

ReVista

HARVARD REVIEW OF LATIN AMERICA
FALL 2009/WINTER 2010

It's Film
In Latin America



DAVID ROCKEFELLER CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

EDITOR'S LETTER

For me, movies are magic. And movie going is an emotional experience or maybe I should say, two types of emotional experience. I love to go to a film by myself, curl up in the seat and lose myself in the darkness to the big screen. I also delight in going with friends, passing the popcorn and engaging in the lively debate of a shared experience afterwards. Both experiences are a form of transformation, whether collective or personal, even if I've seen the film several times before.

I expected a flood of responses to my request for people to write about their favorite film (the short articles you will find scattered through these pages). So I was surprised when my question seemed to produce anxiety beyond the fact of one more thing to do in always hectic lives. "Let me think about it," "But I'm not a film expert..." "Just one film?" were some of the answers. Was this not such a simple task?

So I decided to try the exercise on myself.

In the process of developing this issue on film, we—myself and my guiding lights Harvard Film Archive Director Haden Guest and Harvard Romance Languages and Literatures Professor Brad Epps—had decided to limit the issue to film in Latin America, rather than including film from Spain and Latino films (a good excuse for another film issue!). That made choosing a lot more difficult.

I reread my own little query to my readers. It included films that make us see Latin America in a different light, even if they are not Latin American or about Latin America. And I realized that the two most important films for me in that sense fell into that category. The first was the 1952 *Mexican Bus Ride, Subida al Cielo*, directed by Luis Buñuel, a Spanish-born filmmaker. I was surprised just now on researching the film that it is billed as a comedy, because I remembered it as a tragedy, as a young man on his wedding night who is prevented by Mexico's rickety buses and accompanying mishaps from reaching his mother's deathbed.

The other film has everything and nothing to do with Latin America. The 1966 movie *Battle of Algiers*, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, takes place in North Africa and depicts the Algerian War against French colonial rule. I've seen the film at least a dozen times, and it helped me understand the wars I covered in Central America—both the liberation struggles and the counterinsurgency.

But then I began to fret about my two choices. I try to remember all those magical moments, second guess my decision; my lists grow longer and longer. Indeed, this entire issue of *ReVista*—not just the personal blurbs about film—has been an exercise in limitation. We've chosen here to focus on five countries: Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Cuba. Again, a delightful excuse for another film issue!

This issue has blended perspectives from filmmakers and film-goers, Latin Americans and Latin Americanists, providing glimpses of film trends past and present. But as I write this letter, I'm reminded of the moment when one leaves the theatre and the reality of harsh daylight or blaring car horns shatters the mood.

One of the reasons we struggled so hard to limit the scope of this issue was to ensure that we could keep publishing *ReVista* this academic year, business as usual. But despite our efforts and your generous donations, we will only publish twice in 2009-10 because of the current economic situation. We hope this is a temporary measure.

Meanwhile, use the new comment function on the online version of *ReVista* <<http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications>> to let *ReVista* readers know more about the Latin American films that have had an impact on your life.

See you at the movies!



ReVista

HARVARD REVIEW OF LATIN AMERICA • Volume VIII, Number 3

Published by the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies

DRCLAS: Merilee S. Grindle, *Director* • Kathy Eckroad, *Associate Director*

EDITORIAL STAFF: June Carolyn Erlick, *Editor in Chief* • Anita Safran, *Copy Editor* • Clotilde Dedecker, Jeffrey Leopando *Publications Interns* • 2COMMUNIQUE/www.2communique.com, *Design* • P & R Publications, *Printer*

SPECIAL GUEST EDITORIAL ADVISORS: Haden Guest and Brad Epps

1730 Cambridge Street Cambridge, MA 02138 Telephone: (617) 495-5428 Facsimile: (617) 496-2802

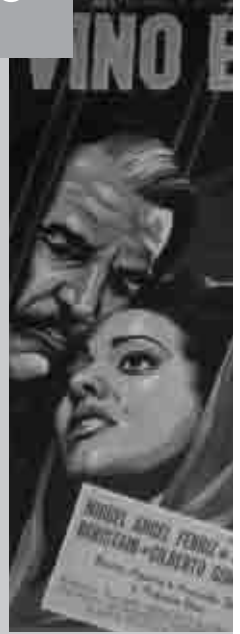
<http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications/revista>

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND READER FORUM: jerlick@fas.harvard.edu

THIS ISSUE OF REVISTA IS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF BANCO SANTANDER

Copyright © 2009 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. ISSN 1541-1443

Cover photography:
top, *Motorcycle Diaries* (2004),
photo by Paula Prandini, courtesy
of Focus Features; center,
Cantinflas in *Ni sangre ni arena*
(1941), photo courtesy of Filmo-
teca UNAM Collection, Mexico;
bottom, *Castro*, directed by Alejo
Moguillansky, Argentina, 2009.



Film in Latin America

An Introduction

BY HADEN GUEST

Latin American cinema has undergone a remarkable transformation since the mid-1990s, with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba and Mexico in particular emerging as vibrant centers for some of the most innovative and imaginative filmmaking in contemporary world cinema. A bastion for politically charged counter-cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, Latin American filmmaking entered a long transitional period during the 1980s that abruptly ended with the emergence in the 1990s of young and frequently iconoclastic directors such as Alfonso Cuarón, Lucrecia Martel, Walter Salles, Guillermo del Toro and Pablo Trapero. This new generation of incredibly talented directors has redefined what Latin American cinema means today through a body of work that offers one of the more exciting topics in recent Film Studies, as testified to by the fascinating scholarship and criticism offered in this special film issue of *ReVista* on which I am pleased and honored to have served as a special editorial advisor, along with Brad Epps.

Interest in Latin American cinema has been building for quite some time at Harvard University, as I discovered when I arrived here as Director of the Harvard Film Archive just about three years ago. It is particularly rewarding to include several pieces by up and coming scholars and historians of Latin American cinema from Harvard such as Humberto Delgado alongside the work of long-established and influential observers of Latin American film from the Harvard community such as Nicolau Sevcenko and visiting professor in Romance Languages and Literatures Gonzalo Aguilar. Together these writers reveal the amazing diversity of contemporary Latin American cinema and the ways in which the

political legacy of the past has not been so much abandoned as reinvented in multiple and artistically fascinating ways. During my interview with legendary Argentine producer Lita Stantic I was intrigued by her reluctance to speak of a political agenda, let alone an unconscious, at work within the *nuevo cine argentino*. Stantic's understanding of the new priorities of the younger generation of filmmakers and the more subtle political register of their work, offers just one example of how the contemporary cinema requires a different set of critical tools than we were previously accustomed to for studying Latin American film.

At the Harvard Film Archive we have been extraordinarily fortunate to have hosted such exciting young contemporary Latin American filmmakers as Lucrecia Martel and Carlos Reygadas as well as important veterans such as Jorge Furtado, all for extended visits and cinematheque retrospectives. These visits have taken place within the context of a larger project here at the university; we have channeled an energetic focus on building resources and interest in Ibero-American cinema at Harvard into an Ibero-American film committee which I lead together with Brad Epps, Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and Chair of the Committee on Degrees for Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality here at Harvard. Many of the authors here in this issue—among them, Humberto Delgado, Daniel Aguirre, Clémence Jouët-Pastré, and Bruno Carvalho—are members of the committee and tireless promoters of film at Harvard.

At the Archive we have been steadily gathering Ibero-American films—including a major new collection of Argentine films from the



1940s-1980s, soon to be available for research and classroom screenings. Our program has worked hard to trace the constellation of Ibero-American filmmakers in active dialogue with one another by inviting the likes of the Portuguese director Pedro Costa and the two of the brightest stars in Spanish and Catalan cinema today, José Luis Guerín and Albert Serra. The support of DRCLAS has been invaluable to our efforts and initiatives designed to go beyond the traditional pattern of Eurocentric—and specifically Franco-Germanic—film studies at Harvard and recognize the growing and vibrant community of scholars at the university work-

ing on Latin American film. A major symposium is scheduled to take place this fall, on “el cine como historia”—Film as History—which will bring together a diverse group of academics, filmmakers and archivists for a discussion of the cinema’s active role as a socio-political and cultural force and which promises to be one of the more exciting events of the academic year.

So in a sense this issue of *ReVista* represents not a retrospective nor a conclusion, but the beginning of a dialogue.

Haden Guest is the Director of the Harvard Film Archive.

New Technologies and New Narratives

In Ibero-American Cinema

BY BRAD EPPS

Recent film trends in Latin America and beyond cannot be understood without examining new technologies and their impact on new narrative forms. That is why, in November 2008, the Real Colegio Complutense of Harvard University, together with the Universidad Complutense and the Universidad Castilla-La Mancha, sponsored a three-day international symposium in Cuenca and Madrid, Spain. The fruit of friendly collaboration with colleagues in Spain, most notably Ignacio Oliva, Fran Zurián, Josetxo Cerdán and Pilar Rodríguez, as well as with colleagues from Cuba (Luciano Castillo), Mexico (Juan Mora Catlett, Elisa Miller), Brazil (Denilson Lopes), Argentina (Gonzalo Aguilar, Ana Amado), Chile (Cecilia Barriga), Venezuela (Andrés Duque) and Costa Rica (María Lourdes Cortés), the symposium was the first installment in a still unfolding series of similar ventures on other topics. The next

will be “cinema as history; history as cinema,” tentatively scheduled at Harvard University in November 2009.

The aim of the symposia is as simple as it is complex: to bring together critics, historians, filmmakers, screenwriters, producers, actors and others who share an interest in and/or commitment to cinematic production in Latin America, Spain, Portugal and the Caribbean in order to interrogate, as openly and dialogically as possible, the promises and pitfalls of a trans-Atlantic, Ibero-American rubric in which Spanish and Portuguese, rather than English or French, would be the primary tongues. Needless to say, it is somewhat risky, if not indeed illusory, to speak of Ibero-American cinema—or, despite the existence of a number of festivals, conferences, books, and collaborative efforts like our own, even to speak of Latin American or Iberian cinema—when what



in fact prevails, still today, is a nationally delimited understanding of cinematic works or, more generally, audiovisual products, here Mexican, there Brazilian, and over there Spanish, as it were.

Brazilian film critic and historian Paulo Antonio Paranaguá already signaled the problems not with the more ample Ibero-American moniker but with the more established Latin American moniker in a book published in 2003 by the Fondo de Cultura Económica de España, *Tradición y modernidad en el cine de América Latina* (*Tradition and Modernity in Latin American Cinema*). In the words of Paranaguá: "Latin American cinema does not exist as a platform of production: the space in which virtually all projects are generated is purely national, at times even local, though there are transnational currents and continental strategies dating from at least the beginning of cinematic sound, if not before" (15). These national, even local spaces, often bundled together in a rather simplistic manner as "peripheral or dependent cinemas" (the terms are Paranaguá's) nonetheless constitute a source of diversity and plurality which is unfortunately often reduced to a merely rhetorical value, as if the relative dearth of communication and collaboration could be remedied by appealing to some vague, oft-repeated principle of "difference" which scarcely leaves a mark on the hegemony of the long-standing, quasi-naturalized distinction—or, better yet, opposition—between Hollywood commercial and European "high-art" ventures. This distinction, so critical to those who take binary formulations (commerce/art, Hollywood/Europe, frivolity/seriousness, convention/experimentation, and so on) as a privileged point of departure for critical analyses in which value judgments are in many respects already implicit, is itself deceptive inasmuch as it blurs, even erases, differences *within* the United States, collapsed into Hollywood, let alone *within* Europe. After all, "European cinema," long and loosely conceived as the great option to the Hollywood business machine (which is itself less coherent and unified as many would like to believe), is far from being a coherent and unified totality, regardless of how many international co-productions there may be within the European Union.

Of course, Europe is not always simply Europe, for within it, Spanish and Portuguese cinema, or cinema in Spanish and Portuguese (let alone in Catalan, Galician, and Basque), has historically not enjoyed the same appreciation and visibility as French, German, Italian, or British cinema and has entered the pantheon of high cinematic art thanks to a handful of filmmakers who, deemed to be "geniuses" of "universal" stature (Luis Buñuel, who worked on both sides of the Atlantic, is here paradigmatic), stand as the luminous exceptions to a putative, and rather somber, general rule. In more than one history of European cinema, as in more than one history of European art and literature, Spain and Portugal are either all but absent or figure only as exceptional or peripheral. In saying this I do not mean to suggest that Spanish and Portuguese cinema, much less some rather vague Iberian cinema, is analogous, without qualification, to Latin American cinema (or even that there *is* an Iberian or Latin American cinema). Rather, my point is that on both sides of the Atlantic, albeit to undoubtedly different degrees, one encounters a certain weary familiarity with marginalization—as well as with the more material challenges of securing funding for works that rarely have the ready-made box-office draw of Hollywood blockbusters (or, for that matter, many English-language "independent" films), and that rarely have the "ready-made" cultural clout of French, British, Italian, or German productions. Beyond the sense of a shared linguistic culture (Portugal and Brazil, Spain and Spanish-speaking America), other situations and experiences, profoundly marked by the vagaries of the global market, are also shared, even though problems of marginalization and funding have historically been generally more acute in Latin America than in Spain, where things have hardly been easy.

As important as protectionist measures and public subsidies may be, as concerted and effective as the policies of promotion of any given national or pan-national culture may appear, the cinema is, in its material and technical aspects, a phenomenon of global, universal, international and/or multinational dimensions (the last four adjectives are not, by the way, mere synonyms). With respect



to Latin America, Paranaguá, once more, signals not just “the importation of films to nourish new spectacles” but also “the importation of machinery and technology [which] is common to exhibition as well as production. In spite of a few unsuccessful projects, ‘virgin’ film stock, the negatives as well as the material needed to make copies, always had to be imported” (28). For the Brazilian critic, the reality of “importation” is part and parcel of a relation of dependence which renders comparative approaches as complicated as they are urgent. From a somewhat different perspective, Cuban critic Luciano Castillo—who, unlike Paranaguá, does not translate material dependency in terms of “productive” and “vegetative” cinematic practices—grapples with the material conditions of technology that make the “seventh art” one of the most costly and demanding of all (of the arts, only architecture—and even then, not always—outstrips it):

The last decade of the *Siglo de Lumière* for Cuban cinema was by no means untouched by the economic restrictions imposed on the country during the so-called “Special Period.” The German Democratic Republic, which had traditionally supplied filmic material, collapsed as abruptly as the sadly famous Berlin Wall, dragging in its wake the entire socialist bloc in a process that had hitherto been unimaginable. It constituted the *coup de grâce* for Cuban documentary cinema which found an alternative of shorts in the guise of video—a veritable “challenge for the future,” according to Alfredo Guevara, founder of the ICAIC [Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry]—though without reaching the level of production and the achievements that had been so admired in other moments. The “art of our time” requires copious resources and, above all, the ability to enjoy the international distribution that offsets costs and contributes to self-financing. Coproductions with European countries became for Cuba—as for the rest of Latin America—an unavoidable option: to coproduce or not to produce, such is the very un-Shakespearean dilemma in which our cinemas find themselves in times of globalization (21).

I have taken the liberty of citing Castillo so extensively because what he says here, in his beautifully argued book *A contraluz* [Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2005], helped both to frame and to model the symposium on new technologies and new narratives. The “art of our time,” emblem of modernity, does not just require copious resources and networks of international distribution but also transnational cooperation. Accordingly, it raises important questions about what we understand by “our time,” especially since both the “our,” or “we,” and the time or times to which the plural pronoun is attached reveal themselves, over and again, to be sundered and atomized in a world in which solidarity is far from being a global reality.

Along with techno-material questions about resources, productions, and products, and socio-symbolic questions about cooperation, dialogue, solidarity or the lack thereof, there are, of course, questions about artistic and political experimentation, innovation, and adaptation which are at play in the very notion of a “challenge for the future” and, more concretely, the turn to “alternatives,” here in the form of video. These alternatives, and their bearing on the cinema (so-called alternative or experimental ventures definitely included), comprised one of the themes of the symposium in Spain and will surely figure in the upcoming symposium on the uses of history in a cinematic context. Challenges for the future, creative alternatives, resources, collaborations, and networks of production and distribution, all of this and much more has been dizzyingly complicated in the face of growing, and seemingly unstoppable, processes of digitalization and the progressive eclipse of celluloid. The eclipse of celluloid, along with its ontological charge of luminous traces of real objects and subjects, is unsettling for many (it would be interesting, that is to say unsettling, to imagine a new “Morel’s invention” based on digitalization), but it is also, for many others, exciting (I confess that, for me, it is at once unsettling and exciting), especially inasmuch as resources and products proliferate, diversify, and in some cases free themselves from the heavy dependency on bulkier, more expensive technologies. The video “alternative” that Castillo



mentions, and that is expanded in turn by yet other alternatives in other formats (some of which are as small, mobile, and relatively affordable as the cellular phone), entails possibilities of a very different sort: for instance, a cinematic practice that is less white, less masculine, less heterosexual, less wealthy, and less directly implicated in, and dependent on, the so-called First World. For it is worth remembering that alongside the global predominance of Hollywood, indeed as a constitutive feature of it, stands the predominance of a certain gender, race, class, and sexuality. Mexican film-

New audiovisual technologies raise possibilities for different and revisualized understandings and practices of transnational cinema.

maker Juan Mora Catlett points to something similar, I submit, when he refers to "the facilities that working in digital modalities entails," facilities that include not just the "multi-camera" or "simultaneous use of various cameras" but also "the possibility of working [as in his *Eréndira Ikikunari*] with a group of indigenous people instead of professional actors" and, moreover, of working in their language, in this case P'urhépecha, rather than in Spanish.

Although the progressive disappearance of celluloid (and by extension, of a certain indexicality or referential capacity) and of large screening venues (and by extension, of a certain shared "theatrical" experience), and the concurrent rise of digitalization and "private entertainment centers" constituted one of the principal axes of our gathering in Cuenca and Madrid, the symposium also strove to take into consideration a variety of innovations and alternatives—from video to the Internet, cyberspace, blogs, cell

phones, and other interactive technologies—that in many respects question the very concept of "cinema." Similar questions obtain for "narrative"—often derided as such in more self-consciously experimental ventures—which undergoes any number of modifications in phenomena such as video-art and video-dance. Whatever the case, profound and far-reaching changes in the industry of cinema and in the very tools and procedures of filmmaking are affecting, often in still unforeseeable ways, the formal contents and discourses of authorship (the *auteur* tradition with its fetishized emphasis on the personal style and signature of the director as artist) as well as the very figure of the *auteur*, often displaced by actors, producers, distributors, and an array of business people, but also reconfigured, if not "democratized," as new, less costly devices become accessible to a larger number of people. The

proliferation of new audiovisual technologies raises, in short, not just challenges for the future but also possibilities for different and revitalized understandings and practices of transnational cinema beyond an exclusively or even predominately European or North American framework. Ibero-American cinema, however fraught with—and enriched by—national, regional, and local particularities, remains, as it were, under construction, its building blocks perhaps only now emerging.

Brad Epps is Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and Chair of the Committee on Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University. He also co-directs, with Haden Guest, the Committee on Ibero-American Film at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. His most recent book is *All About Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

Films from Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba and Chile are featured in this issue of *ReVista*. They range from Golden-Epoch Mexican films to the very latest in video productions in Cuba.

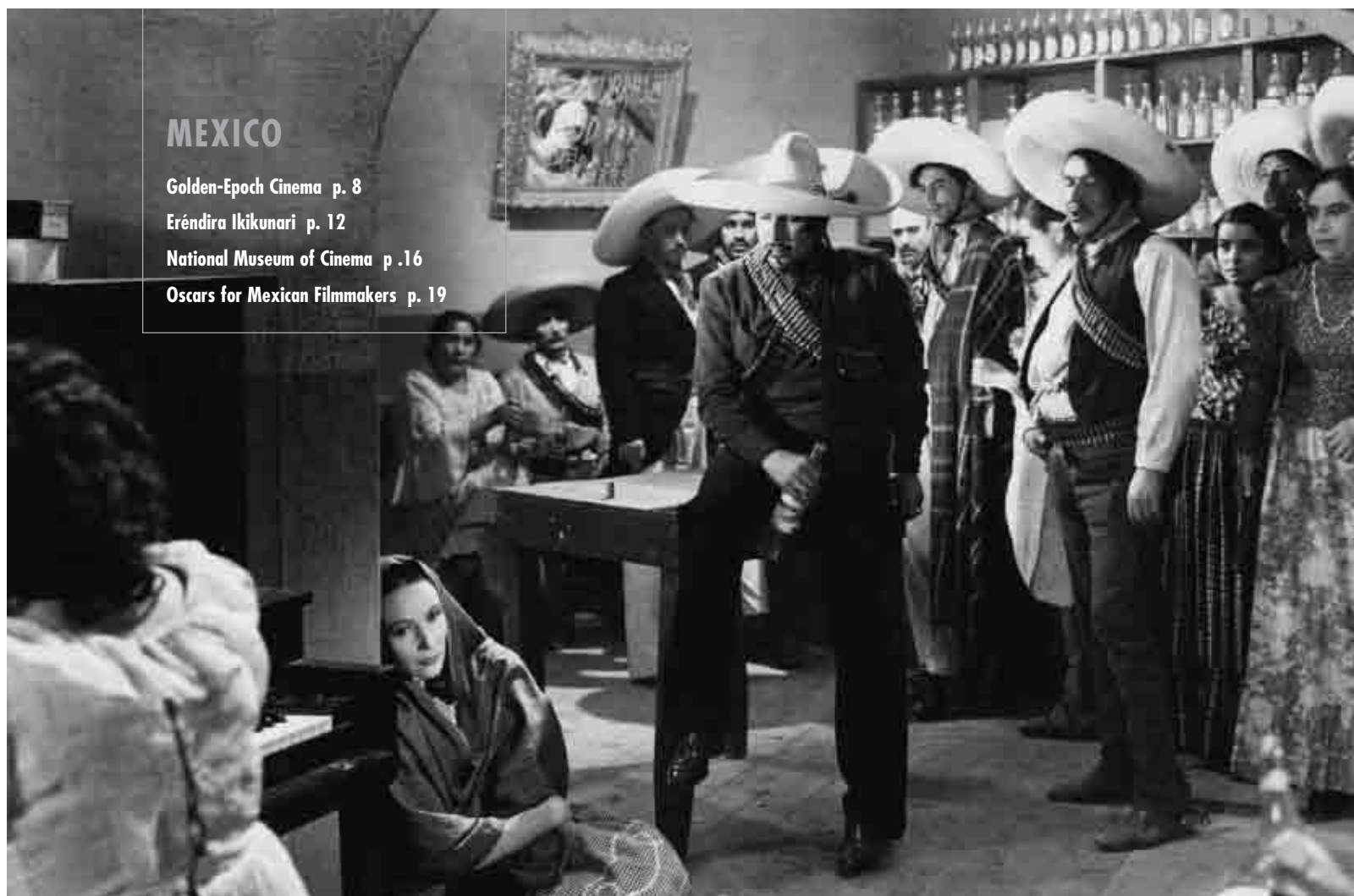
MEXICO

Golden-Epoch Cinema p. 8

Eréndira Ikikunari p. 12

National Museum of Cinema p. 16

Oscars for Mexican Filmmakers p. 19



Golden-Epoch Cinema in Mexico

Creating National Myths on the Silver Screen

BY ALMA GUILLERMOPRIETO

THE ACTING WAS APPALLING, THE inconsistencies of plot and character so constant that any occasional consistency seemed glaring. The soft-bodied chorus girls always skipped and wiggled in non-unison and the heroines always sobbed in precisely the same cadence, and no director ever attached negative value to the term “over the top.” During its three-score-long heyday, the Mexican movie industry produced hundreds of movies that scored low in at least one of the categories of wit, good taste, pacing, psychological insight, or complexity—or, sometimes, all of the above. And yet, as much as any single other force,

Mexican movies defined a nation, and an era, in a way that mattered deeply not only to Mexicans: throughout Latin America, the weepy musicals and glamorous dramas held tens of millions of viewers captive in their silvery light. Not for nothing does one of the revolutionary poet Roque Dalton’s best-known poems end with the words: “Let’s see if you sleep as good as you snore/ as Pedro Infante used to say.” [my translation] To this day, Mexicans traveling through points south will generate friendly surprise when their accent is revealed. “*Mexicana*,” a Peruvian shopkeeper, or an Argentine bureaucrat, will exclaim. And life for the wayfarer

will suddenly become easier, as if by virtue of nationality the traveler were somehow to be thanked for the gift of those old-time Mexican movies.

In this country almost no one who is not Latino has ever seen a Mexican movie from the *Época de Oro*, or Golden Era—as the period from, let’s say, 1938 to 1954 is generally known. And yet, whenever in the course of a lecture I’ve shown a snippet of one of those pinnacles of obsessive sentimentalism, I’ve seen the entire audience relax, visibly let go, at the first strains of a mariachi song, or laugh at the movie’s silliest jokes with good-natured delight, or stare in wonder at



Mexico has a long history of filmmaking from the silent era to the present. Often bolstered by state sponsorship, film in Mexico has been closely interwoven with the country's quest for national identity.

the extreme beauty of María Félix. What *is* it about these bad films that makes them so powerful? Let us say, for the moment, that it is the strength of their conviction in their own Mexicanness.

In the early 1930s, Mexico began to emerge from long decades of revolution and social upheaval into the normality of a daily life, albeit a life transformed not only by the Revolution itself but by an accelerated presence of the modern world. The working class was working, an emerging

bureaucracy was giving rise to a new sort of middle class, and at long last it was possible for families to live a predictable life, one in which weekend family entertainment had pride of place. In the burgeoning economy brand-new movie houses, each more glamorous and extravagant than the next, showed hypnotic entertainments. The glimmering figures on the screen could be from anywhere—swashbuckling stars like Douglas Fairbanks and John Barrymore played as important a role in the fantasy life of young Mexican matinee-movie-goers as they did north of the border—but in post-revolutionary Mexico the proud new

workers and employees (*oficinistas*) also wanted their own faces, language, and taste for high drama and great singing up on the screen. Moreover, a country that had seen itself ripped up and turned inside out by nearly twenty years of warfare had a lot of stories to tell, and the factions that emerged victorious from the bloodshed wanted certain stories told *their* way. Thus, the emergence of a national and nationalistic film enterprise, financed by the government of President Lázaro Cárdenas and, to a lesser degree, by producers in the United States. In the new mythology known as *nacionalismo revolucionario*, Mexico was not a tangle of

Left: Dolores del Río in *Flor Silvestre*

Above: scene from *Gángsters contra charros*



Emilio Fernández (left) was a leading director in the Época de Oro of Mexican cinema; Dolores del Río was a leading actress.

corruption, backstabbing factions, religious warfare and outrageous inequality. Instead, it was a nation forged in the fires of revolution, tempered by want, rooted in tradition but emerging triumphant into the modern world. In any other country, perhaps, and certainly at any other point in Mexico's development, the subjugation of creative endeavor to official history would have reeked of cynicism or propaganda. And propaganda there was, certainly, by the reel, along with ghastly exploitation of the audience's hunger for "schmaltz," but the Época de Oro of Mexican cinema coincided with a rare moment, perhaps akin to the first decade of the Cuban or Chinese Revolution, in which a poor and often victimized country believed in itself and thus created itself in the image it was in the act of conjuring. The energy released by this sort of magical thinking can fuel the unlikely representations of story.

Take Jorge Negrete, the opera-trained singer from a respectable Northern family, who would embody ranchero culture by erasing the whole notion of social class. Yes, it was true that most rancheros were more dark-skinned—and rather less well-nourished—than he, and that he sang not necessarily traditional ranchero songs wearing a mariachi costume no mariachi had ever worn before (indeed, the whole concept of the mariachi was pretty much a Mexiwood invention). But it was also true that Negrete embodied the Mexican persona at its best:

the big-hearted and exquisitely courteous male from *la provincia* who bears himself with virile elegance and an easy-going smile. Mexicans could both identify with him and ache to be like him. Or take Dolores del Río and Pedro Armendáriz, stars and muses of the artiest of all the Mexican film directors, Emilio ("el Indio") Fernández. Del Río came from an *haute bourgeois* family and was a star in Hollywood long before she ever acted in a Mexican movie. Armendáriz inherited his famous green eyes from his American mother, was partly brought up in the United States, and was an unreconstructed bohemian sometime-journalist,

outpourings of national mourning that ended in riots at the cemetery and several reported suicides.) National identity became actors' and scriptwriters' substitute for individual personality and character. Or, rather, national identity *became* character. It is the innocence and conviction with which these representations of identity were enacted onscreen that made them vital, irresistible, and, in some unaccountable way, *true*.

The last great box office hits of the Época de Oro included the Pedro Infante trilogy about Pepe el Toro—heart-broken hero of the working poor—and the whole cycle of hip-shivering rumbera movies,

Mexico was a nation forged in the fires of revolution, tempered by want, rooted in tradition but emerging triumphant into the modern world.

sometime art-student, before he turned to acting as a lark. On the face of it, the notion was ludicrous that these two worldly people could embody, over and over again, indigenous Mexican couples crushed by poverty and discrimination. But like Jorge Negrete, Pedro Infante, and a dozen other screen idols, these actors believed so strongly in the archetypes they were helping to create that they came to embody them for the generations. (I am using the overworked term "screen idols" advisedly: Infante's and Negrete's funerals, for example, provoked

which made audiences dance and sob late into the 1940s. Then it was over. In the 1950s only the comic actor Tin Tan would command the kind of devotion that made the stars of the Época de Oro household names, but the plots of even Tin Tan's best movies unravel long before the ending, and there is a frantic energy in his acting that can be read as trying too hard. He remains an old-style icon, but the formulas he clung to lost their magic even as he did his best to prod them back to life.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Mexican

movie studios made the decision to shift to color film. The dispirited flatness of the first movies in color, their unbearable triviality, come as a shock after the great outpouring of narrative that the Época de Oro represented. It was as if the whole country had suddenly run out of stories to tell. Moreover, there were less and less stories in common. Mimicking the beach-blanket songfests Hollywood was churning out, Estudios Churubusco produced teen musicals in which stand-ins for Sandra Dee and Troy Donahue bounced aimlessly around the screen, singing tuneless covers off the U.S. pop charts. These misconceived attempts at cosmopolitanism did find an audience (what else, after all, was there to see?), as did the only slightly more original risqué dramas featuring heavy-breathing actresses in their slips, but the social classes no longer mingled at the movie theatre: the middle class surrendered entirely to imports—mostly from the United States—while an entirely different audience favored the still-kicking ranchero genre. (Indeed, the

ranchero movie would eventually morph into the narcoepic, appallingly badly-made drug sagas whose existence is barely noted by the middle class, but which have found a huge audience, and are currently produced directly for DVD.)

The dominance at the box office of American movie spectacles, the widespread influence of television, and the demise of *nacionalismo revolucionario*, which had collapsed under the weight of its own broken promises, combined to demolish the Mexican film industry by the 1960s, despite the fact that its revival is regularly announced.

In recent years a dozen or so talented young directors—mostly male, mostly devoted to full-length fiction features—have, in fact, revitalized the art, if not the industry. But these new directors are as determined to prove their ability to tell stories about any part of the world as their artistic forbears were to sing the song of Mexico. The standard-bearers of this new wave, Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu and Alfonso Cuarón, are

internationally recognized, and therefore a great source of pride for their many compatriots. But they are still hugely outsold by *Spiderman*. And because they do not have a truly national audience, as a general rule they are not definers of a new myth of national identity (*Y tu mamá también* comes to mind as an exception.) Instead, the new wave of directors are individual artists, making highly personal films. This is probably just as well: after all, the Época de Oro fed us lies on a silver spoon, and now we are grown up. But oh, how delicious those lies were, and oh, how we miss them!

Alma Guillermoprieto is a Mexican-born journalist and author of several books, including Samba and Dancing with Cuba. A 2004-05 Nieman Fellow and 2006-07 Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Studies at Harvard, she taught a seminar on 20th-century Mexican history and the movies as a 2008 Visiting Lecturer in Harvard's Romance Languages and Literatures Department.

TRES ÉPOCAS, TRES ÓPTICAS, TRES PROMESAS...

POR LEONARDO VIVAS PEÑALVER

Como tantos otros de mi generación, me habría encantado que América Latina desarrollara un cine de gran pegada, que llegara cerca a los sueños de las multitudes. Lamentablemente no ha sido ése el medio cultural de masas más representativo de América Latina. Es otro género, la telenovela, el que se lleva los laureles, a pesar del escozor que eso produce entre las élites del continente. De muy joven, con las películas de vaqueros americanas sólo competían algunas películas mexicanas de estilo charro y, por supuesto, Cantinflas. Apenas nos llegaron los resplandores en extinción de la era argentina del tango. De allí en adelante el cine latinoamericano languideció. Ello fue así no por falta de imaginación, de esfuerzo o de talento cinematográfico. Vienen a mi memoria tres películas como testimonio de lo que digo: *Dios y el diablo en la tierra del sol* (Glauber Rocha, 1962) de Brasil, *Fresa y Chocolate* (Gutiérrez Alea, 1994) de Cuba y *Amores perros* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2000) de México. Cada uno de estos films encarna un momento particular, tanto en la manera como la sociedad latinoamericana (si se me permite el abuso) se ve a sí misma, como en la forma cinematográfica de encarar su temática y en la renovación de los votos por un nuevo cine que, esa vez sí, daría con la fórmula de una cinematografía de calidad para el amplio público. Para mí fueron también un espejo de mi propia evolución personal y

política. En *Dios y el diablo*, Rocha inaugura la era del Cinema Novo brasileño que hurga en la vida preterida del sertao, los conflictos por la tierra y el milenarismo religioso. A pesar de haber devuelto al cine la realidad social de su tiempo y traer a colación los grandes mitos de la redención social, el Cinema Novo terminó siendo un recuerdo precioso de cinemateca. *Fresa y chocolate* tiene un tono más intimista que recoge los nuevos conflictos de la sociedad machista cubana cuando se ve en el espejo de sus sueños rotos. Por inventar personajes creíbles y por haber puesto en evidencia uno que otro mito del mar de la felicidad, tuvo una mayor pegada. No obstante, su influencia en el resto del continente también tuvo patas cortas. Finalmente, *Amores perros* refleja el volcán de la violencia urbana de la gran urbe mexicana. En un guión digno de Vargas Llosa, las tres historias que mezcla representan el chisporroteo de la vida de seres que terminan viviendo para la muerte y desata un ritmo frenético pero lúcido, difícil de conseguir en otras películas latinoamericanas. A pesar de su impacto limitado, para mí las películas mencionadas son tres lupas gigantes que me han permitido saber del mundo en que vivo y de dónde vengo.

Leonardo Vivas Peñalver es un Fellow en el Centro Carr para Políticas de Derechos Humanos, Escuela Kennedy, Universidad de Harvard.

“Eréndira Ikikunari”

A Filmmaker's Journey

BY JUAN MORA CATLETT

“Hucha mitetixapquia escacsi hupiringa, máteru cuiripuecha. Atahpiticha encacsi tyámu xucuparhapca ca engacsi cacapequa úquaaca imaechani engacsi cuahpequarhenga. Ma cuiripuecu no cherheaspti. Yurbistsquiri ma enga naneni, hamemquia Eréndira arhicurhispti...”

“We had heard about the intruders: Warriors covered with iron who descended from heaven and killed all who dared oppose them. The only one that didn't fear them was a girl, barely a woman: Her name was Eréndira...”

THE LANGUAGE IS PUREHPECHA, SPOKEN by the indigenous people who had lived in Michoacán, Mexico, long before the arrival of Europeans. They were one of the most powerful pre-Columbian empires, second only to their worst enemies: the Aztecs. Actually, they were never conquered by anyone, so their descendants still maintain many of their traditions and customs.

SYNOPSIS

The feature film *Eréndira Ikikunari* (2006) is based on a 16th-century legend. It tells the story of a young girl, Eréndira, who became an icon of bravery during the destruction of her world by the Spanish conquistadors. The intruders took advantage of conflicts and discord among the Mexican natives that allowed the newcomers to reap the spoils of a country divided. But Eréndira refused to allow her nation to be destroyed and stood up against the social conventions that prohibited women from participating in warfare. It took extreme courage for her to capture and learn to ride one of the Spaniards' horses—seen as terrifying creatures by the natives. However, in this fashion, Eréndira won the respect of tribal leaders and became a symbol of resistance and the preservation of her culture. She was an exceptional woman, who fought to attain the dignity and respect that her culture only granted men.



Above: The feature film *Eréndira Ikikunari* is based on a 16th-century legend. Here is a composite made on the set in front of the camera; right: *Eréndira Ikikunari* in her body makeup.

BACKGROUND

When I was shooting a mural depicting the History of Michoacán for a documentary film about the Mexican painter Juan O'Gorman, I discovered the figure of an almost naked Indian Amazon facing the bloody, iron-clad Spanish conquistadors. Immediately I thought: “This is a great theme for a movie.” The idea of doing a film on a real red-blooded heroine was very attractive; first, I didn't have to invent or idealize anything, and second, the theme countered the low status that women had in pre-Columbian cultures and the degree of invisibility in which women are maintained even today.

The plot is based on two sources: the widespread legend of Princess Eréndira and the 16th-century illustrated manuscript *Relación de Michoacán*, written immediately after the conquest. This codex narrates the history of the Purépecha people, from their mythical origin until the arrival of the Europeans. The two accounts complement each other as two pieces of a puzzle, although giving opposed views of the conquest, the

Relación being the official history written by the victors, and the legend, handed down by oral tradition, being the only history book of vanquished peoples.

We planned to stage the film in locations in Michoacán: the Parícutín volcano as the abode of the gods, Lake Pátzcuaro, the ruins of two pre-Columbian cities and the spring of the Cupatitzio River. As we would be working in actual ruins instead of building sets, we decided that the characters' wardrobe and makeup should be based on the archaeological sources (the drawings of the codices and representations of people in ceramics and stone) and the contemporary crafts of the Purépecha (pottery, textiles and the attire of the folk dancers).

COSTUME

The costume design was developed from the *Relación de Michoacán* illustrations, where all the social strata of the pre-Columbian Purépecha are depicted. Considering that these images are stylizations, their translation into three-dimensional costumes was a challenge. Instead of using materi-





Shots taken during production



als such as tiger or deer leather, tropical bird feathers, raw cotton or jute fabrics, we employed materials used by contemporary ethnic groups, like straw mats—which served to create armor—or hand-woven fabrics. Instead of embroidering them, we used textile paint, imitating the codex's drawings. The end result was very interesting, achieving the look of a “cinematic pre-Columbian codex.” Another challenge was to present the conquistadors as supernatural beings. We wanted to see them as the Indians did, as “ironclad warriors that had descended from heaven.” We hit upon an answer in the folk dance of the “Curpitis,” where we see natives wearing wooden masks that depict white men. Their costumes were a combination of Renaissance armor and the wardrobe of the “Curpitis,” including, of course, the masks. Purépecha devil masks were used to represent pre-Columbian gods. Even the horse wore a metallic mask, acquiring by association a divine quality. This goes on, of course, until the Indians unmask the invaders, realizing that they are merely human. The only one that never loses his is the horse!

MAKEUP

Eréndira Ikikunari's makeup was developed from an idea from my previous feature on the Aztecs of Mexico, *Return to Aztlán*, in which we substituted body makeup for expensive costumes (expected in a period piece). In the Mixtec pre-Columbian codi-

ces, characters were usually decorated all over with signs, and certain Mexican indigenous tribes still paint their bodies for their ceremonies. It was surprising to discover that a practically nude person covered with body makeup appeared to be richly attired, and also, as in the case of the depiction of gods, was transformed into an extraordinary being.

In *Eréndira* we went even further. In the *Relación* we read that the great warriors used to cover their bodies with the soot from dense black smoke of green wood bonfires. This gave us the idea of using different qualities of black body makeup to distinguish

starts with Eréndira preparing for her wedding, we created a “wedding makeup” based on a pre-Columbian clay figure. Also, in the *Relación*, characters appear with faces painted in different colors, information that was very useful as it broadened our makeup palette.

SHOOTING THE FILM

To make the film I sought the collaboration of the indigenous community as well as input from scholars and linguists. I wanted the indigenous voice and perspective to be the true narrator. Then, instead of working with professional actors speaking Spanish or

The collaboration of the indigenous community gives the film a very special authenticity, a statement of Original Peoples regarding their own History.

the great warriors from the foot soldiers. Also, as the film deals with a fratricidal war, the rebels were painted solid black and the Spaniards' allies had white markings upon their black makeup. In this way we could show that all belonged to a common culture, although they were fighting each other as harsh enemies. Eréndira had a red stripe on her face, to show that she was struggling for all of her people.

Makeup also served to give dignity and greatness to the characters, and to distinguish social strata and trades. As the film

English, I chose to train indigenous actors, speaking their own tongue, acting in their imperial pre-Columbian cities, wearing the outfits of their ancestors and recreating a very important episode of their own history. This gives the film a very special authenticity; more than mere entertainment, it's a Statement of the Original Peoples regarding their own History.

The dialogue is mostly spoken in a Purépecha with an ancient flavor, mixed with a little 16th-century Spanish and Latin. With the help of linguists from several indigenous



villages, we had to create a dialogue that everybody who knows the tongue could understand. The actors, who were mostly authentic Indians acting for the first time ever, went through intensive rehearsals in the eight weeks before we started shooting. For the role of Eréndira we wanted to break away from the commonplace of mannish and superhuman heroines typical of U.S. action films. So we chose a young actress doing her first professional role in a very feminine way.

We started working on the shores of Lake Pátzcuaro, in the ancient imperial cities of Tzintzuntzan (the place of hummingbirds) and Ihuatzio (the place of coyotes), still mostly buried. The fact that we were working in the place where the original events took place also added a kind of magical aura and communion with living nature and the ancient gods. This was echoed in the actors' performances and in the camera work. Due to the difficult shooting conditions, as we were working in exteriors, with natural light, with non-professional actors who were almost naked, the largest part was shot with three simultaneous cameras in digital cinema, one in high definition (HD) and two miniDV's. The other part of the film was shot with two S16 mm film cameras. This allowed the actors to perform without interrupting the flow of their emotions, as is usual in features. We also could take advantage of the continuity of the lighting conditions and colors of each hour of the day. There were many magical

moments that were captured by the cameras in astounding photography.

POSTPRODUCTION

The use of digital techniques during the editing allowed us to combine the beautiful drawings of the *Relación de Michoacán* with live action, establishing a style that followed the Puréhecha concept of the epic and allowed the rendering of a myth. So, through a non-realistic style, a world that we can't possibly recreate is made credible. The story is finally told by the voice of an old Indian through the text and drawings of a codex. This combination of graphics and live action in collage form brought the form of the film near to the aesthetics of pre-Columbian codices while maintaining a very contemporary look.

The music was made from the sound recordings of the scenes. Human voices, sounds of nature, conches and drums, were used to create the music digitally. The film thus attained a very special unity, as all the sound, music and images stemmed from the same source.

SOME LESSONS

Such films on pre-Columbian themes are extremely rare and contribute to the awareness that our most important roots, especially in a large part of Latin America, are not only European. It's true that since the conquest both indigenous cultural heritage and religions have been labeled as "primitive," "useless," "naive," "inferior," and "valueless,"

as that served the Europeans to strengthen their dominion. Even today, the fact of being of non-European origin is a source of shame for many people in Latin America.

During the premiere of the film at the Puréhecha community theater in Pátzcuaro (the city where the O'Gorman mural is located), the response of the indigenous audience was extremely moving. One old lady who did not speak Spanish fluently said that she "was very happy because it was the first time she had understood a Mexican film." One man told the audience very openly that since his childhood he was made to feel ashamed of his language and culture, but after watching the film he felt very proud. Those two comments were for me justification enough for having made the film, which, incidentally, did very well in film festivals all over the world and in box office receipts in Mexico. The film has also been shown in various indigenous communities, always resulting in discussions about the necessity of studying their own history, ending ancient grudges between villages, unifying the diverse dialects of their language, and longing for more Eréndiras.

Juan Mora Catlett is a filmmaker and full professor at The University Center of Film Studies at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). He has distinguished himself in developing a style of fiction cinema based on pre-Columbian cultural roots.

Mexico's National Museum of Cinema

Filmmaking and Identity

BY CLAUDIA ARROYO QUIROZ

MEXICO HAS A LONG HISTORY OF filmmaking, from the silent era to the present, with some particularly prolific periods that have been stimulated by state sponsorship and international recognition. Appreciation of the results that began in the 1940s, when Mexican films won prizes at European festivals such as Cannes, has continued more recently with the success of directors such as Alfonso Cuarón (*Y tu mamá también*, 2001/*And Your Mother, Too*), Alejandro González Iñárritu (*Amores perros*, 2000/*Love's a Bitch*; *Babel*, 2006) and Guillermo del Toro (*El laberinto del fauno*, 2006/*Pan's Labyrinth*). The National Museum of Cinema seeks to broaden Mexico's collective knowledge about its national film history, but first I'd like to provide a little bit of it here.

During the silent period, cinema served as both entertainment and a source of information through fiction features, very

much influenced by European and American films, and through documentaries that registered the final phase of Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship (1876-1910) and the avatars of the Revolution (1910-17). In the 1920s, film production was not so abundant in part because the newly formed state focused on sponsoring other projects such as public education and mural art. It was not until the mid-1930s that the post-revolutionary state invested in cinema on a large scale, which led to the formation of a film industry that in the 1940s dominated the market of the Spanish-speaking world (Latin America, Spain and the United States). This period, known as the Golden Age (1935-55), saw the emergence of new genres, directors with distinctive styles and a local star system that helped to assure a massive audience. Characterized by the predominance of a nationalist discourse and a melodramatic narrative, Golden Age

cinema gained international recognition particularly through the success of director Emilio Fernández and his cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa.

In the 1960s, a new generation of filmmakers and film critics began to reject the 1940s popular cinema. Their attempts to form a new film culture, along with state funding in the early 1970s, contributed to the development of a kind of *auteur* cinema led by directors like Felipe Cazals and Arturo Ripstein. In the early 1990s, Mexico's cultural scene came to be refreshed by a new corpus of films produced by younger directors, which would come to be known, both locally and abroad, as the New Mexican Cinema. While several of these directors have continued to consolidate their careers, with some of them now settled in the international arena, in recent years other new filmmakers have managed to produce their first feature films, despite the finan-



cial difficulties aggravated by Hollywood's supremacy in the country's movie theatres, and to a large extent thanks to the support provided by local annual festivals such as those in Guadalajara and Morelia.

Unlike the *auteur* cinema produced from the 1960s to the present, which has been viewed and praised mainly by the middle classes, the more popular, industrial and melodramatic cinema (Golden Age films and successful genres of subsequent decades such as wrestler and *fichera* films) is very much cherished by a large part of Mexico's population. Love of these older films has been fuelled by the state and by media companies that have promoted this film heritage through retrospectives, commercial DVD editions and constant TV reruns. In particular, Golden Age cinema has been widely celebrated by official discourse and the mass media as a key component of the nation's cultural heritage, for instance through homages dedicated to directors and stars.

Mexico's long tradition of preserving its film heritage is maintained at present by institutions like Cineteca Nacional (Education Ministry) and the Filmoteca UNAM (National Autonomous University), film studios (Estudios Churubusco) and private

collectors; all of them have preserved not only the films themselves but also a wide range of still images, sound material and all sorts of objects related to cinematographic production.

Such preservation work has led to the creation of the National Museum of Cinema, a project sponsored by the Mexican Institute of Cinematography (IMCINE), the official entity in charge of promoting the development of the country's cinematographic activities. President Felipe Calderón announced the creation of the museum in 2008 during the celebrations of the centennial of the birth of the cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa. The document outlining the project highlights the cultural and educational function assigned to the museum, stating that it will be "a dynamic and interactive space that will illustrate the history of our cinema and the contributions made by Mexican cinema's images and filmmakers to both our culture and our collective imaginings." The document also envisages that the museum will take part in the reconfiguration of the national identity, stating that the project aims "to draw the new generations to the cultural referents of our cinema in the process of constructing our national

identity for the 21st century."

The initial stage of the project has involved the formation of a multidisciplinary working group that includes film scholars, collectors, museographers, scriptwriters, architects and visual artists. This group is currently working on the museum's inaugural exhibition, entitled *Cinema and the Mexican Revolution*, which will open in the second half of 2010 at the Antigua Colegio de San Ildefonso during the commemoration of the centenary of the beginning of the Revolution. Conceived as the official "letter of presentation" of the museum, the exhibition will explore how cinema, both national and foreign, documentary and fiction, has represented the Mexican Revolution from the outbreak of that war to the present day.

Housed in nine rooms, the exhibition will treat the following themes: the sociopolitical and cultural context of pre-revolutionary Mexico; the documentaries produced during the Revolution; the representation of the revolutionary leaders (*caudillos*) in fiction films; the genealogy of the representation of the Revolution in Mexico's visual culture in the 1920s and 1930s; the construction of natural and



Shown here are posters for many popular Mexican films.

artificial spaces in the *mise-en-scène* of the films; the representation of the physical and social mobilizations caused by the civil war; the characterization of violence and death during the war; the construction of gender identities in fiction films; and finally, the representation of the Revolution in Hollywood and European cinema. The design of these rooms will be based on both the research carried out by film historians and the proposals made by museographers and artists. In addition, there will be outdoor public exhibitions that will include installations and activities such as film screenings, a collective book with research articles that will be based on the exhibition; and a television series produced by TV UNAM using some of the research findings.

The creation of this museum is inscribed within a long tradition of administering cultural heritage that was implemented in Mexico from the beginning of the post-revolutionary period. Given the nationalist orientation of its post-revolutionary policy, Mexico has invested a great deal in both preserving its cultural heritage and integrating it into an extensive system of museums, more than any other country in Latin America. As UAM anthropology professor

Néstor García Canclini indicates in *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (México: Grijalbo, 1990), museums have constituted the scene for the classification and assessment of cultural goods in Mexico along with schooling and the mass media.

Since the heritage to be exhibited is film, the National Museum of Cinema could prove to be at once advantageous and sensitive, as it will be maneuvering a corpus of cultural goods that hold a special place in the collective imagination. In this sense, it

addressee' who is hailed by the museum as a subject and offered 'a position in history and a relationship to that history.'" In addition to noting this function, we will also witness to what extent the museum mobilizes a discourse regarding its potential contribution to a process of reconfiguring the national identity, as the document presenting the project suggests.

In displaying the history of the film representation of the Revolution, the exhibition will allow the viewer to see how this representation has changed over time, in accordance

The creation of this museum is inscribed within a long tradition of administering cultural heritage that goes back to the beginning of the post-revolutionary period.

will be interesting to see how the museum addresses the visitor as a citizen in relation to his/her country's history of filmmaking. In "Muralism and the People: Culture, Popular Citizenship, and Government in Post-Revolutionary Mexico" (*The Communication Review*, 5:7-38, 2002), Dartmouth College art history professor Mary K. Coffey describes the museum visitor as a "citizen-

with discursive formations and the political necessities of the various historical periods. The exhibition will carry out a conceptual and spatial organization of film materials that will guide, in one way or another, the interpretations of the visitor/citizen about cinema's construction of the Revolution. In the context of Coffey's analysis, this is related to the fact that the meaning of any visual culture is always contingent upon contextualization; an idea that can be developed further through the following questions: where is the piece of visual culture located? What are the rituals governing interpretation in that site? How is it framed or positioned?

Through this exhibition and subsequent ones, the National Museum of Cinema will provide novel and unique ways of displaying and socializing Mexico's film culture. This will allow the public to reflect upon the significance of this crucial aspect of the country's cultural history and, consequently, also on the role of audiovisual culture in the construction of collective imaginings and identities.

Claudia Arroyo Quiroz holds a doctorate in Latin American Studies from the Birkbeck College (University of London) and is a research professor at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Cuajimalpa in Mexico City. Her research has focused on Mexico's cultural history of 19th and 20th centuries; she has published articles on nationalist and identity discourses in Mexican literature and film.



Many Mexican films told the story of revolutionary heroes, as seen in these posters.

Oscars for Mexican Filmmakers

But Where Are the Mexican Films?

BY HUMBERTO DELGADO

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, IN 2007, THE so-called Three Amigos (the filmmakers Alfonso Cuarón, Guillermo del Toro and Alejandro González Iñárritu) went up on stage for the 79th Oscar Awards presentations. Their three films (*Children of Men*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Babel*, respectively) garnered a total of sixteen nominations for the golden statuette (ten of them for people born in Mexico). Together, they won four of the Oscars handed over that night and a contract with Universal for \$100 million dollars to produce five movies, one or two of them in Spanish.

On the other side of the border, the event was much celebrated and publicized. This national triumph had great symbolic value for Mexico. These directors and other Mexican artists had managed to realize the American dream by directing Robert de Niro, acting alongside of Brad Pitt, and working as photography directors for Tim Burton or the Coen brothers. Film criticism in Mexico, sometimes excessively condescending, at other times extremely harsh, was polarized between critics who unabashedly praised the filmmakers for displaying high technical expertise and notable aesthetic quality in these multimillion dollar projects, and commentators who considered these films to be mere "popcorn movies," commercial factory piecework that erased national identity and eclipsed true Mexican films with cultural values that defined the country or that had taken risks to create formal avant garde experiments. Regardless of this polemic (impossible to resolve in this space), the night of the 2007 Oscars could also be said to demonstrate a historic inertia of cinematography in a country which had been capable of generating its own export-quality movies. In this, the relations between Mexico and the United States have played a fundamental role that is responsible for the present situation—not only cinematographic, but also the economic, political, social and cultural. Let us use the flashback technique to explain some of the background that led to the night when the Three Amigos took each other's hands and



From left to right: Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro González Iñárritu and Guillermo del Toro

greeted the audience in the movie awards ceremony seen throughout the world.

The initial point of departure for any discussion of Mexican film is its so-called Golden Age, whose exact dates are defined differently by different commentators. In "El cine nacional," for example, Carlos Monsiváis places the era from 1930 to 1954, while Rafael Aviña and Gustavo García situate its beginning in 1936, the year of the legendary film *Allá en el Rancho Grande*. In any case, the period encompassed a little less than thirty years and managed to dominate the film industry in Latin America, with the exception of Argentina. Mexico made the most widely seen films in Spanish on the continent, including in Brazil and the United States; here, in 1950, 300 movie houses showed Spanish-language films, mainly Mexican movies.

Commercial success led to thematic richness in the film industry. Producers made movies of an expressionist nature such as *Dos monjes* (1934), political-historical films such as *Vámonos con Pancho Villa* (1935) or films dissecting specific sectors of the society such as the family in *Una familia de tantas* (1934) or immigrants to the United States

in *Espaldas mojadas* (1953). Only a strong film industry could receive exiled Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel and help revive his career, or let a terribly bad filmmaker, Juan Orol (the local Ed Wood), write, direct, produce, act in and compose the music for a movie in which Mexican charros—a type of Mexican cowboy—defend the national sovereignty when threatened by the Chicago Mafia (*Gángsters contra charros*, 1947). This peculiar and weird film demonstrates the good health and diversity of a cinematography capable of making 108 movies in 1949 and 150 in 1950, in contrast to the harsh and sad reality of the end of the century, when only thirteen movies were made in 1997.

In this entire Mexican Belle Époque, Mexico-United States relations were notably important. The first factor that should be mentioned—a commonplace for all references regarding this period—was Mexico's northern neighbor's entry into World War II. The U.S. film industry needed to ration its production of celluloid (the material for making film) and to concentrate its movie production on war-related movies and propaganda. Thus, although it continued to be

the dominant industry in the world, it had to cede a bit of room to its neighbors. In addition, European film, the second dominant market in Latin America, directly suffered the effects of the war. Mexico took advantage of the situation when it declared itself an ally of the United States against the German-Italian-Japanese axis. Its Spanish-language film competitors fell behind: Spain was recuperating from a civil war, and Argentina was trapped in its relationship with Germany and Italy. Hence the Mexican movie industry flourished and expanded throughout the continent.

In addition to the factor of the war, the Golden Age of movies in Mexico was strengthened by closeness to Hollywood. The proximity of the border allowed many Mexican technicians and film artists to develop their skills in the United States and to learn from Hollywood the difficult art of making movies. The most notable case—because of its importance and because it serves as a microcosm of the relationship between the two neighbors—is that of the group made up of Emilio Fernández (director), Gabriel Figueroa (cinematographer) and Dolores del Río (actress). This group is unanimously considered by critics as the crew that brought film aesthetics of Mexico to its highest point during the Golden Age in the middle of the 20th century, a status that even today no one has been able to attain. All three had been in Hollywood under different circumstances, and each one was representative of the diverse strata of Mexican society.

First, there is Emilio Fernández, the wetback who worked his way up to learning how to make movies after laboring as bricklayer, longshoreman and waiter in Chicago and Los Angeles. He then became an apprentice in several movies, where he learned a bit of everything and was a specialist in nothing. Later, thanks to his athletic figure, he was hired as a double and an extra in movies, including a few for Douglas Fairbanks. The “Indio”—the Indian—(a nickname he wore with honor) is even said to have been the model who posed for the Oscar statuette, an unlikely tale but indicative of his striking looks. Fernández arrived in Hollywood in the 1920s, when the cinematographic development of silent films had reached its peak after its institutionalization with films such as *Intolerance* in the previous decade. It was also in California where “El Indio” learned of an unfinished film that affected him deeply:

Sergei Eisenstein’s *¡Que viva México!*, about which he declares, “This is where I learned the pain of the people, the land, the strike, the struggle for freedom and social justice. It was wonderful.” This statement is in and of itself an aesthetic declaration that Emilio Fernández would abide by to the end.

The inspiring mix of the North American film and the Soviet director would influence Fernández significantly after he returned to Mexico and became the author of *Flor Silvestre*, *Enamorada*, *Río Escondido*, *María Candelaria* and *Salón México*, among his most significant films. As does Almodóvar today, Fernández stylized melodrama in such a fashion as to give it a tragic aspect and transform it into something greater that could effectively transmit the values of a post-revolutionary Mexico. The idealization and exaltation as a way to construct the identity of the country led the director to create diverse mythic figures that have survived in the local imaginary (the Peasant, the Motherland, the Mother, Providence, all with capital letters). He is, without a doubt, the most nationalist among nationalist filmmakers and this turned him, for better or worse, into one of the few Mexican film directors, perhaps the only one, that has made it to a select pantheon known as authors’ films. The grandfather of the Three Amigos returned from the United States to his country of origin, not to reencounter but to reinvent it. He never would have been able to accomplish this without the experience of living in the United States, distanced from his home country.

The director would not have accomplished much without the help of another notable artist: the cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa, who also had his own experience in Hollywood. If Emilio Fernández crossed the border as a wetback, Figueroa did so through networking among producers. Figueroa received a scholarship in 1935 from the Mexican film company CLASA to study with the legendary Gregg Toland, who later would become the cameraman for *Citizen Kane* and also would take charge of teaching Orson Wells about the language of film. Just as Eisenstein was important for Fernández, Toland’s style would mark Figueroa and through him the entire Mexican film industry, with the use of deep focus in which the depth of field is increased and the cinematographic space is expanded. The “Indio” and Figueroa learned to optimize

this resource to capture the Mexican landscape, imbuing it with a lyrical essence. Through Figueroa, Mexican photography turned into a school with a certain prestige in the world, to the degree that today, fifty years later, there are at least five Mexican cameramen filming in Hollywood and winning Oscars for which Figueroa was nominated, but did not win.

Last but not least is Dolores del Río, who arrived in Hollywood in a very different manner. Unlike Figueroa and Fernández, the future star of the Golden Age was a member of Mexico’s wealthy upper class and emigrated to California—to the circles of the jet set—after the upheaval of the Mexican Revolution. Del Río became an actress in silent films and made about 30 movies, many of them very successful and of the highest quality. She worked with highly regarded directors such as Raoul Walsh, King Vidor and Busby Berkeley, and in 1928 even managed to make a hit as a singer on the soundtrack of the silent film *Ramona*. Although she contributed to the promotion of the Latin stereotype, her elegant and aristocratic beauty, together with a true dramatic talent, made her a diva in her time; while a minor diva alongside some of the great divas of the period, she achieved greater fame than contemporary Mexican actresses like Salma Hayek, who has not managed to achieve a high-quality role in her North American experience. Unlike other non-English-speaking actors, Dolores del Río made an easy transition from silent film to the talkies and managed to continue her career in the United States. In 1942, getting close to 40 and knowing that Hollywood tended to put older actresses out to pasture, she decided to return to Mexico. There she met with intellectuals and artists, among whom was “Indio” Fernández. The director offered her the lead role in *Flor Silvestre* and this would begin the second act of her career, the face of love and feminine anguish of Mexican melodrama.

The director, the photographer, the actress. The wetback, the exchange student, the aristocrat. All the cinematographic sectors and the social strata of Mexico were enriched through this experience. U.S. cinematography gave them the technical expertise and allowed them to encounter their own cultural values that they later developed on returning to their native land. There are also other examples, such as Gon-



The image above depicts a scene from *El Rancho Grande*.

zalo Gavira, the first Mexican to win an Oscar; his award was for the sound effects in *The Exorcist*. Gavira managed to create peculiar sounds with ordinary objects, such as the possessed girl's famous turn of the head, a sound that he made with a comb. Another success story is that of Luis Mandoki, the first true filmmaker of this new bevy of directors at the end of the 20th century. Mandoki emigrated to California as a result of the Mexican economic crisis and achieved a certain prestige in Hollywood; years later, in a curious reversal, he returned to Mexico to support the causes of the Mexican and Central American left, making leftist, politically committed films.

Given this history, it is not surprising to see the Three Amigos on stage for the 79th Oscar ceremony. González Iñárritu, Cuarón and del Toro are products of the Mexican film industry, which, even in crisis, still maintains the infrastructure forged in the years of splendor, enabling it to develop quality movies within the scope offered by the commercial and political relations with its northern neighbor. In spite of this history of being good neighbors in the film industry, there are elements that have negatively affected the Mexican film industry, bringing about its present crisis. The free market strategy, especially through NAFTA, has constrained cinematography south of the Bravo River and has permitted U.S. monopolies to dominate the Mexican movie houses. For example, in 2000, 84.2%

of films shown in Mexico were from the United States, while 8.3% were Mexican, according to cultural critic Néstor García Canclini. The vicious cycle this produces is evident: if Mexican films do not profit from or recoup their investment, movie production is cut back and thus fewer local films are shown. In response, the Mexican filmmaking community has often protested, including a 1998 international symposium that was called *Los que no somos Hollywood* ("Those of Us Who Are Not Hollywood"). These protests resulted in an effort to implement a law to protect the Mexican cinematographic market, a law that was completely rejected by Jack Valenti, director of the Motion Picture Association of America and by the U.S. government itself. The law, of course, never went into effect. Despite these problems, thanks to new digital technologies and the participation of the Mexican government, 70 movies were made in 2008, but only 46 of them were ever shown, and as a result the audience for local movies decreased dramatically. The artificial lifeline that the Mexican state has granted to the movie industry will not help if there is no fair competition within the local market and the Mexican film industry will continue to be in crisis for at least the next few years. This problem can be seen as a microcosm of what has happened in other areas—economic, social, cultural and political—of U.S.-Mexico relations. On the one hand, the strong U.S. film industry has directly

permitted the strengthening of the Mexican industry, but at the same time, power of the former diminishes the latter. But one should not forget the fact that in its turn, Mexico dominated the Latin American film industry in the middle of the last century and hindered cinematographic development in other Latin American countries as a result of the inevitable spiral of the big fish gobbling up the smaller ones. The strengthening of national film industries is not possible without strengthening the economy and public policy in each country; at the same time, a robust film industry reflects the autonomy and strength of an economically healthy and democratic country (film in totalitarian governments should be considered as a separate, distinct case). The best way to guarantee that many more "Tres Amigos" will emerge and that new artistic talents will be developed in other Latin American nations is to guarantee the economic and social health of those nations. Utopia is still desirable—and still possible.

Humberto Delgado, a third-year doctoral student of Latin American literature in Harvard's Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, studied Latin American literature at the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (UAEM) and later film directing at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), where he also received a Master's in Communications Studies.

BRAZIL

Brazilian Cinema Now p. 22

Neither Sertão nor Favela p. 28

Brazilian Film through U.S. Lenses p. 31

Brazilian Cinema Now

Between Plasticity and Blindness

BY NICOLAU SEVCENKO

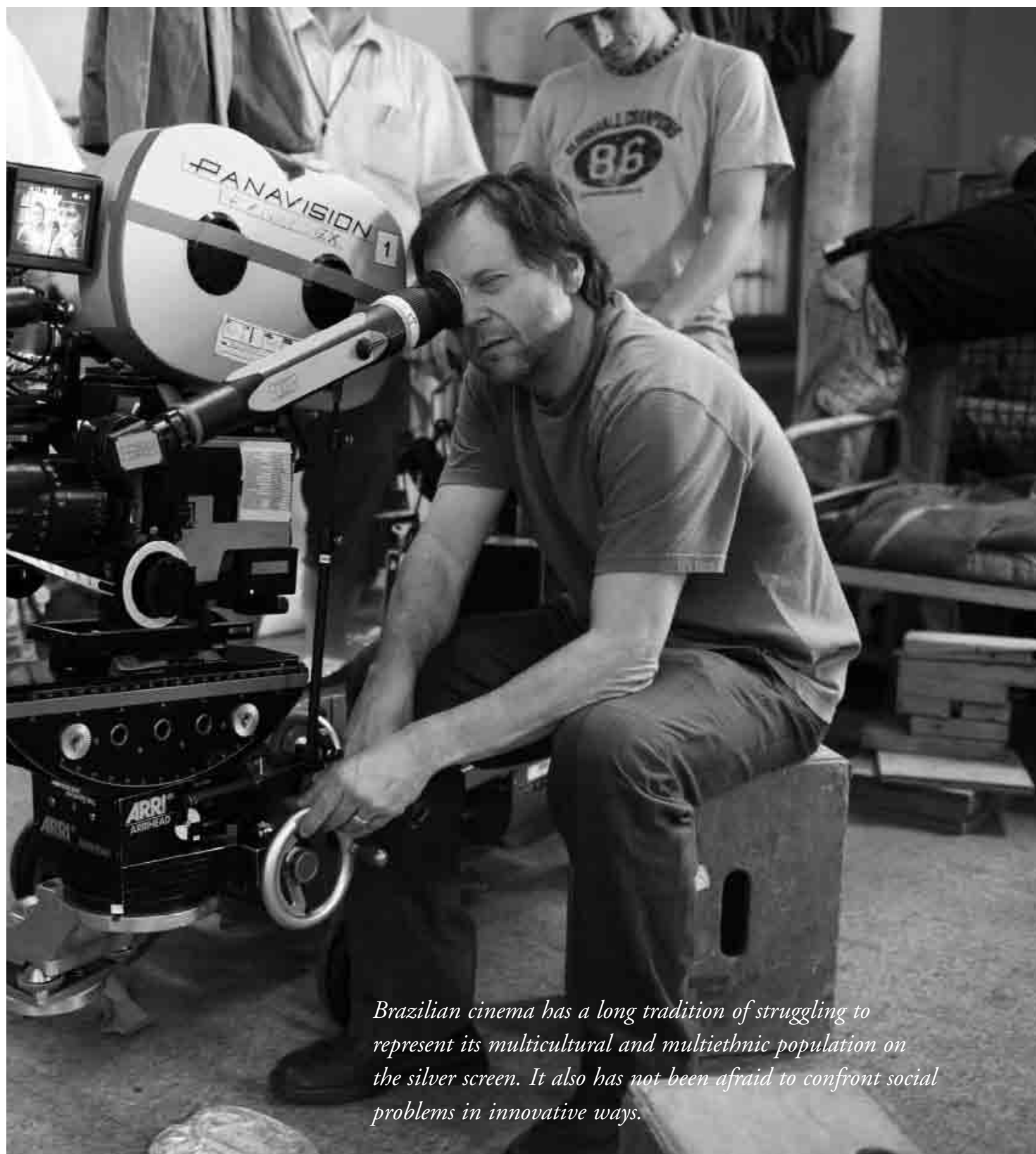
S NOW FALLING IN THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO, IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL? Taking a helicopter in São Paulo then arriving a few moments later in the deep wilderness of the Amazon jungle, half a continent further away to the north? Then meeting a white Asian tiger in the heart of the Amazon forest? Returning afterwards to São Paulo to watch martial-arts duels between triad and yakuza-style gang members? One could very well say that none of those things are remotely possible in the real world. Well, but as a matter of fact, they are the very stuff globalization is made of.

These days, instead of trusting your reason or even your instincts, you are rather invited to believe what is shown on a screen. We are living under the influence of the spectacle gone wild. The scenes described above are part of a new Brazilian (?) film, aptly named *Plastic City*. It is actually a co-production involving Chinese, Japanese and Brazilian investors, casting Asian film stars Joe Odagiri, from Japan, and Anthony Wong, from Hong Kong, under the direction of the renowned and twice Cannes Festival nominee Yu Lik Wei, from mainland China. The Asian associates put in 60% of the investments, leaving 40% for their Brazilian partners. However, the entire budget for the production had to be spent in Brazil, which technically made it a Brazilian film. But is it, really?

Welcome to a new age. Once upon a time there was a rather prestigious tradition called Brazilian cinema. Nowadays what you are going to have will be more and more films made in Brazil. It might sound pretty much the same, but it is not. Some call it globalization, others call it outsourcing, everybody agrees though that local contexts, cultural singularities and historical circumstances need to be erased if your aim is to place a visual product in the world market, designed for indiscriminate consumption. Within this new strategy, the more you neutralize the local flavors, enhancing on the other hand the colors, the elegant display and the fancy glasses, cutlery and porcelain, the closer you get to the shiny gates

Filmographer Ken Woroner on the set of *Blindness*





Brazilian cinema has a long tradition of struggling to represent its multicultural and multiethnic population on the silver screen. It also has not been afraid to confront social problems in innovative ways.

of success. Just follow the victorious formula of internationally acclaimed new cuisine. Along that path you would eventually get into *Plastic City*.

Brazilian film producers were in fact among the first to take a step into the huge and highly coveted Chinese market. Rede Globo, the most powerful Brazilian media network, involving publishing, press, radio, recording, video, TV and film productions, was a pioneer in selling its main product, soap operas, to the Chinese. When, after chairman Mao's death, it sold them "*Isaura, the Slave*" the show became the greatest hit ever at the local TV. The star playing the main role, Lucélia Santos, turned into a mass celebrity, her visit to China leading to unprecedented degrees of personality worship, even if compared to the revelries of the Cultural Revolution. As a consequence of her success, Lucélia Santos launched her own film production company, Nhock Produções, and, in 2007, in collaboration with China's Beijing Rosat, co-produced "*Love at the Other End of the World*," aiming at a potential audience of two billion spectators.

As far as Western screens are concerned however, two other Brazilian films became big hits: *The City of God* (2002-3), directed by Fernando Meirelles, and *Elite Squad* (2007), by José Padilha. Although both films enjoyed wide international success, receiving positive reviews and being acclaimed by audiences wherever shown, they could still claim their place as belonging to the tradition of Brazilian cinema. However much they might have tapped into the visual dialects of TV and Hollywood narrative resources, and they did a lot, they nonetheless strived to capture the real social tensions behind the excruciating violence that engulfed the *favelas* of Rio de

Janeiro with the invading swarms of rival gangs trafficking cocaine and crack-cocaine from the 1970s onwards.

In that sense they might have a different syntactic structure and an expressive voice of their own, but they were in line with the critical tradition and political awareness so typical of Brazilian Cinema Novo of the 1960s and 70s. They were both mostly financed by resources collected from local and small film producers, relying on quite limited budgets. Their remarkable success, however, most of all with respect to international audiences, was due less to their ethical stances or political concerns relative to the local and the Brazilian contexts than to their visual impact and the sheer degree of crude violence that they openly displayed.

Neither of the directors subscribed to this rule of fire power imposed by the gangs and the responding police force, but obviously they couldn't control the reactions of their audiences, least of all outside Brazil. So, regardless of their good intentions, what they intended to show as a tragedy was mostly received as a spectacle, a very amusing one at that, thanks to their striking visual skills and their rather hyperbolic narrative techniques. From that perspective, like it or not, although the films were conceived as Brazilian cinema, they were received mostly as "world cinema," globalized against their will.

It is quite interesting to follow Fernando Meirelles' artistic trajectory after achieving celebrity status thanks to the almost universal praise received by *The City of God*. His most recent film is *Blindness* (2007-8), based on the book *An Essay on Blindness* by the Nobel-prize winner Portuguese writer José Saramago. This time the film was a co-production of Brazilian, Canadian and Japanese investors

BLACK ORPHEUS

BY KENNETH R. MAXWELL

In 1959, Marcel Camus' *Black Orpheus* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes film festival. With its haunting Bossa Nova soundtrack by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Luis Bonfá, the film became an international sensation. I saw it for the first time in 1962 while I was an undergraduate at Cambridge.

The ancient story of love and death is transposed by Camus to the annual carnival of Rio Janeiro. Against the beat of low but continuous drums, the film is tied together by the haunting songs of "Manhã de Carnaval" and "O Nosso Amor." Orpheus, played by Bruno Mello, and Eurydice, played by Marpessa Dawn, retell the ancient Greek myth of a youth who travels to the land of the dead to bring back the woman he loves. Orpheus becomes a street car conductor, and Eurydice a country girl visiting Rio for the first time. The favela where the story unfolds looks down over the city and its beaches.

Death, portrayed in a skeleton costume by Adhemar Ferreira da Silva, pursues Eurydice who has fallen in love with Orpheus as he has with her. Chased into the terminal of the tram cars by Death, Eurydice tries to escape him by jumping and clutching the wires of the trams. Orpheus arrives and switches these on while

looking for her. She is electrocuted.

But the body of Eurydice is removed and Orpheus visits the city's Bureau of Missing Persons to find out where she is. He attends a Macumba ceremony where he is able to establish contact with her spirit. He then collects her body from the city morgue. When he reaches the favela, his former girl friend rushes at him angrily and he falls backwards over the steep side of the cliff. The film ends with Benedito, a young friend of Orpheus, strumming his guitar. Sitting together on the favela hilltop with Zeca, another young friend, a little girl dances before them. Together they welcome the morning sun as it arises over the Rio de Janeiro horizon.

I saw the film again last night for the first time since 1962 in a DVD from the Criterion collection. It was as magnificent as I remembered it.

Kenneth R. Maxwell was a Visiting Professor of History at Harvard University and directed the DRCLAS Brazil Studies Program. He is the author of several books, including *Naked Tropics: Essays on Empire and Other Rogues* and *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*. He is currently working on a book on the Lisbon earthquake.



Brazilian director Fernando Meirelles (center) talks with *Blindness* stars Mark Ruffalo and Julianne Moore.

on a grand budget of an amazing US\$ 25 million.

The film casts a fine selection of Hollywood stars, among them Julianne Moore, Mark Ruffalo, Danny Glover and Gael García Bernal, plus Japanese megastars Yusuke Iseya and Yoshiko Kimura, and some local talents like Brazilian actress Alice Braga. The film was shot on two different continents, two different hemispheres and in four different countries: Brazil, Uruguay, Canada and Japan. It was granted the rare privilege of being shown at the opening session of the Cannes Festival in 2008. This time, what we have is rather globalization by design.

Even more revealing than this massive convergence of global resources is the effect that such a complex blend of diverse cultural sources had upon the aesthetic configuration of the film itself. The whole work shows a deliberate effort to dispel any concrete references to specific geographic, historic, social, ethnic or cultural background. The title *Blindness* is meant to suggest a rather wide gamut of blocked senses. Taken straight from José Saramago's book, the story was devised as an allegory. In many ways it could even be understood as a critique of the detrimental effects of globalization upon local cultures and social bonds in general.

But, once again, good intentions aside, it could as well stress the conclusion that the many processes that lead to cultural dissolution and wrecked communities are so well advanced by now that we have already passed a point of no return. Damage is done, the world as we used to know it is gone for good, as an irretrievable past. Changes were so fast and so huge that they became irreversible. We might not accept it or we might not see it that way yet, but that is because we are all plagued now by a new and particularly morbid form of blindness. Yet, the film tries to unwind a thin tread of hope all along its apocalyptic development—a kind of slim Ariadne's thread leading our way through the interstices of the global labyrinth.

The story begins with a sequence of scenes showing the complex dynamics of daily life in a huge metropolis: people rushing through the streets, amidst skyscrapers and metro stations, seen in shop windows, climbing stairs, accessing lifts and elevators, surrounded by endless masses of vehicles moving in all directions. Fast camera movements, interspersed with precise cuts, focus on visual signs of diverse nature, lights, colors, poles, posters, letters, drawings, symbols, logos, spots, all the plethora of signals people have to rely on in order to find their way within the chaos of the metropolitan daily rush.

This multiplicity of visual codes reminds us of how much modern life has become ever more dependent on sight and visual orientation, to the detriment of other senses and of our affective needs. Urban order is a coordinated result of rational planning, mechanical discipline of bodies and vehicles, all operating through strict sight-oriented navigation. Rational systems provide the background while visual communications prevail in the foreground in a perfectly integrated network, where human beings are the vibrating molecules that keep the whole hive going.

All of a sudden, an epidemic of blindness falls upon this world order. Disruption is instant and total. Since absolutely everything is dependent on visual orientation, the whole system collapses like a sand castle touched by an unexpected wave. Only then do people realize that they were already blind long before. From within the ensuing chaos, the character played by Julianne Moore emerges as the modern Ariadne. She is the only one who is not affected by the epidemic. She will eventually use her sight to drag a group of people out of the deadly vortex by a rope. They are a group of twelve— a rather symbolic number, like the apostles, the knights of the Round Table, the twelve peers of France, hence a flicker of hope.

To make things more interesting, one could compare *Blindness* with another film, shot just about a year earlier, *The Smell from the*



On the set of *Blindness*

Toilet Drain, directed by Heitor Dhalia. It is a local production by a myriad of little independent producers, with an all-Brazilian cast, made with a rather restricted budget, which nevertheless achieved a warm reception among audiences and critics in general. Having been selected for the Sundance Film Festival in the United States, in Brazil it was granted the highest film awards in two of the most important Film Festivals, in São Paulo and Rio. For all these credentials we could consider it as a part of traditional Brazilian cinema, old style. But is it?

Surprise, surprise, it has a lot to do with *Blindness*. First of all, it is also an allegory that makes a similar effort to erase any solid references to time, place and context. It is rather a comic parody of a sermon, like Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly*, except that the evil propensity being chastised here is greed. The story is about the owner of a second-hand shop, who humiliates and abuses the sellers when they come to his office because he knows they are desperate for the money.

More than just buying or trading objects, his pleasure resides in destroying his customers' sense of dignity and self-respect. Taking for granted that everybody has a price, he wants to shout out loud to his victims how shamefully cheap they actually are. Their degradation gives him the pride of a superior rank, a discriminating mind, a prophylactic mission and a noble destiny. As many others scattered all over big cities, he is a modern Dr Faustus, a master in the business of buying and selling souls.

The camera plays an essential role in these dialogues of degradation. Since the shopkeeper and his customers are seated in front of one another, it is the sight of the powerful buyer which casts down the humble seller. Thus clever camera movements underscore this abject play, by directing the wide-open eyes of the greedy man to the abased countenance of his dispossessed clients. The women are additionally humiliated; he demands that they expose themselves nude to his possessive eyes. At a certain point the shopkeeper buys

a large artificial eye, immediately terrifying his victims with his triple sight. Here we have almost the opposite of *Blindness*, meaning, however, almost exactly the same thing. Reason is equal to sight that is equal to power. Closing the eyes of the shopkeeper for good becomes not only the main aim of all those vilified creatures but also the ethical stance of the film itself.

Although the production of this film is not cosmopolitan, the final product can nevertheless be shown anywhere in the world without losing any of its decisive features or meanings. It is not designed to talk to Brazilian audiences in particular about their concerns, but to world audiences at large, about world dilemmas present and future. Although produced, directed and shot in Brazil by Brazilians, it can travel the world over. In this case, again, it is world cinema made in Brazil, rather than Brazilian cinema. Is this new trend good? Is it bad?

Of course, it is up to the individual to form his or her own opinion about it. What is clear, however, is that when cinema assumes a worldly configuration, it becomes more abstract, more aloof, more thinly shaped into universal parables and empty surfaces. After all, the world is more of a word than a place. Being everywhere is also being nowhere in particular; referring to everybody also misses the concrete living creature. The films and the trends discussed here ring an alarm. Trying to encompass the world as whole into a single scene, as a sublimated Plastic City submitted to the panoptic eye of its globalized camera, cinema risks creating the most monumental ever form of collective blindness.

Nicolau Sevcenko is a Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. Formerly a professor of History of Culture at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Brazil, and at King's College, London, Sevcenko works on urban history, race relations, Brazilian Modernism and popular culture.

LONG LIVE MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE LATIN AMERICAN FILM!

BY GREG COHEN

I'm rarely given to superlatives, especially those of the "all-time favorite" variety. My favorite color? Depends on the weather. My favorite ice cream flavor? Depends on what I had for lunch. My favorite Latin American movie? Depends on what happens to be consuming my every thought, my every intellectual exercise at the moment. If that moment were now (and it is, and may be for weeks, months, possibly years to come), said favorite film would no doubt be Glauber Rocha's *A Idade da Terra* (*The Age of the Earth*). Completed in 1980 after nearly a decade of tortured gestation and shortly before the director's death, *The Age of the Earth* belongs among the most important works of cinema of all time, despite (or perhaps because of) its virtual anonymity among cinephiles and film scholars the world over. But then I've just managed to contradict myself twice already, having bequeathed two superlatives to a single

own indications, were devoid of any order, the action of *The Age of the Earth* oscillates between the cities of Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador though, truth be told, one cannot properly speak of "action" in *The Age of the Earth*, at least not in any conventional dramatic sense. To oversimplify with no small measure of violence, Glauber's final work recasts the Biblical Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the key of the Third World, and develops the peregrinations of each in ever accumulating conceptual dimensions from one episode to the next.

Over the course of the film's 150-odd minutes, Glauber's four Christs—or *Kryzto*s, to adopt the director's idiosyncratic orthography—also wage intermittent war against, and frequently collude with, one John Brahms (Maurício do Valle), an imposing, blond-haired, blue-eyed, pot-bellied schizophrenic who embodies, at once, the Gringo capitalist, the Father of Christ,

Maria Magalhães enigmatic Cleopatra) will meld the stentorian refrains of their voices, the labored intensity of their gestures, and the opaque mass of their bodies with a subtly disembodied lighting scheme and the unpredictable, alternating stasis and disquietude of the camera, its wide lens unwilling to bind itself to the canons of landscape, together forming a kind of suppurating two and a half-hour wound of cinematic extravagance. At last, Glauber's penchant for teleology and totalizing national allegory are no match for the pure revolutionary force of the *trance*—the state of *trance*—he so often indicted in his earlier films. In *The Age of the Earth*, what remains or, more precisely, what emerges is an immanent, unresolved, uncontainable impurity. More important, Glauber's last film is less a cinematic object than a work of pure film philosophy, an example of what French philosopher Gilles Deleuze termed a schizoid "image of thought." That is to say, it is no longer Glauber thinking—however brilliantly—through the medium of his film, as had been the case with his earlier masterpieces, *Black God, White Devil* (1963) and *Land in Anguish* (1967). Instead, *The Age of the Earth* thinks for itself in the most protean of registers, despite Glauber, and despite whatever pretensions to meaning he may have had. And it is precisely for this reason, that is, for the film's capacity to go on thinking long after the experience of its making, long after the death of its author, that qualifies *The Age of the Earth* as among the most important films of all times, Latin American or otherwise.

Glauber Rocha's last film is less a cinematic object than a work of pure film philosophy. It has the capacity to go on thinking long after the experience of its making.

film in the space of a single paragraph. Surely, this must be yet another effect of the film's greatness.

Indeed, I might also venture to call *The Age of the Earth* the most important work of Glauber's entire *oeuvre*, though I would in no way consider it his best film, if by "best" we mean aesthetically or commercially successful, or for that matter conceptually coherent in any way. Rather, what distinguishes Glauber's *magnum opus* is precisely all that it refuses to contain, the subterranean forces it unleashes moment upon burgeoning moment, in convulsions of visual and sonic excess. Shot in cinemascope and rich, saturated colors, arrayed across sixteen reels of celluloid that, according to the Brazilian director's

Lucifer in a leisure suit, and the ecstatic European tourist on his first foray into the tropics, though without nearly enough sunscreen. Neither the black, messianic, evangelizing Kryzto (Antônio Pitanga), nor the saturnine Iberian Kryzto-Conquistador (Tarcísio Meira), nor certainly the fragile, indecisive, Oedipalized Kryzto-warrior (Geraldo Del Rey), nor even the native Brazilian Kryzto of "the people" (played, mind you, by the unambiguously Caucasian Jece Valadão) will manage to avert John Brahms's disaster, though neither will Brahms ever truly succeed at bringing the Third World to reckon. Rather, all five figures, along with the women who serve as their foils (Norma Bengell's New Age Eve; Danuza Leão's corrupt Mary; Ana

Greg Cohen is Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities and Lecturer in Cinema and Media Studies, Department of Film and Television, University of California, Los Angeles. He received his Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures from Harvard University in June 2008. He is currently at work on his first book manuscript, provisionally titled *Latin American Cinema and the Spatial Unconscious*.

Neither the *Sertão* nor the *Favela*

A Look at Brazilian Film

BY DENILSON LOPES

TO FRAME THE POETICS OF THE ORDINARY IN TERMS OF subtlety and delicateness is to propose an antidote both for cynicism and for what I call Neo-Naturalism. Its appearance, at least in Brazilian cinema and literature, has been clearly identified, ranging from peripheral subjects such as rap to the film-and-book phenomenon *City of God*, to the works of Marçal Aquino, Fernando Bonassi, Luiz Ruffato, Marcelo Mirisola and the first films by Beto Brant. Neo-Naturalism features an aesthetics of excess, of violence and cruelty, that is considered to be more suited to dealing with our times.

The contemporary reality is unidimensionalized in a double commonplace cliché: the fight against terrorism, from a conservative viewpoint; the opposition to a society of control, from a more radical viewpoint. At the national level, civil wars, multi-ethnic urban conflicts, and narco-trafficking emerge as themes to represent an apocalyptic and hopeless barbarism of our times.

Faithful to the weight of Naturalism in Brazilian literary tradition, public space is represented in the cinema by images of the *sertão* (the arid, inhospitable rugged interior) or the *favelas* (slums), at least since the outset of the Cinema Novo (New Cinema). The trend continues in much of the Cinema da Retomada (Brazilian Cinema from the second half of the 1990s to nowadays) and has served as a way to recover visibility abroad, in festivals and with a movie-going public. Alongside this movement, another cinematography, grounded on a poetics of everyday life, has emerged, which I shall call the lineage of a lost delicateness. Films like *Eu tu eles* by Andrucha Waddington position the *sertão* within the context of everyday life and intimacy. Without sounding like a nostalgic Bossa Nova, I think this trend seeks to recover the subtlety that is so present in the songs by Chico Buarque and Paulinho da Viola. For, far from mere escapism from a cruel reality, they translate into ethical and aesthetic alternatives.

From the viewpoint of the modern Brazilian movies, it is important to remember, in this initial reflection about the ordinariness of intimacy, that a long tradition marks the home by the nostalgia of colonial spaces, of a lost rural environment. Its latest examples are *Lavoura Arcaica* by Raduan Nassar, adapted to the screen by Luiz Fernando Carvalho, and *O Viajante* (1998) by Paulo César Saraceni. The motif of the torn-apart home is present in Saraceni's great moments, ever since his debut in *Porto das Caixas* (1965) to *A Casa Assassinada* (1970), the trilogy under the sign of Lúcio Cardoso. The archaic rural world, close to nature and taking place in another time, contains the rich landscapes shown in *São Bernardo* (1971) by Leon Hirszman. There is much lyricism in the account of the home, regardless of the decadence of rural patriarchy.

Two other works in this genre deserve further analysis. One is that of David Neves, whose debut in *Memória de Helena* (1969) is a unique revisitation of Humberto Mauro, with his short stories about the middle class in Rio de Janeiro in *Fulaninha* (1984/5) and *Jardim de Alah* (1988). Within Modern Cinema, if Glauber Rocha

were our Godard, then David Neves could well be our Truffaut. That would be more praise than criticism.

Domingos de Oliveira is another 1960s director distanced from Cinema Novo, which might explain his not being highly regarded. He may be the most successful cinematographer of the sort of family drama and romantic comedy that both older and younger directors try to achieve (*Bossa Nova* by Bruno Barreto, 1999; *Pequeno Dicionário Amoroso* and *Amores Possíveis* by Sandra Werneck; *Como ser Solteiro no Rio de Janeiro* by Rosane Svartman; *A Dona da História*, 2004, by Daniel Filho).

Another New Cinema director is Carlos Diegues. Having created a more fluid Brazil in *Bye Bye Brasil* (1979), Diegues has reached, in *Chuvvas de Verão* (*Summer Rains*, 1977), another great moment in his career. Because of its delicate approach to old age in Rio de Janeiro's middle class, it can very well dialogue with *O Outro Lado da Rua* (*The Other Side of the Street*, 2004) by Marcos Bernstein, much more successful than *Copacabana* by Carla Camurati (2000).

Noites do Sertão (1984) by Carlos Alberto Prates Correia dilutes rural patriarchy with delicateness, a legacy of Guimarães Rosa's original, a strategy previously used by Carlos Diegues in *Joanna Francesa* (1973). At the same time, *Nunca Fomos Tão Felizes* (1984) by Murilo Salles was breaking ground in this genre, an alternative to the Neo-Realism of Wilson de Barros, Chico Botelho and Guilherme de Almeida Prado. Murilo Salles' earlier movies were centered in frankly urban homes, loaded with violence and clashing inhabitants, as best seen in Tata Amaral's films. This work had an equivalent in feminine roughness in Ana Carolina's trilogy (*Mar de Rosas*, 1979; *Das Tripas Coração* 1982; and *Sonho de Valsa*, 1986/7), not to mention the more recent films, such as *Durval Discos* by Anna Muylaert (2003).

Also in the 80s, the Z company released a new generation from Rio Grande do Sul; from the trilogy *Verdes Anos* (1983) by Giba Assis Brasil; *Me Beija* (1984) by Werner Schünemann and *Aqueles Dois* (1985) by Sérgio Amon, among many other short subjects, and the most talented of its representatives, Jorge Furtado, who has only just recently released a feature film.

Delicateness—would it have vanished from the more recent Brazilian cinematography, except for its presence in documentaries such as *Nós que aqui estamos por nós esperamos* by Marcelo Masagão, *Edifício Master* by Eduardo Coutinho, and *Nelson Freire* by João Moreira Salles? Films such as *Dois Corregos* (1998/9) and *Alma Corsária* (1992/4) by Carlos Reichenbach, *Coração Iluminado* (1997/8) by Hector Babenco or *O Príncipe* (2003) by Ugo Giorgetti deserve a more careful look, beyond the nostalgia that shrouds them.

I hope to have been straightforward in expressing my interest in the ordinary: I am looking at small things, small dramas, without falling into Naturalism or into allegories such as those present in the revisited and reconstructed families with preciously banal gestures in Luis Humberto Pereira's photos, or in João Carrascoza's short stories in *Dias Raros*, or in the works of Michel Laub, Adriana Lisboa and

Paloma Vidal. This is neither about perverting the family as in the work of Nelson Rodrigues, nor about over-privileging representations, but about retrieving family affection in its fragility. Not the violated, but the sheltered, protected body.

This journey is just beginning. A search for a poetics of everyday life, one that envisages, at the threshold, the exceptional, the transfiguration, the sublime, all the while being aware that these are only moments—moments that show the ordinary as the real, as in Otacília's death in *Sinfonia em Branco* by Adriana Lisboa (2001: 144), which presents everything I have said better and more freely:

Otacília finished eating with her two daughters. She greeted her husband when he walked in at the end of the day, and asked him about his meeting at the office, but as soon as he finished replying, she could no longer remember what she had asked him.

Having put on two drops of her precious Chanel no.5, one behind

each ear, she went back to bed to rest again.

When that unique peacefulness penetrated the room, semi-lit by a dim table lamp, she knew she was dying.

She heard her daughters' voices talking in the next room, in Maria Inês' room. Then, she could hear a bit less, and felt a dizziness like a ship in a sea storm. And when the dizziness was gone, and she opened her eyes, she smiled because, actually, it was all so simple.

Denilson Lopes (noslined@bighost.com.br) is Professor at the School of Communications at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and President of the Brazilian Society of Cinema and Audiovisual Studies (SOCINE). He is the author of *The Delicateness: Aesthetics, Experience and Landscapes* (2007), *The Man Who Loved Young Men and Other Essays* (2002), *We the Dead: Melancholia and Neo-Baroque* (1999), co-editor of *Image and Sexual Diversity* (2004) and editor of *The Cinema of the 90's* (2005).

PORR GENTILEZA

BY REX P. NIELSON

Brazil has enjoyed a rich and independent tradition of documentary filmmaking from at least the first decade of the 20th century; over the past fifteen years, the country has witnessed a veritable explosion of documentary production in the national market. In fact, in 2005, almost one of every three feature-length national movies released in Brazil were documentaries, according to Amir Labaki in *The Documentary Film Makers Handbook* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006).

At home and abroad, Brazilian documentary filmmakers are garnering well-deserved attention and praise. Among the beneficiaries of this increased attention are the hundreds of documentary *curtas* or short films flourishing in the shadow of their feature-length cousins. Often experimental in nature, these films challenge the clichéd images and themes of violence, poverty and corruption that often characterize Brazilian film, instead turning to the pleasures and pains of autobiography and daily life. While perhaps lacking the polish of the films of José Padilha and Eduardo Coutinho, Brazilian documentary shorts nonetheless often express a fresh and innovative approach to Brazil's realities that, in its own right, serves to revitalize the national cinematic idiom.



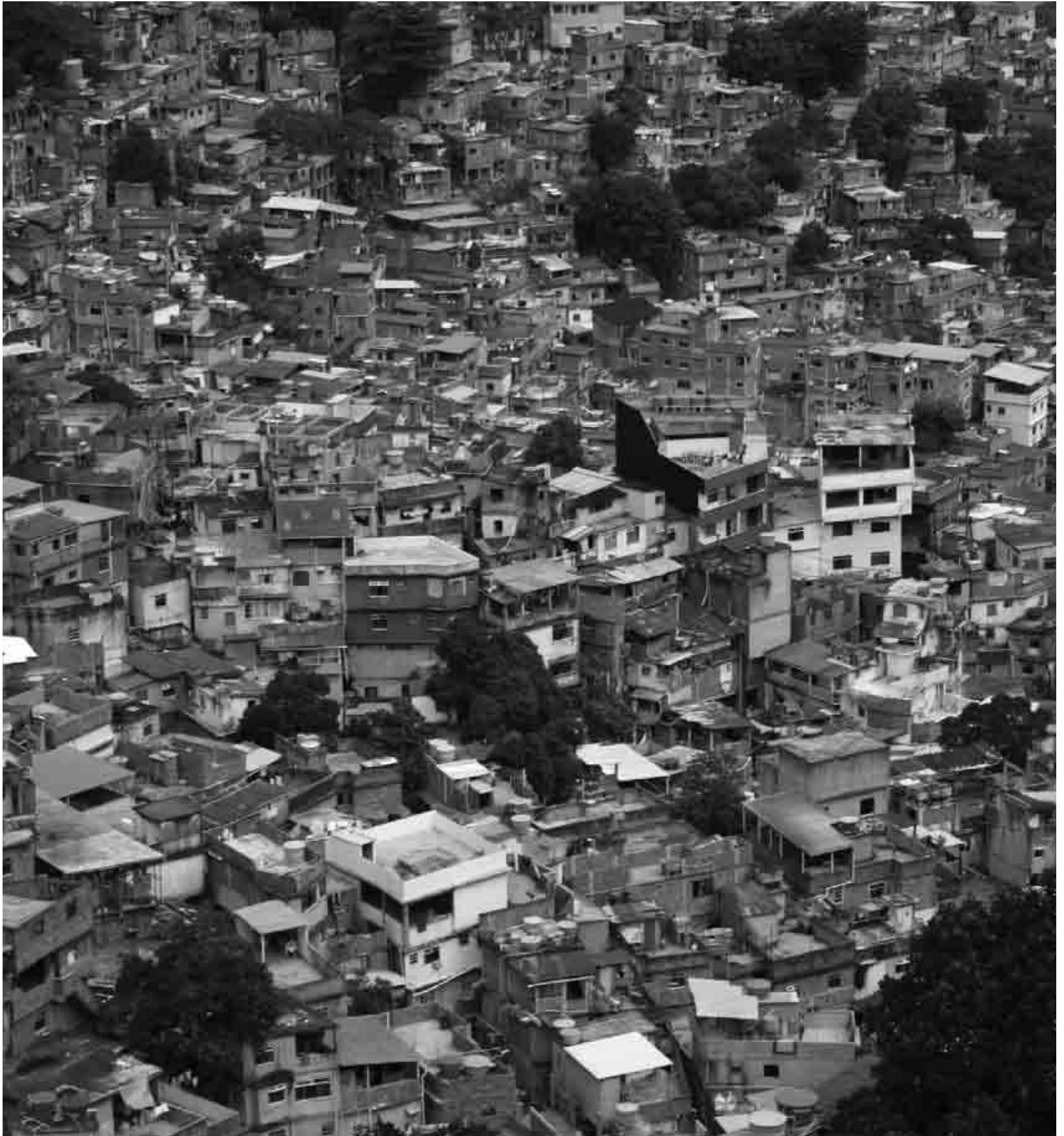
Such is the case of *Porr Gentileza*, a 14-minute documentary directed and produced by Dado Amaral in 2002. The film explores the life of José Datrino, a fascinating individual known to most *cariocas* as *o Profeta Gentileza*, the Prophet Kindness (who always spells "por" with two r's for emphasis). For nearly thirty years, until his death in 1996, the Prophet Kindness lived in Rio de Janeiro preaching a message of kindness, love and respect. Every day he walked the streets of Rio handing out flowers and teaching people not to say "muito obrigado" (I'm obliged) but rather "agradecido" (I'm grateful). Instead of saying "por favor" (as a favor), he insisted we say "por gentileza" (as a kindness). Often, he would stand in the median of busy roads holding a sign: "Gentileza gera gentileza" (Kindness begets kindness). Though he was a humble and somewhat obscure figure, any visitor to the marvelous city's main bus terminal is probably already familiar with the prophet's best-known legacy: the fifty-five murals filled with messages of love that he painted on the pilasters of the viaduct between Caju and the Rodoviária Novo Rio. On a personal note, I confess that having come across these wonderful murals

shortly after arriving in Rio for the first time, I long wondered about their origins.

In *Porr Gentileza*, director Dado Amaral spends a few brief days impersonating the Prophet Kindness, walking the streets previously frequented by the prophet, wearing a similar robe, passing out flowers, and recording on film the reactions of passersby. Amaral's impersonation elicits smiles and recognition, and in these moments, the director captures various individuals' personal memories of their own real-life encounters with the Prophet Kindness. Unlike a typical biopic, this film offers no fictionalized representations of the prophet's life but instead emphasizes in a self-reflective way the imitative nature of the filmmaker's own actions. In doing so, the film subtly reveals that its concern is not so much the details of José Datrino's biography as it is the legacy of the Prophet Kindness in Rio's popular imagination. In a cinematic world that so frequently views Rio through the filter of violence and poverty, Amaral's *Porr Gentileza* reminds us all that a life of kindness need not exist only in memory but can live on through our own kind acts.

Rex P. Nielson is a doctoral candidate in Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at Brown University. He recently taught *Images of Brazil: Contemporary Brazilian Cinema (Portuguese 44)* at Harvard in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.

Amaral's film can be viewed online, along with many other varied and interesting short films, at the website: <http://www.portacurtas.com.br/index.asp>



This is an overview of the Favela da Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro. Life in the favela has been a frequent theme in traditional Brazilian cinema, but new Brazilian film experiments with a great variety of themes and experiences.

Coconut Milk in Coca-Cola Bottles

Brazilian Cinema through North American Lenses

BY CLÉMENTINE JOUËT-PASTRÉ

COMMON KNOWLEDGE HAS IT THAT VIRTUALLY ANY MOVIE, ONCE removed from its original cultural context of production and reception, might be either misunderstood and misperceived or re-interpreted and re-signified. Likewise, we may agree that national cinemas seek to define, challenge, and reshape national identities. For Brazilians (me included), it is important to break out of our comfort zone to observe how others perceive us, even if through a reflection of a distorted mirror, to help us examine our collective identities. For Americans, it is interesting to reflect upon the type of foreign movies that are successful and also those that are unsuccessful in the United States, to try to understand the rationale for their failure or success. Such outcomes are obviously often revealing of cultural values and beliefs.

Brazilian cinema has a long tradition of struggling to represent its multicultural and multiethnic population on the screen. Undoubtedly, one of the thorniest issues is how to present and create a dialogue with moviegoers about the daily suffering and brutality endured by a significant part of the country's population. There is, however, no question that Brazilian cinema raises other kinds of interesting discussions that go beyond the important question of denouncing extreme poverty and oppression. In this short essay, I briefly analyze how U.S. scholars perceive Brazilian cinematic culture through their choice of movies presented in a variety of courses that do not necessarily focus on Brazil. More specifically, I looked at nearly fifty course syllabi from colleges all over the country that include Brazilian cinema in some fashion and divided them into four categories. The first one comprises roughly 35% of the corpus in courses that range from Women's to Urban Studies. In general, these courses screen just one, or at most two, Brazilian movies, accompanied by a couple of articles that might focus on themes that go beyond Brazilian reality, such as "violence in the megalopolis." The second category includes about 30% of the total and comprises course syllabi that focus on Latin America. The tendency is to offer at least a whole unit dedicated to the study of Brazilian cinema. Courses in the third category, almost 30%, are entirely dedicated to the study of Brazilian cinematic productions. The fourth category, of less than 10%, includes movies from several Portuguese-speaking countries.

Not surprisingly, even a brief examination of our corpus reveals a heavy accent on Cinema Novo (New Cinema), the Brazilian film movement celebrated by intellectuals all over the world. The movement developed in Brazil in the early 1960s and was best known for the quite varied work of filmmakers such as Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Glauber Rocha, Ruy Guerra, Carlos Diegues and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade. One could, however, cleverly ask: "Okay, but what kind of Cinema Novo is shown to American students?" This movement lasted for more than a decade and, predictably, is quite heterogeneous. As Robert Stam and Randal Johnson observe in

Brazilian Cinema (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), "While on one level Cinema Novo remained faithful to its initial project—to present a progressive and critical vision of Brazilian society—on another, its political strategies and aesthetic options were profoundly inflected by political events." Following the steps of critics such as Ismail Xavier (*Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Modern Brazilian Cinema*, University of Minnesota Press, 1997), Stephanie Dennison and Lisa Shaw (*Popular Cinema in Brazil, 1930-2001*, Manchester University Press, 2004), and Stam and Johnson (1979, 1995), we could divide the Cinema Novo movement into roughly three phases. The main tenets of the first phase – from 1960 to 1964 – are encapsulated in Glauber Rocha's 1965 manifesto, *An Aesthetics of Hunger*. Rocha and other Cinema Novo directors, including Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Ruy Guerra, viewed filmmaking as a political act. Their films focused on violence, hunger, and the destitute populations of the *sertão* (backlands) and the *favelas* (slums). Low-budget, often made in black and white with a hand-held camera, and preferably with non-professional actors, movies from this phase include *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* (Black God, White Devil, 1964) by Glauber Rocha; *Os Fuzis* (The Guns, 1964), by Ruy Guerra; and *Vidas Secas* (Barren Lives, 1963), by Nelson Pereira dos Santos.

How do others perceive us Brazilians through film?
This article takes a look at how U.S. scholars select
Brazilian movies for a wide variety of courses.

Curiously enough, very few syllabi propose to screen entire films from the first phase of Cinema Novo. Many courses include only a selection of clips, most likely featuring *Vidas Secas* and *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*. These movies are certainly superb in many ways, including their cinematic approach to translating Brazilian reality for the screen. Their aesthetic, however, differs radically from the action-packed style to which the U.S. audience, especially college students, is accustomed. Therefore, professors might have chosen to introduce Cinema Novo in homeopathic dosage, so students might become interested without being overwhelmed by long movies that pertain to a very different cinematic tradition.

The second phase of Cinema Novo has as its landmark the infamous 1964 military coup, which had a profound impact on Brazilian society. In 1968 the third phase began, when a coup within the coup almost completely banished civil rights in Brazil. During the second phase, filmmakers had to deal with their dismay over the disastrous authoritarian regime. The filmmakers sought to explore the reasons behind the sudden squashing of the left and progressive forces in Brazil. Their disenchantment led them to produce movies that revealed their despair through characters adrift, hopelessly searching for answers. *Terra em Transe* (Land in

Anguish, 1967) by Glauber Rocha and *Fome de Amor* (Hunger for Love, 1968) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos are perfect examples of movies full of disillusionment and lack of hope. In this bitter new phase, Cinema Novo directors also had to face the fact that, although critically acclaimed, their movies did not attract the popular audiences with whom they wanted to dialogue. The reaction to this failure was the production of films imbued with social criticism but with popular appeal that would enable them to perform well at the box office (Xavier, 1997). Leon Hirszman's *Garota de Ipanema* (The Girl from Ipanema), released in *color* in 1967, was the first Cinema Novo movie to experiment with this strategy.

The third phase of Cinema Novo was marked by the events of 1968, perhaps one of the darkest years in Brazil's recent history. The military implemented greater censor-

ship restrictions and persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, killed, or exiled left-wing individuals from all walks of life, including hundred of intellectuals. Cinema Novo directors who remained in the country chose to overcome censorship by resorting to tropicalista strategies. Tropicalismo was an artistic movement from the 1960s that encompassed all sorts of artistic manifestations including poetry, music, theater and, of course, film. Briefly put, it is a "reaction to the economically ultramodern but ideologically ultraconservative neoliberal modernization imposed by the military. Tropicalism rendered patriarchal, traditional cultures anachronistic using the most advanced or fashionable idioms and techniques in the world, thus producing an allegory of Brazil that exposed a real historical abyss, a junction of different stages of capitalist development. Tropicalism's formula mixed reflection with enter-

tainment, with fiesta, and carnival to entice the public" (Film Encyclopedia, 2008, "Brazil Cannibalism and Tropicalism" in <http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Academy-Awards-Crime-Films/Brazil-CANNIBALISM-AND-TROPICALISM.html>; retrieved in May 2009). Tropicalism has its roots in the 1920s and, more specifically, in the ideas of Oswald de Andrade, who proposed a strategy of cultural anti-imperialism, in which foreign cultures from the so-called developed countries should neither be rejected nor naively accepted. Instead they should be devoured, digested, recycled and mixed with local cultures to produce new cultural paradigms.

Como era gostoso o meu francês (How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman, 1971) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos is one of best known movies of the third phase of Cinema Novo and also the favorite in course syllabi dealing with Brazilian film in U.S. universities. Several hypotheses explain the popularity of this movie in the classroom setting. Since it was made to reach out to a large audience, it is one of the most palatable examples of Cinema Novo films, and U.S. students may find *Como era gostoso o meu francês* more approachable than the more hermetic movies from the first phase. Furthermore, the powerful dark-comedy is full of allusions to historical events. Thus, it could serve as a means to discuss Brazilian history and artistic movements, including Portuguese colonization, the attempts by France to seize Brazil, cannibalism as a real indigenous practice and as an artistic-political concept. Ironically, the film became renowned through the world in large part because its nudity content led to its banishment from the Cannes film festival. In this sense, the movie also offers the option of examining whether and how nudity can be used in film in a non-exploitative manner.

Another favorite in course syllabi is *Cidade de Deus* (City of God, 2002) by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund. Briefly, this movie portrays the birth of a slum in Rio de Janeiro and the escalation of crime, violence, and drug-dealing over two decades in that environment. It is striking that the fascination with the lives of the have-nots living in *favelas* has remained alive more than forty years after the publication of *An Aesthetics of Hunger*, along with its celebrated line, "the most noble cultural

EDIFÍCIO MASTER: ONE VIEW

BY BRUNO CARVALHO

Some movies seem to travel better than others. From the point of view of teaching a class on Brazilian cinema in a U.S. university to students with a wide range of backgrounds, it is never clear how they will interpret the tone of a scene or what jokes and references will get lost in translation. In the case of Eduardo Coutinho's *Edifício Master* (2002), it was as if certain students had seen a different film altogether. The documentary consists of interviews with the residents of a crowded building in Copacabana: middle-aged couples, a prostitute, and a former soccer player, among others, tell their stories, dreams, and frustrations. Coutinho is one of those rare directors able to treat his subjects as neither heroes nor villains: he does not look at them from above or below, aware that his cameras can only capture the truth of a person's reaction to being filmed.

Edifício Master, then, refrains from editorial judgments, even when we discover holes in a story, or have enough reason to suspect embellishments. The only soundtrack is provided by singing, which Coutinho tends to encourage his interviewees to do. Yet to a fraction of my class, the film was sensationalist and exploitative. Having seen it several times and being familiar with the critical reception, I was surprised by their response. The lesson plan was tossed, students spent over an hour arguing the point back and forth, and I do not think I have learned so much in a classroom as I did then. I saw the movie again, as someone who had never spent time in Brazil or Latin America. Perhaps people do not open up so easily to a stranger elsewhere, unless prodded by the promise of appearing on television? A believer in the universal appeal of Coutinho's documentaries, I had to concede there can be such a thing as culture shock.

Bruno Carvalho received his Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures from Harvard University. He is an Assistant Professor at Princeton's Department of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures.

manifestation of hunger is violence.” Yet the way in which the gloomiest sides of Brazilian life are depicted on the screen has drastically changed since the 1960s. *Cidade de Deus* presents violence in a decontextualized manner, without any reference to the origins of this social plague or any discussion about its systemic nature. The plot revolves around the young drug-dealers’ tragic and short lives, but there is no discussion on how the drug problem permeates different layers of the society and goes well beyond the *favelas*. The *favela* is depicted as completely detached from the urban environment; its inhabitants are portrayed as gangsters who kill each other without purpose. The frantic rhythm of *Cidade de Deus*, with guns shooting in the background, knives and blades shining in the sun, and corpses everywhere, leaves the audience breathless. Brazilian critic Ivana Bentes describes the movie as a parody of Rocha, describing it as “shifting from the ‘aesthetics’ to the ‘cosmetics of hunger’ [...]” (2005: 84).

In most courses pertaining to the first category of syllabi and even in some survey courses about Latin American cinema, which belong to the second category, *Cidade de Deus* tends to be selected as the only movie representing Brazil. One wonders whether its use simply reinforces the stereotype of violence in large Brazilian cities. I hope, however, that it serves as a platform to discuss larger social issues and different modes of representing violence on the screen. This is a serious issue, insofar as students often form their first impressions of politics, culture and even geography from movies, whether seen in a theatre or a classroom context.

The choice of films to go on a syllabus is significant because it is not random. When designing a course on Brazilian cinema or even a short unit about it, several questions come to mind. As a parody of Glauber Rocha’s dilemma (cited in Johnson and Stam 1965: 57), the first question reads: “Should we ‘serve’ students coconut milk

in Coca-Cola bottles”? Its main purpose is to explore Brazilian cinematic representations through American lenses. This question naturally leads to a second one: “Is it possible, for an American college student, to use Brazilian lenses to analyze Brazilian movies”? Finally, the third question—“Is it beneficial”?—invites the syllabus designer to meditate about the possible outcomes of imposing Brazilian lenses on American students. I believe that there is no single answer to these questions. All depends on the context, which is inevitably constantly in flux.

Clémence Jouët-Pastré directs the Portuguese Language Program at Harvard and the Harvard Summer Program in Rio. Every spring she offers a writing-intensive course on Brazilian cinema that aims at introducing students to cinematic traditions in Brazil, as well as to Brazilian culture, stylistics, language variation, and academic Portuguese.

EDIFÍCIO MASTER: ANOTHER VIEW

BY JULIE DUNCAN

For someone like me, who knows the names of fewer than half the people who live in her dormitory, it was all too easy to imagine living in Edifício Master, the twelve-story Copacabana apartment building featured in Eduardo Coutinho’s 2002 documentary of the same name. Most of its residents, members of Brazil’s lower-middle-class, have lived there for years—some for their entire lives—yet they seem barely to know each other. Some of the newer residents complain about the lack of community, insisting no one would realize for weeks if someone died while locked away in his apartment. One woman told me that she went four months knowing nothing about the young girl who lived in the apartment above her beyond what she heard through the vent—and that she could not bring herself to say hello when she finally saw the girl in the elevator. Extended shots of dark, empty hallways confirm the sense of loneliness and isolation even amid a beautiful and bustling city.

However, in his interviews with the residents of Edifício Master, Coutinho shows them to be far from curmudgeonly misanthropes, their tiny apartments not hermitages but bastions of individuality. This documentary made me see my environment in a different way. The residents’ stories surprise us at every turn in the film. There is Paulo, who played and coached soccer around the world until a spontaneous outburst of nudity after a defeat cost him his job. There is Suze, who happily performs a Japanese ballad when

the film crew seems a bit incredulous about her adventures in the Land of the Rising Sun. Then there’s Renata, “number one in Brazil” by her own estimate, who speaks adoringly of her 42-year-old boyfriend in the States; then there’s Luiz, who suspects that his late adoptive father was his real father; Henrique, who met Frank Sinatra on the day the astronauts came back from the moon; Alesandra, the proud prostitute who swears her daughter will find a better path. These fascinating characters certainly don’t fit the stereotype of Brazilians concerned only with samba and sunshine. A Brazilian heterogeneity, a “complicatedness,” goes beyond simple racial diversity. It is a diversity of experience, making Brazil a place where any story can and does take place.

The documentary ends with a long scene showing the apartments from the outside at nighttime. Each time a resident passes by the window, we get a short glimpse into his or her life—only a glimpse before s/he walks away and returns to anonymity. In the quiet darkness, as the residents lock their doors for the night, the feeling of isolation is intensified. For me, the message was very clear, and it is one I’ll never forget: everyone, no matter how humble, has a story to tell—but you’ll never hear it if you don’t ask.

Julie Duncan is a native of Burlington, Kentucky, and graduated from Harvard College with a degree in History and Science this June. She will attend Yale Law School in the fall.

ARGENTINA

New Argentine Cinema p. 34

Memory, Identity and Film p. 38

The Three Lives of Fernando Solanas p. 42

Interview with Lita Stantic p. 44

This section examines four different perspectives on post-dictatorship Argentine film. Whether in recent films by children of the victims or the compelling work of Fernando Solanas, history is a powerful protagonist.

New Argentine Cinema

The People's Presence

BY GONZALO AGUILAR

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR 2004, WHILE I was finishing my book *Otros mundos* on New Argentine Cinema, I kept thinking both about recent film productions and the turmoil caused by the Peronist government in the 1990s. In the chapter on politics, “Adiós al pueblo,” (“Goodbye to the people”), I contended that unlike in the Argentine films made in the 60s to the 80s, one cannot talk about “the people” in New Argentine Film, understanding “pueblo” (people) in its very Latin American sense of “common folk” or “the masses.” People were no longer active political subjects, I asserted. At one time, the people had symbolized the gateway to liberation, but later—whether in discourse or in deed—the people became part of a consensus (no longer antagonistic) within a reality that was increasingly more statistical and less political—or at least, that’s what I thought back then. The people, I wrote at the time, were a mere vehicle for the state’s re-absorption of politics through bureaucracy and police power.

As I was putting the finishing touches on my book, I took frequent breaks to view the televised march to the Plaza de Mayo—a so-called popular mobilization—that had been organized by the new Peronist government. Of all the films that I analyzed in my book, the film from which I felt the most distanced was Fernando Solanas’ *Memoria del saqueo* (2004) (“Memories of Looting”).

In retrospect, the film seems prophetic. In its final scenes, it not only invokes the people as a subject of history, but also predicts their return to full glory. Once the fiction that had been constructed by the Peronist government of Carlos Menem in the 90s dissipated, the people returned to the forefront to participate actively in decision-making. In a series of quite transparent references to the world of the 60s (the title evokes the well-known Cuban film *Memories of Underdevelopment* by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea; the film in general, together with *La hora de los hornos*, shares its documentary lens). *Memoria del saqueo* restores the idea of politics in film because it assumes the presence of the people (the appearance of many of them in the background) as a central conceptual category of the film. All this is to confess that the central theme of my book—that people were passé in both film and politics—was rendered obsolete or at least limited after the events stemming from the economic crisis in 2001. In that crisis, even middle-class people were reduced to poverty, and the so-called obsolete “pueblo” mobilized in unimagined, creative and political ways.

In the most political Latin American film of the 60s—from Santiago Álvarez to Patricio Guzmán, from Jorge Sanjinés to the Grupo Cine Liberación—the documentary image had appeared as the appropriate means through which to represent, raise political consciousness of and interact

with the people. Thus, the film-manifesto *La hora de los hornos* (“The Hour of the Furnaces”), with its forceful arguments and instrumental use of images to inspire direct action, expounded the temporary necessity to do away with all forms of fiction. Grupo Cine Liberación considered the category of fiction as a cheap disguise and a deviation, unmasked by essay-like narration. After several works of fiction, with *Memoria del saqueo*, Solanas returned to the language of the physical—the use of the human body—that had characterized his first film with its nervous movement of the camera in the middle of the street (what a witness in danger would see) and with shots of agitated and vociferous bodies trying to unmask the power and the falseness of the image. He depicts the choreography of multitudes whose enthusiasm and political objectives transformed them into *el pueblo*, hence into protagonists of history.

However, the differences between the films from the early 90s and those of the 60s are evident; the urgency of “the hour” is replaced by the retrospective vision of the “memories” which, with a touch of nostalgia, permeates almost all the documentary productions of recent years. In any case, the fact is that Solanas returned the great tradition in which masses of people burst upon the silver screen, and that film, in turn, creates an image of the people. The image in trance, through that image the multitudes pass to



This image was made during the production of *El bonaerense*.

acquire a visible form in the choreography of bodies that fills up the big screen, that goes beyond the screen and shatters it.

Movies from the 90s often questioned the discrepancies between the politics of action and politics in the form of strategic thinking, and one of the ways these films dealt with the issue of politics was to leave images empty through several means. The most extreme example of this emptying process was that of Lisandro Alonso en *La libertad* (2001): in this film, there is almost never more than one person in sight, and from the very beginning, the concept of freedom and the image of people appear as a dichotomy. Another strategy is that

of Pablo Trapero: in *El bonaerense* (a film about a policeman nicknamed Zapa in Buenos Aires Province), the protagonist comes upon a *piquetero* march, but simply goes his own way, paying no attention to this mass protest that blocks the road. It is as if the *El bonaerense* had encountered a fragment of *Memoria del saqueo*, but had not fallen under its spell. In Martín Rejtman's *Silvia Prieto*, a group of product promoters—the ladies who hand out free samples—mobilize to demand justice for a colleague who has been killed in a work accident. But while in political film, the multitudes fill up and burst forth from the screen, in Rejtman's film, the march of the crowd is marked by

emptiness. Unlike the famous poster for *The Hour of the Furnaces*, showing close-ups of faces distorted by shouting, the scenes in *Silvia Prieto* register apathetic or inexpressive faces. We go from the world of the masculine to a feminine multitude, from social demands to demands for life, from the audacity of popular outcry, expressed through shouts that fill up the screen, to emptiness and dispossession as elemental starting points. Rather than seeing politics as an external fact that sustains the image, these films—negating the category that dominated Argentine film from the 60s to the 80s—introduce the concept of the political through images, as a force in and



from top to bottom: Scenes from *La Libertad*, *El bonaerense* and *M*

of itself and as an open question.

The transition from the masculine to the feminine (since Gustave Le Bon at the end of the 19th century, multitudes have been associated with the feminine while the *pueblo*—the historical masses—have been associated with the masculine) is demonstrated most visibly by Enrique Bellande's *Ciudad de María* (City of Maria), in which the life of the modern manufacturing city of San Nicolás, sustained for and by the labor of workers, is transformed in the 90s into the religious capital of the Virgin, with its legion of female believers and devotees who have performed *another* miracle. In addition to the appearance of the Virgin, the miracle is that the pilgrimages and tourism by the faithful have changed the economy of the city so that it revolves around religious tourism. The substitution of the believer for the worker, of the consumer for the citizen, demonstrates the decline of political belief as the central factor in the choreography of masses. Moreover, the very body of woman becomes inserted into the image, bringing an irreversible and complex link between the public and the private that will displace those choreographies of public space of politically militant films through this complex umbrella of concepts under which the public and private have to be constantly redefined.

A diagnosis for changing times, emptiness, however, is a negation of the political that allows the interpretation of politics as impossibility, deficiency and even disorientation (a position that in any case does not cease to be powerful if one thinks of it as a rejection of identity or political demands to which films were subject in Argentina for a long period). However, in this instance, *nothingness* replaces the people because the public scenario in which the actors operate, as well as the very concept of *pueblo*, have been thrust into crisis. Instead of relying on conventional techniques of making the people visible (they are just outside and will burst upon the screen), these more recent films take a tiny detail such as a fingerprint or a clue as their starting point. In this manner, they create connections between the bodies (choreographies) and identities that are never perceived as stable. The *community* will slowly become visible, abolishing all exteriority (Nicolás Prividera's *M* and Martín Rejtman's *Copacabana*). In the process of creating community from fragmented parts, an emptiness is always created as well. It is

precisely in this twilight between community and emptiness that I believe we ought to think of how the political is portrayed in new Argentine film.

In *M*, director Nicolás Prividera investigates the events surrounding the disappearance of his mother and records the changes taking place in the sphere of politics (or at least, in the politics of memory). How can one penetrate the state so that it will have to tell the truth? This seems to be the question that characterizes the first investigations of the protagonist (the director himself). The regime of visibility is expressed in a poster shown time and again throughout the film, displaying the words of a declaration by Jorge Zorreguieta, the former head of the agricultural agency INTA, where Prividera's mother worked at the time she was kidnapped and disappeared. In the poster, the man is simply quoted as saying that he had "nothing to do with" the disappearance of the filmmaker's mother, Marta Sierra. The phrase is not only a denial of responsibility in the case but also forbids seeing, as "ver" in Spanish forms a pun that plays with seeing and doing. In total contradiction to this mandate, Prividera uses film to see more, to see everything that is possible to see, though not exactly the truth, but the ways in which individuals have processed the past into a regime of fiction that consists of repressing the intolerable. In cinematographic terms, the greatest contribution of this film is in its use of the body, a *hélix* as Bourdieu would say, that "carries" the camera in a very pre-

cise way: not on the shoulders, but by his side, as an objective witness that at the same time is an extension of his body. The spectator accompanies this body throughout the investigative journey through the camera, which follows it in an obsessively close fashion and, at times, even allows the body's breathing to be felt. Indeed, several of the documentaries about militancy and the disappeared in Argentina stage a body, rather than a scene. Many are ghostlike and Prividera manages to show them as such, for example, in the insipid speech in a meeting at his mother's workplace—a meeting of neighborhood militants around a table under the displayed sign with the motto "compañeros" (comrades). The many (the collective, the community) cannot help displaying the fissure that makes any choreography impossible.

In contrast to this temporal and intellectual out-of-phase quality that *M* explores is *Copacabana*, one of the more energetic films marked by collective choreography. Made as a television documentary to illustrate the preparations for the celebrations for the Virgen of Copacabana by the Bolivian community in Buenos Aires, the final scene occurs along the border and in customs, when Bolivian immigrants entering into Argentina are being checked by the border guards. The entry into a foreign country is the entry into invisibility that Rejtman's documentary proposes to make visible. Some critics see in the film a tension between the modern asceticism of Rejtman's camera and the

"report" about the portrayed community. After first traveling through the fair, the film focuses on a series of dances that shine in their own right. The bodies registered by the camera move with coordination and grace throughout the entire course of the film, even in a meeting of the bosses in which organization co-exists with argument. The Bolivian community exists camouflaged in a city that is totally indifferent to its existence (as underscored by Rejtman's exceptional urban perspectives), but it is not because of this that the community is weakened and abandons its secret plot. Of course, the scene at the textile factory leads one to understand—without judging—that the choreography of work is linked to that of the fiesta, but this inference is less important than the director's decision to link his obsession with formality with that of the foreigners he portrays. Here are two unrelated orders that do not mix, and their rhythms are constantly present throughout the film: the eye of the director upon the lives of his subjects, neither surrendering to the other.

This encounter between the Bolivian community and the most modernist of the New Argentine Film directors (also the involved son of a disappeared woman, also the actor-director who rejects any gesture of sentimental identification) is what produces the political. No longer—as happened and happens in Solanas' films—are the many constituted as subject through the category "people." Rather, politics results from a few who do not take orders from anyone except in the context of the fragile community in which they express themselves, constantly pushing against the threshold that separates them from the great unknown emptiness. As separate entities, they do not connect the image with politics. However, they do make us ask about the very possibility of politics when certain traditional categories—like that of the people—no longer are dynamic or effective.

Gonzalo Aguilar is a professor at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. He is author of Poesía concreta brasileña: las vanguardias en la encrucijada modernista (translated to Portuguese) and Otros mundos (Un ensayo sobre el nuevo cine argentino), translated in English as Other Worlds: New Argentine Film (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008).

ALGUNAS PELÍCULAS

POR DANIEL SAMPER PIZANO

¿Mi película favorita del cine español? Dos: "La escopeta nacional", de Luis García Berlanga, un delicioso y divertido fresco de personajes representativos de la España tardo-franquista, estrenada en 1977. Franco había muerto dos años antes. Y "Volver" (2006), de Pedro Almodóvar, con la mirada zarzuelera que a veces tiene la cultura hispánica sobre la muerte.

En cuanto a las latinoamericanas, disfruté varias de las clásicas de Cantinflas ("Si yo fuera diputado", "El Siete machos", "El señor fotógrafo", "Ni sangre ni arena"), me gustó mucho "Doña Flor y sus dos maridos" (brasileña, 1976, de Bruno Barreto) y estoy encantado con el cine argentino de los últimos años, en especial las películas de Carlos Sorín ("Historias mínimas", "Bombón, El Perro") y las de Juan José Campanella ("Luna de Avellaneda", "El hijo de la novia").

Daniel Samper Pizano, columnista, El Tiempo, Bogotá, Colombia

Memory, Identity and Film

Blending Past and Present

BY ANA AMADO

THE CHILDREN OF THE VICTIMS OF DICTATORIAL terror in the 1970s in Argentina have used a variety of language and poetics to demand justice for their parents' executioners. At the same time, they use these diverse expressions as a form of memorial tribute. Film possesses the narrative potential to translate the "mournful memories" of history and to achieve "magnificent mourning," in the optimistic vision of French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Several recent Argentine films took their vital energy from this process, as children of the victims dedicated themselves to the task of reviewing the past.

Since the mid-90s, these creative men and women have been distilling their testimonies through heterogeneous narratives based on a mix of references, a variety of voices, an accumulation of knowledge. Audiovisual material is perhaps the most frequently used supporting technique, with new combinations and unexpected constructions of ways of creating private biography through stories with strong historic and narrative implications. And this decision to use film (and theatre) as a form of processing one's own past is what distinguishes this generation of young adults—generally between 25 and 35 years old—sons and daughters of the victims or the survivors of the repression of the 70s. These young men and women are filmmakers, video producers and artists who follow the international growing trend of the last decade to make documentaries that explore issues of memory and identity.

In the group of documentaries dedicated to the consequences of the dictatorship, films made by the children of the victims and survivors have a very particular role, focusing on history to find a voice and a generational space in the context of the present debates about the 60s and 70s in Argentina. Disregarding the contemporary public discourse, the younger generation has chosen the discourse of the emotions instead of the strident political pronouncements that characterized their parents' generation, as evident in the documentary films made in the 60s and in the first half of the

70s in Argentina. That decade witnessed a surge in collective and social forces; neither actions nor ideas could be linked to individual agents. Representations fostered epic tales—those concerning a heroic guerrilla were the mainstay, with Che Guevara as icon of the generalized revolutionary discourse about armed struggle, while later, "post-history" documentary films bring the individual to illustrate a tragic story—"post-history" in the sense that it is told from the perspective of the present in which everything seems to have been already told. Today, the revolutionary actions of the parents are reconstructed through an aesthetic act on the part of their children, who portray them as heroic subjects seen through their own narration. Nevertheless, they are resistant to the type of relatively idyllic representation that characterized documentaries from the earlier generation.

In the late 90s and the first years of this century, a series of testimonial documentaries register a critical or self-critical stance by former political militants and guerrillas, who revisit their actions in the 70s with the more structured language of politics as an institution. A similar tendency can be found in testimonial literature. In contrast, the voices in the documentaries by the children recreate the childhood memories filled with the violence of kidnappings, absences, death and images in which the daily perception of threats seems to be associated precisely with the language of politics.

Each film offers direct or indirect ways of revisiting the actions and political discourse of the previous generation. The filmmakers can elect to remain at the margin of the political arguments that led their parents to sacrifice their lives in order to concentrate on the failed circuits of their own wounded memories with the help of a family integrated by their generational and vocational peers. The polemical film *Los rubios* (2003) by Albertina Carri is one example of this type of film. Other films such as *M*, by Nicolás Prividera (2007) or *Encontrando a Víctor* by Natalia Bruchstein (2005), among others, voice quite merciless criti-

cism. Distancing themselves from inherited discourses, each film tries to invent a way of supporting its arguments about what is reasonable or irrational, what is sensible or resolutely subversive in the review of the history of the period of the dictatorships. And in this review and invention of past scenes that are imagined in various forms, the children frame the idea of generations as a narrative and temporal construct (as well as a biological one) of genealogy, as a form of resistance to their legacies and, finally, as a formal operation of timelessness.

The various films are about the absent father or mother, although in the process of remembering, the direct or deflected complaint about the parent's priorities inevitably appears. The question becomes why the parent followed the path of desire—that of the revolutionary cause, even though death was one of the possible consequences—instead of guaranteeing his or her presence to the children. The viewer thus catches a glimpse of an ambivalent image hovering between an epic profile of parents who are protagonists in a collective historical endeavor and at the same time deserters in the sphere of private emotions.

At the same time, the very existence of the orphans (or bereaved familiars) is precisely the proof that we could call unique, that is, symptomatic, of the traumatic way in which politics intertwines with the languages of intimacy and of experience. An unquestionable example is Rodolfo Walsh's "Carta a mis amigos," a mix of accusation and personal testimony in which Walsh describes how and why his daughter Victoria, whom he calls "Vicky," was assassinated by the Army in 1977, as he illuminates the "official" version of the events—a sketchy soldier's report—from the perspective of the intimacy of the father-daughter relationship. "I have witnessed the scene with her eyes," writes Walsh soon after his daughter's death, exchanging time and place with Vicky, within the logic of political discourse brought to maximum tension through the intimacy of death.

María Inés Roque's *Papá Iván* and Alber-



Disappearance is a recurring theme, as seen here in *M*.

tina Carri's *Los rubios* are two films constructed around the quarrel with a father's ghost. Their formal operations of disassociation and fragmentation give the films a certain aesthetic modernity, although, paradoxically, they reject the all-encompassing figures of political modernity in which their parents participated in the 60s and 70s through their belief in revolution.

These representations can be interpreted as signs of simultaneous autonomy

and dependency regarding the filmmakers' roots and legacies, which end in an ambiguous stance towards the political choices of their parents and their participation in this violent history in which the children, ultimately, became victims. The autonomy has its formal expression in the use of the first person, in the narrative "I" emphasized through sight and sound, the body and voice anchored in the presence of the author/narrator/ protagonist. This autonomy is also

expressed through the use of graphics in the form of subtitles, whether used to identify the convened witness—*my* mother, *my* father's comrade, etc.—or to underscore the meaning of the spoken word. In *Los rubios*, there is a dual presence, that of Carri as narrator and that of the actress who plays her; in *M*, the most recent film in this genre, director Nicolás Prividera plays the role of the investigator who becomes increasingly enraged because of the lack of answers in his

quest to find out the truth behind the disappearance of his mother. Narrative decisions seem to distort the axiom of French literary theorist Roland Barthes about the tendency to gag the “I,” or the option of silence to narrate history (historic narrative is in the third person; as Barthes pointed out, “No one is there to make the statement”).

On the other hand, dependency is revealed in the attachment to origins, in the resurrection of an absent subject that in some cases is portrayed or emerges fitfully; an extreme example of this elision is found in *Los rubios*, in which throughout the entire movie no image replaces the emptiness of absence. Or the subject is evoked (invoked, narrated, explained) by a series of witnesses that replace the absent (dead) person who is unable to testify. Precisely on this point, that of the dead witness, the stories of the orphans

carry out one of the historian’s paradoxical tasks, which French philosopher Michel de Certeau describes as “the staging of a population of dead people” (1993:62). Through images, texts or testimonies, literally and metaphorically, characters, ideas, places, events, situations and values are resuscitated within a historic gallery designed by the narrators and populated by a multiplicity of named portraits: the ghosts of the 70s.

The language of theatre has operated in a similar fashion. On the local stage, the first was *Teatro por la Identidad* (Identity Theatre) which in the past decade has presented a cycle of plays destined to support from the realm of creativity the strategy of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo to find and identify the young people who were whisked off as babies from concentration camps by the 1976 dictatorship.

A noteworthy play now being performed is *Mi vida después* (My Life Afterwards), which brings together characters from the new generation to express their autobiographical and testimonial “I.” From this starting point, the play forms part of the universal tendency to transform the discourse of experience into artistic work. Personal history is converted into the direct revelation of collective history. Instead of representing characters imagined by an author, the characters play themselves and tell their own stories and those of their parents. Presented as the last link in the Biodramas cycle conceived by theatre producer Vivi Tellas within the government-sponsored space of the San Martín Theatre in Buenos Aires, this work responds to the idea of a cycle precisely to make room for stories from real life.

THREE OF MY FAVORITE FILMS

BY JAVIER CORRALES

In my course on Latin American politics at Amherst, I invariably cover challenges to democracy such as populism, authoritarianism, and the less conventional topic of heteronormativity. Many films can be used to address these topics, but my favorites are: *Eva Perón*, *O Ano em Que Meus Pais Saíram de Férias* and *XXY*.

Eva Perón is always a huge hit in class. The film illustrates the multiple dimensions of populism, especially its democratic aspirations (the inclusion of previously excluded sectors) and its authoritarian lapses (the mistreatment of the opposition and institutions). In a scene between Eva and the *damas de beneficencia* (representing the oligarchy), Eva Perón (representing populism) is portrayed as cunning and caustic as the very same *damas* that Eva is trying to belittle. In scenes with extreme right-wingers and extreme left-wingers, Eva is portrayed simultaneously Machiavellian and accommodating with each group. And in dealing with the military, Eva is portrayed as both respectful and disdainful. The ability to show this diversity of personalities—within and across scenes—is a testament to superb acting, but also

to superb portrayal of the political needs of populism. Eva needs to work with both ideological extremists and the military, and these groups need to collaborate with Eva, while hoping to undermine her. The movie also shows the struggles within Peronism, not just with its outside enemies. A powerful scene between Eva and railroad workers shows, like few other scenes in political movies, the limited but still effective tools available to populist leaders to placate internal dissent. Tired of unfulfilled promises, railroad workers are ready to strike against Perón. Eva is desperately weak because she knows that workers can cause trouble, but also harsh enough to intimidate. Again, this emotional mix is both superb acting and superb representation of state-labor relations in classic populism. The movie even works as a gender-study tool. Eva’s relationship with her husband—in which political and love interests are hard to differentiate—and her relationship with the masses—in which Eva acts as a “sacrificing” matriarchal icon representing a patriarchal militaristic state—offer enough complexity to make discussion of gender issues appealing to students. There

is even a quick scene in which Eva’s fashion designer and confidant compares the plight of the *descamisados* to that of gays. This scene might be a bit ahistorical, but it makes for excellent discussion of the issues that unite and separate non-dominant groups.

O Ano is, to my mind, one of the most original treatments of the impact of military juntas in Latin American films. Most movies on the topic of military abuse go for the overkill, leaving no doubt that the victims suffer transgressions that fundamentally alter, in fact, destroy their lives and minds. The perpetrators are true devils, and the victims are irreparable damaged goods. But in *O Ano*, we see a different sort of victim—a kid whose life undergoes trauma, but in many other ways, remains fairly intact as a result of military rule in Brazil. The transgression against the victim is unquestionable. His parents must go into hiding and are thus forced to leave the kid with his grandfather, whom he hardly knows, in a neighborhood where he knows no one. The kid is lied to—the hiding is explained as nothing other than an adults-only vacation to which he is not

Director Lola Arias, born in 1976, is the same generation as her actors-characters. She describes her staging and intentions: "Six actors born in the decade of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s reconstruct the youth of their parents through photos, letters, tapes, used clothing, stories and erased memories. Who were my parents when I was born? What was Argentina like before I learned to talk? What versions exist about what happened when I didn't yet exist or was so little that I don't remember? Each actor does a remake of scenes from the past to understand the future. As doubles for the risk of their parents, the children wear their clothing and try to present the family history...."

On the border between reality and fiction, in the encounter between two generations, the "literal" interpretation of scenes

from the past perhaps points to a way to transform the future. But this "literalness" maintains a distance from verisimilitude through a way of talking without emphasis, lacking all emotional overtones, in which the words appear to flow with less fluidity than manipulating images (they use video on direct takes, home movies, photography), playing instruments (they play the electric guitar, hum melodies, beat drums) or dancing or unbridled corporal play.

As is the case of recent Argentine film by the children of the victims, *Mi vida después* condenses the questions that come up in one work after another, in diverse forms of expression, about that time, about doubts and allegiances, about the abyss between the generations, about those personal histories that collectively make up history.

This new type of Argentine film and theatre restores the collective dimension out of the fragments of individual, loving discourse that finally takes its place as source and document for that dramatic span of history.

Ana Amado is an Argentine essayist and film critic. She teaches Film Analysis and Theory at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. Formerly a visiting professor at Princeton and Duke Universities, she is author of the book La imagen justa: Cine argentino y política (Ed. Colihue), co-author of Lazos de Familia.: Herencias, cuerpos, ficciones (Editorial Paidós) and Espacios de Igualdad (Ed. Fempress), as well as the author of numerous texts in books and magazines in Argentina and abroad.

invited to come. And immediately after his parents leave, the guardian-grandparent dies, and the new guardian proves to be a kid-despising grunt. For any middle class kid, this is as traumatic as life can get, and many scenes in the film show the damaging effects. But the movie also shows, much more powerfully and often comically, that in so many other ways, this kid continues to be a kid. He makes friends just like any ordinary kid and plays tricks on his friends just like any other kid. Sometimes he outsmarts his friends, and other times, he is the outsmarted one. And he experiences typical (almost stereotypical) troubles and illusions in dealing with females, both his age and older. In other words, normalcy and anomaly coexist in the life of this victim. All this takes place in a neighborhood in São Paulo that, were it not for the Portuguese language, the hardly-changing weather, and the ubiquitous soccer matches, could look like just any ordinary neighborhood in New York, Chicago or San Francisco in the 1970s: the neighbors consist of Italians, Jews, Blacks, Latinos, and plenty of mixed-race folks. For an American student, even the neighborhood is both exotic and ordinary, simultaneously. Few Latin American movies about the trauma of dictatorship make such clever use of ordinariness to portray extraordinariness.

In contrast, there is nothing ordinary in XXY. This is the story of 15-year old Alex, an intersexual teen whose time has come to choose. Many intersexuals do not face the luxury of choice: their parents are the ones who decide what to do with anatomical ambiguity, shortly after the child's birth. But Alex was "lucky" enough to have enlightened parents who actually chose not to choose. They opted instead to wait until Alex became old enough to choose for him/herself. They even moved from Buenos Aires to a beach town in Uruguay to protect Alex from social stigmatism. These all qualify as the most dignity-respecting positions that any parents could take. Yet, at 15, this dignity proved to be a source of anguish for Alex. Alex knows the time has come to decide on a gender, an urge that stems from his/her inner self, not just from peer pressure. But Alex doesn't know what he/she wants to be. Alex is attracted to both boys and girls, and no one at the same time. He/she understands the benefits of being a man and the benefits of being a woman, or rather, the harsh sacrifices that each gender choice would entail. Alex wants to be both, but he/she also wants to be one and not the other. Alex is both the victim of hate and the perpetrator of hate, especially against people who simply offer love. Alex is raped, physically and verbally, but he/she also finds com-

passion. Alex is resentful of his/her parents because they too have expectations for him/her, but Alex knows that nobody else can be trusted to understand his/her predicament. In short, there is not a single minute in which Alex feels at ease, all the result, ironically, of plenty of love.

Psychologists often tell us that having too much choice can be a form of enslavement. The story of Alex tells us that having just one choice can be an impossible cruelty, if that choice has to do with gender identity. Alex's story conveys forcefully the plight of intersexual individuals even in environments that are as free from homophobia as one can possibly recreate in real life. That environment will never be that free from homophobia nor that free to offer real choices. Alex the victim will not necessarily become anyone's hero, but many non-intersexuals will come out of this movie understanding better that, certainly for Alex and maybe for many of us, there is no clearly preferable gender choice. In this movie, the plight of the extraordinary becomes palpably ordinary.

Javier Corrales was the 2009 DRCLAS Central America Visiting Scholar. He is an associate professor of Political Science at Amherst College. Corrales is the author of Presidents Without Parties: the Politics of Economic Reform in Argentina and Venezuela in the 1990s.



The Three Lives of Fernando Solanas

BY JORGE RUFFINELLI

Fernando Solanas

FIRST LIFE: THE CLANDESTINE FIGHTER

IN 1969, FERNANDO EZEQUIEL SOLANAS (b. Buenos Aires, 1936), in collaboration with other Argentine filmmakers, filmed a chapter of *Argentina, mayo de 1969: los caminos de la liberación*. The film has never been restored in its entirety, and few have seen it. Nevertheless, it remains a legendary testimony to collective political unrest, particularly influential for its promotion of cinema as a new vehicle of protest against a ruling regime.

Solanas' filmic inspirations were not exclusively cinematic: his studies in literature, music, dance and law led him to pursue theater arts at the Conservatory of Dramatic Arts, where cinema would eventually seduce him. His career in cinema began at age 26, with the filming of *Seguir andando* (1962). Another short film, *Reflexión ciudadana* (1963), followed a year later.

Like his friend Octavio Getino, Solanas was a Peronist, and in 1968 the two men directed the most influential political documentary of the era: *La hora de los hornos: Notas y testimonios sobre el neo-colonialismo, la violencia y la liberación*. Divided into three parts, the 255-minute

documentary managed to be many things at once: instrument of leftist political and social protest; manifesto; educational cinematic debate; essay of cultural interpretation of Latin America in general and of Argentina in particular; a filmic collage, collecting and juxtaposing fragments from other films of the period; active artifact in the democratization of images; unofficial history. It was also the most controversial film of the 1960s.

Solanas and Getino also founded the Grupo Cine Liberación and developed the theory of "Third Cinema": a cinema that is neither commercial nor authorial, emerging instead from the public at large. Meanwhile, the two kept in close contact with Juan Domingo Perón during his exile in Madrid (1955-1973), following his removal from power in the so-called Liberating Revolution (*Revolución Libertadora*). The relationship resulted in their 1971 film, *Perón: Actualización política y doctrinaria para la toma del poder*.

Solanas' second full-length film, *Los hijos de Fierro* (1972), appropriated a well-known literary character in order to experiment with combining scenes of fiction and

documentary. This innovation achieves an extremely personal reading of *Martín Fierro*, the 1872 classic "gauchesco" poem. Adding to the film's unique ambition, much of the dialogue is written in the same octosyllabic meter as José Hernández's poem. Given the poem's fundamental role in Argentine culture, it becomes a poignant frame of reference and brilliant backdrop for a complex film that oscillates between epic and lyric, realist and mythic, allowing the poem's "characters" and scenarios to articulate a political allegory of the 1970s in Argentina. In 1976, after a military coup d'état, Solanas went into exile.

SECOND LIFE: EXILE AND NOSTALGIA

In France, and later upon his return to Argentina, Solanas' work underwent substantial changes. Without losing his political mission, the filmmaker started to develop fictional stories, mixing present realities with the political and cultural myths of Argentina, as he had begun to do with *Los hijos de Fierro*.

Music, mise-en-scene, and concern with the plastic and the visual assumed primacy in his work. This new combina-

tion of elements produced a masterpiece of intense emotional force: *Tangos, el exilio de Gardel* (1985).

Tangos is the great film of South American exile. Filmed in France, it pays tribute to the significance of that country in Argentine cultural roots, to France's pivotal role in the historical acceptance of the tango (given its origin as a music and dance of brothels), to the supposed birth of Carlos Gardel in Toulouse, and alluding to the two and a half decades of exile the caudillo San Martín spent in Boulogne-Sur-Mer. Paris provides the "natural" scenery for *Tangos*, such as the handsome "Cortázarian" bridges where the pairs of dancers choreograph their dances. Solanas avoids touristy and cliché Parisian scenes, favoring the dense and rich presence of the city, its streets, and its old buildings, a presence that bestows a certain charm on the lives of the exiled protagonists and corresponds with the musical, literary, visual, and *filmic* culture of these years of "mythic" reality of Argentina for one who lived abroad, in exile.

In *Tangos*, Solanas directs a film that is both personal and representative of the era. This aesthetic is risky, but at the same time participates in a musical tradition that is well established both inside and outside the cinema. The splendid choreography displays a variety of tango styles, from traditional to modern, allowing the dance to shine. The progression also shows that the narration, too, is mobile, and should not remain paralyzed in a simple realist telling.

When democracy was restored in Argentina in 1983, Solanas returned.

After *Tangos*, Solanas portrayed the other side of exile: "in-sile." Situated in Buenos Aires, his film *Sur* resumes the theme of the mythology of tango with the same talent and creativity on display in *Tangos*. Divided into four sections ("La mesa de los sueños," "La búsqueda," "Amor y nada más," and "Morir cansa"), the film expresses the author's willingness not only to be attentive to the direct experience of his characters, but also to turn to metaphor, myth, and poetry. The sets and cinematography achieve a ghostly atmosphere, with lights curiously multiplied by mist, smoke, and rain-wet ground. The two films share the aesthetic required to tell a subjective story in an objective manner. *Sur* is the story of love for a woman, for a city, and for a country.

Democracy is supposed to permit and promote political and cultural criticism. Following his return to newly democratic Argentina, Solanas produced a variety of films and articles which criticized successive Argentine governments, especially that of Argentine President Carlos Saúl Menem. Although Menem was also a Peronist, he ended up destroying the Peronist movement, "selling" the country by privatizing state resources and signing agreements of pardon and amnesty for the militants of the Dirty War.

El viaje (1992) and *La nube* (1998) satirized the government, and not without consequence. Though one might expect the personal safety of citizens to be more secure in a democracy than under a dictatorship, Solanas' criticisms were met with violence: as he left a studio on May 21, 1991 unknown gunmen made an attempt on his life.

THIRD LIFE: THE STREETS ONCE AGAIN

Argentina, 2001. Economic, social and labor conditions became insufferable under the administration of De la Rúa. In Buenos Aires, people took to the streets in massive and irrepressible protests. The president declared a state of siege, which only aggravated the situation. The more police that were sent to the street to repress the uprising, the more hopeless the battle for control became. The expression "¡Que se vayan todos!" ("Out with them all!") signaled a collective will that was difficult to stop or contain. On December 21, De la Rúa resigned ignominiously, fleeing the Casa de Gobierno in a helicopter.

These events energized Solanas, as they did thousands of other Argentines. He was inspired to capture on film a historical milestone that, while it had plenty of antecedents, would have far-reaching consequences. Solanas felt that current events should be explored in order to understand the historical moment, as well as the ones that would follow. Above all, he wanted to put in perspective a long history of governmental corruption, on the one hand, and the history of popular resistance on the other.

Three decades had passed since *La hora de los hornos*, when Solanas rediscovered the cinema of the street. Cinematographic techniques had changed in these years, and heavy 16mm cameras were traded in for camcorders and high-definition digital. With these innovations, the cinema of Solanas regained its youth. The filmmaker

hit the pavement to record the events that shook the country, directing four notable documentaries in just five years: *Memoria del saqueo* (2004), *La dignidad de los nadies* (2005), *Argentina latente* (2007) and *La próxima estación* (2008).

With youthful energy, Solanas returned to a cinema of activism and exposé, but this time with four decades of cinematographic experience, allowing him to assume a resounding and authoritative first-person account. Indeed, Solanas narrates each of these films himself, speaking on camera with his protagonists. *Memoria del saqueo*, as its title implies, is the "story" of how Argentina was looted by politicians who privatized public services (airlines, telephones, and others), and of the misdeeds surrounding the financial and economic disaster and popular revolt of 2001.

La dignidad de los nadies gave voice to these "anonymous" people that fomented the uprising of 2001, as well as those that have agitated against the continual abuses in Argentina. Inverting the perspective of *Memoria del saqueo*, which relates the abuses of the system, *La dignidad de los nadies* tells the story of popular resistance.

The trend continues in *Argentina latente* and *La próxima estación*. This last film undertakes a sharp illustration of the looting with just a single example: the state railroads. In some sections of the film the thefts described are nearly unbelievable: looters make off with not only thousands of steel rails, but also with the warehouses that stored them. As in all of his films, Solanas points directly to the names of the accused. In this sense his films are also *escraches*, a colloquial and untranslatable word that describes physical acts of denunciation, peaceful but effective actions of the victims themselves, that is, the citizens. Accompanying these acts is the cinema, the means of communication most feared by the System.

Jorge Ruffinelli, editor of *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, is a professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Stanford University and a recognized authority on Onetti, García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, and Latin American literary history. His critical work has recently focused on Latin American cinema.

This article was translated from the Spanish by Adam Morris.

Lita Stantic

An Interview by Haden Guest

PRODUCER LITA STANTIC (B. 1942) played a crucial role in the *nuevo cine argentino* that surged to international prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000s by discovering and supporting young, emergent filmmakers—Lucrecia Martel, Pablo Trapero, Israel Adrián Caetano, Pablo Reyero, among them—who would together redefine Argentina as a newly vibrant center for cutting edge art cinema. Equally renowned for her eleven-year partnership with María Luisa Bemberg, one of Argentina's most important women directors, Stantic also proved herself as a filmmaker with her powerful and autobiographically inspired debut feature, *A Wall of Silence/ Un Muro de silencio* (1993), a candid exploration of the still deeply sensitive topic of the *desaparecidos* during the darkest years of the dictatorship. Incredibly generous with her time and opinions, Lita Stantic was kind enough to receive me on two early autumn afternoons in May, at her beautiful office in the Palermo Hollywood neighborhood of Buenos Aires where we discussed the course of her long and storied career.

"EL NUEVO CINE ARGENTINO"

Haden Guest: ¿Que significa para Ud. el término "el nuevo cine Argentino"? A pesar de la heterogeneidad del grupo clasificado como miembros del nuevo cine—un grupo que incluye directores de talento y perspectiva muy diverso—se clasifica en este grupo todos los nuevos directores argentinos que han aparecido desde los 1990s. Pero si consideramos el nuevo cine más precisamente como una etapa histórica, que empezó con *Martin Rejtman y con Pizza, birra, faso* (1998) de Israel Caetano, ¿podemos decir que todavía está activo el nuevo cine argentino, o es lo de hoy otra cosa, un tipo de variación?

Lita Stantic: Ahora hay nuevas generaciones y quizás no se siente tanto el cambio, el impacto que se dio con el llamado nuevo cine argentino. En los años anteriores los directores pertenecían a varias generaciones. Esta generación que fue la que apareció en la segunda parte de la década del 90



Lita Stantic

fue más homogénea con respecto a la edad, porque tenían entre veinte y pico y treinta y pico de años. Y creo que eso no se daba desde los años 60, en que hubo una generación de directores que hacía un cine estilo Nueva Ola del cine francés. Creo que en relación a la generación de 60, esta generación es más individualista. En esa generación, se apoyaban más unos a otros. No sé, el mundo cambió, y también los directores se volvieron más individualistas. Por eso, a muchos de ellos no les gusta que se los incluya en el llamado "nuevo cine argentino". Es un grupo de gente que empieza a hacer su primera película a lo largo de una cantidad de años y esas películas son como un quiebre dentro del cine argentino.

HG: Y claro que no podemos seguir usando la palabra "nuevo" para siempre, ¿verdad?

LS: Ya lo nuevo empieza a ser viejo, ¿no? Lo ex-nuevo. Recuerdo que vino una vez al festival de Mar del Plata en los años 60 René Clair, y le preguntaron por la nueva ola. Dicen que, mirando al mar, dijo, "Todas las olas son nuevas."

HG: Algo que tiene muchas de las primeras películas del nuevo cine es un sentido de lugares específicamente argentinos, como la *Salta* de Martel, o *Bolivia*, que es un retrato de un vecindario porteño, o el suburbio de *Un Oso rojo*, o *Mundo grúa* que captura la textura de la ciudad, o *Tan de repente*, que hace muy fuerte el contraste del mar y ciudad.

LS: Yo soy hija de inmigrantes de primera generación, y creo que uno se enraíza más, ¿no? De chiquita, vi Argentina como el lugar

de la salvación. Relacionaba a Europa con la guerra. Parece mentira, pero, después pasó de todo en el país. No podría vivir en otro lugar, y en la época de la dictadura no me fui, a pesar de que estaba relacionada con mucha gente que desapareció. Pensé en un momento que me iba a ir, pero tengo una relación muy fuerte con este país y decidí quedarme.

HG: Uno de los puntos muy interesantes del nuevo cine argentino es el hilo político, a veces muy sutil, que pasa por muchas de las películas. Una de las películas más conocida que se produjo, *La ciénaga* (2001) de Lucrecia Martel, es para mí un buen ejemplo de una obra que tiene una cierta dimensión política—si consideramos la comparación muy fuerte que hace la película de las dos familias que representan distintos lados socio-económicos.

LS: Yo conocí a Lucrecia Martel en el año 98. El guión de *La ciénaga* ya estaba escrito y para ella era una película más existencial. Lo que pasa es que se le impuso la historia. A veces el autor está mostrando algo que ha vivido, y se le imponen contextos, se le impone la historia, sin que haya la intencionalidad de marcar algo, de marcar un momento histórico.

HG: Claro. Pero, tomamos otro ejemplo, otra película que produjo, *Mundo grúa* (1999) de Pablo Trapero. Si uno mira retrospectivamente hacia una película como *Mundo grúa* (1999) se nota como captura perfectamente un momento histórico, ¿no? En este caso, el momento de crisis nacional para Argentina.

LS: Las veces que le han preguntado a Pablo Trapero en la época de *Mundo grúa*, si la película tenía algo que ver con la decadencia de los 90 en Argentina...él lo negaba. Lo curioso de acá es que se dan coincidencias y a veces se filtra, de alguna manera aparece el contexto, y el contexto es lo político. Él no pensó en que la película era política—y es muy política, porque de alguna manera, *Mundo grúa* es el fracaso del Menemismo.

HG: Y representar a la clase obrera en la gran pantalla es un acto político, ¿no?

LS: Pero a él no le gustaba que se le diera esa connotación en ese momento. Pero pasa. Tampoco *La ciénaga* era una película sobre la decadencia de la clase media cuando la pensó Lucrecia Martel.

HG: Pero usted, como productora, está a unos pasos afuera del proyecto. ¿Se fija usted en estos aspectos políticos?

LS: No. Yo no leí en el guión de *La ciénaga* un contexto político. Cuando leí el guión de *La ciénaga*, como he contado varias veces, creí que era Chejov, y después me di cuenta que no era Chejov, que más bien es Faulkner, ¿no?

HG: En su larga carrera ha apoyado a bastantes directores y ha ayudado una generación nueva muy talentosa. ¿Pero también podríamos entender su carrera en otra manera, como un intento de apoyar un cine nacional, de ayudar a crear un cine nacional? ¿Estaba pensando en esto durante los primeros años del nuevo cine argentino en los noventa?

LS: Yo diría que no. Si se hubiera presentado alguien de mi generación en estos años con un libro que a mí me gustara, lo habría producido. No es que elegí una generación, primero. Y me gustan las películas que, de alguna manera, me dejan algo. Digamos, me gusta salir del cine transformada. Y bueno, la elección se debe un poco a eso. Quiero producir un guión que me transforme, o transforme a la gente. Yo me formé en el cine y la lectura. Para mí, soy como soy, digamos, y creo que tengo una ética y una manera de ver la vida por lo que pude leer y ver en cine en mi infancia, mi adolescencia, y un poco más tarde también. Pienso que de alguna manera el cine tiene que contar algo sobre

que me puede hacer ver la vida de otra forma, y entender más a los hombres, a la humanidad.

En general, yo no tengo la expectativa del negocio hasta que tengo que estrenar. Ahí empiezo a pensar en el negocio, pero no elijo un guión pensando en la comercialidad del producto, eso es seguro. Elijo algo que a mí me guste, que me llegue de alguna manera. Veo un corto anterior, que haya hecho el director, como para decidir: "Bueno, sí, me lanzo con este proyecto". Pero no, no pienso en lo comercial que puede ser la película. Después, naturalmente sí, cuando estoy por estrenar.

DESDE TEMPRANO

HG: ¿Cuándo fue la primera vez que se dio cuenta de que el cine tenía esa posibilidad de transformar, de cambiar o inventar un distinto punto de vista, una manera de ver y entender el mundo?

LS: Digamos, yo tengo pasión por el cine desde muy pequeña. Mi idea, cuando era adolescente o antes, cuando era púber, digamos, a los 13, 14 años era ser crítica del cine. Porque bueno, en ese momento, y aún cuando terminé la escuela secundaria, era muy poco probable el futuro de una mujer en el cine. No había equipos con mujeres. Los equipos eran totalmente masculinos. Entonces me parecía que el acceso a estar cerca del cine era la crítica de cine. Pero, digamos, vi mucho cine en la adolescencia, muchísimo cine, y de una manera mucho cine de revisión.

Para mí, las películas que me marcaron alrededor de los 20 años, fueron las polacas de fines de los 50 y principios de los 60 y el Nuevo Realismo Italiano. Creo que fueron

Fundamentalmente para nosotros fue una experiencia muy fuerte *La hora de los hornos* en el año 68. Y en ese momento pensamos que el cine tenía que ser político. Comenzamos a difundir *La hora de los hornos* clandestinamente.

HG: ¿Eso fue el Grupo Cine Liberación?

LS: Sí. El Grupo Cine Liberación se amplió, y se formaron grupos que, con un proyector de 16 mm., proyectaban películas clandestinamente en casas.

HG: Claro. ¿Y cómo invitaron a la gente para ver las películas? ¿Fue algo del boca a boca?

LS: Alguien invitaba a sus amigos o a un grupo de estudio y se armaban grupos de 15 ó 20 personas. Se conectaban con nosotros y proyectábamos *La hora de los hornos* con un debate posterior

HG: Y estos debates, ¿los organizaron ustedes, o fue algo más espontáneo?

LS: No, nosotros mismos lo organizábamos con debate al final de la proyección. Y en el año 69 se agregó otra película sobre el Cordobazo que realizaron diez directores. Hace pocos años Fernando Peña rescató esa película, que estaba perdida.

Bueno, era época de dictadura, el año 69, 70. Pero no era una dictadura como la que vino después. El peligro que se corría era muy pequeño en relación a lo que pasó después del 76.

A la llegada de *La hora de los hornos* se sumó un año más tarde el Cordobazo, un hecho que se festeja justamente hoy, que fue un movimiento de estudiantes y trabajadores en Córdoba que estalló el 29 de mayo de 1969, como una prolongación más politizada del 68 francés. Salir a la calle, pensar que, bueno, que se podía cambiar al mundo. En toda Latinoamérica se dio de una manera más política.

El Cordobazo fue una fecha fundamental. Salieron a la calle obreros, estudiantes, hubo un desmadre. En todos los canales de televisión, había imágenes del Cordobazo. En esas imágenes la policía montada retrocedía frente a las pedradas de los estudiantes. Fue un momento bastante crucial. Mucha gente joven pensó que era posible hacer la revolución. Fueron épocas muy bellas, porque pensar que se puede cambiar el mundo es maravilloso.

HG: ¿Cuál era su papel en el Grupo Cine

This interview with Argentine filmmaker Lita Stantic discusses New Argentine Cinema, Stantic's early life and her film *Un Muro de Silencio*. You can read this interview in English at <http://www.drclas.harvard.edu>.

la humanidad. Hacernos comprender algo más. Esa es la idea en la elección—también en el cine que me gusta. Me gustan más los Hermanos Dardenne que las películas de acción americanas. Por lo general no veo películas de acción. Pero bueno, me gusta el cine que, de alguna manera me deja algo, que todavía me pueda transformar,

las experiencias más fuertes que viví. Quería ver todo lo que se había hecho al respecto de ese cine. Pero, naturalmente pasé por esa etapa y después vino otra, la etapa en que uno pensaba que a través del cine se podía hacer la revolución. Y entonces me encuadré en el cine de compromiso, Eso fue ya a fines de los 60.

Liberación, ¿estaba una de las organizadoras, o...?

LS: No, no. Yo estuve en el Grupo Cine Liberación solamente en el tema de difusión de las películas, y con Pablo Szir—que es el padre de mi hija, que en esa época era mi pareja—hicimos una película que él dirigió, con libro propio y con colaboración mía y de Guillermo Schelske sobre unos bandidos tipo Robin Hood que la policía y el ejército habían matado, en el año 6—era bastante reciente la situación. La película se llamó *Los Velázquez*, y ha desaparecido. Pablo es hoy también un desaparecido. Estuvimos dos años filmando una película, sobre un campesino que se revela de la prepotencia policial, se une a otro, y es apoyado por los campesinos en el Chaco porque con las ganancias de sus robos y sus secuestros ayuda a los campesinos. Hoy Isidro Velázquez es un mito en el Chaco, que fue la provincia donde vivió y murió.

Es muy extraño todo esto porque esta historia fue investigada y publicada por un sociólogo Roberto Carri (el padre de Albertina) que en 1968 publicó el libro: *Isidro Velázquez: formas prerrevolucionarias de la violencia*. Pablo leyó el libro de Carri y quiso filmar una película, una mezcla de documental y ficción sobre los Velázquez. Un documental sobre la situación económica del Chaco, y esta gente que se revela frente a injusticias y que después termina de alguna manera protegido por los campesinos. A tal punto la policía no puede con él, que tiene que recurrir al ejército para poder matarlo. Hay escritos sobre los Velázquez y hoy en día en el Chaco, se festeja a Isidro Velázquez como un héroe. Más aún, en la época del regreso de Perón, escribían en las paredes, “Perón vuelve, Velázquez vive”. Lo vivimos como una forma prerrevolucionaria de la violencia, porque ya en 1969 empiezan a surgir los grupos armados.

UN MURO DE SILENCIO

HG: *Hablamos de Un muro de silencio (1992), el único largometraje que ha dirigido y un proyecto muy personal. ¿Me puede contar algo sobre los orígenes de este proyecto, y sobre sus intenciones y deseos como directora?*

LS: Bueno, yo empecé con la idea de *Un muro de silencio* mucho antes del año en que



A still from *Un Muro de Silencio*

la dirigí. En el año 86, hicimos con María Luisa Miss Mary, con Julie Christie como protagonista. La que me provocó un poco la idea de contar esta historia, que tiene que ver bastante con una experiencia personal, fue Julie Christie. Porque Julie se instaló acá y empezó a querer informarse sobre nuestro pasado reciente.

Julie vino por siete semanas y se quedó un montón de meses. Se enamoró de Argentina, y es un poco la idea de la inglesa que viene a Argentina para entender algo de

vivos un tiempo. Y de esto no se hablaba mucho en la época de la dictadura. Era como que haber permanecido vivo podía significar algo incorrecto. Pero después las cosas se blanquearon más.

HG: *No, complica la historia. Completamente. La historia que ya estaba conocida en el mundo, entonces. No solamente en Argentina. Pero también, para mí es tomar una perspectiva individual, personal para hablar de una situación muy complicada, muy grande, es una de las maneras más efectivas, más poderosas, ¿no? De no tratar de decir una historia así como una épica, algo así como una gran historia, un gran melodrama, sino tomarlo desde los dos ojos de una persona, así. Yo creo que tiene más, no sé, más poder. Y yo creo que esa es la importancia de este proyecto.*

LS: De alguna forma la película trata del ocultamiento. No sólo de la necesidad de olvidar y la imposibilidad de olvidar, sino del ocultamiento porque hay un ocultamiento

“Yo quería hablar de la memoria, de una persona que quiere olvidar. Pero la memoria siempre vuelve. Y vuelve de la manera más infernal.” —LITA STANTIC

lo que pasa acá. Después de esa experiencia con Julie quise escribir un guión que terminé haciendo con Graciela Maglie y Gabriela Massuh.

LS: Yo quería era hablar de la memoria, de una persona que quiere olvidar. Pero la memoria siempre vuelve. Y vuelve de la manera más infernal, con alucinaciones. El personaje cree ver a su marido desaparecido en la calle. Por momentos uno quiere olvidar las experiencias traumáticas que le pasaron en la vida, y quiere decir, “Bueno, mi vida empieza ahora”, y, no. Para mí lo fundamental y la única manera de tener sanidad mental es conservar la memoria.

LS: Lo que me enorgullece de la película es que siento que mucha gente de derechos humanos se sintió identificada. Estaba contada la historia desde adentro, ¿no? Porque de repente se hablaba de algo de lo que no se había hablado—que a muchos desaparecidos, los mantuvieron

con respecto a la hija. Y bueno, son cosas personales. Muy dolorosas, creo que por eso también mucha gente que ha vivido este tipo de experiencia se identifica con la película.

HG: *Pero también me parece que es una actitud sobre cómo hablar de temas políticos con el cine, y tener, como ha dicho, una experiencia transformativa. Y no tener una actitud de un tipo didacticismo en el cine. Porque yo creo que ese es el problema con el cine político, que es...*

LS: Yo creo que es una película en que el proceso empieza cuando la película termina. Y en ese sentido, sí, es una película para pensar.

Haden Guest is the director of the Harvard Film Archive.

A translated version of this interview in English can be found at <http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications>.

THE AMERICAS: UPDATED!

BY PHILLIP BERRYMAN

For years I have been using in my classes several films from the "Americas" series, done by a group of academics and filmmakers and shown on PBS in 1992. At the time it was a great achievement, ten films which combined themes (economics, race/ethnicity, urbanization, revolution, counterrevolution, women, religion, art, identity, Latinos) and country profiles (Brazil, Mexico, Bolivia/Caribbean, Cuba, Central America, etc.). Even though the series was intended for a broad public and for introductory use in classrooms, the more you knew about Latin America the more you could appreciate how much the academics and filmmakers had packed into each film. The series was augmented by Peter Winn's book *Americas*, now in third edition, and also a series of readings.

Although the series continues to have much to commend it (I typically use three of the films in a one-semester course), events have moved on. The films represent the early 1990s, although work had started a decade before.

I believe those of us who teach about Latin America would like to see a new "Americas," a series that would do something similar for Latin America today. The time may be ripe for an ambitious fresh look at Latin America in the spirit of the previous series because of an emerging pragmatic consensus on the way forward in Latin America. Somewhat loosely, here are some of the ingredients of that growing consensus:

- Natural resources, particularly oil, are *not* in themselves the key to development.
- By hindsight it is clear that Latin American countries should have moved away from "inward" development toward more "outward" development sooner.
- Latin American countries should move toward a model of development based on human capital.
- One key is a competitive private sector at all levels (small, medium and large business). "Competitive" means producing goods and services at world standards.
- What is required of government is that it be effective and responsive, and not only at national but at regional and local levels.
- Education should be expanded to provide opportunity for all, and quality should be improved (again to world standards).
- Excessive inequality is not only unfair and unjust; it is an impediment to real development.
- The rule of law is crucial in many ways, including ending impunity of military, police, and the powerful; combating crime and drug trafficking; and reducing pervasive corruption in government and the private sector.

In short, with this new consensus, time is ripe for a series similar to "Americas." Below, I offer some thoughts on the shape such a series might take.

Surviving in the City: "Americas" highlighted urbanization, the move to the city ("Continent on the Move"). The "urban shift" is now a reality: the continent is now 75-80% urban by the usual demographic standards, so we'd want a closer look at life in the cities.

Food and Farming: My assumption here is that Latin American countries are rapidly moving toward a commercial farming model,

to the point where even small farmers find themselves moving from subsistence farming to commercial crops.

Geography and Sustainable Development: One way to approach this topic might be to point out how geography affected the development of various countries (e.g., Colombia), and that the interior of South America went unsettled until the twentieth century. Now of course the Amazon region has been under threat from ranchers, loggers, and small farmers.

Business and Labor: Topics might include a story of small businesses, factories or stores; the story of *pão de queijo*—the small Brazilian roll from Minas Gerais that started as local business and became a successful national chain; and discussions of foreign investment, informal employment, and organized labor.

Race and Ethnicity: The earlier film *Mirrors of the Heart* is excellent at portraying how prejudice operates at the family and local levels. Possible topics include indigenous militancy in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico and Colombia; history of Afro-Latin America, including slavery, and claims of "racial democracy."

Youth and Education: Although education is often treated as part of social policy, making it a topic itself has some advantages; we've all spent years in school, and the series itself might often be used in schools. Some topics include recent notable advances (e.g., almost universal enrollment in elementary school in some countries); likewise problems of equity and problems of quality.

A Changing Family: The idea would be to take a look at the household, with the realization that families vary considerably by economic and social class.

Law and Order: Possible themes include ending impunity; prisons; drug trafficking; domestic drug problems (e.g., Brazil is the no. 2 consumer of cocaine in the world, after the United States).

Deepening Democracy: All Latin American countries (except Cuba) have some version of formal democracy, but people remain largely disappointed with the results.

I see this film series as an interpretation of Latin America for English-speakers. Although the talking heads should be primarily Latin Americans, we must remember that Latin America itself is an abstraction. In their national identity people are Mexicans, Argentines, Costa Ricans, Peruvians and so forth; people may also identify with their village or indigenous roots. They may be linked to other countries in the continent by language, trade agreements, *telenovelas*, popular music, celebrities, religion; their governments collaborate in various ways, but they are not primarily interested in Latin America as such.

Anyone else's ruminations on what such a series would look like would be different from mine. However, the ease with which these ideas have come to me reinforces my sense that the time is ripe for such a venture.

Phillip Berryman is a professor of Latin American Studies at Temple University. You may reach him at pberryman@verizon.net. If you would like to contribute to a public discussion about this article, go to ReVista Forum at <http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications>.

CHILE

Che to Che p. 48

A Brief Chronicle p. 52

This section zooms in and out on two aspects of Chilean cinema. Carmen Oquendo-Villar looks at sexual politics through the lens of a film on Che, while Iván Pinto Veas provides us with a thoughtful overview of Chilean film.

Che to Che

Sexual Politics in Chile

BY CARMEN OQUENDO-VILLAR

AN UNLIKELY COUPLE MONOPOLIZED CHILEAN HEADLINES ABOUT the 16th *Festival de Cine de Viña del Mar* in 2004: international superstar Mexican actor Gael García Bernal and local Chilean Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) activist Víctor Hugo Robles, who also focuses on HIV/AIDS issues. Despite the sharp contrast in their spheres of influence and stardom status, García Bernal and Robles had something in common. They had both joined the crew of Che Guevara impersonators including, most notably, Omar Sharif, Antonio Banderas, Madonna, Cher and, more recently, Benicio del Toro. (For an extensive list of Che Guevara impersonators see Trisha Ziff, ed., *Che Guevara: Revolutionary and Icon*, New York: Abrams Image, 2006.)

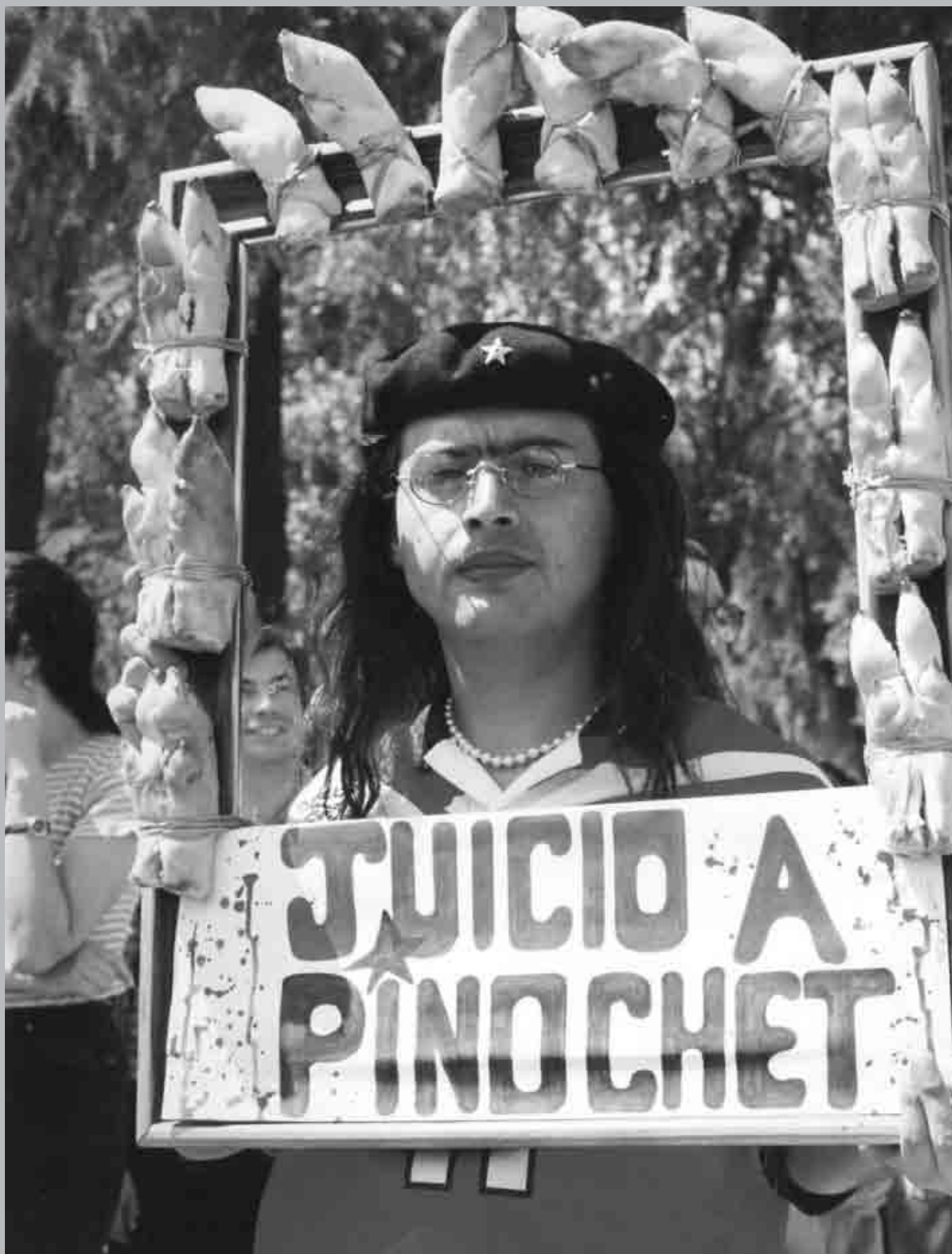
García Bernal had come to Chile to promote one of the blockbuster films of the festival, *The Motorcycle Diaries* by Brazilian director Walter Salles and executive producer Robert Redford. The Viña del Mar *Motorcycle Diaries* screening at the festival was the official premiere of the film in Chile. In addition to actor García Bernal, Alberto Granado, the actual Argentine-Cuban doctor who accompanied Che around Latin America, flew to Chile. Amidst all the media hype with Gael and Salles' film, a discreet, until then practically obscure Chilean documentary began to make headlines. The short documentary *El Che de los Gays* directed by Arturo Álvarez and produced by Pamela Sierra in the short-film category, achieved sudden notoriety because of the dialogue that Víctor Hugo Robles, a charismatic and media savvy figure himself, attempted to establish with the superstar through the local media in Viña del Mar.

Both films were presenting a different spin on the historical figure of Ernesto Che Guevara. Having spawned an iconic poster and taken on a life of its own, Che's image had become both a fashionable de-politicized logo as well as a potent anti-establishment symbol used by a wide spectrum of human rights movements and individuals affirming their own liberation. Salles' film presents a return to an early Ernesto Guevara free of beard, beret and fatigues, before becoming Che and fully articulating his revolutionary ideology. In *A Turbulent Decade to Remember: Scenes from the Latin*

American Sixties (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007: 51), Diana Sorensen argues that Salles' Che represents the "incarnation of a promise without the burden of its radical implications." The choice of a pre-revolutionary Che may very well be one of the secrets behind the film's blockbuster success, exceeding even the studio Focus Features' box-office expectations. This idea is backed by the fact that, even after making considerable profits with *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Focus Features refused to buy Steven Soderbergh's *Che* (2008), which featured a decidedly "bearded" and "iconic" incarnation of Che, certainly burdened with radical implications. In fact, Soderbergh's film faced difficulties in finding an audience both domestically (\$1,497,109 in box office in a film that some speculate cost as much as 30 million) and abroad (figures vary, but 9 million as the most generous).

Nothing is further from Gael García Bernal's blockbuster impersonation of a pre-ideological Ernesto Guevara than Víctor Hugo Robles' rendition of Che. Unlike the Hollywood stars who glamorously impersonated Guevara, Robles, with his trademark *guerrillero* look, had a specific queer left-wing political agenda. In fact, the founding members of Chile's LGBT movement, MOVILH (*Movimiento de Liberación Homosexual de Chile*), to which Robles belonged, situated the movement in opposition to Pinochet's dictatorship, even if left-wing political movements tacitly excluded queer folk. A practicing journalist, Robles flirted with mass media outlets to draw attention to Chilean human rights demands, broadly defined, but also to specific LGBT demands, like the defense of lesbian motherhood and the derogation of article 365 of the Chilean Penal Code that penalized sodomy between homosexual men. *El Che de los gays* was Robles' response to this tension between left-wing politics and gay life:

"Escogí la figura del Che porque es la máxima metáfora del revolucionario contemporáneo y al asumir parte de su figura representacional (estrella, boina y actitud guerrillera), busco politizar la homosexualidad y/o homosexualizar la política, demostrando que es posible ser homo-



Che impersonator Víctor Higo Robles demands Pinochet be brought to justice.



A scene from the movie *Motorcycle Diaries*

sexual y ser revolucionario; ser homosexual y ser de izquierda; ser homosexual y luchar por los cambios y la transformación de la sociedad.”

“I chose the figure of Che because it is the maximum metaphor for the contemporary revolutionary. By assuming part of his representational figure (star, beret and guerrilla stance), I sought to politicize homosexuality and/or homosexualize politics, demonstrating that it is possible to be homosexual and to be revolutionary; to be homosexual and fight for change and the transformation of society.”)

Víctor Hugo’s choice of Che Guevara to challenge the separation between homosexuality and revolution places his performance in a unique position, given that many gay rights activist and intellectuals consider Che Guevara a homophobic figure within the Cuban Revolution. In *Gay Cuban Nation*, Emilio Bejel refers to Che Guevara as “one of the staunchest homophobic leaders of the revolutionary period” (100). Despite the UMAPs forced labor camps to rehabilitate “anti-social” people, including gays in Cuba, Víctor Hugo remains a loyal defender of the Cuban Revolution. During his most recent visit to the island, Mariela Castro, Cuba’s leading sexologist and director of the National Center for Sexual Education, who also happens to be Raúl Castro’s daughter, officially sanctioned Víctor Hugo’s impersonation of Che by stating “if Che were alive, he would be supporting

our cause.” Víctor Hugo’s relationship with Cuba has been solid, even if during the official presentation of the documentary he was at the center of a controversy for quoting salient Cuban gay writer Reinaldo Arenas, who died of AIDS in New York after publicly distancing himself from the Revolution.

More recently, Víctor Hugo engaged in a public confrontation with Chilean novelist Pedro Lemebel over the homophobia of some of Cuba’s leading revolutionary icons, namely legendary *cantautor* Silvio Rodríguez. In contrast to Lemebel, Víctor Hugo Robles sided with Rodríguez, who in 1995 supported the Chilean LGBT movement in its attempt to derogate Article 365. (For an account of the debate between Rodríguez, Lemebel and Robles, see Daniela Escárate, “¿Lemebel contrarrevolucionario o Silvio Rodríguez homofóbico?” *Disidencia Sexual*, March 18, 2009, online. See also the article that sparked the debate: Bruno Bimbi, “Cuba, la Revolución y los gays,” *Actitud Gay Magazine*, Jan 5, 2009, online.) It is evident that still today, Robles insists on evoking Che Guevara for his own political performance.

Alvarez’s documentary, *El Che de los gays*, constructs a narrative of the transformation of Víctor Hugo Robles into El Che de los gays within the context of sexual politics in Chile. This narrative is constructed through footage of interviews with Robles, his grandmother, and key figures in the Chilean left such as Gladys Marín,

Tomás Moulián and Juan Pablo Sutherland, as well as through archival footage of Robles' media appearances. This queering of Che's image on the part of Víctor Hugo is highlighted by the documentary's overpowering soundtrack, which swallows some of the scenes with songs by Raphael, Pettinellis and Camilo Sesto, usual soundscape of the Chilean gay scene. Alvarez's documentary explores Víctor Hugo's LGBT activism through the commander's image, while also registering the reaction of Chilean audiences to a Che Guevara in drag. In fact, director Arturo Alvarez belongs to a generation of young documentarians in Chile who, having learned lessons from masters like Patricio Guzmán, are interested in recuperating stories of resistance among the Chilean youth. Documentaries like *Actores secundarios* by Pachi Bustos and Jorge Leiva, about politicized secondary school students, *Malditos: La historia de los Fiskales Ad-Hok* by Pablo Insunza, about the Chilean musical counterculture in the 80s, and *El Che de los gays* challenge the so-called de-politicization of Chilean youth popularized by many, including Guzmán himself in films like *La memoria obstinada*.

Alvarez's documentary explores a tension in the character constructed by Robles. Though seduced by the combatant image of Che, most emblematically captured by Cuban photographer Alberto Korda's now-legendary photograph, another image also haunts the performance of *El Che de los gays*, that taken by Bolivian photographer Freddy Alborta of the deceased Che Guevara as he lay dead on a table surrounded by his captors.

In the documentary, Alvarez gives particular prominence to an interview with sociologist Tomás Moulián. According to Moulián, Robles' performance directly references that defeated Che seen in the latter image:

"Tiene un aspecto desvalido, no puede representar a Che de la carabina, entonces, él representa un cierto Che, el Che de la derrota y él usa las imágenes de la derrota. Yo creo que se inspira en el Che muerto, entonces, es un gesto interesante, es un gesto descolocante, que se vincula más al Che patético, el patetismo del profeta desarmado, al profeta semiarmado. El no representa el realismo, sino que el idealismo, el gesto. Es alguien que busca el poder abandonándolo, hay algo en la figura misma de Víctor Hugo Robles que le permite jugar bien ese papel, y donde se une la simbología cristiana con la simbología política, entonces yo creo que es una performance interesante, muy interesante." ("He has a helpless appearance; he cannot represent the Che of the carbine rifle; he represents a certain Che, the defeated Che, and he uses images of defeat. I believe he is inspired by the dead Che, therefore, it is an interesting gesture, a disconsolate gesture, that links him more to the pathetic Che, the pathetic quality of a disarmed prophet, a semi-armed prophet. He does not represent realism but rather idealism, the gesture. He is someone who looks for power by abandoning it; there is something in the very figure of Víctor Hugo Robles that allows him to act this role well, a role in which Christian symbolism mingles with political symbolism, thus I think this is a very, very interesting performance.")

Given Moulián's role as campaign manager for Gladys Marín, a communist presidential candidate defeated time and again in elections, his take on Víctor Hugo's performance resonates with multiple defeats in Chilean history. These defeats include the collapse of Allende in 1973 and the ensuing crisis, studied by

Carlos Altamirano in his book *Dialéctica de una derrota*, Pinochet's defeat during the 1989 plebiscite, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of global capitalism, as well as the Chilean transition to democracy which marginalized the revolutionary left in Chile. In fact, Alborta's image of a deceased Che surrounded by his military captors resonated in the Chilean imaginary with another image of defeat: the widely circulated 1973 photograph of Salvador Allende's corpse being removed by military personnel from La Moneda after the Pinochet coup. Even if Víctor Hugo does not verbally subscribe to the notion of political defeat, by giving prominence to Moulián's interview, the documentary brings forth such interpretations.

While Ernesto only became a pop icon upon his death, Víctor Hugo's *El Che de los gays* has derived new life from Che's cadaver. *El Che de los gays* framed his own persona around Che's defeated body as well as on the ailing, martyred, and lacerated bodies of figures such as Saint Sebastian and Jesus Christ (a figure that is often invoked in the iconography of Che, i.e. Chesucristo). Invested with iconography of contagion and contamination (of message, political views, and purity), Robles' figure alluded to biological contagions and explored the ways in which the concept of disease had framed culturally resonant behaviors like radicalism or homosexuality.

Indeed, weakness and infirmity are a common thread in Gael García Bernal's and Víctor Hugo Robles' impersonations. While Salles' film portrays an asthmatic young Ernesto, Che Guevara's body contained a duality that Robles embraced: unbridled force drawing from his political beliefs and actions as well as a physical fragility due to asthma. Asthma marked the body of the *guerrillero* with frailty, turning him both into a doctor (which he was by training) of Latin American social illnesses and a patient for his own bodily condition. Living openly with HIV, the Chilean Che recognized this duality in the impersonated model and once placed a motto on his beret's star: "CHE, TE ASMO" (changing the word "love" to one that combines asthma with love: *asmo* [*asma*+*amor*]).

For the moment, any existing dialogue between the two Ches will remain on the page and between the two screens. Robles attempted to establish a Che to Che dialogue with García Bernal through the Chilean media. He went "live" to invite the superstar to the screening of the documentary, hoping to begin a conversation about the politics of impersonating Che. García Bernal, however, did not attend the Viña del Mar screening of the documentary, which went on to win several awards, including best documentary in the II International Festival of Gay/Lesbian and Transsexual Films in Bilbao, Spain. The conversation between impersonators has yet to occur. It has an additional pending guest: Benicio del Toro and his hypermacho rendition of *El comandante*.

Carmen Oquendo-Villar (Harvard Ph.D.) is the Jacob Javits Fellow at New York University's Kanbar Institute of Film and Television in Tisch School of the Arts, where she is continuing her filmmaking training, and at the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, where she serves as researcher and film curator.

She is completing a book on Chile's 1973 Coup as a performance and media event. She is also writing on the figuration of Che Guevara's image within Latin American political documentary cinema. As a visual artist and filmmaker (www.oquendovillar.com), she has focused her work around issues of gender and sexuality.

A Brief Chronicle

Culture and Beyond

BY IVÁN PINTO VEAS

AS I SEE IT, THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILEAN CINEMA DURING the last years followed two general paths.

The first line of development concerns the institutional framework. Cultural enterprises, especially film, have played a growing role in the democratization process.

The second concerns the aesthetic, narrative and thematic processes which cinema has developed as a cultural-artistic phenomenon.

In merging the two we may find the social and cultural roles which cinema has played in renewing forms, approaches and questions within an ongoing historical process. From here we can ask another question that has been raised lately about the development of, diffusion and reception of the cinema as cultural-social phenomenon.

GHOSTS, RETURNS, UNCERTAINTY. THE CINEMA OF TRANSITION.

The Chilean Congress promulgated a long-awaited law of audiovisual finance intended to create a film industry in 2004.

During the first decade of democracy (1988-98), films faced a double challenge. They aimed to attract a mass audience to highlight the viability of film and project an interest in the formation of a significant film industry. However, they also wanted to take on the social and political issues emerging from the end of dictatorship and the democratic transition. Pablo Perelman's *Imagen Latente* (1988) and Ignacio Agüero's *Cien niños esperando un tren* (1988) opened a new era in this sense, being the first films to publicly address the theme of authoritarian rule. *Imagen Latente*, a dark film, takes place during the dictatorship; it tells the story of a photographer who tries to find traces of her "missing" brother. The second film, a subtle documentary, shows the work carried out by a teacher (Alicia Vega, an important investigator of cinema in our country) with a group of children in a film workshop. Less direct, but more socially focused than Perelman's film, Agüero's documentary shares with it an emphasis on the social importance of an artistic device. In Perelman's case, it is the use of the camera, which shifts from being a fashion and advertising device to recording the truth by capturing the sites of torture dens. In the Agüero documentary, filmmaking takes a more playful turn, but it also transforms social reality: in the middle of dictatorship cinema becomes a tool for pedagogy, a way to connect children who have been segregated by the economic system. In the next years, films would continue to explore both themes: the fresh memories of dictatorship on the one hand, and its legacies of marginalization and inequality on the other.

Three remarkable works dealing with the first theme are: *La Frontera* (Ricardo Larraín, 1991), *Amnesia* (Gonzalo Justiano, 1994) and *La memoria obstinada* (Patricio Guzmán, 1996). The first one, a co-production of Chile and Spain, won awards abroad (Silver Bear

in Berlin, best script award in Havana), and was very well received locally. The film takes place in a desolate landscape in southern Chile, and tells the story of Ramiro Orellana, an ex-militant whom the dictatorship government sent to work there. With an imaginative cast of characters (a Spanish Civil War veteran, a lonely woman, a diver, among others), the film is remarkable for its ability to create profound images that link the powerful and destructive force of the landscape with the country's social reality. Larraín creates a robust and poetic work, close to what we today might understand as "magical realism." *Amnesia* and *La memoria obstinada* project different moods. The first one is a dark drama which tells a story of revenge against a torturer (painted in broad strokes verging on the grotesque). The second is a documentary by one of the Chilean directors who had a brilliant career outside of Chile and became famous with *La Batalla de Chile* (1975-1979), a documentary about the rise and fall of Allende's government. In *La memoria obstinada*, Guzmán uses oral testimony told by several voices (linked by history, exile, family ties), to show the break with past utopias and the frustrations they leave behind, as well as the deep injuries left by the political and military violence of the recent past of Chile. With this film, broadly discussed within the political-cultural frame of the left, Guzmán opens a line of inquiry through an intimate tone raising the possibilities of reconciliation, which would characterize subsequent documentaries on the democratic process and the collective construction of memory.

The second path followed by the first wave of Chilean cinema sought to show, comment on or denounce certain deep changes brought by the political transition which produced a curious "Realism" that also appeared in the 90s elsewhere in Latin America (Gaviria in Colombia, and the first new Argentine cinema). This

In Chile, film has played an important social and cultural role in renewing forms, approaches and questions within an ongoing historical process.

type of "Realism" is defined in opposition to trends of the 70s, as it flirted with some conventional genres (from black genres to dramatic and spicy comedy) and sometimes with the rawness and violence of the social situation. The first example was *Caluga o Menta* (Justiniano, 1990), a powerful if crude portrait of the disadvantaged who were brought down by the neo-liberal economics and politics of the dictatorship. The film also notes the emergence of television as social phenomenon. Both themes are even more focused in *Johnny 100 pesos* (Gustavo Graef-Marino, 1994), a thriller that features a marginal school boy, member of a gang that assaults a videoclub, an assault that becomes a media and television event. The





Movie posters from Chilean films.

film of Graef Marino is a rare case in Chile: his narrative works like a clock in support of his open desire to do commercial cinema that still focuses on the social changes and uncertainty of the early 90s. By the year 2000, this political emphasis (criticism of the media, and plots centered on marginal situations) had lost its force and film moved into popular comedy, which in its best moments (*El chacotero sentimental*, Galaz, 1999; *Historias de Fútbol*, Wood, 1997; and *Sexo con Amor*, Quercia, 2004), not only broke box-office records but also created, at the institutional level, the appropriate climate for the promulgation of the cinema law mentioned earlier.

RUINS AND REFLECTIONS

Agüero's *Aquí se construye* (2000) and Wood's *Machuca* (2004) both started new movements in Chile's cinema. The first film, a documentary, records the construction of new buildings in bad taste-- in the residential neighborhoods of Santiago de Chile. With a subtle blend of existential and geographic features (the documentary follows a university teacher who is the observer), Agüero builds an archaeology of places and emotions about the city. In the process of reconstruction of neo-Santiago (work of economic neoliberalism), he finds ghostly ruins and fragments that still inhabit the city. *Machuca* is a fictional story of a child that takes place during the rise and fall of Allende's government. Projecting a great sense of empathy with the audience, the film satisfied the public's emotional and personal expectations by showing the social landscapes and the emotional breaks during the period 1970-1973. The film not only served as a bridge to establish an open social dialogue about the events, but also established a "canon" of how to represent 1973, a position which is balanced at a middle point between complete rejection of ideology and full transparency.

After 2004, year of the law of cinema, everything suddenly changes.

- Three universities, the Universidad de Valparaíso, Universidad de Chile and Universidad Católica, offer careers in filmmaking, which means the expansion and establishment of formal instruction in this field.
- The number of releases had reached a peak in 2003 with nearly 30 new shows; since the 90s their numbers have doubled and tripled.
- Work with digital cameras lowers the costs of production, which will lead to the production and even the screening of films in digital format.

- The rise of dozens of new film festivals that require diversification stimulates the industry to grow in quality and specialization, from independent cinema to documentary, from underground films to old films.
- The birth of a "cultural cinema field" brings out new web sites that specialize in film criticism (Fueradecampo.cl, Mabuse.cl, laFuga.cl) and the emergence of a publisher specializing in topics of cinema.

In the last few years there has been an obvious decrease in the number of spectators who go to the cinema (a transnational phenomenon), a problem that has led filmmakers to question the sacred custom of release on the big screen. The year 2008 has been called the year of the "audiences' crisis" for Chilean cinema.

These, among others, are the factors that have contributed to the diversification of the cinematic milieu in recent years. Today's formats, forms and modalities of cinematographic representation are less clearly defined: some documentary films have begun to open to fragmentation and reflection on their language (*Ningún lugar en ninguna parte*, 2004; *Arcana*, 2006, *Dear Nonna*, 2004); some films blur the border between documentary and fiction (*El Pejesapo*, *Obreras saliendo de la fábrica*, *Alicia en el país*, *El astuto Mono Pinochet contra la moneda de los cerdos*, 2004), some display the proliferation of an ever more intimate, literary and confessional "I" (*La ciudad de los fotógrafos*, 2006; *Calle Santa Fe*, 2006; *Retrato de Kusak*, 2004) and, during the last years, some produce a re-visitation (topographic, fragmented and discursive) of Santiago (*Tony Manero*, 2008; *Mami te amo*, 2008; *Tiempos Malos*, 2009). All of them confirm that even though it is not possible to establish a clear direction, some of the themes brought out at the beginning of democracy will continue to deepen (collective and social memories) and others will have to mutate or to adapt to new digital technology. What is clear is that whatever happens, the cinema—the one we are interested in—will know how to adapt to its times, and it will be necessary then to reinforce the cultural fields of reception of these future films, which will tell us about ourselves in ways that we might not even be able to recognize.

Iván Pinto Veas is a Chilean film instructor and critic. He has taught courses of Film Aesthetic, Latin American Film and Documentary Film. He is currently working as an editor and critic for www.lafuga.cl.

CUBA AND BEYOND

Interview with Santiago Álvarez p. 54

García Márquez and Cinema p. 58

Cuban Film: What's New p. 60

From the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) international film festivals to the International School of Cinema and Television, chaired by Gabriel García Márquez, Cuban film has made its presence felt internationally.

Con Santiago Álvarez, Cronista Del Tercer Mundo

POR LUCIANO CASTILLO Y MANUEL M. HADAD

SANTIAGO ALVAREZ (1919-1998) INTEGRÓ el grupo fundador del Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) en 1959. Al año siguiente creó el *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano*, al que imprimió un estilo particular innovador del periodismo cinematográfico y dirigió el Departamento de Cortometrajes en el período que va de 1961 a 1967. Rigurosamente internacionalista, Santiago Álvarez recorrió con su cámara más de 90 países. Legó a la historia del cine documental clásicos como *Now!* (1965) —conceptuado por algunos de precursor del actual *video-clip*— *Ciclón* (1963), *Hanoi, martes 13* (1967), *L.B.J.* (1968) y *79 primaveras* (1969), entre muchos otros.

No es reiterativo señalar que el rasgo estilístico predominante en la prolífica obra de Álvarez —que él llamo *documentalurgia*— es la mezcla extraordinariamente rítmica de las formas visuales y auditivas al apelar a todo lo que esté a su alcance (metraje documental histórico, fotos fijas, imá-

genes de ficción, animación, carteles) con cierta dosis de ironía y sátira para transmitir su mensaje. Aunque apeló a elementos de ficción en su cortometraje *El sueño del pongo* (1970), su única incursión en el largometraje argumental, *Los refugiados de la Cueva del Muerto* (1983), quedó muy por debajo de las expectativas.

En un balance de su filmografía es indudable que sus primeros cortometrajes prevalecen por méritos propios sobre las obras posteriores de mayor duración. Ante el descenso de la producción documental en el cine cubano, el casi octogenario cineasta, en su infatigable defensa del *Cine urgente*, incursionó en el vídeo como alternativa. Santiago Álvarez —hombre fundamental en el que siempre destaca la fuerza de las imágenes— insistió en que “el cine documental no es un género menor, como se cree, sino una actitud ante la vida, ante la injusticia, ante la belleza y la mejor forma de promover los intereses del Tercer Mundo.”

Q: *Edmundo Aray llamó Cronista del Tercer Mundo a la compilación bibliográfica que realizó de su que hacer cinematográfico, ¿qué opina sobre esta definición?*

A: Es un poco amplia, seguramente Edmundo Aray al preparar el libro sobre mi obra y advertir que he recorrido durante treinta años los lugares donde la historia contemporánea ha sido muy fuerte y muy dramática, pensó en lo del Tercer Mundo.

Yo he estado en Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, Mozambique, en Angola, Etiopía, en varios países de América Latina como son México, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile; todos excepto Haití. Los he visitado, realizado documentales en todos ellos y es posible que esto conforme una idea del trabajo de uno como cronista de los países del Tercer Mundo.

El trabajo de un cronista cinematográfico; no es el de un cronista de prensa escrita ni de otro medio de comunicación, y a partir de ahí se le habrá ocurrido titular el libro de esa forma.

Q: *En su amplia filmografía usted cuenta con una considerable cantidad de clásicos pero, ¿existe algún título que sea el que prefiera?*

A: Es difícil responder porque cada circun-

This historic interview with Cuban film director Santiago Alvarez, who died in 1998, was first published in CINE CUBANO No. 145 July-September, 1999. An English-language version of this interview can be found at <http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications>.



From top left, clockwise, still image from *Los refugiados*; *El Sueño del Pongo* in which cameraman Arturo Agramonte, a historian of Cuban film, poses as an indigenous person in Santiago Álvarez' only feature short; Santiago Álvarez at work; and an image from the Cuban film *El ciclón*.

stancia ha tenido sus emociones, sus características; circunscribirse a uno o dos momentos se me dificulta aunque, por ejemplo, *Hanoi, martes 13* a mí me gusta mucho por razones obvias. Primero porque fui protagonista del primer bombardeo a Hanoi por parte de los agresores yanquis, y segundo, porque el pueblo vietnamita, el conocimiento que he tenido de ese pueblo, las quince veces que he estado allí —antes, durante y después de la guerra—, me ha imbuido de un amor y una pasión por Vietnam, por lo que ha significado durante siglos, que ha tenido que estar luchando contra todo tipo de imperialismo: el feudalismo chino, contra al colonialismo francés y por último contra el imperialismo norteamericano.

De cierta manera, como he trabajado bastante,—he realizado más de una docena de documentales sobre ese país—, es posible que me atraiga sentimentalmente ese trabajo continuo allí; aparte de las características muy especiales que tiene su pueblo, que con sus manos, pies y modo de luchar contra el enemigo, venció al más grande de los imperialismos de todas las épocas, al más sofisticado de todos los imperialismos. Un pueblo pobre, semidesnudo, sin zapatos, sin

las botas militares con las que evitaban los soldados norteamericanos que le picaran las serpientes venenosas, sin el agua potable que tomaban los soldados yanquis; llenos de malaria, de parásitos, hambrientos, lucharon sin descanso contra el agresor de todos los tiempos. Por ellos siento un especial cariño. El trabajo que he realizado en esos lugares penetró muy adentro en mis sentimientos.

Q: *Existen tres elementos básicos en su cine documental: la edición, la música y la gráfica. Sin embargo, Rebeca Chávez, que fuera asistente suya, lo califica como “el misterio de la intuición”. Cuando planifica un documental, ¿realmente surge como un fruto de la intuición?*

A: Si la intuición tiene que ver con la magia y el misterio, es probable que sea verdad. Sin embargo, me parece que no es realmente lo más correcto decir que el trabajo mío es intuitivo solamente. Si yo no hubiera tenido la experiencia que tuve en mi vida, si no hubiera estado en los Estados Unidos, si no hubiera trabajado de lavaplatos en Nueva York, si no hubiera sido minero, si no hubiera realizado todo el trabajo anterior a cuando empecé a hacer cine, si no

tuviera la experiencia de un joven rebelde ante la injusticia de su tiempo, si no hubiera trabajado en una hora de radio juvenil cuando tenía 14 y 15 años, porque tenía una vocación política, si no hubiera tenido todo este *background*, creo que la intuición no daría resultado.

Puede que sí, que haya algo desde un punto de vista «misterioso» de lo intuitivo, pero es que si lo intuitivo no va ligado a una realidad que uno ha vivido, la experiencia que ha tenido durante esa realidad, no se hubiera convertido en algo intuitivo.

Pongo en duda la concepción de intuición en relación con el trabajo, porque por muy intuitivo que uno sea, si tú no tienes una base cultural, una experiencia de la realidad que viviste, no creo que lo intuitivo saldría a flote. Hay quien cree que se nace sabio, pero nadie nace sabiéndolo todo; sino que a través del tiempo se educa, aprende, obtiene experiencias de la vida, recibe esa experiencia, la reelabora mentalmente, sentimentalmente; entonces sale lo intuitivo. Una vez explicado por mí qué estimo como intuitivo, si es lo que se comprende por el trabajo que he realizado en treinta años como cineasta, bueno, aceptemos entonces que es intuitivo.

Q: Una de las etapas importantes en su formación fue aquella en que trabajó vinculado a la música en una emisora radial. ¿Le ayudó a dominar el ritmo en cuanto a la música?

A: Sí, es un elemento en mi vida, una parte fundamental. por eso es que digo que lo intuitivo lo pongo en duda. Si no hubiera trabajado en el Departamento de archivos musicales de la emisora CMQ en la época en que lo hice, clasificando la música que

A: Jamás escribo guiones. Esta confesión a toda voz puede extrañar a muchos compañeros, no realizo los guiones convencionales con los que muchos colegas trabajan o los obligan a trabajar.

El guión de mis documentales está en mi cerebro y en mis sentimientos. Es como si yo fuera una computadora humana y tuviera un *background* de experiencias de la vida y entonces, de vez en cuando, apriete

realizar mi película.

El guión está en la propia canción, es decir, vas siguiendo la canción y escribes el guión, eso es en el caso de este documental.

En el caso de otros sobre Vietnam, ¿qué guión yo iba a hacer? No sabía lo que iba a pasar. Cuando llegamos, la guerra estaba caminando, y estaban a punto de empezar los bombardeos. Las noticias eran terribles sobre la agresión tremenda del imperio yanqui. Decidí ir a ese país para ser solidario con su pueblo, aunque no teníamos suficiente equipamiento; fuimos con una cámara de 16 milímetros de cuerda y con un popurrí de varios tipos de películas: inglesas, norteamericanas, italianas, que nos habían regalado las delegaciones que constantemente visitaban a Cuba al principio de la Revolución.

Con esas películas en blanco y negro, en 16 mm, de diferentes nacionalidades, con cámaras que cuando tú le das cuerda nada más que dura tres minutos la secuencia que estás filmando, entonces, tienes que volver a poner otro rollito, sin grabadoras, sin luces; yo llevaba una batería que me habían prestado los soviéticos cuando pasamos por Moscú; una batería que parecía un tanque, pesaba como diablo. Le llamaba palangana, y eso es lo que parecía: una palangana para iluminar. Ese fue el equipo que nosotros llevamos a Vietnam.

¿Qué guión iba a hacer? Al día siguiente de haber llegado, empezaron los bombardeos a Hanoi. Teníamos noticias de que en cualquier momento los norteamericanos iban a bombardear ciudades abiertas como la capital. De acuerdo con las leyes internacionales, no puede bombardearse una ciudad abierta; una ciudad no tiene propósito de invadir a alguien, ni guarda equipamientos militares. Sin embargo, así sucedió.

No sabía qué iba a suceder en el momento que estábamos allí. Ignoraba cómo iba a realizar el trabajo. El primer día que llegamos, empecé a buscar los lugares donde intuía que posiblemente podían empezar los bombardeos, como por ejemplo, el puente sobre el Río Rojo. Yo dije: «este puente seguro va a ser un blanco para ser bombardeado»; bueno, esa intuición de creer que iba a ser bombardeado; empecé a tomar notas de los lugares en que íbamos a filmar en el caso del inminente bombardeo a Hanoi. No existía ningún guión.

In this historical interview, Cuban filmmaker Santiago Álvarez talks about his life work and film in Cuba. You can read this interview in English at <<http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications>>.

se compraba para los programas radiales y de televisión, si no me hubiera entrenado en clasificar el sentimiento musical para ser usado después, no me habría dado cuenta de la capacidad de poder musicalizar algo con un sentimiento musical. Debido a que trabajé años allí, es posible que haya desarrollado una especie de temperamento musical, que aprendiera a utilizar la música para determinados momentos de una operación estética.

El hecho de haber estado en CMQ me facilitó ese entrenamiento, ese desarrollo del «oído musical». Siempre me ha gustado la música. He guardado los discos que me regalan; a mi esposa también le gusta la música y me ayuda mucho en eso de la clasificación para futuros momentos musicales que pueda utilizar.

Por eso insisto en que lo intuitivo es muy relativo porque sin ese entrenamiento, con mucha intuición, a lo mejor no hubiera logrado desarrollar ese «oído musical» para emplear la música en determinadas secuencias de un documental o de un noticiero.

Q: En el proceso de la creación, existen dos formas en que usted ha asumido el documental: unas veces como en Mi hermano Fidel, que fue un documental accidental, surgido como fruto de la entrevista realizada a Fidel Castro para el largometraje La guerra necesaria...

A: Un sub-producto.

Q: Sí, un subproducto magistral, pero, ¿existen documentales en los que usted ha elaborado el guión antes de filmarlos, o verdaderamente ha filmado y después reelaborado?

una tecla y produzca determinado hecho cinematográfico, o me remita a un pasado que me sirva de guión en el tiempo para poder realizar un trabajo determinado.

Por ejemplo, *Now!* es un documental que no nació por intuición ni por el arte misterioso de un creador. Nace porque previamente tenía la experiencia vivida en los Estados Unidos, lo que vi con mis propios ojos sobre la discriminación racial. En un momento determinado en que las circunstancias se tornaron propicias para hablar contra la discriminación, tuve ese hecho del pasado, almacenado en mi cerebro, y entonces lo utilicé para realizar *Now!*.

Escuché la canción *Now!* porque un líder negro, llamado Robert Williams, de visita en Cuba me regaló un disco. Visitaba su casa, era su amigo, y un buen día me puso un disco y dijo: "Mira a ver qué te parece esto"; y era la música de *Hava Nagila*. Le pregunté: "¿Tú me lo prestas? ¿me lo regalas"? Y me lo regaló. Entonces, de oírlo varias veces se me ocurrió realizar un documental exactamente con el tiempo que tiene esa canción.

Lógicamente, yo había pasado ya por una experiencia sobre lo que era la discriminación racial en los Estados Unidos y cuando escuché la música de *Now!*, empecé a retrotraer de mi archivo musical lo que habría de ser después el documental. No existió un guión sino todo un pasado que se impresionó en mi retina y en mis células cerebrales y cuando fui a poner en práctica el rechazo a esa situación política de discriminación racial, surgió la experiencia que tuve en un momento determinado, y pude

Sucedió el bombardeo, y de todo lo que filmamos indistintamente empezamos a ver, a buscar detalles adicionales para poder completar el hecho del bombardeo. Es en el cuarto de montaje, una vez que ya uno ve todos los *rushes*, los cuelga en el perchero, los analiza, que empieza a hacer un «guión», un posible guión de cómo va a montar la película.

Además, en tanto no me surge la idea de un título de un documental, no puedo empezar a montarlo, tengo que tener el título pensado ya para, a partir de él, comenzar a estructurar un documental cualquiera. El título, para mí, viene a ser como una célula donde se encuentran todos los hechos hereditarios que van a servir de elementos para conformar la idea después titulada guión; es decir, uno debe llevar cualquier hecho que quiera filmar como un diario: señalar lo que creas que es más importante en ese día. Ese diario lo conviertes después dentro del cuarto de montaje en una especie de cartilla o de guión. Hasta tanto no tienes todo el material revelado, los *rushes*, el título, inclusive ya estás pensando en la música. En resumen: yo edito y no hago como otros compañeros que hasta que no

terminan de editar no le ponen la música, sino que voy simultáneamente preparando la música. En realidad, no existe un guión convencional.

Creo que el documental, igual que un noticiero, es «toma uno». El documental se parece mucho al trabajo del noticiero, es «toma uno» también. Esto te evita tener que usar un guión, porque lo vas preparando en la medida que vas filmando cosas, hechos que te van a servir después para unirlos en el montaje, poner una imagen tras otra, empiezas a utilizar el lenguaje típico del cine que es el montaje.

Q: *El uso excepcional de la entrevista como recurso en su obra, que contrasta con el cine documental contemporáneo, no solamente cubano, donde existe un abuso de las entrevistas y escasa elaboración cinematográfica.*

A: La mayor parte de mis documentales no tienen entrevistas ni tampoco narración; siempre trato de evitarlas. Cuando no me queda más remedio, las utilizo, como por ejemplo, en *La guerra necesaria*. Es otro estilo donde uso la narración, el locutor, pero deliberadamente, la mayor parte del trabajo que he realizado es sin narración

oral. Y es la música, son las letras de las canciones las que utilizo como elemento narrativo del documental. El cine en estado puro, realmente.

Manuel M. Hadad es Licenciado en Historia del Arte y Periodismo en la Universidad de Oriente (Santiago de Cuba). Elabora en la emisora Radio Victoria (Las Tunas). Es crítico de cine, miembro de UNEAC, de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba y de la Asociación Cubana de la Prensa Cinematográfica.

Luciano Castillo es crítico, investigador e historiador cinematográfico cubano. Ha publicado muchos libros, incluyendo Con la locura de los sentidos; Ramón Peón, el hombre de los glóbulos negros, Carpentier en el reino de la imagen, El cine cubano a contraluz. El es jefe de la Mediateca "André Bazin" de la Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV de San Antonio de los Baños, miembro del Consejo Nacional de la Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba y Vicepresidente de la Asociación Cubana de la Prensa Cinematográfica (filial de la Fipresci)

NELSON PALACIOS: DIRECTOR ECUATORIANO

POR MIGUEL ALVEAR

Este año no tengo una película favorita, tengo varias. Todas son ecuatorianas, producidas con bajísimos presupuestos por autodidactas y tremendamente populares a pesar de que no se exhiben ni en las pantallas de los cines, ni en los festivales o canales de televisión. Estas películas, con títulos sugerentes como "Sicarios Manabitas", "Lágrimas de una madre" o "El dolor de ser pobre", se venden a un dólar en un mercado gigantesco de contrabando, filmes y música pirata, conocido como *La Bahía*, en la ciudad portuaria de Guayaquil.

El más prolífico de estos realizadores underground es Nelson Palacios quien solamente este año ha producido tres largometrajes: "El retorno del llanero vengador", "Mundo real" y "No me dejes mamá". En el primero Palacios recrea—en el contexto *montubio* de la costa ecuatoriana—los *ranchera westerns* que viera como niño en los cines de la ciudad de Milagro. En el segundo, nos cuenta la historia de un pastor evangélico en un mundo donde la línea entre el bien y el mal es más clara que el agua. Y en el tercero, un melodrama de proporciones que hará brotar más de una lágrima, el realizador retoma un tema recurrente en su filmografía: la niña abandonada que recorre las calles hostiles de

la ciudad en pos de su madre perdida.

Pero dejando de lado su abundante filmografía (12 largometrajes en los últimos cuatro años), lo que sorprende aún más de Palacios es su particular mecanismo de financiamiento. Al final de cada largometraje coloca un cartel con un teléfono al cual pueden llamar las personas interesadas en actuar en su próxima producción. Una vez establecido el contacto Nelson escribe el libreto y su empresa familiar—Capricho producciones—alista las cámaras y el resto del elenco. La actriz o el actor invitado corren con los gastos de rodaje, -aproximadamente unos quinientos dólares- para comprar los casets, comida y solventar el transporte. A cambio, una vez terminado el film, el actor o actriz recibe una copia de la edición final, con autorización para reproducirla cuantas veces quiera. Así recupera su inversión y gana mucha fama entre los miles de seguidores de este peculiar director ecuatoriano.

Miguel Alvear es un artista visual y productor de películas que reside en Quito, Ecuador. Actualmente dirige la investigación "Ecuador Bajo Tierra", sobre videografías marginales de su país la misma que será publicada en Septiembre de este año.

García Márquez and Cinema

Beyond Adaptations

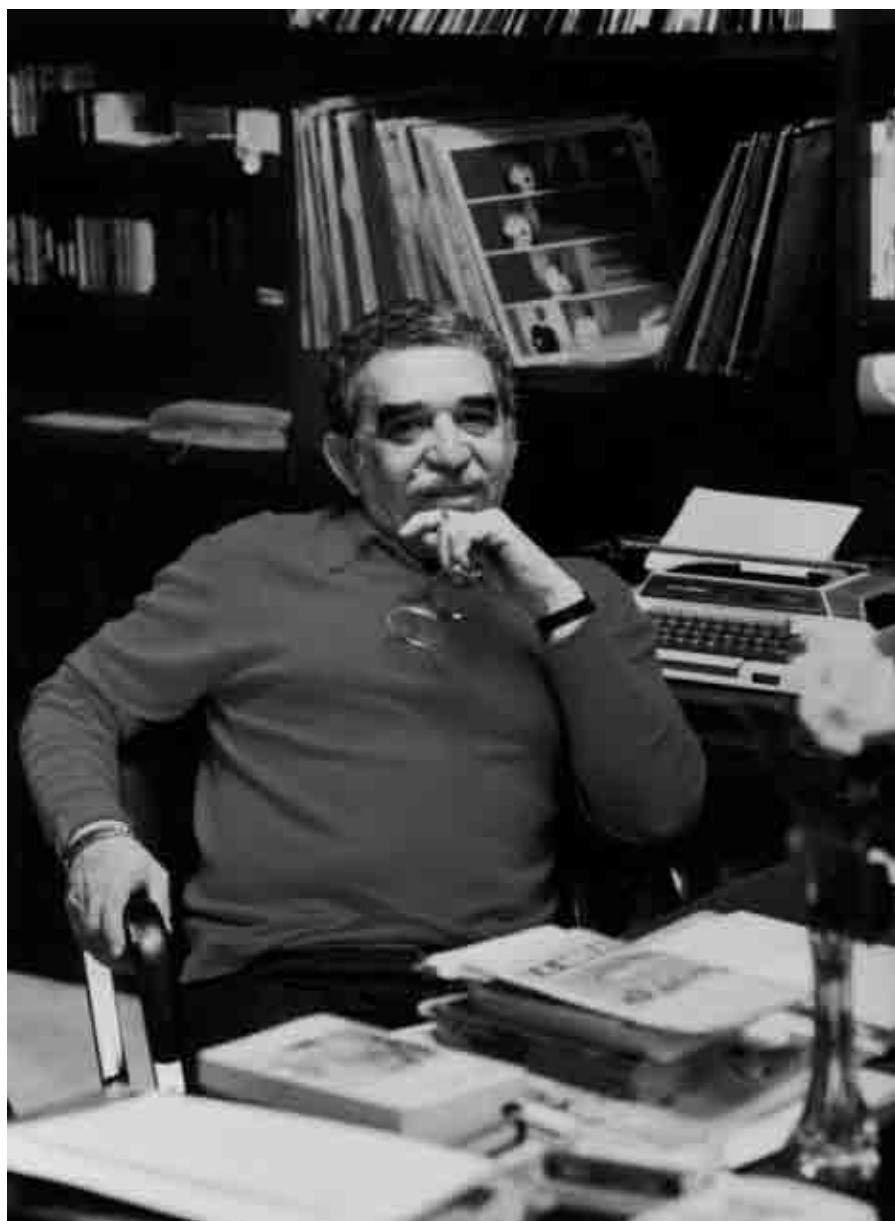
BY MARÍA LOURDES CORTÉS

"...my relations with cinema (...) are those of a marriage on bad terms. That is to say, I cannot live with cinema or without cinema, and judging from the quantity of offers I receive from producers, cinema feels the same way about me."

—Gabriel García Márquez

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ'S PASSION FOR film has always been constant and multifaceted. He has written film reviews; he has produced an extensive report about filmmaker Miguel Littin, *Clandestine in Chile*; he has led script workshops; he has adapted other writers' stories and novellas as well as his own tales for the cinema; and nearly twenty Latin American, Iberian, and European directors have used his pieces to produce works for the big screen. Moreover, he has created a foundation for New Latin American Cinema, and a School of Cinema and Television for the Third World. The relationship between film and García Márquez is, as he himself confesses, a "marriage on bad terms," but it has nevertheless borne multiple fruits.

During recent years there has been an increase in "cinematographic Gabomania" since the release in 2007 of the Colombian author's sole Hollywood movie to date: *Love in the Time of Cholera*, directed by Mike Newell. The film production company Argos this year begins filming *Noticia de un secuestro* ("News of a Kidnapping"), and Costa Rican filmmaker Hilda Hidalgo, a graduate of the school founded by the author, is finishing her adaptation of *Del amor y otros demonios* ("Of Love and Other Demons"), which was offered to her by García Márquez himself at the end of one of his workshops, and which has now become the most ambitious film in Central American cinema. García Márquez's fondness for the seventh art—sparked by his grandfather Nicolás Márquez, "who had taken him by the hand in Aracataca to see the films of Tom Mix"—finally blossomed through his work as a film critic beginning in February of 1954. The cinema-loving Gabo took advantage of a trip to Europe in 1955 as a



Gabriel García Márquez in his office, 1973

reporter for *El Espectador* to enroll in the renowned Experimental Cinematographic Center in Rome; notwithstanding, he left after only a couple of months, disappointed by the academic focus of the Center.

Still, his passion for film did not wear out so easily: he returned to Barranquilla planning to establish a film school, a project that he wrote up but never realized. In 1961, he traveled to Mexico:

"...with twenty dollars in his pocket, his woman, a son, and an idea fixed in his head: to make cinema."

Mexican producer Manuel Barbachano Ponce offered him an opportunity to work on his adaptation of *El gallo de oro*, a text by Juan Rulfo, done in collaboration with Carlos Fuentes. Soon, they the producers began to take an interest in the writer himself, and

García Márquez ceded the rights to his story “En este pueblo no hay ladrones” so that Alberto Isaac and Emilio García Riera could produce it for the big screen.

In 1964, García Márquez wrote his first original script, *Tiempo de morir*, an old idea which in that era he called *El charro*. The script was written expressly for Arturo Ripstein, and the dialogues were adapted by Carlos Fuentes. The work marked the beginning of the career of the now renowned Mexican director, Ripstein. Later on, between 1983 and 1985, Colombian director Jorge Alí Triana produced two versions of the same script, one for film and the other for television, and Rodrigo García, son of the Nobel Prize winner, also produced a version of the same script.

García Márquez continued to contribute to the works of Ripstein and of Luis Alcoriza, such as *Presagio* (1974), considered by some critics to be the best film from this early stage.

While making *Presagio*, García Márquez realized that he was writing something very similar to what he wanted to express in a literary form. He shut himself away for eighteen months and emerged with *Cien*

años de soledad (“One Hundred Years of Solitude”) (1967).

The publication and success of this book, which turned him into a world-famous writer, changed the trajectory of his career. From then on, directors would come looking for him to adapt his novellas and stories: *María de mi corazón* (1979), by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, *Eréndira* (1982), by Ruy Guerra, *La viuda de Montiel* (1979), by the Chilean Miguel Littin, *El mar del tiempo perdido* (1981), by Solveig Hoogesteijn, *Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes* (1988), by Fernando Birri, and *Oedipo alcalde* (1996), Jorge Alí Triana’s contemporary adaptation of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. In 1997, the Italian Francesco Rosi adapted *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (“Chronicle of a Death Foretold”) and in 1998, Ripstein filmed *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* (“No One Writes to the Colonel”). Additionally, numerous television series and short films have been produced by students of the Script Workshop with the collaboration of the Master.

Nevertheless, we believe that García Márquez’s fundamental contribution to film was the founding of Cuba’s International

School of Cinema and Television (EICTV), which has allowed more than 800 youths to learn about the film trade – youths who, without his figure, would have never pursued their interests in film. Gabo is the great father of all young Latin American filmmakers, many of whom have already won international awards. Like Hilda Hidalgo, they are adapting the work of the “father,” but adding a very personal vision of *Del amor y otros demonios*: a feminine view, a love story, the first film of an EICTV student. A challenge that Hilda accepted with a smile and with the complicity of the master.

María Lourdes Cortés is the director of the Fondo de fomento al audiovisual de Centroamérica y el Caribe, the Foundation for Central American and Caribbean Audiovisual Promotion. A professor at the Universidad de Costa Rica and a researcher for the Fundación del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, she is author of Amor y tradición: cine y literatura en América Latina (1999) and La pantalla rota: Cien años de cine en Centroamérica (2005). She is currently working on a book about García Márquez and film.

MEDELLÍN BAJO ESCRUTINIO

POR CLAUDIA MEJÍA TRUJILLO

“El cine es el arte de los lugares” escribió alguna vez Víctor Gaviria, y efectivamente, yo descubría lugares nuevos en cada película de mi juventud: un parque en Nueva York, una avenida en París, una iglesia en un pueblo de España. Llegaban a mí como imágenes de espacios remotos que me abrían el apetito por conocer el mundo, pero no podía reconocerme en ninguna de ellas.

Un día, viviendo ya en otro país, me encontré, inesperadamente, con mi realidad. En una escena un grupo de muchachos, que hablaban con un acento que reconocía aunque no podía descifrar todas sus palabras, saltaban por unos techos y al fondo, como un muro, había unas montañas que me eran familiares. Eran esas mismas montañas que me habían oprimido hasta hacerme salir de la tierra en que nací y crecí. Reconocí mi ciudad, mirada desde lo más íntimo, lo más difícil. Era una realidad sin traducir, sin embellecer, y se sentía como una palmada en la cara. Allí estaba la indiferencia que permitía que los jóvenes perdieran la vida, la violencia como solución, el dinero como goce efímero de una existencia que no tenía sentido. Era la primera vez que lo veía en una pantalla y me sentí dolorosamente

representada. No era fácil identificarme—aceptarme como parte de esa imagen, pero agradecí que me confrontara con el silencio que trata siempre de imponerse en mi conservadora ciudad.

Desde entonces, seguí de cerca la trayectoria del director que me había ayudado a entenderme. Estudié sus películas como una nueva revelación para mí y comencé a difundirlas. Tuve, inclusive, la alegría de conocer a Víctor en persona y de invitarlo a participar en un cine foro para inmigrantes como yo. Al final de la primera proyección, escuché la recriminación: ¿Por qué muestra usted la cara mala de Colombia? y quise llorar. Todavía no entendíamos nada, llevábamos el silencio adentro. El cine es el arte de los lugares y de la gente que los habita. A veces no nos gusta lo que refleja, pero dejar de mirar no hará que la realidad desaparezca. Mirarnos, sea quizás el primer paso para descifrar qué es lo que le pasa a nuestra atormentada ciudad.

Claudia M. Mejía Trujillo is a graduate student of Medieval Literature at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. She is currently living in the Middle East

Cuban Film

What's New

BY VICTOR FOWLER CALZADA

THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION OF Cuban film cannot be separated from the very existence of the Cuban Revolution. Although the first Cuban film was produced as early as 1906 (*El parque de Palatino*), the creation of the Instituto Cubano de la Industria Cinematográfica (ICAIC—the Cuban Film Institute) on March 24, 1959, changed everything. Since then—only two months and three weeks after the beginning of the Revolution—all matters involving film were concentrated in ICAIC. These include equipment purchases, production, processing, international and domestic distribution, training of film professionals, education of popular taste and, to no small extent, film criticism. Consequently, ICAIC has long played a significant role in Cuban cultural life and today reflects the challenges and contradictions facing the film industry in Cuba.

The words “Film is an art,” written in the original declaration that established ICAIC as a revolutionary institution, set the stage for the high standards demanded of Cuban filmmaking by critics and the general public, as well as by the filmmakers themselves. This phrase also helps to explain some of the gaps, difficulties or historical fluctuations of Cuban filmmaking. Cuban cinematography has been characterized by high artistic standards and loyalty to the Revolution, while at the same time reflecting the contradictions and problems of the national reality; the industry’s rejection of simple entertainment in movies, as well as of genre films, eschatological visions, vanguard experimentation and the presence of censorship, are some of its direct and indirect corollaries, gaps or problems.

At the beginning of the 1990s, during the country’s most severe economic crisis, the film industry virtually stopped production. Even the emblem of the revolution, the ICAIC newscast, disappeared in 1990 because producers could not acquire raw film or pay for the costs of developing film and post-production work. From the very beginning of the Revolution, one primary achievement has been this type of docu-

mentary image, projected to domestic and international audiences. The ICAIC Latin American newscast, under the direction of documentary filmmaker Santiago Álvarez, was the vehicle for transmitting a vision for the construction of a new society in which collective effort, constructive criticism, confrontation with imperialism, and confidence in the future and internationalism prevailed.

Once the Cuban film industry was threatened with total bankruptcy, co-productions seemed the best formula for survival. Spain was particularly generous in financing these endeavors. Milestones of contemporary Cuban film (*Fresa y chocolate*, *La vida es silbar*, *Suite Habana*, among others) owe their existence to co-productions, but so too do a great number of films with little or no cultural aspirations.

As part of ICAIC’s 50th anniversary celebrations, the Cuban Association of Film Journalists conducted a poll to select the “most significant” films produced between 1959 and 2008. Published in March 17, 2009, in *Boletín ICAIC Digital*, the results showed that four films from the 1960s figured among the top seven films; after 1994, only one film in that category could be found, in twelfth place. In a separate category, twelve out of the fifteen most significant documentary films were made in the 60s, one in 1980, one in 1990, and only one after 2000 (*Suite Habana*, 2003). These results certainly seem to suggest a nostalgic imaginary anchored in the moments when a new national film industry was being created simultaneously with the new life fostered by the triumphant Revolution in the social arena.

Documentary film today is a good example of a changing scene, dominated by the works presented annually at the Muestra de Nuevos Realizadores/ New Filmmakers Showcase (2001), the Festival de Cine Pobre/ Film Festival of the Poor (2000) and the Festival de Documentales “Santiago Álvarez in Memoriam”/Documentary Festival “In Remembrance of Santiago Álvarez” (2000). Despite the fact that these three

events are organized from within ICAIC or by people closely linked with the Institute, they are not part of the system of the Cuban mega-organization’s public actions.

Several factors have led to the emergence of a new generation of documentary filmmakers within the country: ICAIC’s focus on the production of feature films; the impact of the so-called Special Period on the new generation of Cubans; the growing number of film graduates from the Instituto Superior de Arte/ Arts High School and the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión de San Antonio de los Baños/ International School of Film and Television; and the availability of less expensive equipment for filming and processing audiovisual materials. Unlike previous productions, current films propose a vision of national reality characterized by a sharp-edged critical intention to deal with the troubles of contemporary Cuban society. Individuals such as Gustavo Pérez, Alina Rodríguez, Susana Barriga or Aram Vidal are doing some of the most interesting documentary work in the present decade. In addition to these filmmakers, all film professionals who are graduates of Cuba’s film schools in recent years have seen the emergence of the Faculty of the Art of Behavior (Cátedra de Arte de Conducta), Tania Bruguera’s complex visual arts project that operated from 2003 to 2009. Bruguera sought to facilitate change and artistic growth for participants who attended workshops, conference series or forums with world-renowned artists and special guests. These young men and women, some of whom had no previous specialized training, created audiovisual documents that are among the most interesting made in Cuba in the present decade. In this context it is worth mentioning Adrián Melis (*Aquí todo el mundo me cuida*, 2006) and Javier Castro, a Cátedra graduate (*Yo no le tengo miedo a la eternidad*, 2006).

If, for many long years, Cuba had produced films that—given the relationship between the characters and history—could be interpreted as allegories of the nation, the present gives us works that try to recuper-

ate the old conventions of Hollywood-style movies, resulting in films that are bereft of any ideological discourse. Examples are *Frutas en el café* (Humberto Padrón, 2005), *Omertá* (Pavel Giroud, 2008), the unreleased *Mata, que Dios perdona* (Ismael Perdomo and the recent *Los dioses rotos* (Ernesto Daranas, 2008). Another example of this trend is the work of Eduardo del Llano (a humorist and ICAIC screenwriter, as well as an independent filmmaker) and Jorge Molina (who has acted in some ICAIC films, but writes and directs his own independent films). They have directed six short films that have a profound impact on the national scene—without any support (project approval and subsequent backing) or financing from ICAIC.

Cuba produces about four long feature films yearly. Thus, a short film is enough to shake up critics, audiences and the governing sector, as well as to challenge certain aspects of life or the making and meaning of the films themselves. For example, del Llano's works have made their mark with the richness of their staging, stylistic characteristics and the author's creative transparency, ranging from *Monte Rouge* (parodying the actions of Cuban police and security forces) to *Brainstorm* (which mercilessly pokes fun at political immobility, media manipulation and the silence of officialdom about critical aspects of Cuban life).

Molina continues to be the only Cuban filmmaker who explores the worlds of eroticism, pornography and violence. His latest film, *El hombre que aullaba a la luna* (2008), also demonstrates powerful personal poetics. Both del Llano and Molina are regular figures at film festivals throughout the country; their productions deserve more recognition than they have enjoyed so far.

Although it does not exactly fall into the category of film, the expansion of the video-art scene in Cuba is one of the most interesting developments in audiovisual production in the country. This type of work tends to be distributed in a different way than commercial film, but it has had considerable cultural impact. Since the first Colloquium of Digital Art, now in its tenth year, the idea of a new audiovisual art (consisting of video-art, digital film, animation and audiovisual stories made for computer) has been flourishing in Cuba. The Havana International Film Festival this year has a separate category for experimental work and

TOP TEN MOST SIGNIFICANT CUBAN FILMS

1959-2008

(Asociación Cubana de la Prensa Cinematográfica)

FEATURE FILMS

1. *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea) 1968
2. *Lucía* (Humberto Solás) 1968
3. *Fresa y chocolate* (T. G. Alea y Juan Carlos Tabío) 1993
4. *Madagascar* (Fernando Pérez) 1994
5. *Papeles secundarios* (Orlando Rojas) 1989
6. *La muerte de un burócrata* (T. G. Alea) 1966
7. *La primera carga al machete* (Manuel Octavio Gómez) 1969
8. *Retrato de Teresa* (Pastor Vega) 1979
9. *La bella del Alhambra* (Enrique Pineda Barnet) 1989
10. *La última cena* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea) 1976

DOCUMENTARIES

1. *Now* (Santiago Alvarez) 1965
2. *Por primera vez* (Octavio Cortázar) 1967
3. *Suite Habana* (Fernando Pérez) 2003
4. *Coffea arabica* (Nicolás Guillén Landrián) 1968
5. *LBJ* (Santiago Álvarez) 1968
6. *Vaqueros del Cauto* (Oscar Valdés) 1965
7. *Ociel del Toa* (N. Guillén Landrián) 1963
8. *Ciclón* (Santiago Álvarez) 1963
9. *Nosotros, la música* (Rogelio París) 1964
10. *Hanoi, martes 13* (Santiago Álvarez) 1967

for video-art.

New information technology has opened up new territory for artists. This new work co-exists with the popularity of Cuba's more traditional film, both in the domestic and international realm. To be sure, it is Tomás

Gutiérrez Alea's feature film, *Fresa y chocolate*, that has garnered most international distribution, marking the high point in national cinematography since the mythic years of the first decade of the triumph of the Revolution. The film tells the story of the friendship between a young Communist Party member (David) and a homosexual (Diego), forced into exile because of prejudice and low-level political manipulation. *Fresa y chocolate* presented the very sensitive theme of emigration to the public for the first time and earned much-deserved success. In its subplot, the story functions as a tale of learning (within the realm of culture, particularly national culture) for David, who is taken under his wing by Diego. Since then, other authors have revisited the theme of emigration, resulting in feature films such as *Video de familia* (Humberto Padrón, 2002), *La ola* (Enrique Alvarez, 1995), *Nada* (Juan Carlos Cremata, 2001) and *Viva Cuba* (Juan Carlos Cremata, 2005), as well as documentary films such as *De-generación* (2006) and *Ex-generación* (2008), both by Aram Vidal.

Other important ICAIC films include *Barrio Cuba* (Humberto Solás, 2005), *Páginas del diario de Mauricio* (Manuel Pérez, 2006), *Madrigal* (Fernando Pérez, 2007), *El viajero inmóvil* (Tomás Piard, 2008) and *Los dioses rotos* (Ernesto Daranas, 2008). These five movies, with very diverse aesthetic intentions, relate small contemporary stories through humble characters (*Barrio Cuba*), propose ample revisions of critical points of contemporary Cuban history (*Páginas del diario de Mauricio*), give us a dense metaphoric parable of the national reality in a tale split into a twofold history situated in the present and in the future (*Madrigal*), analyze national culture through the work of Cuban writer José Lezama Lima and his novel *Paradiso* (*El viajero inmóvil*), and present an in-depth account of life in Havana's marginal neighborhoods (*Los dioses rotos*).

I believe the sum of all these efforts is enough to demonstrate that Cuban film lives on, that this is a moment of great changes, and that surprises lie in store.

Victor Fowler Calzada is a Cuban poet, critic and lecturer on film and literature. His most recent book of poetry is *La obligación de expresar* (Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2008). He is presently coordinating a series of books on contemporary international film, written by Cuban researchers and to be published by the ICAIC Press.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Children in Poverty

An Interdisciplinary Approach

BY ANDREA ROLLA WITH MARY CATHERINE ARBOUR

I went together with my daughter, who was in kindergarten at the time, to a parent-child workshop that is part of the work of the *Un Buen Comienzo* project in public preschools in low-income communities of Santiago, Chile. The preschool teacher in the school in the Peñalolén municipality spoke to a roomful of parents about the importance of talking with their children. The teacher then invited us to a classroom,

where we worked with our children on different early literacy activities related to topics such as health, rotating from one table to the next.

The mother next to me admitted that she was illiterate and couldn't do the activities with her daughter by herself. I offered to work with her daughter and asked her to work with mine during the workshop. We had a lot of fun, and my daughter and I

share fond memories of the interaction; I hope that mother and her daughter were also left with a nice memory. That brief moment reminded me why I love directing the *Un Buen Comienzo* (UBC) project. Beyond the research that we are doing, we are also making a difference in children's lives — not only by teaching parents and teachers about early childhood development, but also by encouraging parents

to interact with their children in ways which foster learning.

UBC is a project that aims to reduce educational inequality in Chile by improving the quality of preschool education. By conducting a study of the impact of intensive professional development on teachers' classroom practices, parenting practices, and children's learning in 60 preschools, UBC seeks to enhance educational and public-health capacity





Portraits of children who participate in the early childhood programs of Un Buen Comienzo.



relevant to early childhood in Chile, an important element for the donor, Andrónico Luksic. The intervention is implemented by his Fundación Educacional Oportunidad, while the external evaluation is conducted by the Universidad Diego Portales. The rigorous evaluation of the intervention will produce valuable knowledge that informs early childhood policy; its comprehensiveness, which encompasses children's development as well as practices in the classroom and at home, will allow us to understand both processes and results.

UBC is interdisciplinary by nature, including the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Public Health, the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, and the Center on the Developing Child as participants. At UBC we focus on three major areas: language and literacy, socio-emotional development, and health. We have created an interdisciplinary team of teachers, psychologists, and physicians to tackle the work, which has helped us understand the interdisciplinary nature of the

problems our children face in the real world. For example, during the workshop, the little girl with whom I was working asked me to take her to the bathroom. I accompanied her and reminded her to wash her hands before returning to the classroom, a preventive health practice that we have incorporated into our intervention in the project.

The importance of making sure this little girl washed her hands to prevent illness so that she can stay healthy and attend school is one of the many lessons that I, a special-

ist in language and literacy development, have understood more deeply through this project. There are issues that are important for our children but that sometimes I forget as a researcher because I look at the classroom through my own disciplinary lens at the expense of others.

Andrea Rolla is Director of Un Buen Comienzo and a Research Associate at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and at the Center on the Developing Child.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

As a physician who works on the project, I spend much of my time taking care of the sick, prioritizing and providing for their physical needs. *Un Buen Comienzo* is special in part because it integrates the basic health and physical well-being of growing preschoolers and their parents into a larger project which acknowledges and incorporates many of the other equally important things families need to be healthy and happy, not only at this crucial stage of development but well into the future. This approach reflects real life. Last year, one of the children in our program missed 45% of school days. He has asthma; his mother only got through the 4th grade; she works cleaning houses and suffers from depression—so which of the social, economic, educational or health disadvantages is the main cause of his lower academic achievement? UBC treats all of them. Our interdisciplinary team integrates expertise across academic disciplines in hopes of redressing the disparities we know to be associated with these factors. It is an incredibly challenging and enriching effort.

Mary Catherine Arbour is an Associate Physician for Research at the Division of Global Health Equity, Brigham and Women's Hospital and a Senior Research Associate at the Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. She is also an Instructor at Harvard Medical School.

BOOK TALK

Contesting Civilization's Destiny

David Maybury-Lewis, Theodore Macdonald and Biorn Maybury-Lewis (eds.) *Manifest Destinies and Indigenous Peoples*. The David Rockefeller Center Series on Latin American Studies, Harvard University, 2009.

A REVIEW BY MARÍA CLEMENCIA RAMÍREZ

This book is a tribute to the work of David Maybury-Lewis, the late and distinguished Professor Emeritus at Harvard's Department of Anthropology, where I had the honor to be his student and advisee. It is his last book and a continuation of his life's work: the examination of another aspect of what governments have long called "the Indian question," a topic to which Maybury-Lewis dedicated himself from both an academic and an applied perspective.

The book provides a comparative analysis of policies in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile in the second half of the nineteenth century to legitimize state expansion into territory inhabited by indigenous peoples within their national boundaries.

Four chapters concern the United States and Canada and the other three deal with South America. Theodore Macdonald's introduction summarizes the authors' central concerns and debates, while an afterword by Professor Maybury-Lewis's son, Biorn Maybury-Lewis, discusses the life of his father not only as a respected academic but also as an intellectual committed to the welfare of indigenous peoples. These dual commitments date back to Dr. Maybury-Lewis's eighteen months of intensive fieldwork with the

Xavante people of Brazil in the late 1950s, which his son Biorn also experienced as a toddler.

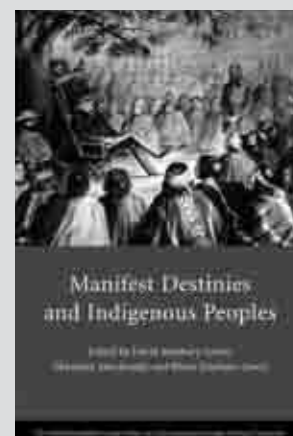
The book's historical perspective and its emphasis on North America allow us to explore another question beyond its own primary concern: the means by which the United States was constructed as a nation whose "destiny" was to bring civilization not only to the lands within its own borders, but beyond them as well, thus legitimizing its role as an expanding empire and producing the national imaginary that has lasted to this day. In this vein, the chapter by Richard White discusses the rise of U.S. corporations in the mid-19th century and the extent to which state and corporate activities would result in the separation of indigenous peoples from their lands in the name of development.

In his chapter, Anders Stephanson explores the ideological content of the idea of Manifest Destiny, a catchphrase that was coined by John O' Sullivan in 1840 according to which the United States was "the nation of human progress" and no person or thing could constrain it in this, its intrinsic mission (p. 25). Stephanson indicates that "the massive expansionist moves of the 1840s entailed a much more centered politics of 'destiny,'" and that "desti-

narianism (to coin a phrase) became the very idiom of the whole project of expansion" (p. 26). The mission of the United States was to propagate democracy on the North American continent, and its ultimate goal was to liberate humanity.

Stephanson shows how these ideas inform the actions taken in the conquest of the national territory "conceived not as war but as 'pacification'" (p.33) that were directed toward the western territories of the United States in order to promote freedom, eliminate wilderness, and institute a private property regime as a symbol of national independence and a means to make the land productive. This was justifiable since Native Americans were represented as lacking any conception of property and unable to produce beyond the level of subsistence. Thus they had no intrinsic right to the land.

All of the chapters refer to the existence of internal frontiers or the relation between the center and the periphery of states. These relations correspond to a contrast between what is considered civilized and savage. Frontier areas are represented as places where barbarity reigns, places that by rights should be integrated into the nation as represented by the center, where development takes place and from which



the modern civilized nation is constructed and the politics of destiny are implemented. The differences among the countries discussed refer to the origin and nature of policies and the actions to be taken, in keeping with each nation's self-image and representation. The elucidation of these differences is the most important contribution of the book.

Anders Stephanson, Edward Chamberlain and Roger L. Nichols contrast English relations with indigenous peoples in their direct colonial possessions with the indigenous policies of the colonies' successor governments. All three authors highlight indigenous policies in Canada that continued the English "protectionist" approach followed since 1670, based on the premise that the newcomers should deal justly with the Indians, learn their languages, and protect their territories and possessions (p. 175).

Nichols points out that by 1877, "while American authorities treated tribal peoples as enemies or at least obstacles to national growth and development, early Canadian leaders considered First Nations people as military and diplomatic allies" (p. 151). At the end of the nineteenth century Canadian and U.S. policies grew steadily more similar, and by the beginning of the 20th century their common pursuit of advanced civilization, progress, and the construction of homogeneous nation-states justified to their governments the goal of eliminating the indigenous peoples, now seen as obstacles to meeting those objectives.

In Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (and unlike in Canada

active attacks, Iberian-style crusades, and the promotion of colonization by foreign immigrant populations.

In the case of Argentina, the pursuit of order, progress, and civilization took on dramatic dimensions. For example, General Julio Argentino Roca led a series of military campaigns between 1878 and 1885 collectively known as the "Conquest of the Desert," seeking to annex the Indian territories of La Pampa and Patagonia. Claudia Briones and Walter Delrio argue that this policy was designed to transform La Pampa and Patagonia "into a sociological 'desert' through de-tribalization and practical extermination that extended well beyond the period of military campaigns"

living there were not only savages, but invaders from neighboring Chile who should be expelled, if not exterminated. Briones and Delrio conclude that to the Argentine government, the task of governing the national territory included populating these empty spaces. This was seen as "a vital constituent of the national Project and Destiny." Unlike the U.S. idea of expanding into new territories, the Argentineans spoke of recovering territory.

As the 20th century neared its end, the results of these de-Indianization and extermination policies allowed Argentina to define itself as having either no Indians or perhaps only a few remnant groups. The authors present testimony from elderly representatives of indigenous groups who describe their silent resistance in the face of continuous assaults. Although Mapuches have lived in the country for generations, their rights began to be recognized only with the constitutional reforms of 1994, and their authenticity as natives continues to be debated.

In his chapter, José Bengoa describes Chile as a country at the southern end of the American landmass whose center is contrasted with the unconquerable south. Just as Argentina embarked on a Conquest of the Desert, the Chilean military launched a

campaign for the "Pacification of Araucania (Mapuche Territory)," a period of intense military activity between 1866 and 1881, breaking a peace treaty between the Mapuche and the Marquis de Baydes reached in 1641 after a major uprising in 1598. This treaty gave the Mapuche the right to self-government, and although their culture had flourished with the incorporation of foreign elements such as the use of horses, people at the center imagined the south as largely uninhabited, with only a few small indigenous groups on the verge of extinction. During the 19th century Chilean expansion toward its northern and southern borders was seen as a civilizing process entailing the Chileanization of the Aymaras in the north and the extermination of the indigenous peoples of the south. Although Chile counted 101,118 Araucanos or Mapuches in its territory in 1907, Bengoa asserts that like Argentina, Chile sought to "whiten" itself after its independence in 1810. A European-American national image was constructed and between 1881 and 1927 the indigenous population was restricted to reservations established after Pacification.

This practice of indigenous relocation and geographical restriction is also analyzed. In the case of United States, thou-

This book, in presenting the work of international scholars on indigenous peoples in the construction of the nation-state in the Americas, is a fitting tribute to the late David Maybury-Lewis.

and the United States), the representation of areas in the interior of the country as "empty" and the consequent invisibilization of indigenous peoples living there were used to legitimize policies for the conquest of these internal frontiers. These policies entailed

(p. 52). This approach freed Argentina from having to develop a policy for the incorporation of the indigenous peoples of Patagonia into the nation-state. It implicitly promoted the colonization of this "empty desert region," arguing that the Mapuches who were

sands of people from almost all the eastern tribes were relocated, while in Canada relocation affected only a few small bands (p. 158). In addition to relocating the native inhabitants, in the middle of the nineteenth century the Chilean government organized the colonization of its "empty" southern territories by German settlers, promoted as representatives of European civilization whose presence would benefit the nation. Bengoa concludes with the affirmation that "Chile has united its national territory and thus 'fulfilled its destiny' to reach the fabled south but has done so by suppressing the indigenous peoples in the south, and has thus created a conflict that lasts to this day" (p. 138).

In the case of Brazil, João Pacheco de Oliveira discusses the contrast between the coastal areas and Amazonia, which was also represented

as an empty territory or a territory inhabited only by savages where both the natural environment (a green hell) and its inhabitants needed to be domesticated in order for wealth to be produced. During the colonial period there was much talk of conquering the Amazon jungle. Evangelization of the savages by missionaries played a central role in their subordination to the colonial regime. Those who resisted were considered legitimate military targets in what was deemed a just war to integrate them into the nation. Pacheco de Oliveira discusses the Brazilian imaginary in which "wild Indians" are said to be "the true and ancient lords of the land [constituting] indisputable proof of the existence of Brazil before the arrival of the Portuguese," and "the oldest and most authentic symbols of Brazilian nationalism" (p. 100). He evaluates the contradiction

in which indigenous Brazilians of the past were portrayed as noble savages while contemporaneous Amazonian Indians have in practice been represented as a "residual humanity that was headed towards inevitable extinction" (p. 102). This kind of tension between government discourse and policy recurs in every chapter. Nonetheless, at the dawn of the 20th century the idea of incorporating savage and unbaptized Indians into the nation gained favor and the state took an ever-more tutelary and protective approach, considering the natives primitive beings who did not know or understand the white man and his ways. As a result, the levels of violence unleashed against Indians diminished, with the exception of the Argentine persecution and elimination of the Mapuches, justified by their stigmatization as foreign invaders.

This book and its role in presenting the work of international scholars on indigenous peoples in the construction of the nation-state in the Americas are a fitting tribute to our late Professor Emeritus David-Maybury-Lewis who fought to make visible the indigenous groups in the Americas, defending their rights and protecting their lands languages and cultures, aiming to stop the cultural devastation so thoroughly examined in this book.

María Clemencia Ramírez is Research Associate and former Director of the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History. She holds a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Harvard University and was the 2004-2005 Santo Domingo Visiting Scholar at Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. She is a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for the year 2009-2010.

Time for a New Toolkit in Mexico

Juan Carlos Moreno-Brid and Jaime Ros, *Development and Growth in the Mexican Economy: A Historical Perspective*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, 328 pp.

A REVIEW BY KEVIN P. GALLAGHER

If all you have is a hammer, all you see is nails. Mexico, however, is plagued with loose screws. These screws have become way too loose over the past 25 years as economists and politicians have hammered away at the wrong problems.

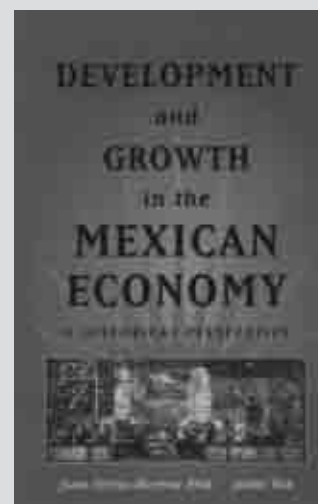
Such is the diagnosis of the Mexican economy conducted by Juan Carlos Moreno-Brid and Jaime Ros in this enlightening new book. Moreno-Brid, a senior economist at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (and former

visiting fellow at DRCLAS) and Ros, a distinguished professor of economics at the University of Notre Dame, have produced the first "development economics" history of Mexico.

In contrast to other economic histories of Mexico, and economic history in general, Moreno-Brid and Ros deploy an approach pioneered by two Harvard development economists, Dani Rodrik and Ricardo Hausmann. Referred to as "growth diagnostics," this analytical framework is an

attempt to move beyond ideological and atomistic theoretical and empirical approaches to an economy. Simply put, the goal of growth diagnostics is to figure out what the core *binding constraints* are on an economy, and then to work to loosen them.

The authors analyze the Mexican economy from independence (1821) to the present financial crisis. The book has many findings that add to or contrast with those of previous histories of the Mexican



economy. The authors find that the Mexican Revolution did not stunt growth as much as others have argued, and that the country was hurt much more by the Great Depression than had been previously understood. They estimate that during Mexico's high-growth period of 1940 to 1970, agricultural growth was more significant than had been thought, and

Mexican incomes have grown less than one percent per annum. Mexico has fallen victim to two financial crises (one of its own making and now this current one); domestic industries and investment have been all but wiped out; financial instability has been persistent; global competitiveness has slid; wages have been stagnant; and poverty and inequality

first, an incorrect diagnosis of the true binding constraints that the economy faces, and second, the lack of political consensus on that very diagnosis.

Moreno-Brid and Ros see Mexico's lack of investment as the single most binding constraint on economic growth in Mexico. Investment in an economy leads to economic growth. A general rule of thumb is that developing nations need investment to be at about 25 percent of GDP to maintain the growth rates needed to catch up to more developed countries. East Asia has steadily been over 30 percent since the 1970s.

Total investment as a percentage of GDP in Mexico has gone from 25 percent for the 1979-1981 period to 20 percent in the 2004-2007 period. Declining investment has been the result of a fall in public investment (thanks in part to Mexico's numerous privatizations and weak tax base), an overvalued exchange rate, which has led investors to look elsewhere, the lack of government policy geared toward industrial competitiveness, and the lack of financing for domestic manufacturing firms.

Such a diagnosis implies that Mexico should increase its tax base and engage in modestly expansionary macroeconomic policy alongside financial reforms and an aggressive effort to modernize its domestic manufacturing base. If done right, the initial increases in public investment could "crowd in" private investment in Mexico, leading to sustained and more balanced economic growth.

Looking back, Moreno-Brid and Ros show that it was a similar mix of policies (and a political consensus behind them) that led to Mexico's golden age of economic activity in the 20th century, from

1940 to 1970. During that period, average incomes grew by 3.2% per year and the gap between average incomes in the United States and Mexico narrowed.

If one wished to quibble with parts of this otherwise excellent book, it would be only to note that the reader is left somewhat guessing as to the exact nature of this public investment in industrialization, and how such policy should be re-constructed in the future. What did industrial innovation and education policies feature back then? How might a country's government develop a world-class industry today? UN economist Mario Cimoli's book, *Developing Innovation Systems: Mexico in Global Context* can serve as a useful companion to help answer these questions about Mexico's past, while Dani Rodrik's *One Economics, Many Recipes* can help formulate industrial policy for the 21st century.

Overwhelmingly, however, this book is pioneering in its approach and striking in its findings. It is essential reading for anyone interested in economic development in Mexico and Latin America and in development economics in general. In a more immediate sense, it can help Mexican policymakers and managers of international financial institutions better understand the binding constraints to economic development in Mexico so that they may produce a more sustainable development path for Mexico's future.

Kevin P. Gallagher is an associate professor in the Department of International Relations at Boston University and co-author of the recent book, *The Enclave Economy: Foreign Investment and Sustainable Development in Mexico's Silicon Valley*.

This book is pioneering in its approach and striking in its findings. It is essential reading for anyone interested in economic development in Mexico and Latin America or development economics.

the economic costs of trade protection were smaller than the literature has suggested. Further, they find that Mexico's recent reduction in poverty and inequality is due more to a demographic transition than to government poverty programs or remittances by Mexican migrants in the United States.

The most striking and prescient new findings relate to Mexico's recent growth performance.

In contrast to growth diagnostics is the prevailing "one size fits all" approach of hard-line neo-classical economists and right-wing policymakers. These folks have hammered on the same diagnoses for Mexico and other developing nations for years: get the government out of economic affairs, once and for all and as quickly as possible! Mexico took this advice and, from the mid-1980s to the present, has liberalized, privatized, and globalized nearly all of its economic activity.

Boy, did Mexico get hammered. During this period,

have remained grave.

These facts are well known and not controversial. The analysis of their cause and remedy, however, is as controversial as it can get.

Harvard graduate Felipe Calderón won the 2006 presidential election as a representative of the center-right wing party, the PAN. Since taking office Calderón has held the view that the Mexican economy is not performing well because it still has more liberalizing, privatizing, and globalizing to do. After reading this book, it does not appear that Mexico's new president took any classes at Harvard with Rodrik or Hausmann.

Moreno-Brid, who is a former DRCLAS Visiting Scholar, and Ros take issue with Calderón's approach—as well as with the policies of the U.S. government (which formalized them through the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994) and of the international financial institutions that support this view. To the authors, Mexico suffers from two things:

Democracy Revisited

Jorge I. Domínguez and Michael Shifter, eds. *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America, Third Edition*, 2008, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 412 pages

A REVIEW BY ALFREDO CORCHADO

Democracies are messy—none so more than those across Latin America. A common refrain used by academics and journalists alike to describe those democracies is usually “weak,” or “fledgling.”

And yet, in spite of endemic poverty, weak economies, rising security concerns and growing drug violence, democracy continues to take root across the continent, albeit with a few hiccups here and there. This is the thesis of the third edition of *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America*, a 412-page tome edited by Jorge I.

Domínguez, a professor and Vice Provost for International Affairs at Harvard University and Michael Shifter, Vice President for policy of The Inter-American Dialogue and an adjunct professor at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. The book features chapters written by thirteen experts on the region.

Even under the glare of media scrutiny and the criticisms of some skeptical analysts and constituents alike, democracy in Latin America is proving to be a “resounding success,” according to Shifter. “The advance may not be irreversible,” he notes in his chapter. “But it is becoming increasingly ingrained, and voting, happily, is a tough habit to break.”

Still, economic problems, security issues and old paternalistic practices continue to challenge these incipient demo-

cracies, threatening the very advances that people fought for decades to achieve, often at the cost of their own lives.

In Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez continues to amend the constitution to assure his power for years to come. In Colombia, President Álvaro Uribe is accused of thinking about doing the same. And in Argentina, economic calamity threatens democracy with a weak congress, and fragile state institutions. The president remains too powerful, thus hampering the checks and balances that any democracy needs to fully take root, notes Steven Levitsky, a Harvard professor of government and social studies, in his chapter on Argentina.

But with the exception of the recent Honduran coup, governments in Latin America are “not killing voters, or stealing elections, or using coups to take power,” Levitsky said in an interview. “It’s difficult to sustain democracy with high levels of poverty so the fact that democracy works even at a minimal sense represents a major achievement for Latin America.”

Levitsky and other experts, however, warned that Latin American governments must do more to tackle poverty and provide security for its citizens, or risk seeing democratic institutions weakening and populist leaders rising. “Economic crisis and security concerns are the prime killers of a democracy,” he said.

Consider the drug violence

across Mexico, a nation of 110 million people that shares a 2,000-mile border with the United States. Nine years after the opposition National Action Party, or PAN, defeated the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, ending 71 years of one-party rule, the verdict is still out. The PAN was supposed to solidify democracy, which had been little more than a word among Mexicans during several decades of oligarchic rule until that point. Today, the rule of law in Mexico is withering even before it takes root. Since 2006 more than 10,000 people have been killed in drug-related violence.

The government’s inability to restore order and retake regions of the country from drug traffickers has some growing nostalgic for the semi-authoritarian PRI. The PRI, after all, ruled with an iron fist. Its corrupt governance provided the glue that kept society together, as it protected citizens by coddling criminals in exchange for hefty kickbacks. Often, PRI government officials made arrangements with members of organized crime in exchange for lucrative kickbacks. The pacts guaranteed that deadly disputes were taken care of internally, unlike today when powerful weapons and decapitations terrorize entire communities.

Almost overnight, Mexico’s “Imperial Presidency” lost power and transferred it quickly to some members of Congress determined to hold on to as many past paternalistic practices as possible. The result: stagnation that has made governing Mexico more difficult by stalling pivotal reforms, as Denise Dresser, a professor of political science at the Autonomous Technological Institute in Mexico City, notes in her chapter. “So what the presi-



dency has given up, or been forced to concede, Congress has gained,” she writes. “... Drug traffickers and organized crime have taken advantage of what the Mexican state is no longer able to ensure—such as a monopoly on violence.”

And yet Levitsky argues, “Being there in Mexico and reading the newspapers every day makes you convinced that Mexico doesn’t look good ... but Mexico’s long term trajectory is very good.” He added that Mexico is on par with Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile and Brazil as nations that have emerged, or are emerging, as “serious democracies.”

Nonetheless, Domínguez strikes an ominous note in his chapter when he warns of the generally poor “record of Latin American democratic performance.” “The key to democracy remains the decision of its citizens,” Domínguez stated. “In their hands and on their wisdom, rest the region’s democratic prospects. As the region approaches the 200th anniversary of the start of its independence, Latin America’s democratic star shines less brightly than it did a decade ago, but it still shines more brightly than it did for the preceding generation.”

Alfredo Corchado is a 2009 Nieman Fellow at Harvard University and Mexico Bureau Chief for *The Dallas Morning News*.

Whose Idea of Cuba?

Alex Harris (with an essay by Lillian Guerra), *The Idea of Cuba*, 2007, University of New Mexico Press in association with the Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University, 136 pp

A REVIEW BY KAEAL ALFORD

"Who could photograph a thought
as a horse is photographed at full gallop
or a bird in flight?"

—José Martí (The epigraph from *The Idea of Cuba*)

First reactions to photographs are important. Photographs, in their slippery relationship to the observable world, often speak to us with quick impact, even before we can articulate to ourselves what they are saying.

For photographers, or those who look at a lot of photography, this impact is accelerated. The inscription to Alex Harris' book holds special meaning for photographers, reminding us that the Cuban revolutionary José Martí lived his life close to an important moment in art history, the invention of still photography. It lets us know that we should read on. We photographers know quickly if we are drawn to the work or not.

The photographs in Alex Harris' book have immediate appeal. They are also, for this photographer, immediately unsettling.

The text of *The Idea of Cuba* delves into the history, politics and abstract notions of what it means to be Cuban, or at least what one American has learned about Cuban identity by observing Cuba. The cover image is selected from the most intimate series of images in the book—portraits of alluring, young Cuban women. The woman on the cover is posing next to a television set showing a man in a military uniform. For a book that contains as many complexities as this one, the cover image may initially raise

doubts in the minds of those sensitive to cultural or gender stereotypes. But with this book, it's important to keep looking—and reading.

Inside its pages, in addition to women, there are also cars. Rehabbed 1950s U.S. cars, photographed from the inside out so both the interior and the view through the windshield are visible in each frame. The interiors are lit so that the brightly painted trim, dashboard controls and car kitsch stand apart from the more muted tropical landscapes and dilapidated mansions framed through the cars' windshields. It's as if the viewer were a backseat driver. The driver is absent, or a ghost, as are the few figures in the streets who appear in the long exposures. The cars and the landscapes they frame, with their patina of age, are nostalgic and seductive in the way that old Ladas and flaking Stalinist blocks in eastern Europe are charming—unless of course you happen to live in one.

In contrast to the cars, the women are young, supple and scantily dressed, showing plenty of rich bronze skin. Sometimes they are faceless, their torsos examined in detail. In other images they look directly at us, daring us to be drawn in by their frank and confident sexuality.

In a third set of photographs are street scenes that

all include a factory-produced bust or statue of José Martí, the Cuban revolutionary who spent his life as an exile in New York but devoted much of his work and writing to stirring up revolution among Cubans. His image is as ubiquitous as Lenin's behind the Iron Curtain before 1989. Scenes that juxtapose the busts of Martí with gritty streets or playful children in decaying or neglected environments point to the contrast between the seminal ideals of that revolution and the modern realities of the Cuban state.

It's well worth viewing the photos and imagining what those motivations might be before reading the text in the book. One's shift in response to the images before and after reading the text may be striking.

At first glance, some of Harris' visual metaphors are clear. Americans see Cuba through the economic and political relationships defined in the 1950s when the last American cars were imported and a trade embargo halted free trade, free travel and the free exchange of ideas between the two nations. As the photographs suggest, many Cubans see the world, literally, through the windshield of American cars. (Interestingly all the cars pictured are owned by men. The owners' names and the location of the scene appear below each plate.) To an American viewing these images, Cuba looks like a country trapped in an economic and automotive time warp. Even the Cuban architecture reminds us of a particular,



shared but colonial history. The view is nostalgic, gritty and it happens to be lovely.

Harris' portraits of women are lovely too, but it's not clear on initial viewing why these women are singled out. On first approach to the work, and before reading the text, it might seem that Cuba, which few Americans know at first hand thanks to the U.S. government's travel ban, is populated largely by stunning, sexually astute nymphs. Only after we've read Harris' essay do we learn that they are *jineteras*, "jockeys"—slang for women who trade sex for money, and other commodities. Why are prostitutes central to Harris' idea of Cuba? We need to look beyond the photographs and read Harris' essay to learn why.

There is a final group of images that provides a visual bridge between the previously mentioned groupings. The seductive portraits of women, American cars in the landscape, and busts of José Martí. gain context through a fourth set of pictures. This last set is the most visually direct and provides a fiber that tenuously holds the other disparate categories of photographs together. They are portraits of statues of women, statues on graves, in gardens, hotel lobbies, of women as angels, mothers and goddesses, echoing the ideals of the ancient Greeks or the

sentiments of revolution as the fashion of the day required. They are iconic in their monumental roles. Some of the statues are broken; their worn expressions seem to reflect the loss of an arm or a wing, or the loss of a dream.

There is a resonance between these depictions of women and Harris' portraits of *jineteras*, between the artful stone angels and the factory-produced busts, between the architecture of Havana in the car photos and the public art of the statues. Harris' portraits

a tourist stomping ground, a historical colony and once an important stop on the slave trade route.

In the context of this book, Harris' portraits of young women seem to allude to contemporary conceptions of Cuba, just as the artists whose work graces Havana's famous Necropolis Cristóbal Colón found inspiration in their models when invoking the abstractions of spiritual life. Yet unlike sculpture, which removes the viewer from the model so we no longer recognize the indi-

The photographs in Alex Harris' book have immediate appeal. They are also, for this photographer, immediately unsettling.

of real women appear subtly defiant, beckoning, or composed, often gazing back at the camera as unapologetically as the camera gazes at them, while the women in the statues are frozen in iconic modes, in victory, in repose, in motherhood, in celebration. Is the author following a tradition or departing from it?

Both sets of women's images remind us that the female form as muse and subject (or object) is nothing new, particularly among male artists. Photographs of beautiful young women in a book entitled *The Idea of Cuba* also imply that these women have been selected from the general population to represent Cuba in some way, not unlike the stone sculptures that came before them.

Certainly, Cuba, in one U.S. stereotype, is sexy. It's warm, rhythmic (at least Cuban music is), as well as politically defiant and transgressive. Even Cuban cigars are forbidden and coveted. In another U.S. conception, Cuba is a satellite,

vidual or the time and place in which she lived, Harris' portraits of *jineteras* portray more immediate flesh and blood and the particulars of each woman. Whether this is a tribute to or an over simplification of womanhood may come down to one's perspective.

What we don't learn is how these women might see themselves or what their lives might be like. Nor do we learn how their sacrifices, gains or circumstances are connected to their own ideas of identity or country. The images themselves seem to be the product of transactions rather than relationships, but then, perhaps that in itself is telling about how our countries interact.

Too often, photographers' writing muddles the clarity of their visual messages and one ends up wishing artists had stuck to what they know best. That is not the case with this book. Harris, who has collaborated extensively with Harvard Professor Robert Coles, has provided a text that is informative and revealing. An extended

essay, interwoven with the images, is essential to understanding the author's insights and intent. The text illuminates not only the history of Cuba but also the reflections of the photographer. Both are valuable.

We learn that the work was produced over a series of three trips. With each visit, Harris grew more familiar with the landscape of Cuba. First came the cars photos, then the Martí busts, and by the final trip, he had grown familiar enough with the country to travel and communicate on his own without the help of a driver or a translator. This is when he began taking portraits of the *jineteras*. In his writings, he describes his interactions with these women. He paid them, because it seemed to be the only way to get permission to take their photographs. He attempted to photograph them in public, with street life in the background, but found that he preferred photographing them in private, where their expressions were more revealing. Certainly there is a long tradition of voyeurism and photography behind these images, and Harris touches on some of his own discomforts with this tradition in his discussion.

Harris also outlines the efforts of the early Castro government to eradicate prostitution in exchange for equality and revolution, followed by prostitution's resurgence when the twilight of Soviet-funded communism gave way to the economic apartheid of capitalism. Harris compares his personal values and attitudes toward women with the feminist leanings of José Martí and wonders frankly how much more enlightened he may or may not be.

In the end, it's the portraits in the book that leave the most lasting impression, though we

learn little about the women in these portraits as individuals. The complexity of these women's lives, as Harris notes, is not captured within the frame. Harris is not a photographer immersed in Cuban life or subculture, so much as he is an earnest, sensitive and well-studied traveler affixing historical and symbolic lenses on a place that is foreign and yet has become familiar to him.

Viewing these photographs, an American who's never been to Cuba may feel the push-pull effect of watching an interesting but reclusive neighbor through a fence. The subjects become familiar, even personal, but they ultimately are mysterious, even taboo.

This state of affairs will not last forever. At some point, likely very soon, the political curtain that has kept Americans and Cubans apart will rend further. Americans and Cubans (not only the American version of Cuban, but the Cuban Island version too) will have the opportunity to confront each other in the flesh. The closing essay of the book by historian Lillian Guerra, Cuban herself, is an eloquent treatise about the underlying complexity of her national identity and her own powerful response to Harris' images. Hopefully, in the future, Americans will be able to ask "Island" Cubans to tell their own stories. It will be interesting to see if more Cubans recognize themselves, as Guerra does, in Harris' images. In the meantime, this book is a thoughtful contribution to a difficult dialogue, and a worthy tribute to America's yearning connection to our mysterious island neighbor.

Kael Alford is a 2009 Nieman Fellow. She is a photographer and documentary filmmaker.

READER FORUM

Dear June:

The articles about Return Peace Corps Volunteers really took me back many years. I too was inspired by President Kennedy's speech at the University of Michigan (where I was at the time) and decided to become a volunteer when I graduated.

In February 2008, a reunion of former Peace Corps volunteers was held in Cartagena, Colombia, celebrating 20 years of Peace Corps service from 1961-1981. Among the numerous returning volunteers (176 of us) were many who had not been back to Colombia for over forty years.One of the most moving talks was given by José Castaneda who was reunited with two volunteers who had helped him—given him a place to stay and money for school—when he was a young boy from a poor barrio. Castaneda went on to become the first Latin-American judge in New York. He regaled us with a children's book he had written about how much good can be done by helping one person—both for the giver and the receiver. I think most of us felt we gained much more than we contributed in our Peace Corps service. In Cartagena and Santa Marta, we visited projects in the barrios supported by The Colombia Project, Amigos de Colombia, and the Magdalena Foundation—groups begun by former Colombia volunteers and their

spouses. Many of us at the reunion became contributors to these groups after viewing their work with families affected by the violence in Colombia....

In a personal note, my husband (former Colombia PCV) and I revisited our sites in Boyaca. Mine (Tunja) had changed so drastically that I could barely recognize a town which was now three times larger than forty years ago. In contrast, Sten's first site in Gachantiva had hardly changed—even the mural he had painted in the room he rented was still there, as were the dueños. Another shock was a visit to a woman who had named her son after him—the name Sten was on her cell phone! Unfortunately, Sten's second site in the llanos was deemed too dangerous to visit as the FARC had retreated deeper into the llanos. We traveled throughout Boyacá with no sense of danger, however; it has remained beautiful and the people as welcoming as ever.

One of the aims of the reunion was to promote tourism and encourage our government to reinstate the Peace Corps. We departed Colombia with a renewed desire to help the people and their country and to return before another forty years had past!

SINCERELY,
CAROLE MAWSON, LECTURER,
ENGLISH FOR
FOREIGN STUDENTS
STANFORD

Dear Miss Erlick,
I hope you will permit me a general criticism of *ReVista*. I am a dedicated reader of the magazine since its inception. Cover to cover, almost without exception, every issue displays a strong 'slant' to the leftist / liberal camp! Why can't we have a little more balance in *ReVista*? I appreciate that Harvard, like almost all its peer schools, is not known for its conservatism, certainly not in the last 50 years! Look how long President Summers lasted! However, I feel that a magazine like yours should strive for a little more balance.

An example of this is in your Winter issue—just received here in São Paulo. On page 56, we have the unchallenged gem, "in 1964, a coup d'état funded by the U.S. government".

As a long time resident here, including the period when my professor Lincoln Gordon was ambassador, I consider this statement blatantly incorrect and academically false. Why wasn't there a footnote to this 'party line' falsehood?

Please do not respond with the usual reply that this was only one item in a 70-page issue or our articles are not the responsibility of the DRCLAS.

Let's see some articles written by 'the other side' to give some counterbalance.

Congratulations on the work of the center.

ROBERT HEIN, MBA '60,
FORMER REGIONAL DIRECTOR
HARVARD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
FOR LATIN AMERICA

Dear Mr. Hein,
Thank you for your letter. We welcome all viewpoints in *ReVista*. Your voice deserves to be heard. As a way of accommodating readers of all political persuasions, we now have a "comment" function in the on-line *ReVista* <<http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications>>. This will allow an opportunity for greater discussion and comments.

To the Editor:

I am a current undergraduate student at the University of Miami (FL) majoring in International Relations and Latin American Studies. I am writing to you because I was really inspired by James Ito-Adler's Peace Corps story in Brazil published in the *ReVista* Winter 2009 Edition.

I recently came back from a semester abroad in Rio de Janeiro and your experience in Brazil identified very well with what I learned there. Due to my experience in Brazil as a student and volunteer with Viva Rio (one of the biggest NGO's in Brazil), I am applying for a Fulbright Fellowship this year to carry out a project on educational development and drug abuse in the favelas of Rio. I am hoping that if I obtain the fellowship, I will come out with a valuable experience that will contribute to my studies in graduate school just as it happened to you with the Peace Corps and Harvard.

As a student, reading about his experiences in Brazil and how that shaped his career path is very meaningful to me.

SINCERELY,
KRISTINA ROSALES
K.ROSALES@UMIAMI.EDU

FE ERRATA *Johannah Barry's name was spelled incorrectly in the Table of Contents of the Spring issue of ReVista on "The Sky Above, the Earth Below; Exploring the Universe." She is President of the Galapagos Conservancy and author of the article, "Saving the Galápagos in the 21st Century."*



Harvard University
David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies
1730 Cambridge St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 1636

IT'S FILM IN LATIN AMERICA



EDITOR'S LETTER

FIRST TAKES

Film in Latin America *By Haden Guest*

New Technologies and New Narratives

By Brad Epps

MEXICO

Golden-Epoch Cinema in Mexico

By Alma Guillermoprieto

"Eréndira Ikikunari" *By Juan Mora Catlett*

Mexico's National Museum of Cinema

By Claudia Arroyo Quiroz

Oscars for Mexican Filmmakers

By Humberto Delgado



BRAZIL

Brazilian Cinema Now *By Nicolau Sevcenko*

Neither the Sertão nor the Favela *By Denilson Lopes*

Coconut Milk in Coca-Cola Bottles

By Clémence Jouët-Pastré

ARGENTINA

New Argentine Cinema *By Gonzalo Aguilar*

Memory, Identity and Film *By Ana Amado*

The Three Lives of Fernando Solanas

By Jorge Ruffinelli

An Interview with Lita Stantic *By Haden Guest*



2 CHILE

Che to Che *By Carmen Oquendo-Villar* 48

Chilean Film: A Brief Chronicle *By Iván Pinto Veas* 52

3

4 CUBA AND BEYOND

Una Entrevista con Santiago Álvarez 54

By Luciano Castillo and Manuel M. Hadad

García Márquez and Cinema 58

By María Lourdes Cortés

Cuban Film *By Victor Fowler Calzada* 60

12

16 MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Children in Poverty 62

19

By Andrea Rolla with Mary Catherine Arbour

BOOK TALK

Contesting Civilization's Destiny 64

By María Clemencia Ramírez

Time for a New Toolkit in Mexico 66

By Kevin P. Gallagher

Democracy Revisited *By Alfredo Corchado* 68

Whose Idea of Cuba? *By Kael Alford* 69

34

38

42

44