, which was one of the biggest mistakes of those left-wing political projects. Lula had some initiatives, but much fewer than expected and, besides, he didn't give enough importance to the culture and communication in the contemporary world. They didn't understand. Unfortunately the left in Latin America didn't have vision of what culture and communication are regarding their strategic importance, even of what education, in a broad sense, is. This is one of the reasons why the project failed. They always understood integration from an economic point of view. I don't want to generalize, but that is what I think that happened. There are projects, vanishing points, some things that can be saved. During the first mandate of Lula, the Ministry of Culture, led by Gilberto Gil, was incredible and sowed very interesting things, but more in Brazil rather than in Latin America.

And in a moment where films like *City of God (Cidade de Deus, Fernando Meirelles, 2002)* or *Carandiru (Héctor Babenco, 2003)*, which deal with Brazilian problems and marginalization, set themselves up as representatives of the Brazilian cinema both in specialized festivals and in commercial circuits, what do you consider the legacy of Cinema Novo is in complementing or controverting these types of approaches?

I don't think they are a rupture, or that they have inherited the spirit of Cinema Novo. They took the key issues of the Brazilian society and of Brazil, and they grasped them to put them into the perspective of advertising cinema, of commercial cinemas, of the 'universal' cinema. There are North American filmmakers in every country. North American filmmakers are not only in the United States: there are a lot of them in Colombia, in Brazil, in Argentina. A friend said that globalization did not exist, that there was rather an *anglobalization*. What happens is that this kind of cinematographic product is, once again, a result of our age, of an idea of commercial cinema, of an idea and an ambition of a type of 'universal' communication that feeds from American cinema and from advertisement. Thus, using the key issues of poverty, it applies the formula of a certain commercial cinema, which is in the end a fake political cinema,

an entertainment cinema dressed up as political cinema. I don't like it and I don't get hooked on it, but there is space for diversity, some people like it. There are referential works in the Brazilian cinema, and they are a path, a vision of cinema, an ideology of cinema, that reaches many places because they have the majors, the international distributors that allow these films to circulate a lot.

Now that you mention distribution and circulation, it is worth considering where the Cinema Novo and its manifestos were received, isn't it? In the end, the New Latin American Cinema reached the importance it has today, partially, because of the validation it got from Europe, and this plays a crucial role which, in a way, contrasts with the anticolonialist ideals that these cinemas had. *Aesthetics of Hunger (Estética da fome, 1965)*, as a manifest, is still totally prevailing because the ideological and cultural colonization is still prevailing as well. How do you sense this and how are the ideas formulated by the Cinema Novo filmmakers being actualized?

I think the question itself is the action. A five centuries long problem cannot be solved in five decades and that is why *Aesthetics of Hunger*, the manifest, is so prevailing. Because... what happened after the manifest of *Aesthetics of Hunger* in Brazil? 21 years of military dictatorship. What happened after a fake openness that promised a democracy that never existed? The first elections in Brazil in 1989, in which the media chose Collor de Mello. A sham! And now? The coup. Making these films can be a way of catharsis. It is what we were talking about before, this notion of dialoguing between generations, of aesthetics and politics. I think it has to do with anthropophagy. Each generation devours what has been done before, with love and inspiration, and with respect; but not to repeat it, but as an inspiration to reinvent things. Because history is in motion, not stagnant.

There are motions and there are forces that transcend their own age. There is an Italian critic called Adriano Aprà, who was a close friend of Rossellini; he said something that had a great influence on me. He was asked: 'Adriano, after all, what is Italian neorealism?' He said: 'Italian neorealism is a spiritual state.'

I think there are movements like neorealism, or the French New Wave, or Russian constructivism and many others, that appear in a certain moment and in a certain country, with certain authors that have a significant common base. But they are above all a spiritual state. They are movements that can be analyzed from a historicist perspective, from a history context. This is a layer. But for me it goes way beyond that.

They are boundless movements, because they are forces that appear to get even with the world or to try to beat it, as is constantly threatening to defeat us. They bring with them a vital experience of the citizen and the author. What exactly wants Cinema Novo? It wants to look at Brazil, to interpret it. To take the cameras out of the studios, the big cameras, and take them to the streets to look at the Brazilian people, to look at the Brazilian reality, to try to confront the military coup. It is important to say that most of the production of Cinema Novo came out during the dictatorship in Brazil. That is why it is very strong, very contemporary, an attitude facing the world, a certain urgency of understanding the world and our realities. This is fundamental nowadays. It seems to me that Cinema Novo is much more interesting as an aesthetic philosophy of thought. You watch films like *Barren Lives* (*Vidas Secas*, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1963), or like *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, Glauber Rocha, 1964), or like *The Guns* (*Os Fuzis*, Ruy Guerra, 1964), for example, and these are films that transform over time, that gain new meanings with every new generation.

They gain new layers of ways of looking...

Yes, that is what seems more contemporary to me about Cinema Novo. And what I see as the original force of the movement is this symbiosis between politics and aesthetics that we mentioned before. I have the feeling that in the current cinema, form is

separated from content. I watch absolutely beautiful films, but they are often so formalist, that they become sterile, they lack courage. In other times I watch totally activist films, films that denounce something, which is essential, but I feel that there is a separation of these two aspects in current cinema. I don't want to generalize, but I think that we need to take risks to cross these borders and connect these two forces. It is incredible to see how many Cinema Novo films mix the two ends brilliantly, so that form and content become one. You don't see form and content anymore, you see a cascade, the language of the film is what comes at the forefront, and I find this is everlasting.

Glauber Rocha says at the end of the film: 'Well, Cinema Novo ended, but no, actually it didn't end because the idea of novelty is everlasting.' This is the idea of Cinema Novo as something prevalent, that is, the idea of novelty is present, is opened. The idea of *novelty* is a possibility that revives in each generation. And it is everlasting because it is in motion, because the possibilities of cinema, which is such a young art, barely a child that cannot die so early, are oceanic. It has a huge experimentation field, a lot of political and poetic possibilities. The same happens with anthropophagy, it is a spiritual state. Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagy isn't there to be repeated. It is more like an inspiration, like an essential mold to transform it, because everything is transforming. What interests us are the roots, the seeds and how we are transforming this energy. •

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The necessary amateur. Cinema, education and politics. Interview with Cezar Migliorin

Albert Elduque

ABSTRACT

Interview with Cezar Migliorin, one of the coordinators of the cinema project in Brazilian schools *Inventar com a Diferença*. We talk about their pedagogical methods, focused on sensitive research with images rather than on the notions of representations, and we discuss the political aspect of cinema made in communities, both in schools and indigenous groups. Working collectively and cinema as a non-professional activity emerge as strong bonds between these works and the manifestos of the New Latin American Cinema. Finally, we deal with the issue of montage, a key element when thinking about political cinema based on the massive production of images taking place today.

KEYWORDS

Cinema and education, *dispositif*, montage, collective creation, representation, *Inventar com a Diferença*, Cinema Novo.

A recurring topic in New Latin American Cinema manifestos is its commitment to break with the traditional spectator and to build a cinema of collective creation. Julio García Espinosa firmly believed that the universalization of university education, social and economic development, together with technological evolution would allow everyone to make cinema, which as an activity would escape from the closed professional spheres. And he pointed out that spectators should become, 'rather than more active spectators or coauthors, real authors. We should ask ourselves if art is really an activity for specialists. If art, by extra-human plans, is a possibility for a few, or a possibility for everyone' (1969: 16-17). Jorge Sanjinés referred to similar ideas when he acknowledged that 'as in popular ceramics there is a collective spirit and signature and not just the style of one individual, in this cinema too, when it is fully developed, there will be the breath of a nation and its deep truth' (1979: 80). Meanwhile, Fernando E. Solanas and Octavio Getino (1969) saw 'cinema act' projections as a community space where the passive spectator was abandoned by turning him into an agent of the discussion and, therefore, an actor of the cinematographic experience, lived in a community. In their opinion, Third Cinema had to be handmade rather than industrial; it should be for the masses rather than for individuals, made by operative groups rather than by authors. And this posture materialized in the form of guerrilla film, cinema act and in the many categories included: letter film, poem film, essay film, pamphlet film, report film, etc.

Over the years, this spirit has not been mitigated, and it has also brought many initiatives into existence. In Latin America there have been, over the years, many projects carried out to make cinema with marginalized communities, either in the poor outlying areas of big cities or in indigenous groups, as well as many cinema projects in schools. In these initiatives, a necessarily political cinema is produced, a cinema that supports not only the portrayal of certain social problems or political criticism, but also ways of creating which, based on the aforementioned access to technology, break with the rationale of professional training and foster creative and collaborative pedagogies. Cezar Migliorin, a lecturer at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (Niterói, Rio de Janeiro), is the coordinator of Kumã: Laboratório de pesquisa e experimentação em imagem e som (Kumã: Laboratory for research and experimentation with image and sound), which is responsible for one of these initiatives: *Inventar com a Diferença* (*Invent with Difference*), a project to teach cinema in Brazilian schools which came into being in 2013. He is one of its pedagogical coordinators,

along with Isaac Pipano, and has recently published the book *Inevitavelmente cinema: educação, política e mafuá* (2015), based on this experience, as well as many essays about cinema, politics and social movements. We talked with him about the project and the possibilities of political cinema using these apparently peripheral initiatives in order to consider those creative ideas from the manifestos of the '60s.

How did the project *Inventar com a Diferença* appear?

In my doctoral thesis, submitted in 2008, I studied Brazil's recent documentary cinema, and one of its essential concepts was the notion of the *dispositif*: the *dispositif* as a trigger of chance, a way of losing control a little. The title of the thesis, *Eu sou aquele que está de saída* (*I am the one leaving*), was an attempt to reflect this: a director who is present but at the same time always leaving, always abandoning the work, finding ways to be absent. Hence, the *dispositif* as a booster of chance. And, at the same time, the *dispositif* made it possible to connect heterogeneous forces, subjects, technologies, etc. that would otherwise never have come into contact with each other. Once my thesis was finished, I joined the Universidade Federal Fluminense, where we started a project linked to the Escola Livre de Cinema de Nova Iguaçu, a town near Rio where I had worked previously. In 2011, a 'licenciatura'¹ in cinema was introduced at UFF, the first and the only one in Brazil: a degree designed to train teachers for schools, cultural centers, museums, etc. That is why the Secretary for Human Rights of the federal government called us one day to draw up a national project linked with cinema, education and human rights. And at that moment, while we were shaping a methodology for teaching cinema to children and teenagers in formal education, the notion of the *dispositif* reappeared: we discovered that the history of cinema and cinematographic practice could be approached as a game, as a fun way of producing images, rather than teaching cinematographic language in a traditional way. Thus, a formal element which in the thesis was linked with political documentary evolved towards education. *Inventar com a Diferença* emerged from there, and it could be defined as a project on cinema and education guided by an artistic and political dimension.

How has the project developed over the years?

Inventar com a Diferença was launched in 2013, and we started working in schools in 2014. We understand that what we created at the UFF is a technology for cinema in school, which

1. In Brazil a 'licenciatura' is a university degree aimed at teacher training.

includes methodology and processes of tracking, evaluation, communication, etc. We train teachers in cinema with this technology, and they pass it on to people of any age: we know that it has been used with four-year-old children, and also with old people who were learning to write! In 2015 the funding disappeared, but it was a very special year: a town in Ceará, in the north-east of the country, asked us for this technology to use it in all their schools, a total of 32! It's the first and only time we have applied it in all the schools in a town. In 2016 we received new funding to work throughout the whole country, and today *Inventar com a Diferença* is a big project: we work nationally, with 13 universities, more than 200 schools, and with more than 20 states involved. It's amazing. And over the years we have been getting very strong feedback, from the films produced by the students to the mobilization that cinema generates within a school: either by watching films, making them, being in contact with the community or with the powers involved in the school, etc.

Let's talk now about your pedagogical methodologies. How is this work carried out with the *dispositifs*? What filmography do you work with as a reference?

We recommend a few shorts, we send a DVD with examples that work with the *dispositif*... It's not classic or historical filmography, but rather an approach to the creative and ethical aspects of the image. The most important thing is the experience with the image based on the rationale of the *dispositif*, which would be linked, in any case, to the documentary and to an experimental, essay type of cinema. The project is not based on the script or cinematographic language, but on the image itself, by carrying out a series of exercises. One of these, for example, is the 'discussed shot', an idea used by Alain Bergala in France: you take a shot and you watch it, over and over again, in slow motion, forwards, backwards... and two people discuss it. This is a *dispositif*. Another example is the Lumière minute, another the haiku film, which helps students to start working on editing: a shot for every sentence of the haiku. Each exercise has a card containing a short theoretical reference, the goals and the necessary resources.

How is the production of these films organized? Is it completely collective?

There is never a director or any separation of tasks. That is how most *dispositifs* work; they can be carried out by one, two, five people... I have been at many schools and the experience

is always that during the practice sessions the group organizes itself: one of the members is close to the camera, another one will be managing the passers-by, another will be simply messing around, etc. We were never interested in training filmmakers. Above all, we want to facilitate an approach to things through image, by perceiving the sensitive potential that cinema has in this relationship with the world, with other people, etc.

Do you think cinema is a privileged place to work with this idea of collectiveness, comparing it to other arts or other school subjects?

There is an initial moment of collectiveness, which is the viewing: watching a film together. And one very important detail: the teacher sits together with the students. The teacher has to take part in this collectiveness, because he doesn't know cinema very well, he too is discovering it... Sometimes students know cameras better than he does. And this is already transforming the notions of hierarchy. On the other hand, you know that the practice of cinema can be extremely hierarchical. But in the case of *dispositifs*, it is better to follow certain rules, step by step, and the way students try to follow them is very collective. It isn't about organizing beforehand what each person has to do, but rather about thinking together: 'Now we are going to place the camera in a certain spot to shoot for a minute. How are we going to do this?'

How do students create the stories for their films? Are they based on their everyday experiences?

We don't deal with narrative problems from the beginning. The initial problems are not a story or a representation, but formal issues, image analyses and framing. And the first exercises are also formal: shooting a one-minute fixed shot without sound, or making a film based on a poem, something like that. Over time, the narrative aspect appears, but as a demand from the students: 'I've made a shot, I've edited three shots together, now I want to tell a story!' That is why we have more narrative dynamics, which is the letter film: making a film using the format of a letter. The first year, for example, schools exchanged letter films. In general, we wanted to stay away from the cinema workshops in schools that are based on scripts, because in these experiences, those students who perform well in class, who write well, who get good grades in Language and History, continue to be the leaders in the cinema class, because it's all about writing. That is why we wanted to base it on image, in order to break the previous hierarchy in class. And also to do projects that weren't

frustrating for the students: if a twelve-year-old kid follows the conventional patterns and wants to make a comedy or a horror film, he will face many problems, because it's very difficult to make someone laugh or feel scared! However, in essay and letter film, the frustration is lower; it allows students to focus on the community, and to discover things that are only possible in cinema, using editing, sound, etc.

A project initiated in Barcelona, *Cinema en Curs*, works similarly, and their films prove that this project, which is intimate and close to the images, has provided students with a tool to find out more about the world they live in, their neighborhood, etc. Do you think the same happens with your projects?

I think so. One of the reasons we didn't start with topics is because we strongly believe in this: that what we had to do was to give the students the means to think aesthetically about images, to sense that they have a powerful tool to connect with other people, with the world. From this standpoint, once the student takes a camera and has to shoot a one-minute-long shot, he asks himself: 'What am I going to do the shot about?' And he shoots a sewer. And it is discussed. And later on he wants to make a film about the sewer! The idea behind the images results in a very unique mobilization of each student and each town. In many places, using letter films, they discussed topics related to the environment, class differences, popular culture, etc. And we didn't guide them in this direction, we didn't tell them 'Okay, now we're going to talk about the environment'. We never did that. We also took the project to three schools inside penitentiaries for teenagers, called socio-educational centers. The films made in these places are impressive: they are young, they're teenagers, and through cinema they think about their lives, about the outside world, and they invent ways of expressing and reflecting things that would rarely appear without this tool.

Is it, then, a political cinema?

Without a doubt. If there is a strong dimension in today's political cinema in the country, it is the one found in places where you wouldn't expect cinema to be: in schools, in indigenous communities, in *quilombola* communities, etc. These are places where cinema is strongly linked to routine and to life, where cinema is not yet professional: it is a necessary

amateur cinema. In the case of indigenous peoples, this is very strong, because cinema is extremely important for recording personalities, traditions, how the community is understood, and so on. We could almost talk of micropolitics, which include the fact that this cinema exists in these indigenous communities or in schools. It also includes the right of these students in public education to have access to certain images: in Brazil, if you don't watch Kiarostami in school, you will probably never see it anywhere else... it's almost impossible. And we work in many cities in the inland areas, in the poor, peripheral districts... in places where the teachers, who are the guides, have never been to the cinema! At the same time, these processes are macropolitical operators, because a film made in an indigenous community will be used to dialogue with the Secretary of Culture, as proof that certain communities deserve acknowledgment. I think that in schools, this *macro* aspect is less intense, but it is present, too.

Politics, then, is in both the process of production and in the result that discusses social issues.

Without a doubt. And this brings us to think about how we deal with these films. I recently wrote an article with Isaac Pipano, another of the creators of the project, in which we wondered how we, the critics and members of the university, approach films made in school. On the one hand, we need to include the process: how does it work collectively? What is its effect on the school project? How does a teenager see the images that he or his classmates have shot? This is all part of a process. At the same time, when I watch these films, I have to approach them as films, I have to analyze their editing, their shot options, etc. Because if I give up on the film as an object of art, then I lose cinema too. The challenge is to see how these two dimensions talk, dialogue, etc.

Do you think university will face this challenge? Because there is a huge production in both school cinema and in indigenous cinema. *Video nas Aldeias*², to give just one example, has produced more than 70 films. And sometimes it is difficult to access all this material. Do you think that the images of school cinema or native cinema will someday be considered as the films that, after all, they are?

Nowadays, there is a lot being written in university about indigenous cinema. There is a huge academic production, not

2. Commenced in 1986 within the NGO Centro de Trabalho Indigenista, *Video nas Aldeias* is the main project for native audiovisual training and production

in Brazil. See www.videonasaldeias.org.br.

only about the training and creative process, but also directly about images. At the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais there are some important researchers – such as André Brasil, César Guimarães and Ruben Caixeta – who are completely dedicated to this cinematography. There is still a small amount of production of cinema in schools that deals with films directly. But it seems to me that in Brazil, the discussion about the expansion of cinema towards these territories (schools, indigenous groups, etc.) is very advanced, very developed. I have lived in England for a year and I haven't seen anything similar.

I think that in the whole of Latin America there is a large amount of projects that teach cinema in the communities, a lot more than in Europe.

I don't know Europe very well, but it is undoubtedly very strong here. For example, in Brazil we have a strong tradition of community television: in Rio in the '80s, there was a channel created by the Philippe Pinel Institute, which is a center for the mentally ill. However, I think that, compared to other experiences, recent cinema in schools has intensified the aesthetic dimension as a principle, instead of being based on social issues. Traditionally, the central idea was that cinema should be brought to these resourceless people so that they could talk through images. This means that the political aspect of this cinema is directly linked to a representational aspect: the people in the poor outlying districts have to speak about themselves because the mass media won't, and therefore there is a misrepresentation. In *Inventar com a Diferença*, and in many other projects, there are problems of representation, but they aren't the ones that mobilize people in the first place. What mobilizes people is the belief that a sensitive experience exists – of the world, of oneself – that is independent of social class and which is possible through cinema. This is necessary in the slums, but also in other places.

The Cinema Novo of the '60s considered the representation of the working-class as one of the central concepts of its political and cinematographic project. Could we say that you take this a step further and reach where the movement never did?

I think they are different things. In Cinema Novo, one main idea is the fact that it is possible, through cinema, to imagine a country, a nation: that cinema can become one of the elements in the process of creating what means to be Brazilian. That is one of the most beautiful things about Cinema Novo: 'I will understand my city with this camera, I will create the country

in relation to history using an actor, editing, etc.' Cinema Novo doesn't invent the posture, but it does invent formulas to connect with this desire for invention. On the other hand, maybe our approach to cinema in schools is that making images is a way of discovering the world: we believe that images provide teenagers and teachers with a tool that intensifies relationships, the way we think about ourselves, and thus they discover something new, something that wasn't there before. Maybe this is the continuity, a belief that cinema is a way of inventing, of relating to what one is looking for, rather than its representation. The problem is not representing what is already there, but of conceiving cinema as a reflexive, sensitive... operator of ways of inventing.

Do you think that the work in schools and communities can change the way we approach cinema, and even change the systems of distribution and consumption?

I think so. For example, we now have a law in Brazil that obliges schools to show two hours of Brazilian cinema every month. This is partially resulting from this process, from this constant reflection about cinema that is introduced to schools not only as content, but also as cinema itself. At the same time, it seems to me that in these processes, a pedagogy exists about the importance of images. When people find out that we work with cinema in schools, they say: 'Ah, but that is very easy, kids are shooting all the time!' Yes, it's true, but kids don't make cinema, they don't make shots. They shoot and shoot, but they don't stop and think: 'Now I'm turning on the camera,' 'Now I'm turning off the camera,' 'Now I'm going to think about the off-screen.' Discovering the off-screen, think about that! A kid starting to think about the off-screen gains a radical ethical dimension; it's like he is opening up to a lot of inventive possibilities that go beyond cinema, and which reach into fields such as writing.

Anyway, technological facilities are essential. They are present in discussions about political cinema from Vertov to the present day, including some New Latin American Cinema manifestos which supported collective creation, separate from the big production centers. Nowadays, smartphones and social networks, for example, offer a wide scope to political cinema.

I agree. If I may, I would like to talk about a personal experience: I have just made a film called *Educação* which I directed together with Isaac Pipano. Since we work in education, we started following the occupations of schools that have recently taken place in Brazil, by browsing the Internet to find images of these occupations shot with phones, inside the schools,

outside the schools, etc. And we came upon a very impressive one: a justice officer, a representative of Brazilian justice, goes to the door of a school, with policemen, holding a judge's order that says that the school has to be evacuated. Her discourse is absolutely conservative and disciplinary. The video is 15 or 20 minutes long, and she tells the students they have to leave and threatens them by saying that if they don't leave, she will send in the police. In between there are people standing up for the students who are trying to get a document that will allow them to stay. We realized that these school occupations were reactions to a process of dismantling Brazil's public education, so we started searching for other images on the Internet: images of journalists, of NGOs devoted to education, of the Senate... and we made a film using just montage. We have recently finished it and now we are showing it in different places, including occupied schools.

How has it been received?

Very well. Because we chose to do a montage where we do not explicitly define our position, but in which we connect elements of education that we usually see as dispersed, separate. For example, in Goiás there is a school that has recently begun being managed by the Military Police and is now called Escola da Polícia Militar Fernando Pessoa. And the news talks about it as if it was completely normal! If you see it on television, you wouldn't pay any attention to it, but if you place it next to politicians' speeches, or the materials for teachers produced by the NGO founded by Jorge Paulo Lemann (the richest man in the country), then you realize that the NGO, the Senate, journalism – they all completely undervalue education! It's an attack. And at the same time, students, with their eloquence, are occupying the schools. The montage places these elements together. I am

thinking now of *A Sixth Part of the World* (*Shestaya chast mira*, 1926) by Vertov, a fantastic film. It's based on the idea that the Soviet Union represents one-sixth of the world, and it is comprised of a very fast montage featuring different elements: machines, workers, etc. Jaques Rancière says that it creates a spiral montage; that it joins and joins images – even Africa appears in it! According to Rancière, Vertov's communism is a spiral that will end up occupying the whole planet. I remember this film because there are a lot of people working on this aspect now, which means going back to the problem of montage: with the huge amount of images available nowadays, how do we edit, how do we organize?

These types of works seem the perfect complement to the sensitive discovery of *Inventar com a Diferença*. In one case, reality is explored to achieve new images; in the other, a lot of images are articulated once again.

It's true, there are many contemporary examples. Vincent Carelli, founder of *Video nas Aldeias*, does it in his latest film, *Martírio* (2016); I also remember *Agustín's Newspaper* (*El diario de Agustín*, 2008) by the Chilean documentary maker Ignacio Agüero, in which he shows the links between the newspaper *El Mercurio* and Pinochet's dictatorship. This is nothing new in cinema, but maybe this emergency in montage is significant. The images are already there, but if they are edited again... The question is: since everyone is busy making their own images, how does this become a film? The experience of the film I just made is incredible, because some of the images were known to everyone, but when you put them in dialogue in a 52-minute-long piece of work, and you ask for the spectator's attention, they gain intensity, a new and very powerful intensity. It's the intensity of being together. •

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Reading Latin American Third Cinema manifestos today

Moira Fradinger

ABSTRACT

In this essay I establish continuities and discontinuities between our present and the historical context in which Latin American Third Cinema manifestos were written in the sixties, in order to offer some ideas about the relevance of these manifestos today. I draw a minimalist itinerary of emblematic images that political cinema and its manifestos have been articulating since their inception at the beginning of the twentieth century to this day –which center around trains, hunger and thirst– all the while marking a difference between the twentieth century context and our times. While the twentieth century offered certainties about the possibility of different social orders, our present is characterized by the lack of certainty about the survival of the human species on earth and the lack of imagination about alternative forms of social organization. To think the relevance of the sixties manifestos in today's uncertainty, I identify three fundamental ideas that run through all Third Cinema manifestos. I call these ideas the manifestos' 'planetary keys' in that, even in the sixties, they postulated their validity beyond the local. They refer to 1) the necessity to transform the spectator into an author, 2) the imperative to turn the chaos of misery into something intelligible, and 3) the change in filmic language that would avoid reproducing dominant dramatic structures and offer a different intelligibility of reality by articulating visual stories with a political analysis. I mention images and manifestos by Dziga Vertov, Glauber Rocha, Margot Benacerraf, Fernando Birri, Jorge Sanjinés, Julio García Espinosa, as well as contemporary films by Tin Dirdamal and Diego Quemada-Díez.

KEYWORDS

Third Cinema, Latin American Cinema manifestos, film and politics, Tin Dirdamal, Dziga Vertov, Glauber Rocha, Jorge Sanjinés, Julio García Espinosa, capitalocene, Diego Quemada-Díez.

In the future there will no longer be painters but rather men who, among other things, dedicate themselves to painting (Marx) (Julio García Espinosa, For an Imperfect Cinema, Cuba, 1969)

The formal choices made by an artist will be governed by his or her ideological inclinations. (Jorge Sanjinés, Problems of form and content in Revolutionary Cinema, Bolivia, 1978)

A language of tears and suffering is understood through paternalism. (Glauber Rocha, Aesthetics of Hunger, Brazil, 1965)¹

Disposable Lives: itineraries of hunger and thirst

2005: *No One (De nadie)*. Visually echoing the nineteenth century 'phantom ride' cameras filming the railways from the point of view of the train at full speed², Tin Dirdamal's light camera shoots railways from the train, over a black pebble background. In between the rails appear the credits of the documentary in which Dirdamal captures the trip of Central American migrants to the north. A quote from Eduardo Galeano –“the no-ones dream of a way out of poverty”³– and statistics precede the interviews that follow. These are segmented with the same image of the railways over the black background. In between them, Dirdamal inserts some statistical data, always chilling, about the painful migration of those who have nothing. Throughout the documentary, the moving train appears cyclically as it crosses frontiers, such as that of southern Mexico, away from Honduras, passing through El Salvador. The train is as much a protagonist as the migrants: the shots are taken from low angles, high angles, from the side, from behind, from above. We see migrants on the roof of the train, on the hinge between the wagons, as they get on the train passing at a slower pace through small towns. The first goal is Mexico. Sometimes they reach the station of death before reaching any intermediary frontier or the final border with the United States. Along the way, men are assaulted; women are raped. They can be thrown from the roof of the train, which mutilates their arms or just kills them. They can throw themselves voluntarily in order to avoid the police. Interviews are meant to give voice to migrant victims, witnesses, and 'experts' who explain this world to us. In minute 50, the documentarian shows a still photograph in black and white to the migrants he interviews:

it is a photo of people that see the train passing by and give food to the migrants who reach out from the train to seize the offering. The black and white photo tells us that the migrant tradition has a long history. Town people get used to the alert of the train whistle and go out to offer food. We see the re-enactment in real time of this act of charity by a woman after the still photographic image. The spectator understands the explanation – of the 'expert,' yes, but more so of the woman. They call it 'the shoulder of the beast,' 'the route of hell,' 'the death-train': it is the connector train between Mexico and the USA proliferating in all kinds of documentaries and also reaching Hollywood and commercial Latin American cinema.

2013: *The Golden Dream (La jaula de oro)*. Diego Quemada-Díez won several awards with the fictional version of the very train documented by Dirdamal. In minutes 53 and 63, we see once again the scene of the food offering. *The Golden Dream* is the story of three migrant teenagers becoming heroes in an adventure that the spectator follows breathlessly. Only one of them reaches the north: the spectator suffers his pain. Quemada-Díez chooses commercial narrative forms, but recalls documentary strategies so precisely and powerfully that the images sometimes are direct echoes of Dirdamal's documentary. For Quemada-Díez it was a question of 'taking the best of fiction and the best of documentary': the dramatic structure, the acting, yes, but with non professional actors, with real testimonies, about real facts, and in real locations. The director does not give the script to the actors beforehand so that he can capture their vital experience – just like in a documentary and in 'real life.' (GOODMAN and GONZÁLEZ, 2015) And it was the scene of inaccessible food that once again inspired the director: Quemada-Díez remembers the family near the railways in Sinaloa who would prepare food for the migrants arriving on the train to the station.

1958. *Throw a Dime (Tire Dié)*. Who does not remember it? It was the 'first filmed social interview' that pioneered Third Cinema. Who does not remember those children in the slum in the outskirts of the Argentine city of Santa Fe that Fernando Birri's student team filmed waiting for the train to ask for a dime to its passengers, who looked from their windows at the slow pace of the machine coming close to the station? This is the train that offers us a historical continuity in the

1. Unless specified, English versions of the manifestos come from MARTIN, 1997. Rocha's quotations are my translations from the Portuguese and Spanish versions in *Glauber Rocha: del hambre al sueño* (Fundación Constantini, 2004: 38-42).

2. For phantom rides in silent cinema see the famous example from North Devon in 1898: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-B3f1z1gTY>

3. My translation: I decided to keep the awkwardness of the Spanish original 'los nadies' (the 'no-ones'), which would not be normally accepted as correct grammar.

tradition of political film, coming to a halt before the gaze of the excluded, and becoming emblematic of the Third Cinema that took to the screen all the manifestos of the sixties – starting with the manifesto of the School of Santa Fe (*Cinema and Underdevelopment*, 1962), which wanted to ‘show reality as it is’ and at the same time ‘negate it.’ (BIRRI, 1962; see translation in MARTIN 1997: 95-99)

One could craft a similar itinerary to that of inaccessible food for inaccessible water. Latin American documentaries about the danger of the so-called ‘water wars’ proliferate as much as those about trains with hungry migrants. There’s good reason: if Latin America provides more than three million migrants to the north per year, it is also true that with only 12% of the global population it hosts 47% of the fresh waters of the planet. War is coming. In minute 6 of Cuban Eliecer Jiménez Almeida’s short *The Face of Waters* (*La faz de las aguas*, 2012), the camera shoots a printed film program that reads ‘XX Festival del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano’: it is sinking under stagnant water. Even the New Cinema contaminates waters: just as much as all those products of capitalism that this cinema criticized for decades. For 9 minutes we see image after image of fresh water that exists but is useless. The montage of a clock under water, a city sewage, a beer can, a floating bottle, plastic packages of all kinds, a crow picking out of a skull at the margins of a lake, a tennis shoe stuck on the mud, dripping taps, the paper under water, and the soundtrack of the tick tock of a clock and running water (the running of time, the few minutes left before the catastrophe), leave our eyes saturated with filthy water. We go to the kitchen sink and we find it hard to open the tap and fill the glass with water to drink. The short is accessible on Vimeo and it is presented thus: ‘According to the World Water Forum, in Latin America between 80 and 100 thousand people die yearly due to consuming the contaminated liquid that is essential for the survival of all forms of life. Problems persist... We lose time. What do we need to take care of our thirst? Become conscious!’⁴

For Dirdamal it is also about raising consciousness and filming the water war, just as he filmed the migrant trains. In 2011 he decided to make a documentary about the struggle of the people in Cochabamba during the year 2000 against a multinational company that wanted to privatize water: *Rivers of Men* (*Ríos de hombres*). Everything had started with the 1970 drought that left Cochabamba without water. The company that was licensed with the distribution of water increased

fees by a staggering 400% and even ‘privatized’ rain water, by prohibiting people from collecting it in buckets. The people fought and won. Dirdamal wanted to be part of this struggle and give voice to the people. However, during his research to make the documentary, he raised his consciousness indeed: he unexpectedly had to tone down his optimism, given that the rain water had not really been ‘privatized.’ This wording had been a metaphor politically used to benefit a different power sector: the people had believed lies, the documentary explains to us. And water ended up being ‘like petroleum’: it is ‘contaminated,’ says a man in minute 37. In minute 61, a man says with sadness: ‘the problem of drinkable water has no solution’; in minute 67 another man says ‘one day the planet Earth will grow tired of us, she will throw us upside down, extinguishing all that is the human system.’

Water also went to Hollywood but in the form of melodrama: the award-winning *Even the Rain* (*También la lluvia*, 2010) was filmed in Bolivia by Icíar Bollain’s team, but with a dramatic structure of heroes, tears, and salvation. However, Chilean Juan Esteban Vega chose a different form for his fiction about the water war in 2013: his movie *Thirst* (*Sed*) is almost homage to Glauber Rocha. In a mining town in the middle of the desert people are, apparently, paid their salaries in access to water. The arid images burn our eyes. There are sepia tones and lots of ragged clothes and filthy people. There is also a saint, crucified in the desert – perhaps in the best tradition of quoting Brazilian Cinema Novo. A family in tatters creates their own utopia: to gather enough water to cultivate a little farm of their own. Near it they construct a hut with tin and cardboard. But the last shot is the hut keeping the farm but inexplicably not the humans: it is empty.

1959. *Araya*. The three hour long movie from which Jean Renoir did not want its director Margot Benacerraf to cut a single shot, filmed under the burning sun in the salt mines of the Venezuelan peninsula. The images of deserts, drought, thirst, dead animals under the sun, are as inspiring for the pioneers of Third Cinema as the trains. Recall the pioneer image of the dead goat on the salt beach (minute 49) under the blazing sunlight of *Araya*. *Araya* inspired Rocha to film in the Brazilian northeastern *sertão*: remember Manuel’s severe look after the two close-ups of the teeth and the eye sockets, full of flies, of a dead horse lying on the desert at the beginning (minute 2) of *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*, 1964). And of course, how to forget the terrible drought that kills the

4. The Spanish phrase is a pun between two meanings of the word ‘tomar’: drink and grab. Thus the phrase in Spanish for ‘become conscious’ is ‘to drink

consciousness’ (instead of water).

animals that Fabiano finds in his nomadic wandering through the northeast in *Barren Lives* (*Vidas Secas*, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1963). Just as it was for Birri, the question was how to change this terrible reality: think of the desert that becomes the sea in Rocha's film, or the last dialogue between Fabiano and his wife in dos Santos's film, in which both agree that they will not be able to survive if they continue to be less than animals.

If it has been said that the train is the great metaphor for modernity and cinema; if it is true that cinema begins by filming the arrival of the train even in the silent newsreels in Latin America;⁵ we may say that the montage of images of thirst and hunger around the train of modernity that arrives to the station marking the difference between the passengers inside and those who are left outside, is the great metaphor for the critical tradition of political documentary (or 'docu-fiction') from its inception. I refer here to the thirst and hunger of the beginnings of the twentieth century. The first minutes of the first *Kino Pravda* that Dziga Vertov filmed in 1922 show a montage of images of hunger and thirst among children under, on, around, the train. The first inter-title says: 'save the hungry children.' We look at Melekes train station; we see starving children searching for crumbs of food on the soil near the railways; a straw roof half destroyed because it has been eaten by those who starve; a man throwing kitchen garbage from the train onto the ground and the children eating those food remains; other starving children wait on the wagons and platforms for the arrival of the 'sanitary train' from Moscow with food, clothes and doctors. It is the 1921-22 famine of the Volga region. It is the 'actuality' feeding the documentary tradition from the start. And it is also the desire for another world, which fuels the tradition of political documentary: in the same *Kino Pravda*, the next sequence is a solution of sorts to the problem of hunger. We see how public officers at the Church confiscate its precious metals in order to fund the food for the poor – the inter-title says: 'each pearl saves a child.'⁶

Between the uncertainties of today and the certainties of the sixties

While my inspiration to reflect on the political manifestos of the Latin American Third Cinema of the sixties comes from the historical persistence of certain images of trains, hunger and thirst in the tradition of political cinema from the twenties to this day – a continuity best captured in the unforgettable title of Glauber Rocha's manifesto *Aesthetics of Hunger* (1965)– this

is not simply because our twenty-first century images keep demonstrating that modernity never arrives, or that capitalism deepens misery, to the extent that today it not only excludes millions of lives but also expels them from any global vital space, as sociologist Saskia Sassen observed in her last book *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (2014). To mention other examples that capture the present anxiety: Thomas Piketty (*Le Capital*, 2013) speaks of a new type of concentration of wealth that takes us back to the world before WWI; Mike Davis considers that we live in a 'planet of slums' as the result of post-seventies neoliberal economic policies (*Planet of Slums*, 2006); Danny Dorling's recent book summarizes it by asking if society can really afford the '1%' (*Inequality and the 1%*, 2014) without collapsing. In this panorama, in which sense can one say today that the desire of the Third Cinema manifestos to 'give voice to those without voice' is extinct among those who possess the means to make independent cinema? In none, I believe. To affirm the contrary would be to fall into the cynicism so useful for the machinery to remain intact.

I am not only inspired by the montage of images of trains, hunger and thirst to which the current global capitalist development has habituated us with its now almost 'normal' expansion of the gap between the so-called '1%' and the rest. I am also inspired by a different type of urgency which was not so visible when Third Cinema filmmakers wrote their manifestos. A new urgency that makes more relevant than ever what I would call the 'planetary keys' contained in the sixties manifestos. With the phrase 'planetary keys' I refer to the declarations written in tension with those indicating the need for the local (the 'Latin American regional'; the 'Brazilian national'; 'the Bolivian national', etc.) and pointing instead at the articulation of a universal technology such as cinema with a universal mode of production such as capitalism. In brief, I refer to the general thought in these manifestos speaking to the articulation of aesthetics and politics.

The singular urgency of our present surpasses the imperative that in some of the sixties manifestos was expressed as the need to universalize the then incipient 'socialism' of the era. Our urgency is a product of an experience that I would locate in the unsettling of a 'regime of certainties' that organized political cinema in the twenties, among Russians and Germans, and that was valid for the Third Cinema of the sixties in the 'global south' (including some of the European independent cinema at

5. See the silent films of Cinematografía Valle (by Federico Valle) in Argentina. For a study about cinema and trains, see KIRBY, 1997. For comparisons between modernity, trains and cinema see the often quoted study: *The Railway*

Journey (SCHIVELBUSCH, 1996).

6. The *Kino Pravda* newsreels, like this one, can be found in YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0SjyLX9MgQ>

the time): certainties that many would call today ‘the discourse of an era’ –with its implication of being ‘dated’– but precisely because of that, I believe, having the potential for a necessary intervention that may simply need updating, not discarding.

What do I mean by the ‘unsettling of a regime of certainties’? The sixties manifestos could be relevant in their time because they accompanied their social movements, but also because they picked up the ‘planetary keys’ of a previous tradition: that of the manifestos of the twenties. Maybe it was not so much a question of the utopian mission that someone like Vertov would assign for the ‘kino-eye’ to surpass the human eye: as he would put it in his *Resolution of the Council of Three* (1923), ‘we exerted violence on the camera forcing it to copy the work of our eye [...] starting today we are liberating the camera and we make it work in the opposite direction, away from copying. The weakness of the human eye is manifest’ (VERTOV, 1923/1984: 16). The sixties manifestos wanted to liberate the eye but not to widen perception in accordance with the mechanics of the (Vertovian) machine. Rather, it was to clean the eye of the ideological spider webs that would prevent us from seeing ‘reality as it is’ and would force us to see it ‘as we wanted to see it’ (BIRRI, 1962). But just like the Russian ones, the sixties manifestos prepared for a new political world: for Latin Americans there was a certainty, Birri again, that they would ‘make a new man [...] and thus a new art’; ‘and in witnessing –critically– how this reality is [cinema] negates it. It denies it. It denounces, judges, criticizes, dismantles it.’ The manifestos thus accompanied the global left-wing movements that believed in horizons of equality and justice realizable in *this* world – not in some other, utopian world. Third Cinema manifestos were nurtured by that ‘epochal imagination’.

One may visualize immediately the ‘certainty of an era’ with a phrase cited in the first minutes of that filmic version of Solanas’s and Getino’s manifesto *Toward a Third Cinema* (1969) – the famous ‘film-act’ or ‘film-essay’ they called *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos*, 1968). To the soundtrack of drums and on a black background, we read titles in white letters (advertisement style) such as ‘invent’ ‘organize’ ‘our revolution,’ followed by quotes of thinkers and political leaders of the time, like Aimé Césaire, Juan Domingo Perón, Scalabrini Ortiz, Frantz Fanon. But there is a title that we may see as the thesis that the film shares with its times insofar as it is not presented as a quote with an author: ‘no social order commits suicide’. The phrase nonetheless had an author: it belonged to the political leader of the left-wing in the Argentine Peronist Party, John William Cooke (1919-1968) (see COOKE, 1973: 121). It is

fitting to clarify the ‘global’ nature of Cooke’s affirmation. He referred not only to the persistence of a dominant order to maintain its status quo, but also to the ceaseless insistence of the organized resistance against that regime.

That certainty, condensed in that phrase, is what we have replaced with a question: can we think today that ‘no social order commits suicide’? I do not refer here only to the thinking minds that resist the concentration of wealth, but also to the thinking minds that concentrate wealth: the bank and corporation reports that agree with the agonizing diagnosis of our disorder. I do not refer either just to the normalization of the permanent threat/uncertainty about the extinction of the planet: a threat embodied in the nuclear code in the hands of a few politicians. I refer to the postulations I mention above (can a social order afford the current social expulsion of so many [Sassen] and the current concentration of wealth [Dorling]?). I refer to the so disputed naming of our era as ‘the anthropocene,’ a name that emerges from scientific consensus on the annihilation of life in the planet, though I prefer the term coined by United States biologist Donna Haraway, ‘capitalocene.’ (HARAWAY, 2015) For some this era would have started the 16 of July, 1945 (with the creation of the atomic bomb) and for others 10.000 years ago with agriculture. In both versions, since 1970 we have seen the acceleration of a human domination that transforms all living matter into something quantifiable (that is, disposable if it does not produce profit). The destruction of the living is such that scientists talk about the ‘sixth massive extinction’ of animal species. What comes next, of course, is ours.

We lack the certainty not only about how to live but also about just living – are we on our way to extinction? Maybe one of Dirdamal’s interviewees in *Rivers of Men* summarizes it best: ‘the problem of water has no solution.’ Dirdamal and Quemada-Díez offer us the aesthetic forms of this epochal specter of uncertainty: an ‘aesthetics of absence,’ one may venture, to echo the phrase of ‘an aesthetics of hunger’ in Rocha’s manifesto. Dirdamal announces at the end of *No One* that he has completely lost track of one of the migrants he interviewed: is María alive? In the final credits, Quemada-Díez thanks the 600 migrants who participated in the film after a final close-up, filmed from a low angle, of the only teenage protagonist who survives the trip on the ‘shoulder of the beast’ and is now in the United States. Juan leaves his cleaning job at a meatpacking industry (or slaughterhouse) on a cold night in winter. He lifts his head toward the sky with a stern expression. The snow is falling. His fellow traveler Chauk, killed before he could arrive, had dreamt of watching snowflakes falling.

Third Cinema films were structured around a message, in the tradition of manifestos: if a certain state of things had taken the wrong turn, this should be changed. The call to action, or directly to arms, was implicit or explicit. Suffice it to recall emblematic examples of the entire movement. The famous last scene in *The Blood of the Condor* (*La sangre del cóndor / Yawar Mallku*, Jorge Sanjinés, 1969): a low-angle medium shot of peasant arms, each one pointing a weapon to the sky. The first scene of *The Courage of the People* (*El coraje del pueblo*, Sanjinés, 1971) with the long shot of miners holding the Bolivian flag as they march in columns through the highlands toward the place from which the camera shoots: the point of view of the military police situated at the high hill ready to shoot their machine guns. It may even be useful to remember scenes of that exceptional animal of the Third Cinema, Cinema Novo. Think of the allegorical final shot in *Black God White Devil* in which Rocha transforms Sérgio Ricardo's musical theme for the film (the utopia of 'o sertão vai virar mar'—'the desert will become the sea') into an image by cutting a general shot of the northeast desert with a general shot of the sea touching the coast.

Our immersion in the uncertainty of life happens in yet another context that was not present in the sixties: another aspect of impotence, this time the difficulty of processing a never-before-seen excess of images and communications. On the one hand, we confront the unprecedented excess of the production of 'news' in social media (what some have recently called 'post truth politics') and the demand for transparency in communications (phenomena such as WikiLeaks) given the increase of hidden regimes of surveillance. On the other hand, we confront the unstoppable proliferation of images produced by cell phone technologies of massive reach: 'trash images,' insofar as they end up deposited in dumping sites or simply vanish in the instant in which they are seen (applications such as Snapchat on cell phones). This 'screen time' excess imposes a question about what we are *prevented from seeing* outside of the virtual circuit and through our human perception – rather than a question about what this excess facilitates.

Three Third Cinema manifestos planetary keys for today

In the context of our uncertainties about political suicide, of the (im)possibility of other worlds, of the confusion between 'true' stories and an indigestible excess of images, Third Cinema manifestos paradoxically take on a new relevance precisely due to the 'message of their times.' As documents of that 'other' imagination they pierce the '*pensée unique*'⁷ that characterizes

our historical moment; they break the 'effort of normalization and concentration [of] neoliberal economic logic,' to cite the 1995 *Manifiesto Documental* that appears in Jean-Louis Comolli's collection *Ver y Poder* (2007: 210-211).

I focus here on only three of the manifestos' many shared planetary preoccupations that crack our '*pensée unique*': the proposal to change the relation between author and spectator (with its ensuing change in the conditions of production and circulation of visual stories); the imperative to transform the filmed reality first into something intelligible and then into something subject to criticism; and further, the demand that such intelligibility be achieved through a change of forms against the dominant narrative form, seen as contributing to the transformation of the potential author in any human being into a passive spectator.

The first planetary key that I mention –that the spectator become an author– runs through every single Third Cinema manifesto and stands as a clear echo of Fanon's famous phrase: 'any bystander is either a coward or a traitor' (FANON, 1961/2004: 140) (a phrase very much used by Solanas and Getino, not only in *The Hour of the Furnaces* but also in the announcements of the film screenings at the time). This idea was translated into many formulations: to defend the right of everyone to be the protagonists of their story; to film 'for and with' the people; to recuperate the 'voice of those without voice' through their testimonies; to narrate from the 'popular' perspective; to prefer low-cost production, Super 8 and 16mm formats, natural locations, and non professional actors. But most of all, it was translated into the dream that everyone one day should have their own camera – a dream that was, by the way, present already in the twenties (remember Vertov and the cameras for his 'kinocs'). García Espinosa's manifesto *For an Imperfect Cinema* is the one that may have given the most attention to imagining a future against all film professionalization: 'is it right to continue developing a handful of film specialists?' the film maker asks rhetorically. '¿What happens if the development of video-tape solves the problem of inevitably limited laboratory capacity, if television systems with their potential for "projecting" independently of the central studio render the ad infinitum construction of movie theaters suddenly superfluous? What happens then is not only an act of social justice – the possibility for everyone to make films (MARTIN, 1997: 72) [...] The task currently at hand is to find out if the conditions which will enable spectators to

7. I refer here to the phrase coined by Ignacio Ramonet in his 1995 editorial in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, re-appropriating the 'one-dimensional thought' noted

by Herbert Marcuse precisely in the sixties.

transform themselves into agents [...] are beginning to exist. [...] If he participates to a greater and greater degree, where will the process end up? Isn't the logical outcome that he will cease being a spectator altogether?' (MARTIN, 1997: 77)⁸

García Espinosa foresaw the digital technology and social media of today, which for many means the expected arrival of the train of film 'democratization.' It seems as though Third Cinema manifestos are indeed 'of their times' in terms of their dream of democratization. Finally we can see massive access to film at very low costs; distribution happens through very informal circuits; production makes use of a mixture of improvised techniques halfway between fiction and documentary; and nonprofessional actors appear from all walks of life in a multiplicity of communities that were until now invisible. In some cases this massive access has become state policy (consider the Agencia Plurinacional de Comunicación in Bolivia). Digital format has made possible the emergence of other ways of telling visual stories.

But it is not wise to erase so quickly the images filmed by Dirdamal; the teenagers that ride on the shoulder of 'the death train' toward Mexico's northern border do not stretch their arms to film the train with their cell phones. They stretch their arms to reach for the *tortillas* that Mexican ladies prepare for them in each train station on their way north. Dirdamal captures this in minute 58 of *No One*, when the generous lady who gives food to migrants cries in front of the camera 'you do not suffer, you have everything, you have food, a roof, a mother, a father, they have nothing.' If the aim is to become 'owner and protagonist' of artistic production, who owns digital cameras, Internet connection, smart phones, access to networks where information is propagated and created? In an online interview, Dirdamal was asked, 'If you were given \$10 million to be used for moviemaking, how would you spend it?' to which he responded: 'There is this idea that with video format, films are now democratized. That practically anyone can grab their camera and tell what they want. I believe this is not so. Immigrants do not have access to making their own movies; indigenous people don't either. So media and films are still controlled by the ones who have the money. With \$10 million dollars I would buy cameras and give free workshops to several marginal groups in order for them to tell their own stories.' (*Indiewire*, 2006)

As it is not wise to forget who owns the cameras, it is not wise either to forget the real meaning of 'becoming authors' in the

manifestos of Third Cinema. What is filmed (and what does not fit the screen) on those millions of cell phones? How to overcome the divine temptation of the 'pornography of misery' that Colombians Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo so precisely denounced in their 1977 film *The Vampires of Poverty* (*Agarrando pueblo*)? Or, for that matter, with what heroic will must one resist being suctioned into the dark tunnel of the 'pornography of violence,' which seduces to the point that it becomes permanently 'viral' in social media? Rocha suspected the voyeurism of Europeans in his *Aesthetics of Hunger*: 'Latin America laments its general misery; the European onlooker cultivates the taste for that misery.' (ROCHA, 1965)

Dirdamal jumped out of his spectator role without academic formation or film school, as we may imagine anyone could do today, and as García Espinosa had envisioned with his advocacy of de-professionalization: he learned alone, in the fire of praxis and thanks to having a camera. But he was not so alone. He did it after having had the chance to study at the university. He rejected the type of knowledge that institution offered him. When a poet and filmmaker does emerge from a slum, such as the phenomenal César González (alias Camilo Blajaquis) in 'Carlos Gardel' in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, we are invited to feel the impact of that heroic jump made by a man who grew up in the midst of hunger and violence, who became a thief, who ended up doing five years of jail, and who finally landed back in life as an artist. His incredible critical thinking about the system that made him a victim –not a willful delinquent– was nurtured by (as he narrates in interviews) the gestures of love of a professor teaching in the prison. It was through this teacher that he ended up knowing who Che Guevara was, what the Cuban revolution had done, and what Michel Foucault had written. Today he fulfills the democratic dream of Third Cinema, filming in slums with street children and finding national outlets to show his movies. As he himself says, one had to *understand* first: 'to want to understand how this world is and not deny it [...] knowing how it is, is a great first step [...] a kid that acts in my movies, and who comes from the slum, this means for me that the world changes, we have to know how to see small victories.' And, as he says, *every* slum kid, in the end, can understand: it suffices to give them a hand.⁹

The second planetary key of Third Cinema was a prescription for how to stop being a spectator: transform the chaos of misery into something *intelligible*. For Third Cinema filmmakers this was codified in Rocha's famous *dictum* – 'a camera in your hand and an idea in your head'– and it was expressed in each

8. I refer The manifest was first published in *Cine Cubano*.

9. There are many interviews in YouTube; see for example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fzd9uRq9-A;>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZzum91sNiM>

and every one of the manifestos in various ways. Solanas and Getino, Birri, Sanjinés and Rocha dedicated more paragraphs than others to the necessity of a political thesis about what they were filming – the ‘negation’ of ‘reality as it is,’ as Birri would put it. In the best tradition of the Brazilian artistic *avant garde*, Rocha equated cultural processes to digestive ones in his *Aesthetics of Hunger*. ‘Digestive cinema’ was emptied of ideas, whereas the indigestible ‘aesthetics’ of hunger of Cinema Novo were full of ideas. For Rocha aesthetics had a mission to ‘understand’ the violence of hunger –its violence on the human body, on the mind– and thus, to understand violent action as the only way out. Cinema was ‘a gallery of starving people’: characters ‘eating earth, eating roots, stealing to eat’ in order *to be able to speak* hunger in its reality. ‘The Brazilian does not eat but he is ashamed to say so, and most of all, he does not know where this hunger comes from’; ‘our greatest misery is that our hunger is felt but it is not understood’; ‘The Latin American neither communicates his real misery to the “civilized” European, nor does the European truly comprehend the misery of the Latin American’; ‘there are only lies sold as truths’, ‘a series of misunderstandings’; ‘philosophical emaciation’ or ‘sterility’ or ‘hysteria’ in the way we tell our story, with ‘impetuous discourses’ that we transmit to the colonizer, who does not understand us because we lack lucidity: ‘And, if he understands us, it is not due to the lucidity of our dialogue, but to the humanism that our information inspires in him.’ (ROCHA, 1965). Sanjinés devoted an entire section to the issue of ‘communication’ in his manifesto-essay *Problems of form and content in revolutionary cinema* (1976). For Sanjinés and the Ukamau group, ‘the stimulation of reflection’ was imperative, as was the capacity to generate spaces for participation in production and filmmaking in order to think collectively.

For all the documentarians that I mentioned above the issue is also that of raising consciousness. Dirdamal frames his *No One* with an almost ‘biblical’ reference from the sixties, none other than Eduardo Galeano. He offers statistics and political explanations. Experts abound in documentaries about the war on water. But we don’t know anymore if our social order is committing suicide: ‘the problem of water has no solution.’

Our urgency for change is as pressing as it was in the sixties, but it has a different content. The key to becoming intelligible in the sixties, the third planetary key that I have mentioned, was the change of forms, against the psychological narration that commercial Latin American cinema adopts today (even if sometimes mixing them with classic documentary strategies). The enemy in *Aesthetics of Hunger* was ‘our language of tears’ and ‘of silent suffering.’ For Rocha, that language could not have the ‘lucidity’ to communicate with the colonizer. In reality, this language was an old enemy; Vertov would write in

the *Revolution* (1923): ‘all efforts, sighs, tears and expectations, all prayers are directed toward the six-act film-drama’ (1923: 14); in his *Kinocs: A Revolution* (1923) the number one enemy of the new cinema was identified as: ‘a friendly warning: Raise your eyes, Look around you- There. It’s obvious to me as to any child, the innards, the guts of strong sensations are tumbling out of cinema’s belly, ripped open on the reef of revolution. [...] It’s all over.’ (1923: 11-12).

Sanjinés dedicated long paragraphs to the ‘formal choice of the creator’ as obeying ‘profound ideological inclinations’ and analyzed forms as ideological carriers: ‘to use the sensational language of commercials for a work on colonialism is a serious incongruence; the one minute spot [...] is calculated for the defenseless spectator.’ Ukamau’s experience filming *The Blood of the Condor* had been their biggest lesson: they had chosen forms (the close-up for example) that had little to do with the way indigenous communities (acting in the film) saw the world. Sanjinés meditated on the mistake of those close-ups and chose finally for an ‘objective’ gaze that would prevent him from imposing his point of view as director: a ‘non psychological gaze, that facilitates participation’ of indigenous cultures where the notion of the individual does not predominate and a close-up diminishes the ‘freedom to think, act, invent.’

Dirdamal does not avoid tears in *No One*. But those tears are not from the traveling migrants: they are from those who see them migrate, those who are inside the system. Of migrants, we hear and see what they want to tell us. The only interviewee that cries on camera is the woman who in the end vanishes without a trace: an ‘aesthetics of absence’ for a time that has not yet found a way not to commit suicide. Eliecer Jiménez’s documentary does not offer images of clean water; the montage saturates us and explains everything. Meanwhile, Quemada-Díez’s commercial cinema ‘with social content’ appeals to the desire for dramatic structure and a bit of suspense and adventure – but we may note that it also ends almost in an ‘aesthetics of absence.’ Juan is left alone, with no friends, in the cold winter night where he does not belong, and with a job out of which we cannot imagine an escape. The last scene in Vega’s fiction, *Thirst*, is void of humans.

To evaluate the relevance of the three planetary keys that I identified in the manifestos of the sixties, it may be useful to remember the phrase in the Mexican *Manifiesto del Frente Nacional de Cinematografías* (1975, Paul Leduc, Jorge Fons, Raúl Araiza, et al): ‘insofar as cinema is a social activity of humanity, it can only change to the extent that social structures change’ (my translation). And then we may imagine how to appropriate these three planetary keys for a cinema that can rise to the occasion of having to intervene in a social order

whose relation to suicide is not yet clear, in a visual regime that limits our vision beyond cell phone screens, in a surveillance system that makes difficult the creation of other worlds/other montages out of the 'route of hell' of the train, the hunger, and the thirst of today. What cinema and what manifesto can be written for the absence of certainties about whether 'this planet will not extinguish us'? The 'planetary' in the sixties manifestos has several geological layers: what should we film and what

should we write to make visible the gap between the excluded and the *expelled*, who have no potable water; to perceive what the 'democratic' cell phone screen occludes; to insist that the cost of paper on which to print film programs confronts us with the need of a 'geology of morals' that may imagine 'a future that is not one'?¹⁰ •

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10. I refer to the famous chapter in Deleuze's and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987: 39-74). As to 'a future that is not one' I play with the famous title of

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From imperfect to popular cinema

Maria Alzuguir Gutierrez

ABSTRACT

Misunderstood as a defense of technical imperfection, the idea of imperfect cinema was reviewed by Cuban filmmaker Julio García Espinosa many times: the imperfect cinema is interested in cinema, which will only overcome this condition to the extent that man is free, releasing also art from its instrumentation. It is also to overcome the division of labor: the search is for a cinema that can be created by everyone, leaving behind the author-spectator separation. Likewise art can no longer be an autonomous sphere in relation to other life activities. According to García Espinosa, the adventure of Cuban cinema after the revolution was always a search for the end of the thought/fun dichotomy, and an attempt at a popular cinema. We will investigate, in articles published in a period of more than thirty years, what was meant by the notions imperfect cinema and popular cinema, and how the latter was reconfigured according to the historical moment. Thus, the purpose of this article is to discuss, from the texts compiled in *Un largo camino hacia la luz* (2002), the concepts of imperfect cinema and popular cinema as conceived by Julio García Espinosa through time and reflect on their permanence nowadays.

KEYWORDS

Imperfect Cinema, Popular Cinema, Julio García Espinosa, Cuban Cinema, Filmmakers' Theory, Latin America

The idea of *cine imperfecto*, proposed in the famous text written by Julio García Espinosa in 1969, was often mistaken for a defense of technical imperfection, and approximated to Glauber Rocha's manifest, *Eztetyka da fome*, with its claim to a significant and aggressive use of material precariousness¹. Indeed, the defense of technical imperfection is one of the possible interpretations of the term –as García Espinosa stated himself in a text twenty-five years later– not as an exaltation of misery, but in the sense of a stimulus to make movies with the available means, in opposition to Hollywood's aesthetic dictatorship (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 1994). This, however, is certainly not the most important facet of the notion of *cine imperfecto*.

Cine imperfecto is interested cinema, which will only overcome this condition to the extent that man is free, also releasing art from its instrumentation. The purpose is also to overcome the division of labor: the search is for a cinema that can be created by everyone, leaving behind the author/viewer separation. This is the only way that art can no longer be an autonomous sphere in relation to other life activities. So, the cinema will be imperfect while it has to be interested, committed to the transformation of reality. Only when the division of society into classes is overcome, art can be a disinterested activity of man, something that people of all occupations may practice as one more life activity.

This is the utopia of García Espinosa, and he ends the text stating that art will not disappear into nothingness, but into the whole. In this regard, García Espinosa shares the greatest ambition of the historical vanguards: to break with the art institution, returning art to everyday life (BÜRGER, 2008). The contradiction, however, is that García Espinosa takes an anti-avant-garde position in the idea that there should be no longer intellectuals and artists, that art can be everyone's activity. While in the USSR, for example, constructivism intended to dissolve into the whole from a vanguard position, based on the notion of social request. The aim was to revolutionize the consciousness, organize life, the psyche, the habits, the

customs of the working class. The artist thought of himself as imbued with a social request, and its function would be to formalize, give form to demands not yet formulated by the proletariat (ALBERA, 2002). The vanguard, then, in politics as much as in art, presented itself as a consciousness outside of the working class. Far from the avant-garde, García Espinosa tuned to certain strains of anti-intellectualism and Workerism that prevailed in cultural debates in Cuba during the 1960s. For him, intellectuals and artists must produce their imperfect art –because it is interested– until they can disappear as a class.

For further reading of García Espinosa's work, we need to understand it in the context of the cultural debates that took place in Cuba during the 1960s. In that decade the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry was involved in a series of controversies. The first one, involving a veto of the exhibition of the movie *PM* (Orlando Jiménez Leal and Sabá Cabrera Infante, 1961), when the position of the ICAIC represented a kind of balance between the opposite poles of the dispute, the 'liberal' publication *Lunes de Revolución* and the 'hardliners' Marxists of the National Council of Culture (GARCÍA BORRERO, 2007). Then another controversy: this time involving the programming policy promoted by ICAIC, when a reader sent a letter to a newspaper complaining about screenings of films such as *Accattone* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1961), *Alias Big Shot* (*Alias Gardelito*, Lautaro Murúa, 1961), *The Exterminating Angel* (*El ángel exterminador*, Luis Buñuel, 1962) and *La dolce vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960), that couldn't be considered an example to the young people. Another controversy settled around a text, published and collectively signed by filmmakers linked to the institute, which claimed freedom in ownership of the cultural tradition previous to the Revolution, stating that 'culture, there is only one' (VV. AA., 1963). The text generated a range of responses and a debate was organized at the university to discuss it, after which Gutiérrez Alea published a text in which he chaffed the position of those who treat the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois origin of intellectuals and artists as an original sin that should be atoned for (GUTIÉRREZ ALEA, 2006)².

1. There is, moreover, another important affinity with Glauber's manifesto, which is the theme of the relationship of our cinema with European criticism and public. The rapprochement between García Espinosa's text and the theoretical work of his contemporaries in Latin America has already been contemplated in other instances (AVELLAR, 1995). Here, what we would like to emphasize is that, although this theoretical-critical production is commonly known as the 'manifests of Latin American cinema', different to texts such as *Hacia un tercer cine* (*Towards a Third Cinema*) and *Eztetyka da fome* (*Aesthetics of Hunger*), *Por un cine imperfecto* is more an essay than a manifesto, asking questions more than expressing ideas in an assertive and provocative way, as do Solanas and Getino's and Glauber Rocha's texts. As for the works of Sanjinés and Gutiérrez Alea, *Teoría y práctica de un cine junto al pueblo* (*Theory and*

Practice of a Cinema With the People) and *Dialéctica del espectador* (*The Viewer's Dialectics*), they are a retrospective reflection on their film practice. In a course organized in the *Memorial da América Latina*, my colleague Elen Döppenschmidt drew attention to the Socratic method in García Espinosa's text. A reflection on the form of each one of these texts would be interesting, but is beyond the scope of this work, which focuses on the content of *Por un cine imperfecto* and other later texts written by García Espinosa.

2. The problem of the original sin was in the center of the debates then, as it was present in the famous text of Che Guevara, *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba*, from 1965. For an elaboration on the theme of cultural controversies in Cuba during the 1960s and the participation of ICAIC on the same, view: POGOLOTTI, 2006 and VILLAÇA, 2010.

At that moment the director of the ICAIC published an article in which he defended the artist's right to heresy (GUEVARA, 1963)³. While Alfredo Guevara advocated the role of the intellectual, the writer Félix Pita Rodríguez published a poem that questioned how long the word would be retained as one more private property, because the people had claimed their copyrights. It also stated that the intellectuals were claiming the right and freedom to keep talking about something that did not belong to them, and stored the dead, talking and talking, while the revolution was happening outside (PITA RODRÍGUEZ, 1963).

Observing the problem in a broader context, it should be noted that in the early 1960s in Latin America, intervention in the public sphere started to convert the artists into intellectuals, and established the idea that the intellectual should be one of the main agents of a radical transformation. Between 1966 and 1968, however, especially in Cuba, an opposition had been established between the idea of the intellectual as critical consciousness and that of the revolutionary intellectual. According to Claudia Gilman, the armed struggle became then the fact before which the intellectual should be measured, and the paradigms of the man of action and the man of the people placed him outside of the playing field (GILMAN, 2003). At a time when action began to have more value than the symbolic practice, the intellectual went from criticism to self-criticism, and was suspected in his claims of representation for being biased from the beginning (GILMAN, 2003; NAVARRO, 2002)⁴.

In this context García Espinosa writes his text, questioning why the artist intended to consider himself critic and conscience of society when these should be tasks for everyone. García Espinosa's text proposes to overcome minority concepts and practices, creating conditions for spectators to become authors. Quoting Hauser, García Espinosa differentiates mass culture from folk art. While in the cultural industry products are produced by a minority and destined to a consumer majority, popular art –when it was not frozen into folklore– is characterized precisely by its lack of distinction between creators and viewers, being considered as one more of life's activities. And, for him, this should be the goal of a truly revolutionary artistic culture.

Por un cine imperfecto (For an Imperfect Cinema) is about aesthetics, much more than a mere essay on cinema. It is a questioning of the very function of art. García Espinosa believed that the art has the ability to express things that are otherwise impossible to express, and this would give it a cognitive power. Based on Kant –even if the philosopher is mentioned explicitly only in later texts– García Espinosa asserts that, unlike science, however, art's results do not have immediate applicability, so art is not a job but a disinterested activity of man. The aesthetic pleasure lies precisely in the pleasure of feeling the functionality of intelligence and sensitivity without having a specific purpose. However, while we cannot break away from art as a separate sphere of life and convert mass culture into popular art, interested art should stimulate the viewer's creative function, an attitude of transformation towards life.

Here, it should be noted the utopian aspect of García Espinosa's proposal. The mass media is converted, under capitalism, in cultural industry, which absolutely denies the idea that art can be a disinterested activity of man, because what it makes are products to market. So there is nothing more utopian than converting these means, linked from the beginning to the interest of profit, in a disinterested activity of man⁵. The expectation of García Espinosa is that the revolution, releasing the mass media from the need of profit, can return it to the sphere of art as disinterested activity of man. Adorno and Horkheimer analysed how the cultural industry had made a transposition of art to the sphere of consumption, turning fun into an extension from work –in which 'having fun means agreeing' (ADORNO and HORKHEIMER, 2002: 25)–, depriving art from what it should seek: the release of the principle of utility and the creation of space of thought as denial.

García Espinosa, later, will explain his rejection of the intellectual who, entrenched in elite positions, is opposed to the mass media and nostalgically claims the autonomy art had prior to the spread of such means, collecting the 'spoils of a useless corpse' (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 1973: 35). Sharing Benjamin's position, García Espinosa sees the mechanical reproduction as a progressive factor, which leads to the proletarianization of the artist and the democratization of culture, which however was denied by what he calls populist cinema –the one produced by the cultural industry– which converted us all in a 'brotherhood of grateful idiots' (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 1988: 83).

3. This is a celebrated text, that has been revisited several times by Cuban criticism over the years.

4. For detailed documentation of the discussions about the role of the intellectual in the society between 1960 and 1970 in Cuba and Latin America, see NAVARRO, 2002 and GILMAN, 2003.

5. In a lecture held at IEB/USP on August 15th 2016, Professor Barbara Freitag drew attention to the incompatibility between the cultural industry and the notion of art as disinterested activity of man.

The time, the paths and the waywardness of the revolution led García Espinosa to give his utopia more nuance. In 1971, in the text *En busca del cine perdido*, he no longer advocates the dissolution of the artistic class arguing that it works to produce a popular art that, as he will explain later, should establish a non-alienated, renewed and enriched communication with the public, returning to them the critical spirit (GARCÍA ESPINOSA 1989: 90). According to García Espinosa, the adventure of Cuban cinema after the revolution was always a search for the end of the dichotomy between thought and fun, and the attempt at a popular cinema. Echoing Che Guevara, the filmmaker says that 'popular cinema resides in the potential of the current cinema as the New Man resides in the potential of today's man' (GARCÍA ESPINOSA 1971: 31). And at another moment, he remembers a quote from Pauline Kael, for whom the popular cinema is the one which can 'unite in a same reaction both worship and unlearned audience' (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, s / d: 274).

At no moment García Espinosa comes to precisely define what is this popular cinema, but he gives examples of Cuban films that approach his proposal, which he opposes to the populist cinema. García Espinosa argues that artists should learn from popular culture to produce their works in dialogue with it. Against the idea of 'educating' the masses to high culture, he states that the artists are the ones who should be educated in popular art to make their work popular –as Brecht recommended–. The best example of what would be this popular cinema may be his own movie, *The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin* (*Aventuras de Juan Quinquín*, 1967), one of the biggest box-office successes of the Cuban cinema. This is a film that draws from the picaresque narrative tradition and at the same time from the cinema tradition genres, particularly the adventure films. García Espinosa proposes the film to make not only a criticism of reality, but of the cinema itself, defending the establishment of a critical relationship with tradition, that the proletarian art should not be created from scratch, but in dialogue with what came before, affronting Hollywood's codes and structures with the cinematic language.

The appropriation of Hollywood genres in *The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin* and other films of Cuban cinema is reminiscent of Brecht's operas, in which the author had given himself unto the same risky game of incorporation of the commodity form, accompanied by its criticism (PASTA, 1986). There was in Brecht's operas an attempt to criticize the 'culinary' from inside,

using a technique to make it turn against itself, revealing the merchandise character not only in the fun but in the viewer himself. The operation performed in *The Adventures* is similar to that of *Death of a Bureaucrat* (*La muerte de un burócrata*, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1966). There are satirical and deconstructive citations of genres, without forgetting the pleasure of their narrative procedures. This generates an active reception, because it is aware of the language formulas (GUTIERREZ, 2014; GUTIERREZ, 2015). García Espinosa affirms that this is 'a way that allows, without losing communication with the public, to seek the new within the possibilities that lay in the old' (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 2001: 238)⁶. So García Espinosa defends the search for a popular cinema in the commercial cinema (GARCÍA ESPINOSA 1971: 29), since, as Brecht said, to renounce to such work means represents a 'freedom outside the means of production' (BRECHT, 1973: 111).

In his lucidity, García Espinosa seeks compromise solutions between various antagonistic positions: between the autonomy of art and its political exploitation; between the political commitment of the artist and his freedom; between thought and fun; between formalism and propagandistic or didactic art (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, n.d.: 276); between the break with Hollywood's narrative and experimentalism –which, most part of the time, has the 'petty-bourgeois mentality as only addressee' (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 2002: 247)–. As Gutiérrez Alea in *Dialéctica del espectador* (*The Viewer's Dialectics*), García Espinosa refused a cinema that revolutionizes the superstructure without 'touching the base' (GUTIÉRREZ ALEA, 1982). How to find the balance between these poles? The answer lies in respecting the viewer. For García Espinosa, the artist's freedom is not above the freedom of the viewer (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 2000: 212).

Por un cine imperfecto contains in a dense and concentrated form the thinking that García Espinosa will consistently develop later in films and essays. In *Por un cine imperfecto*, the filmmaker wrote about a poetic whose goal was to disappear as such, then defended that the aim of the revolutionary filmmaker is to make the revolution in cinema (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 1971). Later he assumes that, at the moment, even this popular cinema still have to be in a minority position (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 1988). It is when he makes movies such as *Son... o no son* (1980) and *El plano* (1993), that aimed at a meta-theoretical debate — as the 1969's text, *Son... o no son* questions the function of art: how to create reflection, if the

6. This quote was taken from a text in which García Espinosa refers to the work of Lars von Trier and Wong Kar-wai, commenting how these authors use genres to subvert them. The formula, however, is very similar to that used by García

Espinosa before to comment his own film, in explaining the idea of 'seeking the new in confrontation with the old' (GARCÍA ESPINOSA, 1994: 122).

public goes to the cinema to ‘disconnect’?, is a question asked several times throughout the film. *Por un cine imperfecto* is a defense of the right to make art before the proletarianization of the filmmakers, a defense of ‘what we have for today’.

In his book about the filmmakers’ theories in Latin America, José Carlos Avellar (1995) comments on how some of the concepts that García Espinosa proposes in his essay had been in circulation since the 1950s or even earlier among Latin-American filmmakers such as Fernando Birri, Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Humberto Mauro. As an example, the idea of making a creative and expressive use of material precariousness. Avellar also comments on how today the utopia that art can disappear into the whole is no longer on the horizon, that technological development can lead to a democratic expansion of creative activity, since, on the contrary, the more the media multiplies, the more it requires viewers⁷. For Avellar, what remains in effect in the theoretical work of García Espinosa is the defense of imperfection as the only possibility of survival of our cinema.

But this is a basic assumption. For me, however, what is more permanent in the work of Julio García Espinosa and other pioneers of the cinema of the Cuban revolution is the search for a popular cinema. For there is an ever-present question: how

to make a film that seeks reflection without speaking to itself? In Cuba, during the decades of 1990 and 2000, filmmakers like García Espinosa, Gutiérrez Alea and Humberto Solás made films that can be considered, in relation to the ‘prodigious decade’ of 1960, a step back in aesthetic terms. With *Barrio Cuba* (2005), Solás proposes a dialogue with melodrama, and even the soap opera, in *Strawberry and Chocolate (Fresa y Chocolate*, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío, 1993) there is a return to naturalism, to the ordinary language of classical cinema, and in *Queen and King (Reina y Rey*, Julio García Espinosa, 1994), a return to realism. Here, genres and styles are no longer exactly ‘subverted’, but rather are used for their communication value, as a way to ensure the presence of the interlocutor and make cinema an effective intervention in the public sphere⁸. These films, which could be criticized for their language choices, rather reveal the profound coherence of García Espinosa and his colleagues of ICAIC, for whom the dialogue with the public was always above the mere search for personal expression. •

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7. García Espinosa himself noted, in 1988, that the spread of the cultural industry was making us all viewers of the world, more than citizens of the world. It is remarkable that today, when large portions of the population have a camera in their own pockets, we are not witnessing the fulfilment of García Espinosa’s utopia. With the multiplication of the means of audiovisual production and reproduction, we have seen an increase in the number of hours spent by the population in front of the screens in the consumption of audiovisual products

that, even when performed by amateurs, most times merely repeat the cultural industry standards. The self-promotion stimulated by the Internet can be seen as a form of self-exploration, always feeding back the machine.

8. Fornet considers this search for dialogue a fundamental aspect to the development of cinema in Cuba after the Revolution, and Chanan emphasizes the role of the cinema in the Cuban public sphere since then (FORNET, 1990; CHANAN, 2004).

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The return of the newsreel (2011-2016) in contemporary cinematic representations of the political event

Raquel Schefer

ABSTRACT

Contemporary cinematic representations of the political event (2011-2016) point to an ongoing dynamic dialectic of 'structuration' and 'destructuration' of the film forms. In the works of Jem Cohen and Sylvain George documenting, respectively, Occupy Wall Street (USA), 15-M (Spain) and, more recently, Nuit Debout (France), the return of the newsreel highlights the link between the economic structures and the film manifestations, while indicating a dynamic process of formal evolution. From the soviet newsreels to the work of Cohen and George, passing by the New Latin American Cinema, and the North-American Newsreel Group, newsreel's dynamics enables to reconsider, from both a historical and a formal perspective, the relationship between aesthetics and politics, as well as the established distinction between avant-garde/experimental and political cinema. These issues will be examined through the operation notion of 'form-event,' which allows to reconcile two dimensions of the aesthetic production: one, which considers art as a reflection; another, which examines it in terms of its outcomes. Newsreel's formal development from the post-war until the political and cultural contexts in which it has currently evolved brings up a more enriched genealogy of political filmmaking, revealing complex relationships –and a web of influences beyond national film canon– between historical political cinema and the 'state of the form' of this cinema.

KEYWORDS

Newsreel, political cinema, avant-garde/experimental cinema, Soviet Cinema, New Latin American Cinema, ICAIC, Newsreel Group, Sylvain George, form-event, aesthetics and politics.

Perhaps I filmed to fight against.
(Robert Kramer, *Berlin 10/90*, 1990)

Contemporary cinematic representations of the political event (2011-2016) point to an ongoing dynamic dialectic of 'structuration' and 'destructuration' (LUKÁCS, 2012, 1968)¹ of the film forms, transposing the terms of Lukácsian literary theory into cinema aesthetics. In the works of Jem Cohen and Sylvain George documenting, respectively, Occupy Wall Street (USA), 15-M (Spain) and, more recently, Nuit Debout (France), the return of the newsreel highlights the link between the economic structures and the film manifestations, while indicating a dynamic process of formal evolution. From the soviet newsreels to the work of Cohen and George, passing by the New Latin American Cinema (Santiago Álvarez, Glauber Rocha, Raymundo Gleyzer and Cine de la Base, etc.), and the North-American Newsreel Group, newsreel's dynamics enables to reconsider, from both a historical and a formal perspective, the relationship between aesthetics and politics, as well as the established distinction between avant-garde/experimental and political cinema. These issues will be examined in this article through the operation notion of 'form-event,' which allows to reconcile two dimensions of the aesthetic production: one, which considers art as a reflection; another, which examines it in terms of its outcomes. Newsreel's formal development from the post-war until the political and cultural contexts in which it has currently evolved brings up a more enriched genealogy of political filmmaking, revealing complex relationships –and a web of influences beyond national film canon– between historical political cinema and the 'state of the form' (JAMESON, 1992) of this cinema.

The newsreel as a film form

The newsreel is one of the major and most constant film forms in the history of cinema. Prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century, persisting in the second half of the century, namely through its destructuration by the aesthetic (Jonas Mekas) and political (Jean-Luc Godard's *ciné-tracts*, Dziga Vertov Group, among other examples) avant-gardes (WOLLEN, 1975), the newsreel constitutes a transhistorical and cosmopolitan film form. Shaped in 1911 by Charles Pathé, and characterized in its earliest period by the predominance of its informative nature over the aesthetic dimension, as well as by standardized film procedures, newsreel's language would be soon reinvented by individual filmmakers and filmmaker's collectives. Dziga Vertov's newsreels series constitute one of its first historical moments of destructuration.

In 1918, shortly after the October Revolution, Mikhaïl Koltsov, who headed the Moscow Film Committee's weekly newsreel section, hired Vertov as his assistant. In this frame, Vertov worked together with Lev Kuleshov and Edouard Tissé. Vertov began editing documentary footage and became an editor for 43 issues of Kino-Nedelya, the first Soviet weekly newsreel. The film footage was compiled into organic newsreels, which were then distributed by agit-trains and agit steamboats all across the Soviet Union. The full-length film *The Anniversary of the Revolution* (*Godovshchina revolyutsii*, 1919), for instance, was entirely composed of assembled newsreel footage. In 1919, the filmmaker co-founded the Kinoks, a film collective which defended newsreel, in line with Lenin's conceptions, as the film form of the Soviet Revolution. Vertov defined newsreel as '*revolutionary cinema's path of development [sic]... It leads past the heads of film actors and beyond the studio roof, into life, into genuine reality, full of its own drama and detective plots.*' (VERTOV, 1985a: 32) In 1923, with regard to newsreel and *Kinoglaz's* (Kino-eye) theory (the camera as an instrument, much like the human eye, to explore the events of everyday life), he considered 'Kino-eye as the union of science with newsreel to further the battle for the communist decoding of the world, as an attempt to show the truth on the screen' (VERTOV, 1985b: 41-42).

In 1922, Vertov started the Kino Pravda newsreel series, a movie version of the Party paper, *Pravda*. Bill Nichols argues that Vertov's film praxis, founded on newsreel, and his theoretical writings were fundamental in delimiting documentary as a film genre (NICHOLS, 2001). Annette Michelson states that 'Vertov's concern with technique and process' led to 'a disdain of the mimetic' (MICHELSON, 1985: XXV). In his turn, Nichols considers that 'Kino-eye contributed to the construction of a new society by demonstrating how the raw materials of everyday life as caught by the camera could be synthetically reconstructed into a new order' (NICHOLS, 2001: 218).

If Vertov's newsreel series are a decisive step in the development of another film form –archival footage's appropriation (a significant trend of Soviet Film School, which can also be found, for instance, in Esfir Shub's filmography)–, the 'reconstruction' of 'everyday life' 'into a new order' through film editing creates tension between the raw materials as indexical traces, and its re-organisation and re-signification within a formal system problematising realism, and mimetic tradition. Vertov plays with all the possibilities of film editing, disregarding formal continuity and chronology to

1. Unless indicated, all the translations from non-English texts are mine.

accomplish a poetic representation of ‘reality’. Problematising the relationship between film and reality, representing actual and possible worlds, Vertov’s newsreels series lie at the edge of two conceptions of the aesthetic production: one, which, following the blueprint of Marxist aesthetics, considers art as a reflection of reality; another, which recognizes its outcomes on the social field and on the aesthetic sphere, including in terms of transformative *mimêsis*.

From that moment on, newsreel, in its non-dominant form, would combine powerful innovation –to the point of even denaturalising the film medium– with political engagement. Newsreel would evolve in a powerful and dynamic tension between formal experimentation and political content. To trace the history of newsreel as a film form implies then to examine its deconstruction moments, which often coincide with revolutionary periods: the Soviet Revolution, as stated before, Cuban Revolution, as well as, among other possible examples, Portuguese and Mozambique revolutions. The cases briefly studied in this article point towards ‘form-events’ or ‘film-events’, that is, film representations which not only reflect ‘reality’, but which also transform cinematic history and general history through aesthetic innovation and political engagement.

A brief history of newsreel’s deconstruction moments - I

The Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (Cuban Institute on Cinematographic Arts and Industry, ICAIC) was the first cultural institution created after the Cuban Revolution in March of 1959. The law of the Congress of the Ministers of the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Cuba giving birth to the ICAIC defines cinema as ‘the most powerful and suggestive medium of artistic expression and dissemination and the most direct and extensive vehicle of education and popularization of ideas’ (*Cine Cubano*, 140, 1998: 13). This is the framework within which ICAIC began producing the *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano* (ICAIC Latin-American Newsreel), a weekly newsreel shown from 1960 to 1990 for a total of 1493 editions of about ten minutes each.

The law creating the ICAIC states explicitly its programmatic lines: placing cinema between art (‘the most powerful and suggestive medium of artistic expression’) and pedagogy/propaganda (‘the most direct and extensive vehicle of education and popularization of ideas’), it anticipates the direction of film policy in Cuba. For Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, ‘Cuban cinema emerged as one more facet of reality within

the revolution. Directors learned to make films on the march... They interested viewers more by what they showed than through how they showed it’ (GUTIÉRREZ ALEA, 1997: 108). The crew of the *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano* was indeed formed by technicians with little training, such as Álvarez, who was the sole director of the program for over three decades. Nevertheless, the subsequent development of Cuban revolutionary cinema would soon find a balance between content and form. Maintaining a productive tension between political engagement and formal experimentation, the ICAIC newsreels exemplify one of Third Cinema’s major concepts, Julio García Espinosa’s notion of ‘imperfect cinema’.

In his seminal article *Por un cine imperfecto* (*For an Imperfect Cinema*, 1969), García Espinosa affirms the potentiality of contingency (namely of technical contingency) in relation to film’s representative principle as a necessary step towards the ‘abolition of “elites” [sic]’ (1979: 24), the transformation of the spectators into ‘agents’ (1979: 24), and therefore the elimination of the separation between the subject and the object of representation. In García Espinosa’s words, ‘imperfect cinema is no longer interested in quality or technique. It can be created equally well with a Mitchell or with an 8 mm camera, in a studio or in a guerrilla camp in the middle of the jungle. [...] The only thing it is interested in is how an artist responds to the following question: What are you doing in order to overcome the barrier of the “cultured” [sic] elite audience which up to now has conditioned the form of your work?’ (1979: 26). In line with the conceptions of other Latin-American filmmakers, such as Rocha (the concepts of ‘aesthetics of violence’ and ‘aesthetics of hunger’, developed in 1965 manifesto *Estética da Fome* [*Aesthetics of Hunger*], which is quoted in the article [ROCHA, 2015], Ruy Guerra (the notion of ‘aesthetics of possibility’ [GUERRA, 2011]) or Octavio Getino and Fernando ‘Pino’ Solanas (‘Third Cinema’ and ‘Liberation Cinema’ [GETINO AND SOLANAS, 2015]), García Espinosa argues that the aesthetics of imperfection would not only be a means to achieve a decolonized and non-dominant (GRAMSCI, 2012; ALTHUSSER, 1973) cinema –affirming the specificities of Cuban and Latin-American culture–, but that it would also constitute a new poetics of cinema, defined as a “partisan” [sic] and “committed” [sic] poetics² (1979: 25). This operative poetics is approached as a transformative poetics, *i.e.*, as a poetics reflecting the ‘revolutionary process’, but also transforming it, contributing to ‘abolish artistic culture as a fragmentary human activity’ (1979: 25), leading art ‘not to disappear into nothingness’ (1979: 26), but to ‘disappear

2. In the original, ‘poética interesada’ (‘interested poetics’).

into everything' (1979: 26). Suggesting the suppression of the aesthetic sphere, the disappearance of artistic specialization, and the 'possibility of universal participation' (1979: 25) – therefore the unification of the subject and the object of representation–, García Espinosa considers that the goal of this new poetics is 'to commit suicide, to disappear as such' (1979: 25). This position is close to the perspective assumed by the young Karl Marx in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In this philosophical work immediately preceding 1845 'epistemological break' (ALTHUSSER, 1973), art is defined as the prefiguration of the intensified sensibility of men liberated from historical alienation. Aesthetic production does not respond to the real collective consciousness, but instead to a possible consciousness, a consciousness to come (MARX, 2007). This position would be later reviewed by Marx, namely in the third volume of *Capital*. Literature –French Realism– is perceived *a contrario* as the reflection or the representation of a given socio-economic reality, and therefore located at the level of the ideological superstructures³; the prevailing conception of Marxist aesthetics.

The New Latin-American cinema cannot strictly be regarded as a remarkably eclectic aesthetic movement, constituted by extraordinary cinematic *œuvres*, but as a theoretical *praxis* (ALTHUSSER, 1973) of cinema, including a *corpus* of speculative texts, and mobilizing, as Soviet Cinema before, a set of new modes of film production and distribution. In this sense, the ICAIC's cinematic *corpus*, along with its structures of production and distribution, and the theoretical approach of some of the filmmakers working at the institute, exemplify this transcultural horizon. With a significant documentary production involving newsreels, but also including fiction films –as Gutiérrez Alea's notable *Memories of Underdevelopment* (*Memorias del subdesarrollo*, 1968)–, the ICAIC's structures of production and distribution exemplify García Espinosa's 'imperfect cinema,' a cinema which affirms the potentiality of contingency. The ICAIC newsreels were produced very fast, often with obsolete technical equipment. The newsreels were filmed in cellulose acetate support with ORWO magnetic sound. Copies in 35 mm were made for the movie theaters, and in 16 mm to be distributed throughout the country by the *cine móvil* (mobile cinema). Furthermore, the ICAIC's *corpus* is predominantly constituted by 'film-events' insofar as these films do not only represent (or reflect) the Cuban and the international revolutionary processes (ALTHUSSER, 1973), but they also transform the history of cinema –providing the

formal basis for Cuban, Latin-American and Third Cinema– and general history – modifying the perception of recent and historical events.

The ICAIC's production leads thus to reconsider the relationship between art as a reflection of 'reality' (a major problem in cinema due to the indexical nature of the film image) and as a productive force, categories which themselves suppose an exchange, and a dynamic tension, between political content and formal experimentation. Within this framework, the ICAIC worked on two inseparable fronts: on the one hand, reviewing history and actuality; on the other hand, transgressing the canon. Álvarez states that the formal innovation of his films emerges as a response to the dominant newsreels (ÁLVAREZ, 1970). In his view, 'the urgency of the Third World, this creative impatience in the artist produce art of this period, the art of the lives of two-thirds of the world population' (ÁLVAREZ, 2009). Álvarez's *Now!* (1965), perhaps the best-known ICAIC newsreel, and Humberto Solás' *Simparelé* (1974) stand as examples of these two gestures: rewriting history and actuality through aesthetic innovation and canon transgression. Both films propose a counter- or a non-hegemonic aesthetics, the first one innovating newsreel through new forms of narration, editing, archival footage's appropriation, use of soundtrack, and *détournement* strategies (DEBORD and WOLMAN, 2006); the second one refreshing cinematic reenactment. In *Now!*, the image takes on a new dialectical legibility, a restitution which is the condition for the emergence of counter-actuality. In *Simparelé*, dialogism ensures a 'counterpoint' (FERRO, 1993: 13) to the history of Haitian Revolution, and to its repercussions in the history of the continent.

The ICAIC newsreel's formal procedures and the theoretical assumptions underlying their paratext may be inscribed in the genealogy of Soviet Cinema. However, this historical declension also constitutes a major deconstruction moment of the newsreel as a film form. At this exceptional moment in time, newsreel finds itself in conflict with dominant structures, which are deconstructed. This process gives rise to a new structure, which is oriented toward a new state of equilibrium, shaping New Latin American and Tricontinental aesthetics. At the same time, newsreel is redefined not as essentially a vehicle for propaganda, but, conversely, as a film form driven by a politico-aesthetic emancipatory logic. The ICAIC newsreels' ability to make cinema appear as a site of confrontation, allowing images to make visible political transformation, along

3. If we consider the conceptions developed in 1859 *Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, particularly with regard to

'the unequal development of material production and, e.g., that of art,' Marxist position appears as much more complex.

with their aesthetic procedures can indeed be found in a broad and heterogeneous range of Latin-American films from the 1960s and 1970s, from Rocha's *Maranhão 66* (1966) and *1968* (a collaboration with Affonso Beato) and Solano and Getino's *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos*, 1968) to Raymundo Gleyzer's *Swift*, *Comunicados Cinematográficos del ERP n° 5 y 7* (1971), and Marta Rodríguez and Jorge Silva's *The Brickmakers* (*Chircales*, 1964-1971), among many other examples.

The *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano* collaborated in the creation of other national newsreels in countries like Nicaragua (INCINE Newsreel) and Panama (GECU). However, its influence goes beyond Latin America. In the aftermath of Mozambique's independence, for instance, a Cuban delegation that included Álvarez⁴ visited Maputo to form technicians from the National Institute of Cinema (INC) as part of an ICAIC's program for training African film professionals. The aesthetics of *Kuxa Kanema*, Mozambican national newsreel program, was clearly influenced by the ICAIC newsreels.

Ismail Xavier highlights a singular turn which takes place in the 1960s: from an aesthetic point of view, Brazilian Cinema Novo and the New Latin American Cinema question 'the teleology implying that it is up to the core countries... to produce the cutting-edge artistic experiences' (XAVIER, 2007: 12). For the first time in the history of cinema, the Northern hemisphere is represented in the cinema of the Southern hemispheric countries, as, for instance, in Rocha's *Claro* (1975), a film in which the Third World permeates and tropicalizes the ruins of the ancient world. For the first time in the history of cinema, the cinemas from the South have an aesthetic impact –and an intrinsically political impact, within a framework of reciprocity– on the cinemas from the North. In 1967, Rocha states that 'Jean-Luc Godard is the heir of *cinema novo* [sic]' (ROCHA, 2006: 311). One can actually note the influence of New Latin American Cinema's aesthetics on Dziga Vertov Group's filmography, while the *ciné-tracts* and the *cinigiornali liberi* manifest heavy influences from the ICAIC newsreels, although their genealogy can be traced back to Soviet Cinema. Also in the context of the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-1975, filmmaker's collectives such as Grupo Zero and Cinequanon produce newsreels clearly influenced by the ICAIC newsreels.⁵

4. Álvarez devoted two films to the Mozambican Revolution, *Maputo: The Ninth Meridian* (*Maputo: Meridiano Novo*, 1976) and *Nova Sinfonia* (1982).

5. Álvarez directed a film on Portuguese Revolution, *El milagro de la tierra morena* (1975).

A brief history of newsreel's deconstruction moments - II

The Newsreel Group, a filmmaker's collective, is created in 1967 in New York to produce and distribute militant cinema. The Newsreel Group stood for collective forms of film production and played an important role in the 1960s political movement in the USA. The cooperative documented, for instance, the 1967 March on the Pentagon, the occupation of Columbia University in 1968 and the Chicago Democratic Convention in the same year. Films as *The Case against Lincoln Center* (1968), or *Off the Pig* (1968), one of the first films made about the Black Panther Party, including footage of Panther recruitment and training,⁶ testify the influence of the ICAIC newsreel's aesthetics on the collective.

Newsreel's subsequent deconstruction would be achieved by Kramer, one of the founders of the Newsreel Group. In an interview to *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1968, Kramer states that a revolutionary movement was then under construction in the USA, adding that there was no distinction between 'our' political role and 'our' role as filmmakers (DELAHAYE, 1968). The subjective dimension of political change was already at that moment a central point of Kramer's thought: 'We are politically engaged in all sort of things not only as filmmakers, but also as political filmmakers and even as individuals without a camera, with our bodies' (DELAHAYE, 1968: 51). For Kramer, who brilliantly uses the metaphor '*a maison qui brûle*' ('a burning house'), quoting Luis Rosales, to characterize Hollywood in the 60's, the conception and praxis of political cinema would thus imply to rethink the aesthetic forms departing from politics. In the Winter 1968 issue of *Film Quarterly*, which dedicates a special feature to the Newsreel Group, Kramer defines the collective's cinema: 'Our films remind some people of battle footage: grainy, camera weaving around trying to get the material and still not get beaten/trapped. Well, we, and many others, are at war. [...] We want to make films that unnerve, that shake assumptions, that threaten, that do not soft-sell, but hopefully [...] explode like grenades in peoples' faces, or open minds like a good can opener' (KRAMER, 1968-1969).

The cinema of Robert Kramer possesses the power of articulating politics and subjectivity, and the ability of thinking technology creatively. These characteristics are inseparable from a formal research related to the transition to a *lived* cinema, in which

6. Jean-Luc Godard's *One plus One* is from the same year.

politics is permeated by subjective experience, and collective history is beset by memory. Kramer tackles the framework and the methodology of militant cinema: his cinema affirms, in its most corporal dimension, politics of subjectivity and politics of desire.

Kramer directs *Ice* (1969) against this background. The film retraces the story of a New York militant group in the context of COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program, a CIA's covert program to disrupt domestic political organizations), and of political struggle's radicalization. The film's uncertain temporality is considered to be an example of 'prospective cinema' by Dominique Noguez (1987: 62), as it represents a time to come, reinforced by the diegetic imaginary war between the USA and Mexico.

Ice's mise en scène, its grainy image, its long sequence shots, the focal changes and the rupture of all forms of naturalism, particularly when representing situations of loss of sight or loss of control, owes more to the New American Cinema and to the New Latin-American Cinema stylistic forms than to those of militant cinema. However, militant cinema is present in the film as a metanarrative element through the didactic short movies directed by the fictional militant group that intercut the plot. The aesthetics of these short movies is symptomatically very close to that of Newsreel productions and of Kramer's first movie, *FALN* (*Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional*, 1965, co-directed by Peter Gessner), entirely edited with images shot by the Venezuelan guerrilla fighters, which insists that revolution would imply the adoption of reinvented forms of life and the creation of a new ideal human being.

Militant cinema is questioned and formally overcome by *Ice*. To Nicole Brenez, engaged cinema, on the contrary of militant cinema, do not 'remain indifferent to aesthetic questions' (BRENEZ, 2011). Quite the opposite, 'the cinema of intervention exists only insofar as it raises the fundamental cinematographic questions: why make an image, which one, and how? With whom and for whom?' (BRENEZ, 2011) *Ice* is an engaged film that critically contains militant cinema as an objectual metanarrative element. The complex role Kramer plays in the film as one of its leading actors detaches it as well from the militant cinema. In one of the central sequences, Robert, interpreted by Kramer, is emasculated by the secret police. The punishment emphasizes the imbrications between politics, subjectivity, and sexuality while the plot's ulterior development indicates a clear separation from the Newsreel Group's programmatic line.

The subjective and authorial marks of Kramer's films were in fact at the edge of militant cinema, achieving a deconstruction of the newsreel as a film form. Indeed, *Ice* was rejected by the Newsreel Group for its subjectivism and its political position. It would only be released in 1970 because the Newsreel Group considered that to distribute it officially would mean to acknowledge the cooperative's support for armed struggle groups, which some of its members would join subsequently. According to Eric Breitbart, at that moment member of Newsreel, *Ice* contributed to 'prematurely put an end to the group' (BREITBART, 2001: 212).

In *Milestones* (1975), as in *Ice*, we find a collective body, a political community composed of a constellation of individual bodies in the process of becoming – Mary, who is going to be a mother; Terry, the demobbed GI, who is killed by a cop; Helen (the writer and filmmaker Grace Paley), who edits a film about Vietnam War; the political militant who just came out of prison and wants to become a blue-collar... However, the film is not only a communitarian or a generational portrait of the New Left, but, instead, a cinematic essay on the equation between the collective and the subjective, the limits and contradictions of militancy, bodies' implication in the political struggle, and biopolitical regulations. To Serge Daney, the film's 'cast of [...] bodies [...] creates neither a fresco, nor a chronicle, nor a document but a "fabric" [*sic*]' (DANEY, 1976: 55). The patchwork of stories' entanglement emerges from their material articulation as much as from the lacunae, the intervals, and the ellipses. The narrative is also structured by certain scenes of intense physicality and synesthesia: the delivery, one of the film's central sequences; Gail's attempted rape scene, which construction breaks definitively the border between documentary and fiction; John, the blind potter, interpreted by John Douglas, the film's co-director and one of the Newsreel Group's founders, the one who cannot produce images but objects, living for that reason on the margin of postindustrial society.

There is also a becoming-Indian in the film, particularly present in the employ of ethnographic forms to represent the hippie community, which is inspired by Kramer's biographical background. The transformation is mentioned by one of the characters – 'living in the desert [...] becoming Indian'. The inserts that punctuate the film convoke a historical reverse angle, retracing the history and the iconography of slavery, state repression, and biopower technologies in the USA. There is an outside that is gathered by the film, an attempt to inscribe those bodies in the 'contrived corridors' (ELIOT, 2002) of history, a

movement which has as a counterpoint the effort to redefine the outside, to revise national history departing from a singular intersection of subjectivities.

Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal (1977-1979), co-directed by Philip Spinelli, deconstructs the newsreel as a film form. On the one hand, the narrative is structured by the confrontation of two different temporalities and spatialities: 1975-1977, the years of the shooting in Portugal; San Francisco in 1978, the space and time of the film's prolog and epilog. Temporal and spatial distance favor an analytical representation of the Portuguese Revolution, which is conceived as a dynamic process. There is an explicit subjective mediation of the Revolution's representation, enacted through the voice-over, the modes of enunciation, the graphics and, particularly, the prolog and the epilog.

The subjective, self-reflexive and self-referential dimensions of the prolog and the epilog locate *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal* in a very fragile ground at the frontier of political cinema and self-portrait. The film affirms self-portrait's potentiality as a political form in opposition to militant and documentary's film ideology of objectivity, transparency, and purity.

Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal results from a reflection on dialectic pairs embedded in the notion and praxis of the Revolution. These pairs are set out in the successive intertitles: 'events/history, facts/principles, actuality/potentiality [...] words/images [...] history/memory'. Kramer's dialectic thought finds its formal equivalences in the multitemporal narrative structure and in the editing's fragmentary and discontinuous dynamics, highlighting the interstitiality announced by the film's Balzacian title. The abrupt cut of the newsreels by the intertitles make visible the in-actuality of actuality. This in-actuality of actuality is also present in the interval between the shooting and the editing processes, made visible by means of three elements: the prolog and the epilog's dating, the intertitles, and the voice-over.

Alongside with Rocha's segments of the collective work *The Guns and the People (As Armas e o Povo, 1975)*, another full-length film on Portuguese Revolution, *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal* –and, in general terms, the whole cinema of Robert Kramer– represents a moment of deconstruction of the newsreel as a film form. The representation of reality is consciously filtered by subjectivity, while the 'impure' aesthetic and narrative procedures render visible the inactuality of actuality. The subjectivization of newsreel takes place in a period of a self-referential turn of cinema. Extending the tradition of

pictorial and literary self-portrait, self-referential film forms impregnate the work of filmmakers such as Chantal Akerman, Juan Downey, and Godard. The proliferation of self-referential forms, unifying the subject and the object of representation, highlight a significant trend of the political cinema in the 1970s.

Newsreel's 'state of the form'

Contemporary cinematic representations of the political event point to an ongoing dynamic dialectic of 'structuration' and 'destruction' (LUKÁCS, 2012, 1968) of the newsreel, and to the crossing of boundaries between the 'objective' and the 'subjective'/self-referential' declensions of this film form. The problem of the dynamic formal phenomena is wide and complex, and it cannot be dealt with exhaustively within the framework of this paper. The self-referential turn of cinema in the 1970s would culminate in the so-called 'creative documentary', documentary's contemporary canonical model. The peak of 'creative documentary' is symptomatically accompanied by the return and the deconstruction –namely through its self-referential declension– of the newsreel. In the films of Cohen and George documenting Occupy Wall Street, 15-M, and Nuit Debout, the return of the newsreel highlights the link between the economic structures and the film manifestations, while indicating its dynamic process of formal evolution.

In its 'state of the form' (JAMESON, 1992), newsreel's process of deconstruction is pushed to its extreme limits, finding itself in conflict with the background of film forms (newsreel and self-referential cinema's traditions) as well as with the background of the everyday political experience. Particularly in George's filmography, this process gives rise to a new structure. Jameson argues that, with the failure of the traditional distinctions between the spheres of work and leisure, to look at images is fundamental to the functioning of most dominant institutions (JAMESON, 2011). Jonathan Crary considers that, under such conditions, 'most of the historically accumulated understandings of the term "observer" [sic] are destabilized' (CRARY, 2014: 47). Associating a critical reading of the tradition of avant-garde/experimental and political cinema, political engagement and formal innovation, contemporary newsreels constitute true acts of seeing –affirming image's productivity– in a network of permanent observation (FOUCAULT, 1993).

Since 2009, the cinematic landscape has been prolific in works that not only constitute film inscriptions of history, visual documents about the emergence of an 'insurgent citizenship' (HOLSTON, 2009), and the process of reconfiguration of the public sphere, but that also establish a fertile and transversal dialogue with the history of avant-garde/experimental and

political cinema, particularly newsreel. Those film objects interrogate the current state of things –when images become technologies of control– from the point of view of a critical analysis of the dominant forms of visual representation.

Cohen's *Gravity Hill Newsreels* (2011) constitute a series of ten newsreels about Occupy Wall Street Movement. The series was conceived to be shown at New York IFC Center Cinema, preceding, as in the past, the screening of a feature film. The political event's representation is based upon an exploration of the shot/reverse shot's logic as well as upon contraposition of verticality (architecture) to horizontality (people). Through a virtuous editing and an expressive usage of the music of the ex-Fugazzi Guy Picciotto, Cohen manages to intertwine, opposing them, Manhattan's architecture and the citizens' collective movements in an organic narrative innovating newsreel as a film form.

George's *Vers Madrid ! – The Burning Bright* (2011-2014) is defined, in its official synopsis, as an 'experimental newsreel trying to present some political experimentations and new life forms'. It constitutes an aesthetic insurrection manifesto opened upon three different temporalities: first of all, 15-M's political events in Madrid; secondly, the history of class struggle and the history of avant-garde/experimental and political cinema, evoked both as memory and a matter which is reactivated by the film; finally, the future, it is to say, the almost imperceptible ongoing historical variations and transformations, condensed in dialectical haptic images of radiant lights, sunflowers, undisciplined bodies, and resistant luminescence.

Class struggle and class relations are represented through the collective actions of the social body. In the heterogeneity of its materials, the film summons up multiple literary and cinematographic references, ranging from William Blake (*The Burning Bright*) to Kramer (its subtitle is *Scenes from the Class Struggle and the Revolution* evoking *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal*) to Calderón de la Barca and Federico García Lorca. The low-angle shots, the complex multitemporal sound design, the work of ellipsis, the dialectical organic editing through qualitative, formal and material jumps, which expands and highlights the temporal dimension of the events, the straight and direct cuts that link visually and narratively the individual, the people and the urban architectures where word flows are the main formal traits which allow George to organize a narrative expressive of the complex social confrontation of late capitalism.

Vers Madrid !'s genealogy can be traced back to Soviet Cinema and the different newsreel's deconstruction moments analyzed in this paper. However, a new structure arises from the combination of these procedures with elements from newsreel's self-referential declension. In some of the film sequences, George is stopped by the police and has to run away. The shaky oblique hand-held camera shots reveal the presence of the filmmaker and his effective and affective involvement in the events. In *Paris est une fête – Un film en 18 vagues* (2017), George's most recent film, the documentation of Nuit Debout is intercut with sequences in which the filmmaker's *flâneries* become a programmatic variation of the Pasolinian figure of the 'free indirect subjective' (PASOLINI, 1991). This mode of cinematic perception and enunciation establishes a system of relationships between visibility's inside and outside, the possibility and the impossibility to represent 'reality', what it is and what might have been, actual and possible worlds. At the same time, it highlights the gap between cinematic representation and natural perception.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to examine the historical and formal evolution of the newsreel as a film form, focusing on its major deconstruction moments. Newsreel's deconstruction moments coincide with exceptional political events, such as the Soviet Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the generalized recession of capitalism economy starting in 1974 (MANDEL, 1974), and contemporary forms of insurrection. The newsreel's dynamic process of formal evolution points therefore to the link between the economic structures and the film manifestations – a principle which might be applied to the evolution of all film forms. However, this transversal process of permanent mutation shows the capacity of cinema not only to represent, but also to transform 'reality'. The cases studied in this article point towards 'form-events' or 'film-events', *i.e.*, film representations which not only represent 'reality', but which also productively transform the history of newsreel, the history of cinema, and general history. Therefore, newsreel's evolution seems to be produced against the background of film forms as well as against the background of 'the everyday experience of life' (JAUSS, 2013), and to have an impact on these two spheres. Within this framework, political cinema involves always formal innovation. Implicit in this definition is the short-circuit of any crude binary opposition between political and avant-garde/experimental cinema. •

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ImagiNation

José Carlos Avellar

ABSTRACT

In this piece written in 2004, José Carlos Avellar explores the emergence of Cinema Novo in the '60s and its legacy for Brazilian films in the '90s, especially *The Oyster and the Wind* (Walter Lima Jr., 1996) and *Central Station* (Walter Salles, 1998). To that end, the author considers the metaphor of speech/writing to suggest that the movement possessed the creative spontaneity of oral language; the search for a cinematographic identity, in relation to the national culture, the New Latin American Cinema and European and US cinema; and, finally, the attitude of the spectator when faced with images which, according to him, should never undermine his ability to imagine.

KEYWORDS

Cinema Novo, New Latin American Cinema, *The Oyster and the Wind*, *Central Station*, brazilian cinema, cinematographic writing, spectator, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Glauber Rocha, Walter Lima Jr.

This piece was written by José Carlos Avellar (1936-2016) for the exhibition and seminar *Tudo é Brasil*, organized by Lauro Cavalcanti and produced by Paço Imperial and the Itaú Cultural Institute in Rio de Janeiro between August and October of 2004, and in São Paulo from November 2004 to February 2005. The original version in Portuguese can be found on his web page: www.escrevercinema.com.

1.

Imagine something that is simultaneously oyster and wind. The oyster, the shell, stagnation, something that is closed and also open to everywhere, something without shape or body, something which is only movement. Let's consider the title of the film by Walter Lima Jr., *The Oyster and the Wind* (*A Ostra e o Vento*, 1996), as if he wanted to refer not only to the characters, to the good relationship between Marcela and Saulo (her being the oyster, him the wind) or the dispute between José and Marcela (him being the oyster, her the wind), but as an image that suggests to the spectator a way to watch the film (or, more generally, a way to watch any and every film). Let's think about the title as the initial breeze to construct the film; the idea that organizes the story and the way it is narrated. And also, as the expression of an immobility that is highly mobile: the special relationship between the spectator and the film when it is screened. Not the film when the spectator continues to reinvent in his mind what he has seen during the screening, but the film at the moment when there is only image before his eyes. The relationship between the film and the spectator at the moment of screening is one of open/close, movement/immobile. The film (open like air in motion, which gusts everywhere while remaining closed on the screen) is oyster and wind. The spectator (who is still in the projection room like an oyster inside an oyster, and who transports his imagination to everywhere) is both wind and oyster.

2.

Let's imagine Brazilian cinema in the '60s, not exclusively but especially Cinema Novo, as the equivalent of *speech*. From this standpoint, maybe it is possible to think of current Brazilian cinema as the equivalent of *written language*, a way of writing the oral language of the '60s. What is more, let's imagine Brazilian films of the '60s as the individual speech of each filmmaker, as a result of what we could call a *director cinema*. From this point, it is perhaps possible to think of cinema before Cinema Novo as a *spectator cinema*, an attempt to imitate Hollywood's writing at that time. Maybe it is possible to think of a *spectator cinema* and a *director cinema* as basic impulses, not of the idea, but as impulses of the practice of cinema, in particular of the practice of cinema in social groups subordinated by colonization –

be it political, economic or cultural. Colonization can be the violence that one nation imposes on another, or which, within a specific country, one sector of society imposes on another. The colonist may have sent in troops or just films, it doesn't matter. When a group that is economically and materially stronger imposes onto another group, through any kind of pressure, the inhibition that prevents free invention and which conditions people to behave as spectators, then they all become oyster rather than wind, and not just as film spectators.

3.

Maybe when Mário Peixoto directed *Limite* (1930), he was trying to speak to part of the European photographic avant-garde of the late '20s: Moholy-Nagy, Kertész, Burchartz, Man Ray, Hausmann, Renger-Patzsch and Rodtchenko. Maybe when Humberto Mauro directed *Ganga Bruta* (1933), he was trying to talk to another sector of the European photographic avant-garde: Cartier-Bresson, August Sander and Alfred Stieglitz. It was a conversation that was direct and conscious, or mediated by any other image, in a magazine or a film, influenced by them, because maybe Peixoto and Mauro were indeed engaged in a dialogue in the general belief that cinema allows us to watch more, and better. Then Vertov spoke of the possibility of 'making visible the invisible, of lighting the darkness, of watching without limits and without distances.' Then Grierson spoke of the possibility of 'observing and choosing moments of life itself to create a new art.' Mauro, in a dialogue with Grierson, tried to bring to Brazilians a more accurate version of ourselves on the screen – to bring 'our environment, our land, nation, Brazil as it is' to cinema. Peixoto, in a dialogue with Vertov, tried to show that cinema makes us watch less and worse; it makes invisible what is visible, and herein lies its strength. What can be seen is shown just to establish a tension with what cannot be seen. Cinema covers, it hides and cuts. It actually starts with a cut, as if the commanding voice that interrupts the shot – 'Cut!' – marked the beginning of it all. Maybe we can photograph ourselves as a part (not as a whole), a photo taken before digital photography and which, before our very eyes, extends for an infinite time the process of developing, the photographic paper in the developer, the image is formed and at the same time it is modified by a tiny beam of light. Maybe we reveal ourselves in the same way that Walter Lima Jr. observed in a statement in the first issue of the magazine *Cinemas* (September/October, 1996):

'It is significant that within Brazilian cinema there are two films that are such clear archetypes of our research: *Limite* and *Ganga Bruta*. Something you have to refine and something that determines your space, while suggesting that it exists beyond itself. This is strange, but in a way it creates a parameter' (MATTOS et al., 1996).

4.

Let's imagine that this issue can be considered at the same time as an oyster (everything is Brazil) and wind (Brazil is everything).

5.

Let's imagine that not everything that is ours belongs to us, and that we do not wish to own a part of what is ours. As Nelson Pereira dos Santos stated in a conversation with Maria Rita Galvão about Vera Cruz (1981): 'We wanted a cinema that reflected the Brazilian reality, as if it was possible to make a cinema that didn't reflect it, that wasn't related to the reality that originated it. As if Vera Cruz itself wasn't the reflection of a thousand things'. A line by Zavattini (as Nelson said: 'We didn't look for support in its idea system, but rather in sentences'): 'Cinema has to look for truth, poetry comes after that'. An image of Eisenstein (as Leon Hirszman said: 'I saw *Potemkin* and I went crazy! I thought I was watching the Renaissance, you know?'). Let's remember: *The Grand Moment (O Grande Momento, 1958)* by Roberto Santos; *Pedreira de São Diogo (1962)* by Hirszman. Let's imagine: Zavattini and Eisenstein as samba, readiness and other *bossas*. Vera Cruz, our thing?¹

6.

Let's imagine that Brazilian films, beyond the stories told in each of them, all say together that we possess a fragmented vision of ourselves. Maybe cinema, maybe even the country as a whole, undergoes a similar process to the one in the documentary *O Fio da Memória* (1991), presented by Eduardo Coutinho as a condition imposed onto black culture: following abolition, black people – illiterate, uncultured, without citizenship and without a family – had to fight against disintegration, gather all the pieces of their identity, and to build 'the Brazil according to ourselves?', as Gabriel Joaquim dos Santos wrote in his diary. He lived in the town of São Pedro d'Aldeia, less than 200 kilometers away from Rio de Janeiro. He built his house there, the Casa da Flor, using objects he picked out of the garbage – pieces of glass, broken tiles, pieces of brick, stone or wood – and regularly wrote down fragments of life in Brazil in his notebooks from the moment he learned to read, when he was 34 years old, in 1926, until his death in 1985, at the age of 92. Let's imagine that Brazilian films tell stories with similar eyes to those of Gabriel, stubbornly wanting to build a house, a place, a country.

1. The author is talking here about the famous samba song by Noel Rosa 'São Coisas Nossas'. The chorus goes: 'O samba, a prontidão / e outras bossas, / são nossas coisas, / são coisas nossas!'. The translation in English would be: 'The samba, the readiness / and other *bossas* / are our things, / are things from us'.

7.

Let's imagine a foreign spectator. Foreign not because, by chance, he is not in the country where he was born, but because he has the condition of a foreigner; or because he is surviving outside the space where he could be fulfilled; or because the conditions by which he received a news bulletin, or a soap opera, or a film on television turned him into a distracted spectator, and he is always foreign to the picture in front of him. When, in the adventure in *Foreign Land (Terra Estrangeira, 1996)* by Walter Salles and Daniela Thomas, Brazilian Alex, who has emigrated from Brazil to Portugal, sells her passport (nowadays a Brazilian passport is worth nothing, says the buyer), or when she says she feels sorry for the Portuguese (because they crossed the ocean with great effort just to discover Brazil) – when she acts and talks like that, Alex is not just behaving according to the context of the plot of the film. She is also (and mainly) expressing dramatically the feeling that engulfed Brazilian middle-class youngsters at the beginning of the '90s. The adventure on the screen experiences in another dimension what the spectators really experienced: the sense of belonging to a country that doesn't work, of lacking roots or identity, of feeling that their land is foreign, of surviving (let's remember two moments in the film) like a ship beached on a sand bank, like a car speeding to cross the border.

8.

Let's imagine that thinking about art as an expression of a certain reality means thinking, at the same time, about reality as an artistic expression, or rather (not to imagine too much), thinking of art as the possibility of foreseeing a certain fact and expressing a reality that still doesn't exist.

9.

Let's imagine that when Joaquim Pedro de Andrade said in 1966, in an interview for *O processo do Cinema Novo* by Alex Viany (2001), that 'There is always a layer of interpenetration, of communication, between the intelligence of developed countries and ours, of less developed countries', he was searching not for a dialogue with the European or North American avant-garde, but rather with Latin American expression at that time. Together with Solanas, 'The underdeveloped countries are victims of a neocolonialism in which the standardization of cultural models substitutes the occupation armies'; Glauber, 'An

'Bossa' is a difficult word to translate in this context, because it means, among other things: convex architectural decorations, a vocation or talent, the way the body moves when walking and a way of doing things.

2. Grammatical disagreement in the original: 'nós próprio'.

economically underdeveloped cinema should not be culturally underdeveloped'; and with Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 'We suggest making a cinema that is free from the limitations of the studio, a street cinema that is directly in contact with the people and their troubles.' When Joaquim says that nobody can avoid 'receiving information from the world's cultural avant-garde' and being 'obviously reached by this information', he continues with the discussion of that time: how can we reject 'directly imported values and processes that are not really connected to our reality'? How can we 'find the genuine Brazilian processes'? Joaquim recalls the attempt to adopt an approach to this problem at the Week of Modern Art, and says: 'We would gain a lot if we analyzed the Movement of 1922 once again in relation to what is happening now.'

10.

Maybe, close-up (like an oyster) on *O Cangaceiro* (1953), the radical statements (rather than wind, gale) of Lima Barreto and Glauber could be understood as a suggestion that the solution for what is ours is in what is ours, in the Brazil made by ourselves³, ('Whoever thinks otherwise is dumb and unpatriotic'), and that our problem is the difficulty of finding what is ours ('Who are we? Which is our cinema?'). In a letter written in 1954 to *O Estado de São Paulo* (quoted by Alex Vianny in *Introdução ao cinema brasileiro*, 1959), Lima Barreto says that 'If we admit there should be, and should happen, a Brazilian contribution to international cinema-art, it is with the content of films, rather than with the technical external form. In the case of Brazilian cinema, and in defense of our culture, representation should be more important than presentation. Generally, the fools in cinema, the dull people in cinematographic art, are left speechless before a limpid image, an audible sound, a slightly strange montage, a Dutch angle. They are not interested in whatever is behind all this – the essence, the real intention of the film, the message, the filmologic intention; they do not see this, they do not even suspect that it exists. The presentation technique, the external look of cinema, the container of filmology, black-and-white or color cinematography, stereo or not stereo sound, sumptuous scenery or adjusted to the action, Cinemascope, the third dimension, VistaVision, the sometimes miraculous tricks, the make-up, the extravagant camera movements – these have all been pushed to the limits in *gringo* cinema. And, while we do not discover our themes to express them within our own aesthetic-film-cinematographic concept, eminently lower-class-peasant-mestizo-farmer-rustic⁴, as Mário de Andrade and the few cultured men in Brazil would

like, we will not find the audiovisual way to generalize, to spread our culture, which is incipient, yes, but it is also authentic, real, irrefutable. Whoever thinks otherwise is dumb and unpatriotic.'

Maybe we can say that when Glauber was discussing *O Cangaceiro* in *Revisão crítica do cinema brasileiro* (Critical revision of Brazilian cinema, 1963), moved by the idea of *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, 1964), which was being shot at that time, he saw Lima Barreto at the same time as 'atheist and Catholic, patriotic and reactionary, progressive and developmentalist, neither on the right nor on the left wing', 'a Parnassian loaded with a lot of very badly-interpreted information'; as the director of a film addressed to a spectator who is 'educated in the idealist mythology of a Western movie' and who cannot 'place the *cangaço*, as a mystic-anarchic rebellious phenomenon that emerged from the landowner-based system in the North East, worsened by the droughts'. In Glauber's opinion, Lima, 'having failed to understand the novel of *cangaço* and to interpret the meaning of the popular novels of the North East', made 'a psychologically primitive and conventional adventure drama, an 'epopee with the rhythm of a Mexican *corrido*'. However, behind the radical disagreement, both texts seem to agree that the Brazilian contribution to cinema is 'in the content of films rather than in their external technical form' (as Lima Barreto said in his letter) because 'a technical ability should not be the support for an expression like cinema' (as Glauber said in his *Revisão*).

11.

Let's imagine that the spectator watching a piece of art is before a product of a process that has undergone a contemplative act of the objective reality, as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea suggested in his *Dialética del espectador* (Dialectics of the spectator, 1982); that a piece of art is not addressed exclusively, but mainly, to a privileged spectator, and that it tries to illuminate through a dialogue with this otherness; if that is so, we can imply that in a certain step of the invention process of a work, the director, as a spectator in the contemplative act, will favor a certain work as a piece of the objective reality that will illuminate his creation; therefore the matter does not lie in the relationship with the other, but in the choice of the other. What is more, let's imagine, as Hélio Oiticica suggested in *Situações da vanguarda no Brasil* (Situations of the avant-garde in Brazil, 1966), that 'We are over the matter of the objective of art, we are past that phase', and that the artist has to 'offer a way to provide the possibility to experiment creation, to let the spectator turn into a participant'.

3. See note 2.

4. The original text uses a few Brazilian words that are difficult to translate: 'matuto-caipira-caboclo-campeiro-sertanejo'.

Let's imagine art as something that transforms the spectator into a creator, an invitation to creation as suggested by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in *The Hour of Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos*, 1968). This film recalls what Frantz Fanon said in 1961 in *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*): (*in the fight against colonialism nobody can run away*) every spectator is either a coward or a traitor. The invitation to think like Alea (remembering Marx: *the production of a piece of art does not just make an object for a subject, but also a subject for an object*): director and spectator is all the same thing.

12.

Let's imagine that the issue summarized at some point by Glauber with two questions – Who are we? Which is our cinema? – is not the question, but the answer. Let's imagine we are a question.

13.

Let's imagine a not-articulated expression, like a speech is articulated in writing: the opening images of *Barren Lives* (*Vidas Secas*, 1963), by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, are like this, they are trembling and almost entirely white. Long shots, almost empty, white on white, camera hand-held by the operator who walks alongside a family of emigrants; the images flow onto the screen like thoughts in construction spoken aloud, a visual correspondence of the word: of the more accentuated pronunciation of a word and the half-swallowed sound of another one in the middle of the sentence; of the gestures that go with the speech and which complete the meaning of what is only half said, and of the sometimes-irregular punctuation, of the pauses that show the search for the correct expression. In short, the intense white and the trembling image can be viewed as correspondences of all the imperfections of spoken language when compared to the written language. Let's imagine a little further, a speech that is not very well organized as a language, an essential and rudimentary phenomenon, pure expression, completely inarticulated: the images of *Black God, White Devil* by Glauber are like this, those images in which the camera rises, as if it was on its knees, next to the parishioners of Sebastião, the stones in Monte Santo; the other images around Corisco or running alongside Antônio das Mortes. Neither a foreign and unknown language nor a deliberate misarticulation caused by the misuse of the language: we are talking here as if there was no language, as if everything was to be invented, as if a new way of feeling and thinking about the world was being invented at that moment, as if there was a word that had never been said before. To simplify everything: let's think about language as a cinema resulting from the montage of two different shots which are sometimes apparently in conflict with each other but which are actually complementary: speech and writing.

The first is natural, open, like a shot in a documentary. The second is disciplined and constructed like a shot in a feature film. Let's think of the cinema of the '60s as an equivalent of speech, not because it tried to visually show the oral language of Brazilians, not because it tried a similar operation to when a film is supported by written language to structure its narrative. In the '60s, cinema was *speech* rather than *writing* because it was expressed through lively and partially articulated oral language; because it was even expressed with the equivalents of (shall we say) word before word, with the equivalents of the moment in which, to express anything even before it had a name, there is only an interjection, a shout, a grunt, a silent gesture, a speech that comes from feeling rather than reason. Let's imagine: reality was then felt as cinema in nature. Life in its entirety, 'its actions as a whole, is a natural and live cinema, and that is linguistically equivalent to oral language'. With memory and dreams as 'fundamental outlines', cinema represents 'the written moment of this natural and total language, which is the action of men in reality'. Pasolini then imagined cinema as *the* written language of reality. In a dialogue with this way of feeling reality as a cinema in nature, Cinema Novo was considered an oral, natural and total language, action in reality, almost as if there was no film on the screen, representation as a re-presentation/reinvention of reality, as a first language. Indeed, first: thought being articulated, thought in the desert, on the border, in the moment between the still not-conscious, the still not-present, and the possibility of gaining form and expression.

14.

Let's imagine that making cinema among us was like dictating a letter for Dora in *Central Station* (*Central do Brasil*, Walter Salles, 1998): the chances that the letter will be taken to the post office and reach the addressee are low. And the chances that Dora, even though she has decided to take the unlikely decision to bring the letter to the post office, will find any postmen interested in delivering domestic post are also very low. For the postmen in cinema, the letter is also coming from outside, it is written in another language and has a different kind of stamp. Let's imagine that the free cinematographic imagination can sometimes be confused with the dubbing in Portuguese on foreign films, as recounted in *Better Days Ahead* (*Dias Melhores Virão*, 1990), by Carlos Diegues, in which the brunette Brazilian dubber sees the blonde American actress on TV with her voice and says: 'Look, I'm on television!'

15.

Let's imagine what Nelson Pereira dos Santos once said to sum up the feeling that motivated his generation in the mid '50s – 'We didn't just want cinema, we wanted Brazilian cinema' – as an expression addressed not to foreign cinema, but to films

being made at that time, adaptations of foreign trends. He explained in declarations to Maria Rita Galvão for *Burguesia e Cinema: o caso Vera Cruz* (Bourgeoisie and Cinema: the case Vera Cruz) what was being discussed at the time: 'We tried to copy international cinema, its dramatic structure, its language, its themes, everything [...]. For example, there weren't any black people in films except for in certain roles, which were stereotyped as black, like Ruth de Souza, who always played the maid. This was a prejudice, black people were considered from white, rich people's point of view. It was a characteristic of American cinema brought into Brazilian cinema. In the USA, black and white people lived in separate worlds, but here they did not, their interrelation was much greater, even if prejudices did exist, and there were also a lot of skin-bleached mulattos living among white people. But not in films. Even the actors' appearance was Americanized. Girls were wearing American-style make-up, many actors had their hair dyed in lighter colors. That sort of behavior was not our own, it was unnatural for us, even if it was (at least, I think it was) natural in American films. Etc. The use of Portuguese in Paulista cinema was senseless, it was completely false; there was a prejudice against using the usual, wrong, oral language in films, which is in fact our language. We often make mistakes when speaking, I do, you do, and yet we have both benefited from higher education... But if this is how people speak, then why is it wrong?' One thing was clear: 'cinema did not express our reality, it did not have cultural representation'. In order to give it representation, we had to 'create our own expression and stop using a preexistent expression, like Vera Cruz did'.

16.

Maybe when Júlio Bressane restated, in the '90s (shortly before his *Miramar* [1997]), that cinema 'is an overly sensitive intellectual organism, not just sensitive, but over-sensitive' and that this excess 'pushes, forces cinema to find its limits', to create 'a border with all the arts and with almost all the sciences', with this statement he seems to continue and expand what Mário de Andrade said in the '20s (shortly before his 'cinematographic novel', *Amar, verbo intransitivo* [To Love, Intransitive Verb, 1927]): cinema, as an impure art, is 'the eureka! of pure arts'. Impurity, mixture, multiplicity of languages, art felt as the process of editing varied and different materials and influences. Maybe the influence that cinema had on pure arts at the beginning of the Twentieth Century is similar to the influence television now has on cinema. By mixing – with an even greater impurity – theater, music, literature and cinema lessons, television has developed a way of communicating that leads to the spectator paying little attention to the image, focusing instead on the interests of television and himself. Television tries to fragment and repeat what it shows to make

the conversation easier to follow; the spectator tries to watch television while watching and doing other things, free from the focused, exclusive attention he devotes to a cinema screen. While once, when he was watching a film by the Lumière brothers in which the La Ciotat train looked as if it was about to jump off the screen into the room, a spectator closed his eyes, turned his face away and even seemed about to run out of the room, nowadays it doesn't matter what kind of nightmare is threatening to jump out of the television into the house, the spectator will keep his eyes open, but he's not focusing his attention anywhere. He tries to defend himself from what he is watching without ceasing to watch it. With a television in the living room, being at home is like being outside home at the same time, being somewhere else, where you can behave like Nininha in *The Third Bank of the River* (*A Terceira Margem do Rio*, 1995) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos: in order to fulfill her grandma's wish, she puts her hand inside the image on the television and brings the box of chocolates into the living room. The house as this other place, no-man's land, in no way reality; and also the image, from time to time stretches its hand out of the television to take something. Sitting in front of the television, the spectator can repeat to himself what Portuguese Pedro says to Brazilian Paco when he has just arrived in Lisbon in *Foreign Land*: 'This is a place to meet nobody. It is the perfect place to lose someone or to lose oneself'.

17.

Let's imagine that before the '60s we tried to write before we learned to talk, as if a language could be born first as writing only to emerge as speech, or that we tried to write the cinema that was spoken in Hollywood. *Barren Lives* and *Black God, White Devil* appear at a time when cinema was made like a drawing of an idea that is thought of before the image, thought in writing – and sometimes thought by somebody else, thought outside, where, it seemed, they thought better. Let's imagine then that cinema was thought of as a way to coordinate a limited range of possibilities for composing images (close-up, long shot, high-angle shot, low-angle shot, shot / reverse shot, tracking shot, travelling, tilting): the image achieved with a hand-held camera (all these shots and none of them at the same time) and the improvisations during the shooting were the strengths of our films in the '60s. Actually, shooting like that, revealing the nervous presence of the camera rather than the actual scene, was a creative operation to make the cinematographic language more complex. *Land in Anguish* (*Terra em Transe*, 1967), by Glauber, is a good example: the scene is improvised, not because it was not thought about when writing the script, but because it was still being thought about during the shooting. The image was trembling not because the operator was lacking in camera skills, but because at that time reality was being discussed in

this way, in a nervous, trembling discourse. Then cinema thought about the script as a challenge to shooting, shooting as a challenge to editing and the film as a challenge to the way of seeing. Cinema was considered an expression that is finished, ready, on the screen, and at the same time unfinished; part of a process that does not end with shooting: image-provoking, rushes, work print so that the spectator can clean out and order everything in his imagination.

18.

Let's imagine that this issue can be considered at the same time as an oyster (Brazil is everything) and wind (everything is Brazil).

19.

Let's imagine an image that is interested not just in revealing who watches it, but also in the way the spectator watches. Let's see, for example, the story of the retired teacher who, in order to make a living, writes letters for people who can't read, as if she was a metaphor for the process of renaissance of Brazilian cinema after the standstill imposed by the corruption of the Collor Government between 1990 and 1993. *Central Station* was not created to serve as this metaphor, but it can also (once its essence is understood) be viewed thus, as the story of the renaissance of looking: we could tell stories once again in a language that is common to us all and is our own; we could rediscover the country, discover ourselves as part of a certain space and time. The film runs through landscapes and characters that marked the oral cinema of the '60s: the North West, the *sertão*, the emigrants, the pilgrims, the ordinary workers in the suburbs of the big cities; it follows in the other direction the migration of the characters in *Barren Lives*, it follows the journey of a woman who is undergoing a process of *resensitization*. The expression used by Walter Salles defines the experience of Dora and, by extension, of Brazilian cinema in recent years. The films and the audiences, cinema as a whole, have all undergone a process of *resensitization*. This process is in a way a reencounter with the father (the old Cinema Novo, and through it a reencounter with everything it was in dialogue with) and with the country. It is the understanding of a country which to some extent resembles the protective, castrating father in *The Oyster and the Wind*; it proceeds on to the impotent authoritarian man who takes paternal possession of children who are not his own in *Me You Them (Eu, Tu, Eles, 2000)* by Andrucha Waddington; then on to the insensitivity of the father who confines his son to a hospice to get away from

the embarrassment of seeing him taking drugs in *Brainstorm (Bicho de Sete Cabeças, 2001)* by Laís Bodanzky; on to the tragic figure of Tonho and Pacu's father in *Behind the Sun (Abril Despedaçado, 2001)* by Walter Salles; and to the absence of Branquinha and Japa's father in *How Angels Are Born (Como Nascem os Anjos, 1996)* by Murilo Salles; and to the absence of the father in *Central Station*.

The reencounter with the father/country⁵ is created with all the ambiguity and tragedy that the story of Dora and Josué gives to the figure of the father, which is at the same time the figure that Josué admires without knowing him, that Moisés despises because he destroyed himself with drinking and that Isaías is hoping to see when he comes back home to his family and to work with wood. Dora does not forget that he is a rude, insensitive drunkard who abandoned his family and once tried to seduce his own daughter when he met her in the street without recognizing her; but Dora ends up remembering that one day he let his daughter, who was still a child, drive the train he was working in. The reencounter also represents the regaining of a way of looking that is determined to invent the country through cinema – or vice versa, because the invention of one would be the invention of the other: creating a picture that can express the country would be like creating cinema and then the country in its own image and likeness, national image.

20.

Let's imagine that the issue can be considered through this scenario: Marcela (oyster?) is kept prisoner in the island by her oppressive father, as if she was the sister of Josué (wind?), who goes across the country from the South West to the North East searching for the father he has not met yet.

21.

Let's imagine that what is ours as a solution for what is ours could also go beyond our borders. This is what Alex Viany seems to be suggesting in the opening page of his *Introdução ao cinema brasileiro* (Introduction to Brazilian cinema, 1959), when he includes a line by Noel Rosa from 1930 ('The samba, the readiness and other *bossas* are our things, are things from us'⁶) next to a sentence by Álvaro Lins from 1956: 'We can't afford the luxury of being "citizens of the world" because we aren't men enough of our region and our country; that is, men properly imbued with the feeling of the land, of society, of Brazilian culture', and 'we can't aspire to achieve an international position until we have strengthened our national position.

5. Wordplay in the original: 'pai/país'.

6. See note 1.

Both in art and in politics. What is more, in the first part of the quote, he stresses: 'It is necessary to make nationalism in literature and art. Emancipating culturally, in the same way we talk of economic emancipation. We need to think of Brazil in terms of nation and in terms of America, especially South America.'

Latin America as what is ours: in 1959, Glauber sees the Mexican film *Roots* (*Raíces*, 1953) by Benito Alazraki as a contribution 'to the future of cinematographic language in Mexico, in Latin countries and mainly in Argentina and Brazil'; in 1961, while in Salvador, even before finishing *Barravento* (1962), Glauber suggests in a letter to Alfredo Guevara from the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) that an international meeting of Latin American independent filmmakers should be held, to show films and discuss common problems; in 1967, in Viña del Mar, Chile, the first Latin American filmmakers' meeting takes place; impure and contradictory art which, as it is too sensitive, borders on everything. Cinema was starting to suggest the image of a nation, an extension of what is ours: 'the notion of Latin American is bigger than the notion of nationalisms'. The other, the avant-garde, the interlocutor, what is ours made by ourselves⁷ was right here or right beside us.

22.

Maybe with the same words, the same statements, and even the influences of the same films and texts for the invention of a Brazilian cinema, the directors were referring to different things at the beginning of the '50s (could we say that they were looking for a formula?) and at the beginning of the '60s (could we say that they were looking for a process?). The mixture of German expressionism (intense light favors a point in the scene) with Italian neorealism (soft light spread all over the scene) in *O Cangaceiro* by Lima Barreto or in *The Given Word* (*O Pagador de Promessas* [1962]) by Anselmo Duarte. The mixture of neorealist image captured in natural sets with the landscape of Rio, in *Agulha no Palheiro* (1952), by Alex Viany, and *Rio 40 Graus* (1955) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, and with the landscape of São Paulo in *The Grand Moment*.

Maybe we can see, in these mixtures, the beginning of a new relationship in which foreign cinema ceases to be a model and becomes an interlocutor. A goodbye to parodies (an example: *Nem Sansão nem Dalila* [1954] by Carlos Manga instead of *Samson and Delilah* [1949] by Cecil B. De Mille). A goodbye to imitations of European and North American styles and genres (an example: *The Drunkard* [*O Ébrio*, 1946] by Gilda de Abreu, instead of *The Lost Weekend* [1945] by Billy Wilder. A few more: Walter Hugo Khoury, *O Estranho Encontro* [1958], instead of Bergman; Rubem Biáfora, *Ravina* [1959], instead of Wyler). An interlocutor: in the same way that in 1969 an open and informal seminar was held in which Hirszman, Joaquim, Escorel, Sarno and David Neves, among others, took part, and Glauber reinvented Eisenstein by reading and discussing his theoretical work.

23.

Let's imagine: maybe we do not imagine as much as we should. What *Time* magazine wrote on the 26th of April of 1999 when it announced the release of *Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace*, by George Lucas, represents for us, rather than a threat, a real and immediate danger: today, everything we can dream of can be achieved by digital technology in cinema: 'If you can dream it, you can see it'. Something is not right in our dreams if we only dream what can be quickly achieved. By placing technology above our ability to dream, the magazine is just repeating Hollywood's main promotional strategy, it is reaffirming the common feeling that technology thinks, imagines and makes for us. In the world of technological expression, avant-garde seems to be left behind – that is why, as Cláudio Assis said, he, Lício Ferreira and others formed an artistic group called Vanretro, the Vanguarda Retrógrada (the Backward Avant-garde) while they were at university in Recife. Films produced by the big audiovisual industry, beyond the stories they tell, confirm that what really matters is technology, and that everything that can be imagined has already been imagined.

In this context, it is not difficult to imagine what we have to do: let's imagine. •

7. See note 2.

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JOSÉ CARLOS AVELLAR

José Carlos Avellar (1936-2016) was one of the main theorists of Brazilian and Latin America cinema. He was a critic for the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* for more than twenty years and wrote reference books such as *O Cinema Dilacerado* (1986), *A ponte clandestina – Teorias de cinema na América Latina* (1995), *Glauber Rocha* (2002) and *O chão da palavra: Cinema e literatura no Brasil* (2007). Throughout his life, he also held

different positions in institutions linked to cinema, including director of the film archive of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro (1991-1992), director-president of RioFilme (1994-2000), president of the board of the Petrobras Cinema program (2001-2009) and vice president of FIPRESCI (1986-1995).

TEN BRINK, Joram and OPPENHEIMER, Joshua (eds.) *Killer Images. Documentary Film, Memory and the Performance of Violence*

Wallflower Press, New York, 2012, 330 pp.

Bruno Hachero Hernández

‘Cinema has long shaped not only how political violence, from torture to warfare to genocide, is perceived, but also how it is performed’

With this original idea, written by the editors in the introduction of *Killer Images*, it is easy to see the deep bonds that connect this theoretical-analytical work with the Indonesian film diptych by Joshua Oppenheimer that includes *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2015). Both the production of the two films and the editing of this volume are part of the project *Genocide and Genre* of the University of Westminster, directed by Joram ten Brink himself. It suggests ‘developing innovative cinematographic methodologies to explore the memory, the stories and the performance of genocidal violence’. A project that develops towards the cinematographic intervention, but also towards the theoretical reflection that explores the links between horror, memory and cinema. In it, both theorists and filmmakers take part, because of the double condition of the editors – academic and cinematographic. With the certainty that cinema has a fundamental role in these violent practices, ten Brink and Oppenheimer suggest in this volume a collective approach to the possibilities, limits and questions that the cinematographic image sets out nowadays in relation to political violence.

From healing images to killing images, the collection of works analyzed in this volume deals not only with cinema, but also with television image, animation, video activism or photography. The result is a corpus that shows different possibilities image has to document violence, and also a possible cinematographic journey that takes us from Glauber Rocha, Jean Rouch, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Lanzmann or Peter Watkins to several contemporary filmmakers who have faced this issue from problematic and innovative perspectives: Harun Farocki, Avi Mograbi, Rithy Panh, Errol Morris and Joshua Oppenheimer himself.

In the study that introduces the volume, Thomas Keenaan reveals how the image can become a field of action for violence just by being there; a TV camera during the Bosnian War could kill. A key idea to understand Avi Mograbi’s cinema in Israeli checkpoints, or the video resistance of collectives like Burma VJ or of the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, to mention an example that does not appear in the book. Because of this, the use of virtual images for the training or post-traumatic treatment for soldiers reveals a double potentiality of images to access horror. Thinking along the same lines with the research on documentaries about the Nazi genocide, Brian Winston analyses how the limits of representation that Lanzmann wanted to set in his *Shoah* (1985) are surpassed by animation as a way to visually reach *ostranenie* in front of horror. On the other hand, Joram ten Brink deals with the re-enactment in cinema as a process of critical thinking borrowed from historiography. Ten Brink wonders about the possibilities of this method, whose cinematographic referent is *La Commune (Paris, 1971)* (2000) by Peter Watkins, in order to reach a new knowledge of violence. In the last contributions several film possibilities close to this idea take form: Rithy Panh, witness and archive of the Cambodian genocide; Avi Mograbi and the killing soldier of *Z32* (2008); Errol Morris and the images of Abu Ghraib, and Joshua Oppenheimer, who in a reflection alongside Michael Uwemedino, introduces the concept of *archaeological performance* as a cinematographic method that works with gestures, routines and rituals from the past to stage it in the present. The method consists of two processes: on the one hand, the *historical excavation*, which requires different strata through which we can go deep, and the *histrionic reconstruction*, which adds layers of meaning through the performance and the stage, and which is the base of the cinematographic *dispositif* of *The Act of Killing*.

As a whole, *Killer Images* presents itself to the public as a plural reflection that, based on a careful hermeneutics of the images, inquires into new possibilities of dealing with political violence

through cinema. The body and the word are, while being performative, ways of writing reality. Thus, cinema, as a way of operating through body and image, can be a powerful line of research about evil to restore a memory in which there are too many silences. Oppenheimer's films are a good example of this, of how the cinematographic research can be transferred to practice, and of how the main value of these pages lies in their

willingness to make way to cinematographic creation. By that, he sets the bases of a whole contemporary cinema movement around horror and its practices, which, along the way, seems to want to reinvent documentary cinema, with a foot in practice and another beyond, in some place where theory appears. •

MONTIEL, Alejandro; MORAL, Javier and CANET, Fernando (coord.) *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta*. Volumes 1 and 2

Shangrila Ediciones, Santander, 2016, 354 p.p. (vol. 1) and 390 p.p. (vol. 2)

Alan Salvadó Romero

The recently deceased Abbas Kiarostami told, in the documentary by Jean-Pierre Limosin, *Vérités et songes* (part of the series *Cinéma, de notre temps*, 1994) that he never made an effort to become a filmmaker and he never planned to become one. He was just carried away and it was the bends or zigzags of life that brought him close or far from the bank of cinema. He said: 'I am 53 years old and I still don't know what my job is. We live with a provisional job.' Very few times a visual motif, like Kiarostami's path shaped like a Z, defines and illustrates so well the career (and philosophy) of a filmmaker who was also a poet, photographer, audiovisual pedagogue (if his job at Kanun center could be defined as so), among other things.

We recall this seminal image, this Z-shaped path, to try to illustrate two things. On the one hand, the tour suggested by the two-volume book *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta* (Javier Maqua: more than a filmmaker), which was coordinated and compiled -thanks to an accurate archaeological and research work- by Alejandro Montiel, Javier Moral and Fernando Canet. On the other hand, the (multidisciplinary) career of Javier Maqua himself, an author born in Madrid who abandoned his education as biologist to work, from the late 60s and with a certain activist and resistance attitude, in cinema (as director and scriptwriter), in film criticism, in television, in novel, in theater and in radio. In many occasions, he received awards like the *Premio Ondas*, the *Premio Nacional de Radiodifusión* or the *Premio Café Gijón*. Maqua, the perfect example of what Kiarostami called 'provisional job', is one of those artists that have been carried away by their curiosity and inquisitiveness to learn and experiment without a preconceived plan. For example, he experimented cinema not as an obsession that is going to only one direction, but as just another way to think and narrate; in short, just another way to live, as he himself says in the interview with Marta Sanz that opens the approach to his work.

In this sense, it is interesting to emphasize that the history of cinema is often monopolized by some names that represent lineal careers coming from cinephile passions and obsessions -and both the directors and the critics are responsible for this. But there is also another history of cinema, in which the book *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta* takes part. This history is less known and its characters are those who approach cinema not as a way to fulfill an unstoppable pulsional desire, but as a chance, an unexpected event, just another step in a path that is not previously planned. This is a history of cinema, against the current, more derivative and erratic, in which the authors' careers are not easily traced under a causal logic. This is the case of Javier Maqua. He represents a cinema experienced as just another piece of a vital and artistic puzzle. This image of the puzzle is very typical of Welles (or rather typical of Kane) and it also becomes a visual motif to define his multifaceted work.

Here lie, then, two of the difficulties involved in approaching such a unique and special person as this artist from Madrid: the fact that most people do not know him (due to his apparently "secondary role" in the Spanish cinema from the transition to democracy until now) and the fact that his work has many points of view. However, the book *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta* overcomes these difficulties, both in its internal structure (a detailed analysis of his work [films, scripts, novels and plays] by specialists of each one of Maqua's disciplines and a varied compilation of his most representative texts) and in its approach as a dialog between Maqua's life and work (analyzed in the first volume) and his thoughts (in the second volume). The idea of a book in two parts, then, is a way to zigzag into Maqua's universe, not necessarily in a chronological order, so that we progressively discover an artistic and vital coherence: a critical point of view that shows in his stories and in his

reflections. For example, the analysis of his experience in television docudrama, *Vivir cada día* (1983-88), has a dialog with his ideas about borders between genres that he exposed in remarkable and pioneering texts such as *El autor en las fronteras de la ficción* ('The author in the borders of fiction, 1992) or *Apuntes para una historia de las relaciones entre la realidad y la ficción en la televisión española* (Notes for a history of the relationship between reality and fiction in Spanish television, 1996). Another good example is the analysis by Manuel Vidal Estévez about the sordid and grotesque *Chevrolet* (1997), contrasted with the brilliant and visceral text (an alternative chronicle about the consequences of the tumultuous 80s) called *El último pico* (The last shot, 1995), in which Maqua narrates the last days between the actor José Luis Manzano and the director Eloy de la Iglesia. Undoubtedly, it is one of the best texts in the compilation and it shows very well Maqua's point of view, which, as Alejandro Montiel pointed out in *Algo, y solo algo, del cine de Javier Maqua* (Something, and just something, about Javier Maqua's cinema, 2009)¹, has a trace of Stroheim: it is direct, real, ruthless but, in the end, honest.

The crossed dialog and the movement between Maqua's disciplines (maybe it lacks some reflection about his work in radio) contemplated in these two volumes put him, literally, in the border between genres and between arts, which is a key issue in his work and one of the bases of his artistic ideology.

The Bazin formula of the 'impurity of cinema' has been considered and talked about many times, but the 'impurity' of artists is rarely discussed directly, and probably one of the biggest achievements of the two-volume book *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta* is claiming this 'impurity'. This claim is not accidental or innocent if we have in mind its contemporary context: on the one hand, the growing specialization of knowledge and the progressive extinction of humanities and of polymaths (word used by authors to define this multifaceted man); on the other hand, a deep economic, political and social crisis, in which the foundations of the Spanish transition to democracy have sunk, as well as the ideals of the left that dreamed of a social change that would come with democracy. Maqua, thus, who lived first-hand and narrated that transition period, is now more prevailing than ever with this review of those times that can help us understand the current times. Political, ethical and moral consciousness reflected in Maqua's works and texts are in nature the spirit that the authors of this book want to shout out to the world: "More Maqua(s)!". •

1. MONTIEL, Alejandro (2009) *Algo, y solo algo, del cine de Javier Maqua*. *El Viejo Topo*, Vol. 255, April 2009, p. 65. Barcelona: Ediciones de Intervención

Cultural, S.L. Marta Sanz, Javier Moral and Manuel Asín also collaborated in this work.

