

A vintage movie camera with two large reels is the background of the image. The camera is dark and metallic, with a prominent lens on the left and two large reels on top. The reels have a spoked design. The camera is positioned on a tripod, though only the top part is visible. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

STONY
BROOK

CINE
LITES

Selected papers from
The International
Conference of
Hispanic Film and
Literature
Portland - 2011



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SELECTED PAPERS FROM
THE INTERNATIONAL
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HISPANIC FILM & LITERATURE



PORTLAND

2011

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Introduction

Since its first edition in 1991, the triennial “CINE-LIT International Conference on Hispanic Film and Literature,” scheduled jointly with the Portland International Film Festival, has provided an essential forum for scholars working in the field of Hispanic cinemas. Indeed it would not be an exaggeration to link the integration of cinema into the Hispanic studies curriculum in US colleges and universities to the establishment of Cine-Lit. While there were a handful of scholars (Marsha Kinder, Katherine Kovacs, Marvin D’Lugo) publishing regularly on Spanish cinema from the early 1980s on, Spanish language cinema was largely overlooked by cinema departments and excluded from the literature-based curricula of Spanish/Romance/Modern or Foreign Language departments. Tellingly, when cinema finally began to make its entry, it was often via the alliance or one might say, “alibi” of film and literature and/or adaptation studies. Clearly, film needed literature to give it academic respectability within Hispanism in 1991.

Much has changed in the last twenty years and both the quantity and quality of papers and presenters at CINE-LIT reflect the increasing integration of cinema and media studies into graduate and undergraduate programs in Spanish, Latin American and Latino studies in the US. But certain constants in the CINE-LIT experience remain. One of the most rewarding aspects is the mixture and mixing between veteran scholars and critics and newer members of the field, whether assistant professors or graduate students. To that extent the conference provides a snapshot of a discipline constantly renewing itself, as scholars reenact a kind of apprenticeship in which critics trained in literary (and, increasingly, cultural) analysis apply and adapt the skills developed with respect to one artistic form (usually written, fictional narrative) to another (usually cinematic fiction). In the best cases, these transtextual exercises have several benefits, chief among them hands on training in analyzing the very different formal languages of literary and film narration and a recognition of the different production and reception contexts for film and literature with a focus on the industrial and commercial pressures specific to film.

Significantly, Stony Brook has been represented at CINE-LIT since the beginning, with faculty and multiple “generations” of graduate students presenting papers and leading panels on various aspects of Spanish and Latin American cinema and visual culture. CINE LIT VII, held February 24-26, 2011, hosted the largest Stony Brook group ever, with six current graduate students, two recent Stony Brook alumni and one professor presenting papers for total of nine, by far the largest contingent from any university. This highly visible presence is to be celebrated for many reasons. As participation in scholarly conferences becomes an increasingly important facet and even requirement of graduate education, our strong showing testifies to the supportive research culture in the department where graduate students find encouragement and support for presenting their research and ideas in public academic forums. While financial assistance for travel to conferences at the department level has declined if not disappeared entirely for students and faculty alike, we should celebrate the Graduate Student Organization for stepping into the breach while urging administrators to restore funding for this important activity that does so much to advertise the strength and quality of Stony Brook programs to colleagues and future students. More specifically, our representation at CINE-LIT speaks to Stony Brook’s pioneering role in the field and the attractiveness of the Hispanic Languages and Literature Department as a place to study cinema and visual culture, where more than half of our faculty publish regularly in the field and all professors increasingly integrate cinematic and visual texts into all types of courses.

The varied and often dazzling results of this fertile work environment are on display in the seven papers included here. Indeed what strikes the reader first is the diversity of topics and approaches. There is no Stony Brook “school” of visual studies just as there is no party line of literary or cultural studies. Drawing on their previous backgrounds as well as the open-ended character of our doctoral program which encourages students to follow and develop their interests in other disciplines and departments, whether formally through certificate programs in Women’s and Gender Studies or Cultural Studies or on an individual basis, the authors of these papers bring to their individual topics a capacity for close textual analysis along with a wealth of relevant critical and theoretical readings. This diversity extends to the

composition of the group which includes first year students as well as students completing their dissertations. The papers themselves may derive from seminar papers or represent early or later drafts of dissertation chapters. What unites them is a commitment to dialogue and communication with their listeners and readers over the mere demonstration of professional mastery. In each case, the authors have taken their viewings of a given film or film corpus, their readings of various critical and theoretical sources beyond the original frame in which they encountered them. Their approaches to the films in question are eclectic in the best sense, adapting and expanding existing modes of critical thought in unexpected ways.

In her analysis of the “aesthetics of violence” in the Brazilian novel *Cidade de Deus* (Paulo Lins, 1997) and its film adaptation (Fernando Meirelles, 2002), Elizabeth Osborne initially returns to the founding intuition of CINE-LIT, the inter- or transtextual dialogue between written and visual discourses. In this case, however, her concern is less with the formal mechanics of adaptation than the divergent reception of the “same” shared story engendered by a cinematic language inflected by the discourses of advertising, music videos and an increasingly pervasive transnational style of aesthetized violence. Osborne draws on a range of theoretical and critical sources in reception theory, Brazilian film history and cultural studies (from Nestor García Canclini to Stuart Hall) in a reading that seeks to integrate textual analysis with a critical account of the spectator’s experience of the film.

Questions of gender are central to three of the papers. In Gabriela Alvarez’s study of the Mexican film, *Voy a explotar* (Gerardo Naranjo, 2008), she examines the way the film works to challenge and redefine the coming of age narrative in a story in which the female protagonist, Maru, dies at the end, truncating expectations of the heroine’s emergence into maturity. She argues that the film reverses both gender and genre conventions, first through the attribution of the primary narrative agency and an ironic self-awareness to its female lead, and second by means of her untimely and unromantic death that forces a reconsideration of what constitutes a “successful” coming of age. Turning to Judith Butler’s writings on the experience of death, Alvarez suggests that the other characters’ and the spectator’s response to Maru’s death offer an example of the importance of preserving our sense of

vulnerability and capacity for mourning as a source of affective attachment and social cohesion. In this way, the traditional story of an individual coming of age is made available for broader collective meaning.

Dean Allbritton also works with Butler's meditations on loss and mourning in his analysis of the crisis of masculinity in Pedro Almodóvar's *All about My Mother* (1999). Allbritton reads Almodóvar's women-centered film against the grain, focusing on its male characters whom he sees less as the carriers of sickness and death than as liminal figures that challenge the boundaries between life and death while questioning the binary opposition between female and male, nurturing mother and death-delivering father. In the characters of Estebán father (a transgender drug addict infected with AIDS) and son (who dies early in the film only to live on as an organ donor) he explores the paradoxically life giving potential of death and suffering and its broader capacity to engender community.

Like *Voy a explotar*, María Novaro's film *Sin dejar huella* (Mexico 2000), as skillfully analyzed by Ericka Herbias, demonstrates a thorough mastery of genre conventions—in this case the road/buddy/adventure movie—which it proceeds to deconstruct in the service of a feminist tale of empowerment. Herbias make good use of her own thoughtful readings of canonical feminist film theory (Ann Kaplan, Laura Mulvey) to elucidate the film's reframing of its two female characters as active agents rather than passive and iconic objects of the gaze. However she does not simply apply Anglo-American theory to a Latin American film text; instead she shows how the film deliberately complicates both the universalizing vision of first world female solidarity and the determinism that pegs characters to a reductive demographic grid of nationality, race, class.

In her paper Pilar Espitia turns to a little studied 1957 film, *Los jueves, milagro*, by one of Spain's greatest filmmakers, Luis García Berlanga. As she recounts in her revealing reconstruction of the film's eventful production history, Francoist censors were not content to simply eliminate the offending scenes from the story of a false miracle concocted by local leaders to turn their town into a tourist attraction. They sent a priest, himself a former censor, to supervise filming and he

ended up writing his own script for the second half of the film. Thus, as she suggests, the film offers an inadvertently doubled confirmation, in the original story and circumstances surrounding its filming, of the long standing “esperpentic” and satiric vision of a grotesque and backward Spain. She also pursues the larger implications of the film’s staging of the “miraculous,” citing Baudrillard, as a reflection on the practice of filmmaking and the power of cinematic illusion as well as a comment on the nature of image-based representation itself.

In her study of an unlikely pair of Hispanic film texts, the 1955 Spanish film, *Historias de la radio* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia) and the multilingual Mexican-French-US co-production *Babel* (Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu, 2006), Anna Shilova brings formalist narrative semiology into the global and digital age. Linked by their status as “mosaic” narratives composed by discreet by interlinked storylines and their settings in the “ether” of early mass-media and the jet-set world of instant communication, respectively, *Historias de la radio* and *Babel* offer Shilova the opportunity to interrogate the parallel evolution of the experience of spectatorship and the shape and form of film (and literary) narration in the shift from determinedly national to insistently global models of cinema production and reception.

Finally, Kathleen Vernon’s paper takes the focus on the spectator and the actual experience of cinema to enlarge the field of investigation beyond the original film text and the corpus of strictly national films, to the questions of what exactly the spectator hears when he or she goes to the movies in Spain. In doing so she explores the history and consequences of film dubbing in Spain in which the voices of foreign, and mostly Hollywood, actors were and are replaced by those of Spanish dubbers as part of a potent and still influential industry in Spain. While touching on the ideological consequences (under Franco dubbing became an instrument of censorship as lines of dialogue were cut or modified to conform to national values and norms), her study concentrates on the material, artistic and cultural effects of the suppression of original voices that has led to a vocal orthodoxy and standardization that continues to screen out dissenting voices and sounds.

Kathleen M. Vernon





Elizabeth Osborne
PhD Student

The Ethics and Aesthetics of Violence in *Cidade de Deus*

In order to analyze a novel and its filmic adaptation, one has to recognize the significance of their differences and similarities due to their different languages. In other words, the novel relies heavily on the written word and time while films draw upon visual images and space. Not only do the choices of how to use these languages create different interpretations of the medium's messages, but also the reader/spectator's individual interpretation(s) allow for interpretations that the author/director did not intend or foresee. Although the authors/directors try to present their novels/films according to the criteria already accepted and known by the readers, the readers/spectators may stray from the suggested message. Thus a work's capacity to engender various readings makes studying both its reception and its production worthwhile.

For this reason, this paper will use reception theory as a starting point to analyze both the novel *Cidade de Deus* and its filmic adaptation. Although this theory differs for a written narrative and for a film (given the different languages and techniques already mentioned), the idea is basically the same: how the audience (reader, viewer/spectator) decodes what the creator/author (writer, director) puts forth in a specific text (novel, film).¹

First, I will use reception theory to analyze *Cidade de Deus* by Paulo Lins in relation to the testimonial aspects of this novel. Secondly, I will examine the movie

¹ García Canclini says that “si bien la estética de la recepción trabaja con textos literarios, su giro paradigmático es aplicable a otros campos artísticos”, which would include film (143).

of the same title by Fernando Meirelles, ending with a discussion about the aesthetic representation of violence in the film and the consequences this may entail.

Reception theory and testimony in *Cidade de Deus*

Cidade de Deus was published in 1997 by Paulo Lins who wrote it based on his own experience living and working in favelas. He worked closely with anthropologist Alba Valuar from 1986 to 1993 in conducting interviews with favela residents. Due to this intimate contact with the subject matter of his novel, Lins uses a mixture of anthropological, sociological, and literary language in reconstructing his own story as well as that of some of his interviewees.

Instead of revisiting the well-known concepts of reception theory, I prefer to invoke Bakhtin's implicit or ideal reader, for whom the work is written. Although the author writes for his double, another type of reader interprets and receives the text. Lins is no exception as he admits to his conscious consideration for the novel's potential reception during the writing process.² He has stated that he wrote the novel with the intention that the residents of the favela would read it; however, his readership has consisted mostly of the middle class (Lorenz 11-12). Because of this, the author believes that literature has little to no impact in the favela and the success of his novel outside of the favela ironically confirms this belief. He doubts art's ability to bring about change while at the same time maintaining a certain idealism concerning literature's potential.

Lins says that his commitment as a writer is to look for the imaginary of the socially segregated. He also hopes to call attention to the inequalities in Brazil and create forums and agencies that will criticize and reject the violence, the corruption, and the lack of public, social, and cultural policies (Lorenz 11). According to his interviews, the most important element in creating a work of art is the aesthetics, and in turn, the political and/or social compromise expressed through the aesthetics.

² In Jauss's words, "El lado productivo y el receptivo de la experiencia estética entran en una relación dialéctica: la obra no es nada sin su efecto, su efecto supone la recepción, el juicio del público condiciona, a su vez, la producción de los autores" (73).

Clearly art's function in society is connected with its reception because in the end, it is the audience who decides how it will affect them and how they will interpret the political and social messages.

Lins has also stated that he believes that robbing, killing, and kidnapping are justifiable actions for people who are starving or poor. He presents the example of his mother, who died due to a lack of medical attention in a public hospital. He says that in the favelas there is no medical attention, there is no food, there are no houses, there is no dignity—basically there is nothing (Lorenz 13). When asked about his reaction to his mother's death, he is asked if he thought of killing as a result of his anger, and he answered that yes, but instead he wrote *Cidade de Deus*.

Some studies of the novel have compared it to the testimonial genre; however, Lins' doubts toward language's ability to communicate the real story of an entire community and promote social change go against testimonial literature because the testimony depends on the belief that language can objectively communicate reality. The use of criminals as protagonists of the novel eliminates their credibility as subjects. The criminal's language allows the reader to know his thoughts, and at the same time, the narrator uses a more refined language, parodying the "official consciousness" represented by mass media. Uncharacteristic of testimonial literature, the narrator's ability to convey the truth is placed in doubt through these two contradictory types of language.

Testimonial literature also speaks for a community through one witness or speaker, while *Cidade de Deus* presents a multitude of protagonists who are not united but rather fragmented in their narration. Because of this, the reader is unable to understand the favela protagonists and their violence becomes a type of nonverbal communication. Just as silence is powerful in testimony due to the ability or the choice not to speak, in turn building the reader's interest, the violence in this novel replaces such silence. Because of these differences and the mass media techniques used in the novel, some have called the novel "post testimonial" (Lorenz).

In spite of the differences between testimony and *Cidade de Deus*, there are also some similarities between the two. First of all, both call national and international attention to the relationship between poverty, unemployment, and violence. Secondly, they use a realist discourse of truth and authenticity through literary and rhetorical strategies. For example, the lack of reflection about who is narrating the novel produces an effect of “inmediatez y fingida autenticidad” and the lack of distance between narration and action implies that “el lector se ve directamente situado dentro de la intrincada red de la trama” (Nitschack 322). And lastly, both testimonial literature and this novel can be considered an emergence of subaltern voices both contextually and politically.

The narrator and the reader do not trust each other completely in this novel because the reader finds himself/herself simultaneously identifying with the victim and the criminal. This technique makes the reader want to understand the crime from the criminal’s point of view and therefore the reader has to negate his own position as a possible victim of crime. According to Iser, the reader projects his/her own previous conceptions on the text or else he/she lends himself/herself to revising these previous conceptions at the time he/she reads the text (Fokkema 176). Consequently, the reader revises and confronts his/her previously established conceptions and prejudices about the criminal and the crime by wanting to identify with and understand the criminal. The novel questions the reader and his codes while the reader also questions the novel and its codes.

Reception theory and possible decoding in the film *Cidade de Deus*

Seeing a film and reading a novel are not passive processes of “reception” or “consumption” of messages, but rather are active processes of interpretation or decoding. The reader or the viewer makes his/her judgments about the text according to his/her previous conceptions. In his article “Encoding/Decoding”, Stuart Hall identifies three hypothetical positions from which one can interpret or receive mass media messages. Although these positions are intended for analysis of television viewing, here I will apply them to film as well, given the closeness of the genres. The first of these is the dominant/hegemonic position, in which the viewer accepts

the preferred and proposed message (Morley n.p.). The second is the negotiated position, in which the viewer relates the message with his/her own context and situation which reflect his/her position and interests in which the reader can modify or partially twist the preferred (dominant) message. The third and last position is of opposition. In this case, the viewer is able to identify the context of the message and construct a different referential framework that leaves out the codified message and instead opts for an interpretation that operates in direct opposition. These alternative interpretations are not erroneous simply because they do not agree with the preferred reading; rather they are criticisms of the preferred interpretation.

Using this outline, I have identified three possible receptions of the film *Cidade de Deus*:

1. Dominant/hegemonic: This interpretation follows the typical stereotypes associated with marginality (for example that all marginal members of society are basically potential criminals). It also supports Busca-Pé's *bildungsroman*. The viewer believes that the movie is largely based in reality (especially considering the photographs placed in the end credits, identifying real people with the movie's actors, as well as the documentary about the favela included on the DVD). This position follows the director's cues, celebrating Busca-Pé's departure from the favela. Under this interpretation, the viewer travels through the favela almost like the favela tourism that has become popular. The viewer appreciates the already-known techniques used in the film, based on criminal shows and the news, concluding that the favela is a spectacle that evokes fear and curiosity.
2. Negotiated: In this position, the viewer thinks that the movie shows some realistic characteristics but that other aspects of the movie are purely fictitious in order to sell the movie. This viewer can accept the violence and drug trafficking as characteristics of the favela, but also recognizes the use of violence and Busca-Pé's coming-of-age narration in the movie to attract audiences. The viewer is capable of recognizing some of the director's cues as such but follows some of them without hesitation.
3. Opposition: The viewer of this third position is against all of the movie's preferential/intended messages, saying that the film betrays Brazilian cinema tradition and that it only presents stereotypes of the favela. According to this interpretation, the movie does not alleviate or question the audience's stereotypes and it underlines the importance of the market/production aspect of film-making more than the industry's ability to criticize social problems. Furthermore, the movie destroys the notion of community for fixing its problems by offering Busca-Pé's individual exodus. In this way, everything becomes a spectacle, but not an attractive one as in the first possible interpretation.

The aesthetics of violence

Closely related to these three interpretations is the aesthetics of Brazilian cinema. Ivana Bentes' reading of the film, for example, could fit within the above interpretation of opposition. In order to understand Bentes, one must begin with the 1965 "uma estética da fome" manifesto by Glauber Rocha. In this manifesto, hunger and poverty become transformative and positive, uniting a political discourse with a radical aesthetics that express the brutality of poverty. Rocha claims that hunger is what differentiates Cinema Novo from other cinema from around the world: "nossa originalidade é nossa fome e nossa maior miséria é que esta fome, sendo sentida, não é compreendida." Later on he indicates that "a mais nobre manifestação cultural da fome é a violência" (Rocha n.p.). Rocha believes violence to be a revolutionary strategy that can right social injustices.

Bentes criticizes contemporary Brazilian cinema by pointing out that it does not adhere to an aesthetics like Rocha proposes, but rather it is what Bentes has deemed "a cosmética da fome". The fundamental ethical issue here is how to represent suffering, in this case of the favela, without falling into folklore, paternalism, and humanism. Aesthetically, the problem is how to stage an experience of poverty and hunger's radical effects. Instead of showing the favela as a place with characters capable of transforming social and political power as in Cinema Novo, contemporary Brazilian cinema now shows the favela as an exotic spectacle where the characters have no revolutionary discourse. These contemporary films have a superficial political perspective when compared to Rocha's revolutionary ideas (Oliveira n.p.). The term "cosmética da fome" can be understood as using violence or poverty in order to sell a film or to satisfy the audience instead of purporting social change. The recent trend of "favela chic" is reminiscent of Bentes' cosmetics of hunger in that it shows just how favela life has become a commodity.

Films that use violence to satisfy their audiences tend to generate three criticisms. One is that the audience becomes desensitized to brutality and in that sense becomes more aggressive resulting in what could be coined a naturalization of violence. On the other hand, some critics see violence as cathartic. The novel *Cidade*

de Deus could possibly fall under this category by considering Lins' statement that he wrote the novel as a reaction to his mother's death. However, he did not react physically with violence but instead wrote a novel with violence as a theme. In addition, others believe that the use of violence in films heightens the audience's sensitivity towards violence to such an extent that they will not try to imitate it. The defenders of aesthetic violence say that it is not real violence because it is a representation of violence on a screen and the two are unmistakable.

Cidade de Deus fragments violence by using video clips. In this way the film represents local themes (like the favela) through a more international aesthetic. For instance, Busca-Pé's story (*bildungsroman*) is very international and Western and could take place anywhere, but the chosen setting in this film is the favela. The various clips in the film represent violence's evolution. Also, the film is devoid of the political and historical contexts leading up to the social inequality shown; presenting the marginal subject becomes an object of curiosity. In fact many members of the community of *Cidade de Deus* have spoken against the movie's stereotypes. For many of them, the film presents the idea that all favela inhabitants are potential criminals. While the novel does not offer a concrete solution to the favela's problems, the movie offers Busca-Pé as an individual answer to social problems, reflective of Western thinking. Because of this, the favela loses its ability to discuss social meanings, especially as a community. At least in the novel the protagonists try to (re)install themselves as subjects through violence and death. In this sense violence is their power.

In addition to the techniques of violence and video clips, there is an advertising aesthetic in the film. Many critics say that the advertising and TV series influences on the film's aesthetics create a lack of social verisimilitude in Brazil. The film does not maintain connections with Brazilian cinema, underlined by the director's comments. Some would suggest that *Cidade de Deus* converses more with the aesthetics of violence in the films of Quentin Tarantino. This aesthetic violence is not just the abundance of violence like in war movies, but rather it turns violence into a spectacle. Instead of using the term "advertising aesthetics" some have opted

for the term “postmodern aesthetics” with the influences already mentioned. Examples of this aesthetics are the “libertad con que se abandona al espectador, la engañosa voz-en-off que articula el relato, la carencia de guías morales y la distancia con que se relatan las historias” (Greene 5). These techniques along with some of those already examined exacerbate violence and make it attractive.

Two scenes in the film particularly illustrate this aesthetics of violence or the postmodern aesthetics. The first is that of Bené’s death. Before he dies, the camera works in flash, showing various characters (Busca-Pé, Zé Pequenho, Bené) among other scenes at the party. The camera also uses nonconventional angles. Seconds before Bené’s death, the music speeds up, mirrored in the strobe lights. The camera shows the entire room from above and suddenly the shot is heard and everyone disperses, leaving only Zé Pequenho and Bené. The aesthetic techniques make the scene attractive for something typically ugly: murder. In addition, Bené’s personal story and unfortunate tragedy are highlighted instead of the mortal chain of violence in the entire favela.

The second scene, when the child Filete con Papas kills another younger child, is one that perhaps does not seem to adhere to an aesthetic violence at first consideration. However, this scene would not be aesthetically shocking if it were not for the age of the boys involved and their emotions. Zé Pequenho wants to uphold a relative peace in the favela so that he can continue to traffic drugs. He discovers that a group of children (another gang) robbed a storeowner in the favela. In order to reprimand them and to test Filete con Papas, he chooses two little boys who could not escape and asks Filete to kill one of them. The only violence that the scene shows is when Zé Pequenho shoots the boys in the foot resulting in a little blood and the littlest boy’s cries but not much more. Afterwards, when Filete chooses whom to shoot, the viewer notices the littlest boy’s emotions in his inability to stop crying, and consequently Filete’s mental oscillation. Finally, Filete does not kill the littlest child and he tricks the other boy and the viewer by holding his pistol in front of the littlest boy for the majority of the scene. This scene, like the other one analyzed, is personal. The emotions are central while violence and the decision to kill are

presented as personal issues rather than social ones. The audience identifies with the specific characters, not with the favela as a community. While in the novel the favela is the protagonist, in the movie the protagonist is Busca-Pé.

However, there is still the negotiated interpretation that attributes violence in the film as a denunciation. For example, in the opening scene, the photographic camera looks at the audience and by sustaining the audience's gaze; a negotiation begins between the audience and the film. Through Busca-Pé, the audience is implicated in the images of poverty, drugs, and weapons. In this way, the camera also becomes a weapon against violence and demands social visibility for the marginal community (Vieira xviii).

Another example of the audience's complicity in the same scene is when the chicken looks directly at the audience. The chicken represents the Brazilians trapped by the injustices of Brazilian society. According to these critics, the movie invites the audience to recognize and not recognize by placing the chicken in a familiar scene of killing to eat, and by situating the chicken in a scene outside of the familiar: between the gang and the police. They suggest that *Cidade de Deus* can be considered within its own rules of representation and a different way of confronting and criticizing Brazil's social problems (Vieira xix).

Final thoughts: issues of representation

The ethics of the aesthetics is important because the aesthetics is where social problems are situated. The aesthetics can represent a denouncement with a certain political commitment, or they can entertain an audience. The problem raised in the criticism presented is whether aesthetics can express a socio-political commitment and entertain an audience at the same time, especially considering the aesthetic violence and representation of a subaltern group like in *Cidade de Deus*. The issues considered in this paper (starting with reception) have to do with the representation of the subaltern: testimony and Bentes' criticism based on Cinema Novo. As a result, the questions of the ethics and aesthetics of representing the marginal, excluded, or subaltern in contemporary film without producing stereotypes becomes relevant. The

aesthetics of violence used in the film started debates about the ethics of film production and cinema in general.

Glauber Rocha rejects the sociological discourse of denouncement and victimization in his manifesto. He proposes aesthetics to destroy the audience's perception including the destruction of all sociological and political discourses on misery. In his manifesto, Rocha says:

O comportamento exato de um faminto é a violência, e a violência de um faminto não é primitivismo... uma estética da violência antes de ser primitiva é revolucionária, eis aí o ponto inicial para que o colonizador compreenda a existência do colonizado; somente conscientizando sua possibilidade única, a violência, o colonizador pode compreender, pelo horror, a força da cultura que ele explora. Enquanto não ergue as armas, o colonizado é um escravo; foi preciso um primeiro policial morto para que o francês percebesse um argelino. (n.p.)

In other words, the denunciation for Rocha implies a reiteration of stereotypes, such as those of marginality and victimization. One can conclude that aesthetics (and the aesthetics of the subaltern's representation) should not produce prejudices but should propose a change to improve real life as well as the represented life.

The visions of the two versions of *Cidade de Deus* are mirrored in the criticisms of urban life. While the common language between the novel and the film is violence, the language of the urban center is the street, the setting of both works. Consequently, one has to wonder whether violence (and its aesthetics) is a “consecuencia de la urbanización acelerada y descontrolada” (Nitschack 329). Violence and the subaltern become spectacles in the street. And it is also in that same space of the street where the subaltern tries to establish himself as a subject through violence.

In his theory on urban space, Lefebvre presents an argument in favor of the street and an argument against it. He sustains that in urban centers, the street is the place of encounters (meeting) and that in this “escena espontánea” the subject is “a la vez espectáculo y espectador, y a veces, también, actor” (Lefebvre 25). The space of the street is where a group (in this case the favela) “se manifiesta, se muestra, se

apodera de los lugares” (Lefebvre 25). According to this perspective, the favela and its characters are not marginalized by stereotypes but participate directly in the street. Therefore, this perspective tends to be in agreement more with the novel than with the film, given what has been presented in this paper. However, the arguments against the street tend to agree with the arguments against the use of violence in the film. According to this position, the street is a place of superficial encounters. Additionally, people are spectacles of each other. Under this perspective, the subject loses his capacity to take control of the street and to use it for his own means; he becomes a spectacle and the street becomes a type of circus. This point of view, against the street, seems to coincide more with the film’s vision than with the novel.

Violence, and therefore its aesthetic representation, has much to do with the medium used. In this paper we have seen how violence has become a problem in its filmic representation and perhaps this is because of the medium itself. Films use images and consequently have a more immediate impact on the audience. The violence in the novel, while may displease the audience as well, does not have the same effect as film because it depends on the reader’s individual imagination. The reader can choose whether to picture the violent scene in his head or not, or the reader can imagine the scene in a way that does not agree with the author’s vision. The viewer of a film is almost forced to see the violence and the director does not give him/her the liberty of choosing how the violence is represented. In this sense, it is easier for the film’s audience to have a reception that agrees with the dominant/hegemonic position than the novel’s reader.

This difference may explain the overuse and dominance of media that use images today plus the benefit of reaching a larger audience. Jauss explains this phenomenon considering the aesthetic side: “El que se interese por la experiencia estética de la inmensa mayoría de los hombres que no leen todavía, o que han dejado de leer, tendrá que investigar en el ámbito del oído, del espectáculo y del juego” (75). Based on this quote, the film *Cidade de Deus* uses the three identified elements: hearing/ear (music, sounds, speech), spectacle (violence, favela), and the game (someone has to win, in this case Busca-Pé), and thus achieves the goal of reaching

more people, but at the expense of the subaltern's ability to enact socio-political change.

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**Youth, Rebellion, and Death: the
Potentially Productive Coming of Age in
Gerardo Naranjo's *Voya Explotar***

Rebelliousness is often seen as a trait associated with youth; and running away has traditionally been depicted in cinema as the ultimate act of youthful defiance. At the same time, though, most coming-of-age narratives continue to perpetuate the ideology that dictates what it means to grow up. The possibilities are limited: either the happy ending, which comes together with the move toward a so-called responsible adulthood, *or* the tragic finale, a cautionary tale that illustrates the consequences of refusing to conform. But in the spirit of youthful revolution, is it possible to read against the grain and admit death as an alternative and not as the ending? Can we accept a quest for freedom that results in death as a successful coming of age? And if so, what are the implications that such reconceptualizing poses for society?

This essay attempts to show how Gerardo Naranjo's 2008 film *Voya a explotar* (*I'm Gonna Explode*) exemplifies the way in which rebellion, even when taken to its most extreme consequences—in this particular case, death—, can be interpreted as a revolutionary and, therefore, productive coming-of-age. However, I argue that this can only be accomplished through accepting the loss entailed by death and through embracing the process of mourning, as Judith Butler conceives it in *Precarious Life*.

Through grieving –both on- and off-screen–, we are able to recognize the characters’ vulnerability as well as our own; and it is this recognition what enables death to be transformative. While opening up the possibility of becoming, death and loss press for the acknowledgement of our own collective responsibility and thus –of our agency– within society, which I propose, can be reconsidered as a generative or productive coming of age. First, though, it is necessary to stop and ponder what a successful coming of age means. How do is productivity defined? Should it be talked about in terms of positive or negative? It is certainly impossible to answer those questions in such a brief essay, yet, in an attempt to avoid relativisms, I choose to think of a generative or productive coming of age as one that triggers transformation, one that enables a becoming, whether simply for the individual or for the community as a whole (with these serving as metaphors of the nation)¹.

At the beginning, Maru, the female protagonist of the film, seems like the typical 15-year-old: a romantic and idealistic girl who spends her time daydreaming about an alternative reality in which her Prince Charming will come and rescue her from the boredom that is her live. Román, her male counterpart, is also introduced as an archetype: the angry teenager who is desperate to call attention to the hypocrisy and lies surrounding him. When they meet, their mutual attraction is inevitable. They are drawn to each other by their evident disillusionment with the conservative mores of Guanajuato, a society that sees them as misfits. The possibility of freedom quickly becomes manifest: “*Hay que hacer algo*”, says Román after spending the day in detention for pulling a reprehensible stunt during a Mother’s Day performance at school. Maru’s reply confirms her dissatisfaction but also brings them back to their realities: “*Yo tengo que volver al mundo real*”, she says dryly. Still, soon the pair feels suffocated by their environment and they plot their escape to a place where they hope they will truly belong: Mexico City. While their families believe them to be on the run, the kids spend their days lounging on the roof of Román’s house, enjoying the safe space they have created for themselves and discovering the bond that unites them. Yet when faced with the threat of being found and returned to the “real world”

¹ The ideas of rebellion and death as metaphors for a national coming of age are a significant part of a larger project still in progress and unfortunately, as such, here can only be mentioned in passing.

they so dread, Maru and Román immediately make the decision to continue their quest for independence, despite all the dangers involved. Things take a turn for the worse when, trying to avoid the police, Román accidentally shoots Maru in the abdomen; she survives but runs away from the hospital to keep the pact she has made with him: they will reunite and take off. Unfortunately, they don't make it to their destination: Román is now in a mental institution but he too is set on keeping his word; he escapes, but only to find Maru bleeding to death from the wound he inflicted upon her. He tries to save her but soon she is dead.

Although undoubtedly heartbreaking, her death, I argue, symbolizes the loss that sets off a process of grieving that for Maru herself began the moment her gaze crossed Román's.² This calls for a return to the notion I proposed earlier that death can be seen as a generative or productive coming of age. But, how is this legitimate possibility? I understand the difficulty of grasping such a concept, since death is traditionally associated with the finality of an ending; however, while I do admit that death and loss are inextricably linked to each other, they are also inseparable from vulnerability. Butler argues that an opportunity for community can open up "with our exposure to violence and our complicity in it, with our vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows" (19). Therefore, it is this productive coming together, brought about by death and loss, that most interests me. The productivity of death is found then in its ability to reveal the fact that we are *socially constituted bodies*: we develop attachments to others and the risk of losing those attachments makes us vulnerable. "There is losing, as we know", writes Butler, "but there is also the transformative effect of loss, and this latter cannot be charted or planned" (21). Mourning, consequently, can be seen as the agreement to undergo a transformation.

² Given the brief nature of this essay, which I consider a work in progress, I am not able to fully explore all the levels on which I believe this loss affects not just Maru but also Román, her family, the strangers that see her die, and also us, the audience. Her death could give Román the opportunity to finally cope with a previous loss in a more productive way: his mother's death in a car crash when he was 13, which we learn throughout the film is the source of much of his violent behavior. Maru's family and the random people that gather around her as she dies will certainly mourn in their own ways. And, lastly, the audience will be interpolated by her death as well. We too must grieve the loss as our own; we are compelled to recognize Maru's vulnerability and, in the process, recognize our own, which forces us to acknowledge our responsibility in her death—both as viewers and also as members of society.

However, I deem it worth pausing to ask, ‘what is it that is lost with death?’ When we lose someone –when someone dies– we lose part of ourselves as well because we lose the tie, the relationship that brought us together or, as Butler beautifully puts it, “we are undone by each other” (23).

Earlier I have proposed that Maru’s mourning process starts when she first meets Román; perhaps, though, it is worth to revise that statement. At the beginning of the film, we hear Maru addressing a friend off-screen: “*Pinche Marta, desde que te fuiste a México este lugar se volvió una mierda... Todo lo que hago me sale mal... Creo que voy a explotar*”. As she speaks, the camera cuts from a close-up of her eyes to the notebook she is writing in. We are so close that we can only make out part of what she writes, her words repeat themselves visually; her large, impotent handwriting and the red marker she is using make a strong point, desperate calling for attention. She is unhappy and she *needs* to speak out: she communicates her message with the double strength of her voice *and* her written words. We learn that she broke down on her way to school but something happened and changed everything: “*Entonces, voltéé hacia arriba*”, she *says* out loud. “*Y lo ví*”, she *writes*. “*Y como en los cuentos de hadas que las dos nos inventábamos, apareció un chico y cambió todo*”. Román drives by and we literally see Maru through his own eyes: The film cuts to a black screen with two circular cutouts at eyelevel –on the mask Román wears– through which we see Maru sitting on the curb, cheeks wet with tears, appearing at once helpless and hopeful. “*Se llama Román y existe, pero también yo lo inventé*”, she says expectantly. Maru must escape and she has created her own way out, by inventing her idea of Román as that of a modern-day Prince Charming that perfectly suits her needs: “*Lo mejor de todo es que está enojado*”. Maru does make reference to the fairy tales of childhood; however, she is *not* the damsel in distress who needs a boy to save her. In fact, it is quite the opposite, I argue, since after meeting Román, she appears to be the one in charge.

Later, she whispers into his ear: “*Te conozco, te he estado esperando por mucho tiempo*”. Her statement evinces a form of agency that her earlier words confirm: *she* has invented *him* and through him *she* invents or, perhaps more

accurately, she *becomes* herself. On several occasions throughout the film, her attachment to Román is articulated by repeating the words she first spoke in the confessional video she left for her mother, explaining why she had ran away: “*Hablé de ser diferente, de descubrir algo importante, algo por qué pelear, algo por qué vivir...lo que sea, un cómplice perfecto, una hermana gemela*”. When pronouncing these words, Maru is always off-screen, addressing no one and everyone at the same time. The words are always accompanied by powerful images: a close-up of Maru, slowly turning around to meet Román’s gaze, an extreme close-up of a spinning vinyl record, an intensely blue sky with a few clouds: all symbols of *her own* conception, of *her* becoming, of *her* coming of age.

Yet despite the strength of Maru and Román’s attachment and the productive effect it has on her, it is evident that she can already sense her upcoming loss. She tells Román once again that she had been waiting for him; she is gravely aware of their bond, and the seemingly fatalistic pact they make signals the start of her preemptive mourning: They promise never to leave each other, “*pésele a quien le pese, caiga quien caiga*”. They both agree to their “*pacto secreto*”, but it is Maru who alludes to it numerous times throughout the film, both during joyful times –like dancing at a Quinceañera party– and more poignant circumstances –such as when she’s bleeding to death. Nonetheless, death is, in a way, the path she consciously and actively chose when she decided to pursue her liberation: running away with Román is the adventure that –despite its fatal consequences– enables her to ultimately and productively come of age.

Butler describes the notion of vulnerability as a relational, as an affirmation of our own fundamental social condition: it is because we are social beings that we are able to experience loss and grief (23). However, we have no control over that grief, just as we have no control over desire; we cannot stay intact. “Despite one’s best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel” (23-24). Maru has finally found life, not in Román but in her attachment to him; it is that bond what constitutes her. Butler impeccably sums it up when she writes that “[we] tell a story

about the relations [we] choose, only to expose, somewhere along the way, the way [we are] gripped and undone by these very relations” (23).

This undoing of ourselves through the mourning of our loss and the exposure of our vulnerability, I claim, is key in the conception of death as a productive, and therefore generative coming of age. Yes, Maru is dead, but the effects of her death will stay with us. Paradoxically, her loss is what remains. We will mourn her death and recognize her vulnerability as well as *our* role –as a community– in the way the events surrounding it unfolded. Butler’s argument is not for a mourning that tries to replace what has been lost, but instead, for one that recognizes this vulnerability, and protects it without eradicating it. Maru’s story apparently ends tragically; however, we cannot ignore that she exercised her own agency and chose what she deemed worth fighting for, worth living for, even worth dying for. On the other hand, through the incorporation of the audience into the grieving process as we witness Maru’s death, the film forces upon us this recognition and, to quote Butler one last time, we enter into “a reciprocal exchange, an exchange that dislocates us from our positions, our subject-positions, and allows us to see that community itself requires the recognition that we are all, in different ways, striving for recognition” (44). To ask for recognition, then, is to demand the possibility of something new, of transformation, of becoming, and that, in my opinion, constitutes a most productive coming of age.

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All about My Father:

The Crisis of Masculinity in Almodóvar

Contemporary social theorists of masculinity often speak of a modern “crisis” of manhood brought about by the result of a convergence of shifting fault lines: the introduction of women into the public sphere of the workplace, changing definitions of family and the roles of men, and the larger redefining of what man and manhood entails, to name the most salient examples. These are clearly problematic lines of thought, ones that in many ways are products of a rigid set of gender norms and practices. Yet by marking this as a time of intense change for masculine identities—a seemingly inevitable approach towards critical mass, a “something’s gotta give”—the destabilization of normative gender identity in contemporary society is pathologized as ill product of ill times. The blame is placed not on masculinity but society, and the proof is to be found in manhood’s loss of a stable foundational meaning.

What does it mean to reference contemporary masculinities as in crisis? It certainly seems to call forth an older sort of pathology, one where, passing through medical Latin, “crisis” came to signify “the turning point of a disease when an important change takes place, indicating either recovery or death” (New Oxford American Dictionary). Even its more popular modern use as “decisive moment” or a generalized “turning point” still retains some of these medical traces. To say that masculinity is in crisis thus necessitates an understanding of the consequences of crisis in the first place. In other words, what is to die in this framework, what is to be recovered? And following the line of thought to its conclusion, what would happen

to masculinity (of all sorts) when the crisis is resolved? Or even further: does the reduction of possible outcomes to a tight binary (life or death) preclude alternative resolutions of crisis? For instance, what if the outcome is neither death nor recovery but paralysis? Or what is the outcome for a stabilized sense of masculinity if the important change that takes place, the turning point, leads to further complications and partial resolutions that constitute a sort of death within life, or a living death?

Considering the ‘crisis of masculinity’ in this matter foregrounds a few critical aspects of the way contemporary masculinities are framed. Firstly, it marks metaphors of well-being and masculinity as always already imbricated; always wrapped up into each other, one calling forth the other in constant reproduction and employment. In other words, speaking of masculinity entails an immediate analysis of the health or illness of the masculine body, its perceived strength or weakness, and the consideration of well-being must likewise imply a gendered understanding of the functions and operations of health in the male body. Secondly, speaking of a crisis in masculinity as a turning point that requires a specific outcome highlights the emergence of death and recovery, mourning and loss, as potentially productive resolutions that affect contemporary understandings of gender. A metaphorical death or renewal of life become possible outcomes of what is a perceived illness in the social health of masculinity in society. Thus, part of what I posit is that an understanding of the purported “crisis of masculinity” of the modern man reveals the power that metaphors of health and illness still exercise over gender and from within the structures of gender themselves; and in this, that death becomes a *possibility*, and not merely a foreclosed inevitability.

The possibilities of death are continually at work in Pedro Almodóvar’s 1999 film *Todo sobre mi madre*, and indeed in several of his films. *Todo sobre mi madre* opens with a slow pan down a drip bag, fading into life support machines with colorful buttons, and up to Manuela, played by Cecilia Roth. The slow blips of the life support are replaced by the sound of the patient flat-lining. Manuela’s work in the hospital is soon after established: a sign on the door reads “Coordinación de transplantes”, she makes a call, and the liver from the deceased donor begins its journey to a new host body. In this manner, the first few moments of the film present

a specific view of death, wherein what we consider to be its finalizing foreclosures are circumvented by the renewal of life. That is, the physical transplant of the organ of a (dead or brain-dead) donor into a new body, debilitated but standing to be renewed by this transplant, recalibrates death in such a way that it no longer has the same finalities for all parties involved. In turn, Manuela's position as transplant coordinator figures her as a mother to orphaned organs and dismembered limbs, responsible for the safe care and delivery of her charges into a new home.

Marking death and life in these ways clearly exceeds our bounded concepts of living and dying so that what occurs in *Todo sobre mi madre* is never just a simple renewal of life, or a pure life carried out. Indeed, the specter of death haunts this film, injecting itself into life at all turns. This is seen when Manuela's son is run over and his heart is transplanted to a middle-aged man in A Coruña. Echoing the initial scenes of the liver transplant, or the earlier staging of a mock transplant counseling session for training new physicians, Manuela is forced to undergo the loss of her son and sign off on the donation of his heart. Weeks later, still in shocked grief, she locates the records of the transplant, goes "after her son's heart" (as she will later tell another character), and arrives in A Coruña to witness the recipient emerge from the hospital. The man exclaims "I feel like I can breathe like before!" and his wife happily replies, "Yes, with an 18-year-old's heart!" The camera stays fixed on the man's chest as he walks toward the audience, until finally it closes in on the space where the heart lies, and the screen goes dark.

In holding life and death as fixed binaries, these scenes may potentially be read as the continuation of life where life has been, or a curing of the specters of death (the old, bad heart) by the renewal of life (the heart of an 18-year-old). But doing so refuses to take into account the vulnerability of the human body, and the way that vulnerability and a capacity to be harmed marks our social interactions with others and constitute, in part, a sense of self. The middle-aged man who emerges from the hospital with Esteban's heart does so at the expense of the death of the teenager, a death that he admittedly did not cause or bring about but one that now thoroughly marks his living.

The film further highlights the world-making potential of vulnerability in its intertextual references to Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in which the story of Manuela and her husband Lola is to be read as a retelling of Stella and Stanley Kowalski, paralleled in violent misogyny and emotional abuse. Unlike Stella, Manuela runs away from her husband in order to seek a new, better life; and in that flight to Madrid and away from Lola, Manuela becomes transformed by this moment. Similarly, her son will claim his life to be "missing its other half", the loss of the father defining his very core.

Rethinking the emphasis of loss, vulnerability, and the commingling of life and death in *Todo sobre mi madre* takes us to Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender*, wherein she writes that:

We are, as a community, subjected to violence, even if some of us individually have not been. And this means that we are constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies; we are constituted as fields of desire and physical vulnerability, at once publicly assertive and vulnerable. (18)¹

The move to vulnerability would read *loss* as a catalyzing and humanizing condition, rather than as finality from which there is no return. Similarly, highlighting our vulnerability as a state of being that is not simply physical but political and social means that the clear lines between life and death are made much more porous. Underscoring a politics of vulnerability, then, sees Manuela's search for her son's heart as an emphasis on the specters of death that haunt even the most joyful celebration of continued life.

That these specters of death are overwhelmingly figured as masculine and paternal is no accident, particularly when seen alongside Manuela's maternal characterization. A simplified reading of the film might locate Manuela on one side

¹ Her reformulation of this in *Precarious Life* reads as follows: "Women and minorities, including sexual minorities, are, as a community, subjected to violence, exposed to its possibility, if not its realization. This means that each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies—as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of a publicity at once assertive and exposed. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure" (20).

as the good mother, rendering her capacities as bearer of children and physician who surgically promotes life's extension as equivalent forces—while also viewing her pre-op transsexual husband Lola, a prostitute dying with AIDS, as the oppositional bad father, the omnipresent promise of death. The problematic behind this reading is clear—no binary is anywhere near that fixed in *Todo sobre mi madre* (nor in the majority of Almodóvar's output), and the borders between death/life, male/female, and sickness/health are continually broken down and complicated.

If Manuela *does* become the film's good mother-to-all, it is only through her contact with and reconstitution of death. In turn, this capacity for reworking life in death is measured not only in a feminine proximity to natality but in masculine mortality. That is, it is not simply through Manuela's efforts as a woman, and the curative powers of femininity, that we find the indistinctions between death and life but also through the debilitating (when not wholly deadly) effects of certain types of masculinities. Or, to simplify further, it's not just that all of the women of the film are good and healthy and all of the men bad and sick, but that these boundaries are constantly being crossed. What is further intriguing about this film, and not often acknowledged, is the role of sick masculinities in providing productive, transformative, and perhaps even world-making or generative possibilities. In this regard, Almodóvar's reworking of the crisis of masculinity in *Todo sobre mi madre* (to say nothing of 2004's *La mala educación*) reads fatherhood as a sort of viral pathogen, the spreading of a sometimes social, sometimes physical sickness that destroys and creates with equal measure.

For this reason, and in many ways justifiably so, Lola receives the brunt of the film's ill will. Abandoning Lola in Barcelona some decades earlier, Manuela fled to Madrid to escape her husband's misogyny and only returns to inform Lola of the death of their son. She meets an old transgendered friend of theirs, Agrado, who tells her that Lola has stolen all of her valuables and disappeared. In searching for jobs, the pair meet Rosa (played by Penelope Cruz), a young nun who has also had an encounter with Lola—an encounter that is slowly revealed to be much more physical than initially suggested, as Rosa is now carrying two of Lola's legacies, his unborn son and the HIV virus.

By this right, when Lola finally reveals herself at the end of the film, Manuela angrily tells her: “You aren’t a human being, Lola. You are an epidemic!” Lola, who has ghosted through the entire movie by rumors of her whereabouts and stories of her misdeeds, has appeared in the only place that makes sense, in a cemetery. It is the only place she could appear, as the embodiment of a masculinity on life support, a proximity to death that is correlated in the narrative to her bad and dangerously viral masculinity. Using a cane to support herself, she sees Manuela and smiles: “I’m happy to see you. What a pity it has to be here.” Manuela is implacable: “It couldn’t be anywhere else.” If the location of this encounter further ties Lola to death and its processes, a bad specter haunting the cemetery, it does so by referencing her masculinity—even while physically demonstrating something that goes beyond its normative boundaries.

In casting Lola as epidemic, she is the pathogen that penetrates the lives and health of the film’s characters. (And here we might productively consider the Greek roots to this word, which mean “I give birth to suffering”, *pathos* + *gen*.) Indeed, when he holds his and Rosa’s infant son in his hands he says: “My son, I’m sorry to leave you such an awful inheritance”, that legacy is meant to be both physical and emotional, the possibility of the child developing HIV and eventually AIDS and the death of the his mother from that same disease (where disease may be read as the virus itself, or Lola).

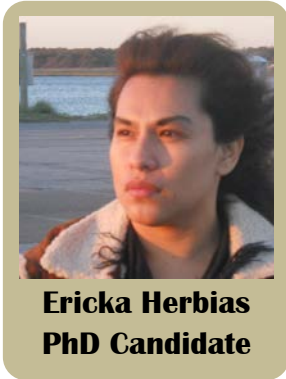
In the film’s final scenes, we are told that the baby has in fact developed HIV, but has “neutralized the virus in record time.” Manuela thus returns to Barcelona, some two years later, so doctors can study the young Esteban’s case. In her tearful reunion with Huma and Agrado, it’s noted that the virus has disappeared “practically overnight” in young Esteban, that his “case proves that the virus can disappear”. Manuela is beaming: “They’re still trying to figure out why, but it’s a miracle.” In a film filled with the shades of death always at work in life, what place does this utopic neutralization have here? Is it that Esteban is born from death, the sickness of his biological parents bringing about a curative fantasy of life? In other words, what I’ve attempted to assert here, the film and its director’s emphasis on the vivification of life even in death.

If this is the case, it must also be the importance of maternal power in Esteban's life. In short-circuiting a normative idea of masculinity within the film's central male characters (of which there are only a handful), *Todo sobre mi madre* seems to highlight the feminine while at the same time stressing its intimate connection with masculinity, and vice versa. In doing so, in building a perfect world that is bolstered by death just as it is by life—the initial moments of a new world that finds femininity and masculinity similarly in flux—this child is able to escape from the bad legacies of the past, and with it promote a new fantasy of life born from ghostly ills.

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***Sin Dejar Huella* (2000): Subvirtiéndolo a los
Héroes y a su Gloria en un Film de
María Novaro**

Sin dejar huella del año 2000 de María Novaro (México, 1951) es un film que se puede asociar con el género de viajes y aventuras. Es la historia de dos mujeres fugitivas que circunstancialmente emprenden el viaje juntas desde Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez hacia Cancún, después de venir huyendo, una del jefe de los judiciales y otra de un novio narcotraficante. Y si bien por un lado comparten la condición delictiva, en tanto una es contrabandista de piezas de arte maya falsificadas y la otra lleva consigo el dinero que le resultó de vender paquetes de droga que le robó a su novio, ambas están separadas por la clase y cuestiones de raza en lo que es claramente un contexto de herencia colonial latinoamericano. Una es española (aunque aduce nacionalidad “mexicana”) y la otra mexicana. Una es culta y sofisticada y en el momento del encuentro inicial sin una blanca en la cartera, mientras la otra es una obrera de las maquiladoras, sin estudios, vulgar pero con un neceser lleno de dólares enrollados. La española se mueve sola, soltera y sin hijos, muy cosmopolita. La mexicana con un niño a quien amamanta –y otro mayor que dejó al cuidado de su hermana–, sin mucho mundo pero al parecer, muy astuta. Una ha viajado por casi todo el mundo y para la otra, este primer largo viaje es sobre todo la huida hacia el progreso. Una parece ser más madura que la otra, aunque ambas son mujeres bellas y altamente atractivas para sus perseguidores, estereotipos del macho gánster mexicano, Mendizábal, jefe de judiciales, cruel y corrupto que acosa a una desde hace tiempo y Saúl, un muchacho metido en el tráfico de drogas pero muy enamorado.

Empezaremos por decir que el ambiente en que se realizan los desplazamientos guarda sumo interés en tanto toman lugar en la frontera, en las zonas liminales donde el control y la normalidad parecen sufrir ciertos trastornos.

La ruta es hacia el norte de México, en lo que se nos ofrece un tour fascinante de lugares despoblados y exóticos de la geografía rural. Nos encontramos también a mitad de la película con una comunidad de artesanos mayas, que viven de sus labores. La lengua también se presta a esta exploración etnográfica llevándose a cabo varios diálogos en idioma maya. Tenemos pues que la dinámica de aventuras transcurre en poblados marginales, carreteras y lugares perdidos o encantados como los oasis, como en el caso del refugio de la comunidad maya, donde el carro que las persigue se hunde o en el caso de lo que viene a ser el paraíso soñado, la gran meta, Cancún.

En su “Travel, Travelling Identities and the Look” Ann Kaplan señala que los seres humanos siempre han viajado por una variedad de razones, así ellos pueden viajar por necesidad, placer, conocimiento científico o cultural, por refugio político o religioso, para sobrevivir o explotar o comerciar. Entendemos en “Sin dejar huella” que Ana, la española y Aurelia, la mexicana viajan por trabajo. Aunque con ciertos matices, lo concreto es que se desplazan a menester de sus oficios, para mantener su situación económica o mejorarla. En el caso de Ana, el viaje requiere también ser internacional –pues el tráfico cultural exporta–, mientras el que realiza dentro del país parece ser altamente especializado, teniendo conocimiento de áreas de acceso, rutas de escape o pistas alternas. En ese sentido el sujeto Ana se constituye sujeto de saber cuanto más porque habla la lengua de las comunidades, está en posesión del código cultural, es parte importante de su industria artesanal, y en más de un sentido, es “parte” de ellos. En el caso de Aurelia, el viaje se da en tanto progreso, superación; concepto muy instalado en el espíritu de las clases populares que tienden a buscar formas de escape frente a la estrechez material que los limita y agrede. El viaje que da vida al film es del todo fortuito, circunstancial y en su dinámica, único. Se concibe cuando Aurelia ve la oportunidad inmediata de hacerse con una mercancía ajena que dejaron en su casa provisionalmente. Ella hurta al

contrabandista, y mediante la cadena de vicios, robando al ladrón, ella emprende la marcha a lo desconocido. Lo vemos cuando pregunta en la fonda “¿Cómo llego a Cancún?” En la fonda también va a estar Ana, huyendo de Mendizábal, que al oír la pregunta aprovecha la oportunidad para unirse a Aurelia en el viaje. Es curioso notar aquí otra vez que la que podríamos considerar la extranjera, Ana, conoce al dedillo todos los vericuetos y caminos intrincados del lugar, mientras que para Aurelia, la que es desde todo punto de vista del lugar, su propio país le es desconocido y necesita orientación. Lo común en ambas es que activan el viaje con el riesgo porque su posición está al margen de la ley –aunque también la de sus captores.

Siguiendo con Kaplan, en la medida en que nos interesa indagar cómo se establece la relación entre las dos protagonistas, el viaje implica mirar y relaciones de miradas con personas diferentes a uno. Y aunque por un lado, el viaje puede desestabilizar una noción fija de cultura, por otro acentúa un sentido de pertenencia nacional. Además el viaje provoca la atención consciente de género y diferencia racial, y en la película que nos ocupa, la de las clases sociales. Sin embargo, Ana y Aurelia son compañeras de ruta, es decir se mantienen en un intercambio de miradas pero que las engarza en división con los paisajes y gente que encuentran en el camino, son una especie de unidad. Pero diferentes a nivel interno y aunque comparten la nacionalidad, no pueden estar más alejadas en su identidad cultural. Hablan de ello los constantes comentarios de extrañeza de Aurelia por ejemplo, ante las andanzas clandestinas de Ana, cuando apunta que no entiende qué hace ella (Ana) en ese estado de apuros cuando tiene “todo” para gozar de una buena posición, y le dice que ella sí tiene imagen para trabajar en un hotel de lujo –que curiosamente fue la mentira (pero también el deseo) que Aurelia le dijo a su hijo mayor para justificar su salida, que ya está contratada por un hotel en Cancún y que por eso lleva dinero, porque así pagan en esos lugares, por adelantado–. Y le sigue diciendo Aurelia a Ana, tienes educación e incluso debes saber inglés, y observando la pronunciación de su castellano peninsular, le pregunta ceceando “¿cuándo hablas inglés también le haces *azi*?” Cabe señalar la misma actitud de reparo de parte de Mendizábal por la pronunciación de Ana. Es curioso pues que dentro del grupo de los mestizos criollos (Aurelia, Mendizábal), Ana resulte extraña por su acento, aun

compartiendo el mismo idioma, y como ella dice la misma nacionalidad, mientras que se hace una con el grupo de mayor herencia indígena, hablando su misma lengua y participando, la europea, de su misma empresa e intereses. Lo que nos lleva también al negocio de la mirada que se establece entre colonizadores y colonizados. Llevados por la agresión de los judiciales cuando ingresan en el poblado, y torturan a la matrona maya, podemos concluir que ahora los colonizadores asesinos que diezman a su paso son las autoridades del grupo mestizo criollo de herencias coloniales y que la presencia europea –representada por Ana– es más bien una de promoción y respaldo en tanto actúa de nexo entre ellos y el mercado internacional.

Los viajes en la filmografía se prestan para examinar sistemas de pensamiento y construcciones culturales mediante la organización y relación de miradas en momentos históricos específicos. El film mismo viaja. Desde el lugar del film, se puede también especular cómo cambian las relaciones de mirada, llegando en ciertos casos a mitigar el racismo, sexismo u homofobia. Sin embargo, las miradas no son nunca inocentes. Están siempre determinadas por el sistema cultural de las personas que viajan con ellas. En el film que nos ocupa el principal cruce de miradas es el que se activa entre las dos protagonistas. De ahí el prejuicio, fantasía o curiosidad, que en ambos casos, las precede en su relación. Como cuando Aurelia saca un revólver, después de que el carro se ha anegado en los baños, y Ana queda alarmada pensando si es una mujer de banda armada a lo “gans girls” chicanas. En este ambiente de contrabando y crimen no falta la omnipresencia de los Estados Unidos, aunque en el film se siente más que se observa, se percibe su influencia en la economía y costumbres de las zonas de frontera. La música popular nortea, los corridos, por ejemplo, lo aluden en sus canciones, como el monstruo que los domina pero que al mismo tiempo, les sirve de consumidor. Su presencia genera dinámicas y estilos de vida. Fomenta el frenesí de la diáspora, pero al mismo tiempo el de los negocios de contrabando y el de la intrusión capitalista en un contexto de tradición colonial. Sobre todo en la población joven, representada por Aurelia y su novio, el fenómeno de las maquiladoras y el narcotráfico. La mirada de y hacia el “imperio”, basándonos en la teoría feminista, implicaría también una mirada masculina que objetiviza, aunque en este caso la mirada del objeto se ejerce y se devuelve.

Entrando al campo de los estudios de cine hecho por mujeres me gustaría traer a discusión, los preceptos establecidos por Laura Mulvey en su famoso y ya fundacional artículo “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” y confrontar como muchos de los postulados se confirman en la estética desarrollada por María Novaro en tanto lenguaje que subvierte.

La figura femenina dice Mulvey es la figura de la castración, desde una visión psicoanalítica. Mientras que el papel masculino, en el cine tradicional narrativo, es el que posee la mirada y la ejecuta de dos modos que son conocidos como “scopofilia” y libido del ego. El placer de mirar a otro haciéndolo objeto de deseo y dominio y de otro lado, el papel de la autocontemplación en los procesos de formación de identidad, concretamente, el momento de la imagen en el espejo.

La mujer es así relegada a su condición de imagen y el hombre llevado a su posición de portador de la mirada, la cual también cederá para conformar la mirada del espectador. La figura femenina se establece como la presencia de un “alien” que tiene que ser integrado en la cohesión narrativa, la cual es llevada a cabo solo por el papel masculino protagonista, él la hace fluir. Lo que cuenta es lo que la heroína provoca, representa, o inspira en el héroe. El interés que él siente por ella es lo que le hace actuar de la forma en que lo hace. Ella en sí misma no tiene la más mínima importancia. Ella es pues objeto erótico, tanto, para el personaje dentro de la pantalla como para el espectador dentro del auditorio. En “Sin dejar huella” vemos que sucede precisamente a la inversa. Ellas, las heroínas, son ahora los héroes con quienes el espectador se identifica, en tanto su aventura les pertenece en forma activa. Y son ahora sus perseguidores quienes motivan en ellas la dirección y la ruta que ellas deciden. A nivel de la narración, la división entre espectador y narrador que apoya el rol del hombre como rol activo que hace avanzar la historia, haciendo que las cosas pasen, recae ahora en el rol de las compañeras de viaje.

La gran metáfora se establece cuando logran desbaratar el seguimiento, eliminando a sus perseguidores en la imagen del coche rojo que se hunde y utilizando indirectamente a unos para liquidar a otros (Saúl, el novio de Aurelia dispara contra Mendizábal y lo mata). Así, la mirada simbólica del hombre que

perseguía para someter o reclamar ha sido destruida. El pretendido objeto de caza se libera, anulando el riesgo.

Otro punto que guarda interés es el del rol de la mujer en tanto ícono, a diferencia de la figura masculina activa (esbozada en el ego ideal del proceso de identificación) que demanda una dimensión tridimensional correspondiente al momento de reconocimiento frente al espejo. Las protagonistas de “Sin dejar huella” subvierten la condición de figura icónica, en el sentido en que su ser productor de acción supera su el marco de su imagen. Generalmente las tomas son lejanas y envuelven el cuerpo en movimiento, encajado en un escenario de profundidades, tridimensional. Por ejemplo, la primera escena que nos muestra a Ana, arrastrando su maleta y atravesando las mallas de fierro que marcan la línea de frontera entre el desierto de Arizona y el de Sonora por un pequeño forado, introduciéndose. Escena muy fálica. O cuando vemos a Aurelia por una ventana, a través de la mirada de Ana, enseñando una coreografía a los niños del poblado maya, en despliegue de alegría, simbolizada por los niños y la libertad absoluta de movimiento, para acto seguido desaparecer por arte de magia entre ojeada y ojeada. Nos hace pensar en un ilusionista en perfecto control de su presencia. De otro lado, no se podría decir que se experimente con la imagen de las fugitivas el *close up* del rostro o el encuadre que corta sus bien formadas piernas, y aun cuando esto sucede, por ejemplo cuando se enfocan sin cuidado las botas vaqueras que Aurelia adquirió con el dinero mal habido sucede precisamente que el potencial captor ha sido aniquilado. Y yace ensangrentado en el piso. Por lo demás, ya en el poblado, Ana deja su sensual vestido rosa, estropeado por la aventura, para llevar la blusa blanca ancha y larga, típica de la comunidad.

Uno de los aciertos más grandes en la observación que Mulvey realiza del cine tradicional narrativo es el comentario acerca de las películas “Only Angels Have Wings” y “To Have and Have Not”, las que se abren con una mujer, objeto de la contemplación del espectador y de todos los personajes masculinos de la historia. Ella es aislada, glamorosa, y en su despliegue, muy sexualizada. Pero en tanto la narrativa progresa ella se enamora del protagonista masculino y se convierte en su

propiedad, perdiendo su acendrado glamour, su sexualidad generalizada y sus connotaciones de show girl, entonces su erotismo es subyugado y reservado solo para la estrella masculina. Y por medio de su identificación con él, el espectador puede indirectamente poseerla también. En el caso de las dos protagonistas, Ana y Aurelia, se mantienen emocionalmente libres. La española, de gran seducción, sobre todo en el contexto latinoamericano, juega y maneja la fascinación de Mendizábal, y en el contexto europeo, ironiza a un suizo cuyo pene torcido, no calza bien con la rectitud de su idiosincrasia. Falsea el matrimonio, con la pregunta capciosa: “¿Qué hacen las mujeres mientras encuentran a su hombre ideal? Se casan.” En el caso de Aurelia, ella establece una relación con un hombre más joven que ella, al cual finalmente aprovecha y engaña. Para luego emprender sola, el camino hacia el éxito. En ese sentido, podríamos decir que estas mujeres comparten características propias a las de las *femme fatale* de la novela negra. Muy resueltas y osadas, bellas y en cierto grado, criminales y frías.

Así pues hasta cierto grado la pareja “Ana & Aurelia” en tanto se implementa se basta a sí misma en su particular amistad. Es muy sugerente la escena de la playa cuando la pragmática y desconfiada Aurelia pregunta: “¿Eres mi amiga, Ana?” y acto seguido corren hacia el mar, hilarantes y efusivas, y la cámara las sigue y las une en la misma toma. Ya en el mar, nadando juntas en un espacio claro y abierto parece ser que todos los bordes que ellas cruzan, incluidas las de su propia relación se disuelven infinita y pacíficamente. Diferente aunque hermosísima será la escena del baño en la laguna, donde el color oscuro del agua reposa entre las rocas que cubren ese espacio, ocultándolo. Parece tratarse de una escena uterina, donde curiosamente, ambas se hacen confidencias, elucubran y filosofan sobre sus vidas. Quizá el momento que más nos declara la intensidad y la mutua gravitación que se han cobrado en la relación, es la discusión en la mesa del hotel donde se van a separar. Acusándose de sacar provecho una de otra y liberando todas las quejas que la relación les había provocado, precisamente por actitudes tomadas a raíz de esas “miradas” que anteceden comportamientos. La española quejándose de haber sido utilizada y la mexicana quejándose de haber sido subestimada. Culpándose también una a otra por falsedad y criminalidad. Este vínculo queda claro cuando más

adelante vemos que a Aurelia no le duele tanto que su novio la haya dejado y no regrese, después de haberse llevado el cuerpo de Mendizábal muerto, y como ella piensa también su dinero; como enterarse que su compañera de ruta, se fue sin ella. Es cuando se deja caer sentada en la puerta del cuarto, detenida y sin esperanza. Por su parte, Ana reaparecerá después, en el aeropuerto para recibir con un grupo de música típica mexicana –y no mariachis, como Aurelia había prometido– al hijo mayor de la amiga, a quien le encanta el recibimiento, “Ay ma, te acordaste” y también el cambio de los mariachis. Acto seguido, se nos muestra una Ana de materialismo quebrado cuando le dice a Aurelia que le devuelve la bolsa del dinero, casi intacto. Y le confiesa que su nombre no es Ana, para integrarse en el cuadro como parte de la familia, ahora toda reunida. La última escena nos muestra una escena que podría presentar todas las características de una familia y final feliz. Están todos en la playa de Cancún mientras Ana está hamacándose y leyendo un libro, mientras Aurelia juega con los niños. Ya desde antes se hubiera podido percibir, desde una lectura homosexual, ciertos rasgos que masculinizaban a Ana, soltera sin hijos y de mucho mundo, y otros que más bien feminizaban a Aurelia, en tanto figura materna y de menor instrucción. Añadido a lo cual, podemos hablar de representaciones culturales y de poder, en tanto una formaliza la Europa conquistadora y dominante, mientras la otra, activa la sumisión de América, en tanto tierras colonizadas y vencidas.

Finalmente, una última circunstancia en la que entra a tallar la subversión de Novaro en relación con las películas tradicionales narrativas que estudia Mulvey. El héroe de este cine narrativo, manifiesta Mulvey, está siempre dentro del orden simbólico o de la ley aunque su inclinación erótica lo lleve a situaciones comprometedoras en las que activará el poder de subjetivizar al otro a la voluntad sádica o a la contemplación voyeurista, convirtiendo a ese otro en un objeto. El poder, dice ella, es respaldado en estos filmes por una certeza de corrección legal del lado de los hombres y el establecimiento de culpa en la mujer (recordando su castración). La verdadera perversión, señala, es apenas encubierta debajo de una máscara de corrección ideológica, en la que el hombre siempre está del lado correcto y la mujer del equivocado. Y comentado “Vértigo” ella describe cómo el

protagonista masculino se enamora de una mujer a quien sigue y espía, sin ni siquiera hablarle. Su lado sádico, señala, es igual de evidente, en tanto él ejerce la representación de la ley con sus implicancias de investigación y persecución. En el cine de Hitchcock el héroe está firmemente ubicado en el orden simbólico, cumpliendo con los atributos del superego patriarcal. En “Sin dejar huella”, las mujeres parecen estar fuera de los espacios de la ley pero sus perseguidores, sobre todo el jefe de los judiciales, aunque autoridad que detenta el orden se percibe en franca decadencia y corrupción de valores por lo cual es desautorizado por su propio discurso. El otro muchacho es aún muy joven para esbozar una línea de acción establecida, lo que sabemos es que desaparece.

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Los Jueves, Milagro: Religión, “Cachondeo” y Censura Ideológica en el Filme de Luis Berlanga

La religión, el estado y los medios de comunicación generalmente han tenido unas intrincadas relaciones que, con el la llegada del siglo XX y las tecnologías propias de este siglo, se acentuaron y se convirtieron en problemáticas centrales que definían los caracteres de las cohesiones nacionales (y a su vez religiosas). Esta es una aproximación al entendimiento de estas maquinarias políticas y sociales con el caso de la película, *Los jueves, milagro* del director Luis García Berlanga, un excelente ejemplo de las tensiones entre las posturas y narraciones oficialistas, y las posiciones disidentes que intentaban sabotear o “cachondear” como los proyectos de unificación romantizados. A través del fenómeno del milagro, Berlanga intentará cuestionar las creencias y reducirá esta tradición central de la iglesia, a un mero montaje cuyos fines no son más que los comerciales y turísticos. Sin embargo, la película, como se explicará más adelante, no pasó desapercibida por la censura y terminó siendo el blanco de muchos desgarramientos y cortes. De este modo, terminó siendo una apóstata de cualquier postura (ya fuera de derechas o de izquierdas) que, sin embargo, sigue teniendo total vigencia debido a todas las críticas y preguntas que deja abiertas acerca de la religiosidad contemporánea.

Nacionalismo, catolicismo y cine

Para los años 50, la Segunda Guerra Mundial ya era cosa del pasado: los países intentaban ocultarse en el olvido y la democracia; el régimen franquista se

hallaba en la encrucijada de salir de aquella imagen fascista que había promovido durante la guerra, para abrirse al mundo con una imagen fresca y renovada de una España dispuesta a la apertura que, sin embargo, intentaba preservar aún los valores “propios”, como el patriotismo y el catolicismo. Éste último, de hecho, hacía parte de la esencia del primero y el régimen franquista era uno bicéfalo en donde la imagen del buen español coincidía también con la del buen católico. Dentro de esta encrucijada del franquismo, el cine, como herramienta esencial mediática del siglo XX, no podía dejar de aparecer dentro de las preocupaciones del régimen conservador y católico, pues éste representaba un arma de doble filo: era el gran medio masivo que podía integrar la nación (el maestro moral del pueblo), pero también era un medio que podía propagar todo lo contrario. No obstante, el dilema entre los gobiernos, el catolicismo y el cine no era nuevo en España ni en el mundo, y se planteó desde los primeros momentos en los que el cine hizo su aparición; la iglesia católica siempre estuvo dispuesta a curiosear sobre lo que significaba la aparición del medio y a tomar cartas en el asunto. El líder de la Iglesia por aquella época, el papa León XIII (periodo de papado: 1878-1903), ya se permitía hacer unas cuántas declaraciones después de que él mismo había sido filmado por Luis Lumière: “si el cine resulta ser algo útil y beneficioso, lo bendeciremos” (Pelaz López en Ruiz Sánchez 77). A partir de ese momento, la iglesia empezó a publicar encíclicas para promover lo que consideraba “el buen cine”, a la par que también comenzaban a aparecer los primeros comités nacionales de censuras.

En el caso de España, como lo señala José Vidal Pelaz (2005), el régimen y la iglesia comenzaron a preocuparse por la aparición de películas que iban en contra de la moral y el orden nacionalista, y es así como hicieron presencia distintas asociaciones que intentaban brindar protección a los espectadores (especialmente a los niños, pues se pensaba que el cine conducía a que éstos tuvieran comportamientos “anormales”), y boletines y periódicos católicos como *El debate*, que se preocupaban intensamente por salvaguardar lo nacional y católico frente a la llegada inevitable y temprana del cine de Hollywood a España. De este modo, se comienza a reflexionar sobre la posibilidad de un cine católico español y a

promulgarse una suerte de manifiestos como el siguiente en el que se expresan las categorías obligatorias de este tipo de cine:

Las pantallas hispanas no pueden hablar en otra lengua que en el buen romance castellano (...) frente a los ritos protestantes del arte yanqui campeará la purísima belleza de nuestros ritos católicos en fiestas religiosas y pompas nupciales; y frente a ese concepto puramente materialista de la vida; sed de oro de lujo y de placeres, un poco de ese humano espíritu de renunciación, característico nuestro, que presintió la filosofía y enseñó el cristianismo.

(Pelaz López en Ruíz Sánchez 82)

Para los años 30, la categorización moral de las películas no se hizo esperar en boletines como *Filmor*. “B: buena para todos. D: con defectos más o menos graves que pueden corregirse, pasable; F: sólo para las personas formadas y M: pernicioso para todos” (Pelaz López en Ruíz Sánchez 77). El nacionalismo y el catolicismo español se funden en una sola unidad que intentará reflejarse como la verdadera esencia de España en las pantallas de cine. Es con la llegada del franquismo que aparecen instituciones cinematográficas como la CIFESA que producía filmes históricos y católicos en los que se promovían las narraciones sobre los “héroes” y “mártires” de la patria. Dentro de tales ideologías, y como lo menciona John Hopewell, la tendencia de las películas católicas producidas por el oficialismo era la de insertar dentro de un evento conflictivo la figura familiar de un cura o una monja que lograra restablecer el orden social:

The priest has the common touch: he is a bullfight man (*Currito de la cruz*, ‘Currito of the Cross’, 1948); he plays the billiards (*De mujer a mujer*, ‘From Woman to Woman’, 1949). The priest is a force for good: his charity drive prompts social regeneration (...); he is a cuddly *deus ex machina* who doubles up with a Capra-ish cupid to unite the lovers (...); he merges with lay authority in the proximity of his presence, opinions, or even role, to the father figure.

(Hopewell “Out of the Past” 41)

Sin embargo, siempre estaba la sospecha de que las producciones tuvieran conflictos ideológicos, y de ahí que el régimen trabajara en una doble estrategia en la que promocionaba sus películas y acogía a todos los cinematógrafos que le hicieran honor a la patria, a la vez que creaba más instituciones que impidieran la aparición

de películas opositoras y problemáticas para los modelos de nación e iglesia que se deseaban. Pero para la época de los años 30 una oposición demasiado radicalizada era todavía difícil de pensar dentro del gran aparato cinematográfico franquista, y fue sólo a partir de los años 40 y 50, en el vórtice de una renovación contradictoria (“Spain had become a curious mixture of traditional –largely Catholic- values and the behaviour thought proper for a consumer society” [Carr y Fusi en Hopewell “Out of the Past” 47]) que aparecieron películas cargadas de humor negro y que brindaron narraciones alternativas y paródicas de la historia oficial. La censura se radicalizó y se intentó una doble operación en la que se producían películas populares, católicas y patriotas, a la vez que se implementaban fuertes aparatos de censura formados por miembros eclesiásticos, en especial por seguidores del Opus Dei, que incluso eran más estrictos que los del mismo gobierno.

Los jueves, milagro: por una historia y religiosidad al margen del oficialismo

El estigma de la disidencia marcó a muchas de las producciones de la época y puso a los cineastas inconformes con franquismo en situaciones incómodas: sus producciones tenían que valerse de toda clase de estratagemas para lograr ser rodadas, y luego presentadas. Precisamente fue dentro de este estigma donde cayó automáticamente la película de Luis García Berlanga, *Los jueves, milagro* (1959), un filme que, al igual que otras producciones de este director como *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall*, son ante todo una visión que “cachondea” el mito de las películas franquistas en pro de mostrar una visión esperpéntica de España. “En las películas posfranquistas de Berlanga, al igual que en las que hizo durante el franquismo, España continúa retratada como si fuese una ‘deformación grotesca de la civilización europea’” (Hopewell “El Cine español” 201). *Los jueves, milagro* fue una de las películas más acorraladas por la censura de la época, pues toca las fibras más sensibles, tanto del gobierno, como del catolicismo: el fenómeno del milagro (en este caso particular, el milagro de San Dimas), que dentro del régimen y la religiosidad era visto como un elemento esencial de la cohesión y la unidad, es completamente ridiculizado y deconstruido a través de esta producción cinematográfica. Por

supuesto, la burla contra la fe termina siendo una burla contra toda la tradición nacional y hacia esa idea de que España era una bucólica pradera de sevillanos.

Como lo indica Hopewell ("El Cine Español" 42), las películas opositoras intentaban mostrar las contradicciones de las películas franquistas que declaraban una asertividad histórica, cuando en realidad eran narraciones que beneficiaban el régimen: en éstas, todos los personajes terminan siendo héroes predestinados por la gracia de Dios para convertirse en ejemplos vivos de lo que debe ser un verdadero español. En efecto, *Los jueves, milagro* es un azote directo a las creencias históricas y religiosas de la época, y sin embargo, el caso de esta película es mucho más particular, pues la intervención que hizo la censura durante su rodaje, especialmente la intromisión del padre Garau durante la producción de la segunda parte, terminó por hacer de esta obra una mescolanza brutal del "cachondeo" con la moral ultracatólica, de modo que se convirtió en una diatriba, tanto para la derecha como para la izquierda. Dice el propio Berlanga en el libro de entrevistas *El último austro-húngaro*:

Cuando la productora me propone al padre Garau, que además era censor, para modificar el guión, yo creía que este buen señor se limitaría a hablar conmigo, a hacerme por escrito algunas limitaciones. Pero me encuentro con que se escribe un guión de doscientas páginas, en el que San Dimas hace esto y hace lo otro. Entonces yo, indignado, exigí que ese señor figurara como guionista en los títulos de crédito, pero él se negó y, aunque yo llegué a consultar con un abogado, no hubo manera.

(Berlanga en Hernández Les e Hidalgo 72)

Sin embargo, el hecho de que esta película se haya quedado relegada al olvido desde muchos puntos de vista hace que el caso sea más interesante, pues ésta se puede ver como el chivo expiatorio de muchas situaciones ideológicas y sociales que marcaron la historia del cine español: es una película que se desgarró entre narrar el fenómeno del milagro desde la contradicción y la parodia que provoca éste en el contexto de la modernidad, y narrarlo desde la versión romantizada e idealista de la iglesia. Fue precisamente por ese desgarramiento que *Los jueves, milagro* resultó en todo un fracaso comercial: "se estrenó el 2 de febrero de 1959 en el madrileño cine Capitol, donde tan sólo permaneció diez días en cartelera. La versión que se estrenó de la película estaba notablemente mutilada (...). Quizá por ello, tendrían que pasar

hasta cuatro años para que Berlanga se sentara en la silla de productor para rodar una nueva producción” (Pulido 1). No obstante, como más adelante se explicará, al tiempo que la película recibía la reprimenda de uno y otro lado, también se le dio un reconocimiento durante la Semana de Cine de Valladolid, lo que demuestra el periodo de transformaciones en el que España estaba para la época.

Marcelino, pan y vino vs. Los jueves, milagro: del bucolismo sobrenatural al esperpento del espectáculo

Un análisis de *Los jueves, milagro* por sí sola es bastante diciente, pero resulta mucho más interesante si a la vez se tiene en cuenta aquello que la censura sí aprobaba sin titubear: las películas católicas conservadoras que, si bien se iban haciendo cada vez menos populares, no paraban de ser producidas, algunas con éxitos totales de taquilla. Como lo dice Hopewell de forma irónica, “By the 50’s, Spanish films had largely abandoned their morbidity for a less complicated attempt at religious drama of ‘devout little believers, nice little saints, hagiography and schmaltz’, which was increasingly eclipsed by child stars (...)” (Hopewell “Out of the Past” 48). Una película como *Marcelino pan y vino* (1955) de Ladislao Vajda logra fusionar perfectamente las historias de curas con la de niños, éstas últimas tan populares para el mercado cinematográfico de la época, y muestra todo aquello que el catolicismo y el nacionalismo querían ver; la película duró un tiempo prolongado en las salas de cine y además le fueron otorgados varios premios, entre ellos, el reconocimiento en Cannes y en el Festival de Cine de Berlín. Esta película es un ejemplo perfecto de las prefiguraciones e ideales de la moral católica de la época y, al igual que *Los jueves, milagro*, se centra en lo que puede ser llamado lo milagroso, aunque obviamente lo trata de una manera muy “correcta”. Aparte de esta coincidencia temática, también se hace contundente comparar la producción de Vajda con la de Berlanga, porque ambas comparten el mismo censor y si en la película de “Mr. Cagada”¹, el padre Garau decidió ser la mano divina y oculta que intervino el filme, en la película de Vajda el nombre del padre aparece con todo su

¹ Apodo que se le dio a Berlanga: “Sus compañeros de rodajes le llamaron Mister Cagada, porque cada vez que terminaba de rodar un plano, aunque hubiera salido excelente, exclamaba: ‘¡Vaya

esplendor en los créditos, bajo el título de “consejero eclesiástico”. ¿Qué fue lo que le molestó a la censura del milagro de San Dimas, y lo que le encantaba del milagro de Marcelino?

Resulta curioso que en su inicio las películas compartan tantas características: una panorámica del pueblo de Fontecilla en *Los jueves, milagro*, un plano medio del pueblo anónimo de *Marcelino pan y vino*, dos narradores omniscientes que comienzan a hacer una descripción del pueblo. Pero no bien las voces omniscientes han comenzado a hablar, se puede notar inmediatamente que sus narrativas parecen ser contrarios absolutos: “¿Lo ven? Hasta el humilde tren correo de las 6:45 atraviesa este pueblo sin detenerse. Claro que esto no ocurría hace 50 años. Por aquella época, para que un expreso se pudiera llamar de lujo tenía necesariamente que parar en Fontecilla ¿Qué ha ocurrido desde entonces?” (Berlanga *Los jueves hay milagro*). “Es mi pueblo y lo quiero, sus casas y sus gentes son sencillas, las quiero en sus alegrías y en sus dolores, hoy están contentos en su romería, todos suben para festejar algo quizás perdido en el recuerdo de algunos, pero que sigue sonando en el corazón de muchos” (Vadja *Marcelino pan y vino*).

Fontecilla es descrito como un pueblo olvidado, muerto y es “como tantos pueblos de España”, donde lo único que se escucha es el silbato del tren; el pueblo parece ser un lugar perdido en el tiempo que niega esa idea modernizadora de la España de Franco. El *close-up* brusco hacia los adentros del pueblo, no mejora la idea del mismo y en la imagen se ve una arquitectura que recuerda al medioevo, y de la que salen algunos habitantes solitarios y sin ninguna importancia. Entonces se hace evidente que tanto la voz del narrador, como las imágenes en pantalla tienen el doble juego de querer asumir el tono de una objetividad divina e innegable (procedimiento bastante marcado en el cine histórico franquista), que a la vez se niega y que por medio de la parodia de las narrativas oficiales e incuestionables,

cagada!’ Esa valoración singularmente negativa de todo lo que hacía y el hecho de que una de las grandes obras de Berlanga se llama *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall* (...) valieron para que le hicieran pasar a la historia como Mister Cagada”. Información tomada de la entrevista hecha en 2005 por Juan Cruz a Berlanga titulada “El pesimista erótico” en *El País*, y nuevamente publicada el 13 de noviembre de 2010.

Disponible en <http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cultura/pesimista/erotico/>, recuperado: 13 de noviembre de 2010.

deforma y conforma una realidad pesimista de España. Al contrario, en *Marcelino pan y vino* el narrador tiene un tono completamente sentimentalista y *naïve*, que pretende pasar como la descripción objetiva y verdadera; el pueblo es un lugar perfecto y los habitantes son una unidad armónica cohesionada por el patriotismo y la religión. Todos visten trajes típicos y parecen ir llenos de euforia, al son de una sevillana, a una romería tradicional del milagro de Marcelino. Es un pueblo que se apega literalmente a lo que deseaba el franquismo y la iglesia católica; es la realización de un presente que permanece fresco por medio de la historia "pulcra" y "maravillosa" de España, a través de la narración de un milagro significativo.

Fontecilla, en cambio, es un pueblo anacrónico y lleno de figurines aislados que sólo actúan como colectividad en la medida que pueden obtener un beneficio propio de ello: es precisamente la ocurrencia del milagro de San Dimas lo que conlleva a que un grupo de los habitantes "más destacados" del pueblo se unan para revitalizar sus propios negocios. Justamente en esto radica la mayor diferencia entre *Los jueves, milagro* y una película como la de *Marcelino*: la idea del milagro en la primera es presentada como un simple mecanismo que se puede construir y reconstruir cuantas veces se quiera: es una ficción, en todo los sentidos de la palabra, que algunos de los habitantes supuestamente más prestigiosos de Fontecilla se han inventado, no con la intención de reinstaurar la fe colectiva del pueblo (la fe se vuelve sólo un medio para llegar al fin), sino como un engaño y con la idea de que Fontecilla vuelva a ser el lugar turístico que, gracias a su balneario y aguas "curativas", había sido alguna vez. Así, la película parece desdecir todo lo que el oficialismo buscaba de España y de su proyección en el cine español (ese "humano espíritu de renunciación") para mostrar una realidad "materialista de la vida" en donde el invento del milagro se vuelve una oportunidad económica y turística de un pueblo.

Don Antonio (dueño de una mercería y alcalde), Don Salvador (maestro y "cronista oficial" del pueblo), Don Evaristo (médico y científico), Don Manuel (barbero), Don Ramón (dueño del balneario) y Don José (un terrateniente y tacaño consabido) hacen parte de una aristocracia rural que vive del recuerdo de una mejor época y que por eso mismo, tratarán de sostener sus decadentes estilos de vida por

medio del milagro. El balneario de Don Ramón es el espacio alegórico donde el grupo se reúne a distraerse con hidroterapias suecas dirigidas por Carmela (la vetusta y sorda ama de llaves), y a recordar “gloriosas” historias. En otro acercamiento abrupto de la cámara que sitúa al espectador en un primer plano, se muestra el balneario del pueblo como una ruina que insiste en sobrevivir al paso del tiempo: la lluvia que por tanto tiempo había pedido el pueblo para que sus cultivos progresaran, inclementemente intenta inundar el balneario y por todos lados se ven cacharros “ilustres” y de todas las edades, intentando recoger el agua que se filtra por el techo. Dentro de este mismo escenario se puede ver a Don Ramón tranquilamente sentado, leyendo fragmentos de revistas pasadas.

A la vez, el narrador en *off* sugiere al espectador sobre la posible trama: “Sí, el balneario no es más que una ruina, y para devolverle la vieja prosperidad su dueño, Don Ramón, está dispuesto a todo. Tal vez a hacer trampas con la ley, y aún algo peor, mucho peor” (Berlangu *Los jueves hay milagro*). Simultáneamente aparecen los subtítulos sobre la imagen y es en este momento donde se puede presenciar una de las primeras mutilaciones (además, mal hecha) que sufrió la película: Don Ramón se detiene en una página donde se ve claramente el anuncio del milagro de la Virgen de Fátima, y luego hay una discontinuidad de la imagen en la que se ve al hombre guardando algo en su bolsillo. La censura eliminó torpemente la imagen donde Don Ramón está arrancando la página sobre el milagro, y el espectador puede notar que precisamente lo que puso en su bolsillo es la noticia sobre la Virgen de Fátima. Berlangu, por su parte, no sólo había puesto esta secuencia dentro del filme original como una señal premonitrice de la trama, sino también como un hipotexto de lo que realmente inspiró su película: “La idea surge porque esos años, en Valencia, se produce uno de esos “milagros” que, de vez en cuando, llegan a la prensa (...). La noticia se extiende por toda la región valenciana, y llegan a concentrarse en Vinromá hasta cincuenta mil personas (...). Comencé a pensar en Fátima, en Lourdes, en la explotación comercial de las apariciones y los milagros (...)” (Berlangu en Hernández Les e Hidalgo 70).

Don Ramón tendrá la misma idea de Berlangu en la cabeza, y cuando se presenta la ocasión de que el cura está ausente de la iglesia (se ha ido a atender a

Doña Paquita que “siempre se está muriendo”), todos los que conforman el grupo, que ya han sido previamente presentados en su cotidianidad, unen de forma descoordinada todas sus fuerzas y mañas para ir a escoger a un santo. Irónicamente, escogen a San Dimas (“el buen ladrón”) por el parecido que encuentran entre la estatua del santo en la iglesia y Don José (José Isbert). Así, escogen de manera forzada al terrateniente para que represente al santo, y el grupo, no sin discutir constantemente², piensa sobre todas las implicaciones técnicas que tiene “poner en escena” un milagro y las ganancias que recibirán de ello. Don Salvador le inyecta un aire de optimismo al grupo cuando se imagina el rumor del milagro extendiéndose por todo el mundo: “¡Y qué turistas! Turistas con escapularios dispuestos a pagar lo que sea por ver aparecer a don José (...) ¿No hubo en California la fiebre del oro? ¡Esta será la fiebre del...del milagro!” (Berlanga *Los jueves hay milagro*).

En *Marcelino*, por el contrario, la idea del milagro se sigue sosteniendo como se sostenía desde la tradición medieval: un evento inexplicable y sobrenatural que se inserta dentro de lo cotidiano como una manifestación de la presencia de Dios sobre la tierra, y que buscaba conmover y cohesionar a la sociedad alrededor de la fe. No sorprende entonces que la historia sobre Marcelino se cuente como un *flashback* en el que se recuerda “una historia de padres a hijos” de cómo un niño fue elegido por la gracia de Dios para evidenciar un milagro. Marcelino no podría ser representado más que por un niño conmovedor y bello como Pedrito Calvo que, en su actuación, hace constante hipertextualidad con las narraciones bíblicas del niño Jesús. En una misma tónica, el convento y el pueblo donde crece Marcelino es un espacio romantizado en el que los frailes, los guardias oficiales y todos los habitantes en general irradian una bondad casi absurda. Por su parte, el alcalde que parece ser el único personaje

² La incomunicación entre los personajes y la poca individualidad que éstos poseen son rasgos que distinguen el cine de Berlanga y que lo inscriben dentro de la tradición de lo sainetesco y el neorrealismo italiano. Además, este manejo “esperpéntico” de los personajes a través de planos secuencia muestra una visión de mundo donde el individuo y su originalidad importa poco, lo que contrasta mucho con el manejo que las películas de Hollywood le dan a sus personajes como individuos únicos e íntimos a través de los primeros planos. Al respecto, dice Hopewell: “Con la sucesión de primeros planos, la narración va progresando a medida que los personajes expresan opiniones contrapuestas hasta llegar a una síntesis fructífera. Pero el plano medio ininterrumpido hace que un coro de personajes contrasten opiniones que les conducen mucho más allá de su objetivo original (...). Entonces, en vez de presentar a unos individuos que dominan la narración, la historia gira alrededor de los intentos de individuos de dominar a los demás (...)” (1989, 208-209).

opositor, es el representante de una maldad tonta que al final queda opacada por el ejemplo de humildad de los frailes, y que en realidad no representa un mayor peligro para la unidad del pueblo. En una visita del alcalde al convento de los frailes, éste, acompañado de una banda sonora que parece prever sus malas intenciones, protesta frente al padre director porque no le quieren dar a Marcelino en adopción. El diálogo es bastante esquemático, sin los atropellos verbales típicos de una discusión (atropellos que, por supuesto, están presentes en la película de Berlanga), y se muestra al alcalde como un hombre irracional y alejado de Dios. En cambio, el fraile es un hombre sensato que con sus palabras nobles pretende darle una lección al otro. Todo lo demás, demuestra el carácter completamente maniqueo de la película y su ideología:

Alcalde: ¿Entonces, me lo niegan(A Marcelino)?

Fraile: Sí.

Alcalde: ¿Por qué? ¿Soy un ladrón? ¿Soy un asesino? ¿Un malvado?

Fraile: No eres nada de eso. Pero sí eres injusto y orgulloso.

Alcalde: ¡Quiero al chico!

Fraile: Mientes. No quieres más que satisfacer tu orgullo. No quieres al chico ni te preocupas por él (...). No tendrás al chico.

Alcalde: ¡Esta bien! ¡Se quedarán ustedes con el chico! ¡Pero aquí no!

(Vadja *Marcelino pan y vino*)

Es dentro de este carácter maniqueo-idealista donde el milagro es posible. La historia de Marcelino y de cómo Jesús se volvió su amigo se cuenta de la manera más verosímil que se puede y sin permitir que la producción cinematográfica ponga en duda su veracidad: la producción de Vadja intenta mostrar la figura de Cristo de manera bastante austera y aquello que no es posible mostrar, por su calidad de milagroso, sucede por fuera del recuadro de la cámara. A Marcelino se le ve ofreciendo el pan y el vino a un Cristo crucificado, y lo único que se puede percibir de éste son sus manos recibiendo el alimento, y una voz varonil y bastante sublime.

El tratamiento que Berlanga le da al milagro, muy al contrario de lo que presenta Vadja, y de lo que representó el padre Garau en la segunda parte de *Los jueves, milagro*, resulta contundente no sólo como juego deconstructivo de lo milagroso, sino porque mostrado a través y en comparación al cine permite hacer una meta-reflexión sobre el cine mismo y lo que significó esta herramienta de

reproducción técnica para la percepción de la realidad. El llamado “séptimo arte”, valiéndose de cámaras, luces, sombras y maquillaje, intenta ofrecerse al mundo como una historia creíble, pero a la vez, no deja de revelar que entre la pantalla y el espectador hay una distancia; las cicatrices-costuras del rollo cinematográfico siempre se están exhibiendo. El mundo del cine es el mundo de la ilusión, pero a la vez, es un mundo que logra subvertir y cuestionar lo que significa la realidad: el espectador también puede llegar a dudar si la ilusión realista del cine no es acaso la misma de la realidad. En *Una pareja feliz* (1951), la primera película de Berlanga, ya se comienza a ver el “cachondeo” de este director con las películas históricas y “fidedignas a la realidad” del régimen, y así mismo, comienza a dibujar su propia postura del cine como medio crítico que desdibuja la distinción entre la vida y la ficción. Dice Kathleen Vernon al respecto de esta primera producción: “the film endorses no easy opposition between cinema and real life. The film’s realism consists not in a denunciation of cinema’s ephemeral magic but in an invitation to the spectators to consider the illusions that drive their lives beyond the four walls of the movie theater” (Vernon 258).

En este punto es importante hablar sobre el concepto del simulacro de Baudrillard, pues por este se puede explicar la diferencia entre la presentación del milagro en una película como Marcelino y la película de Berlanga. En su artículo titulado “The precession of simulacra”, el teórico explica la problematización que hubo para muchas religiones en el hecho de representar la idea ininteligible de Dios como un ícono táctil: los iconoclastas ya olían el peligro que acarrearía hacer una figura visible de Cristo: “Their rage to destroy images rose precisely because they senses this omnipotence of simulacra, this facility they have of effacing God from the consciousness of men, and the overwhelming, destructive truth which they suggest” (Baudrillard en Storey 411). En ese contexto el milagro es el “gran simulacro”, pues la solidificación de lo divino en la tierra requiere de una imagen precisa, que a su vez niega la existencia de la divinidad. Sin embargo, por mucho tiempo los iconólatras ignoraron esta idea y veían en las imágenes de santos sólo un reflejo de Dios: el sentido sobrenatural del milagro sugería una realidad trascendental divina. Pero luego, en su imaginario contemporáneo, este sentido del milagro queda

socavado y se empieza a entender que éste no puede existir más que como un evento reproducible que sólo lleva a la consciencia de su propia artificialidad:

All of the Western faith and good faith was engaged in this wager on representation: that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could *exchange* for meaning and that something could guarantee this exchange –God, of course. But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say, reduce to the signs which attest his existence? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer anything but a gigantic simulacrum- not unreal, but a simulacrum, never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging it itself, in an interrupted circuit without reference or circumference.

(Baudrillard en Storey 412)

Era por esta razón, y no por ninguna otra, que a Berlanga se le hacían interesantes los milagros; en su entrevista con Juan Hernández y Manuel Hidalgo acerca de *Los jueves, milagro*, Berlanga explica que los milagros le importan por “su fenomenología mágica, siempre que no lleve aparejada la idea de la trascendencia. (...) los milagros me atraen, pero precisamente por eso, como cosa mágica, y también por lo que pueden tener de barroquismo, de espectacularidad” (Berlanga en Hernández Les e Hidalgo 71-72). El director hace sentir tal espectacularidad al mostrar que el milagro de San Dimas es uno donde los fuegos artificiales, los disfraces y las técnicas de iluminación, y no la intervención real de la divinidad, son esenciales para que éste se pueda producir. Los personajes involucrados en el milagro lo tienen muy bien pensado, e incluso llegan a ser más ácidos que el propio director, pues critican la superficialidad de los milagros representados en el cine: a ellos, “el milagrito del cine” también se les hace falso, y quieren lograr efectos que sean mucho más realistas: “Los milagritos en el cine (...), yo por lo menos no me convertiría (...), pero creo que con la ayuda del azul celeste podremos lograr efectos de primera calidad. Y estos discos ayudarán mucho” (Berlanga *Los jueves hay milagro*).

Pero la producción de primera calidad no parece ser como el grupo lo esperaba, y se ven “miserabilizados” cuando Don José y compañía intentan mostrar el milagro frente a la víctima más inocente que pudieron elegir: Mauro, o el típico loco del pueblo. Anteriormente, ya han estado a la caza de otras víctimas: Don

Salvador (el maestro), al lado de Don Evaristo (el científico aficionado) ya han ido a la escuela del pueblo y han experimentado con “el chico más imbécil de la clase”. En un primer momento, Don Salvador utiliza un viejo truco de magia para engañar al niño, pero enseguida éste se da cuenta que la supuesta moneda mágica está escondida bajo el cuello del saco de su maestro. Luego, Don Evaristo le dice al niño que va a convertir el agua en vino por medio de un experimento con químicos: Don Salvador le dice al niño que rece el Padre Nuestro, como si el experimento fuera atribuido a la divinidad, y finalmente los químicos que Don Evaristo recalca son de “de producción nacional”, no funcionan. El mal carácter del maestro no se hace esperar y el niño es castigado “por no haber rezado bien el Padre Nuestro”.

En esta escena se revelan muchas de las contradictorias relaciones que tienen los personajes con la idea de un milagro (el milagro puede ser desde un truco de magia, hasta un experimento), a la vez que se presencia una de las temáticas y alegorías constantes a lo largo de la película: la represión constante que sufren los niños por parte de los adultos; la idea de que la juventud, en este pueblo anquilosado, se encuentra reprimida por una clase tradicional que no permite ningún cambio. Don Salvador es la figura que principalmente encarna esta idea en su papel de maestro bipolar que se muestra cariñoso y comprensivo con sus pupilos, y que al segundo está amenazando con golpes y gritos. La abuela de Luisito, otra de las pocas aristocráticas del pueblo, es otro personaje que representa a la oxidada sociedad de Fontecilla con las prohibiciones y lecciones erróneas que le da a su nieto.

Como la juventud no se ha dejado engañar con lo del milagro, la víctima de éste finalmente es Mauro. Los hombres lo preparan todo para hacer la aparición por la noche, cerca del viejo vagón donde vive el loco, pero a la hora de “rodar” su milagro las cosas salen bastante mal; este momento constituye uno de los más divertidos de la película. José Isbert aparece disfrazado de San Dimas, no sin quejarse constantemente del disfraz, y termina por olvidar el diálogo en plena aparición. Por su parte, los técnicos de luces y sonidos son todo un desastre: los fuegos artificiales se disparan en todas direcciones y el tocadiscos, en vez de tocar una música de apoteosis, toca la ópera de Fígaro. No obstante, Mauro obedece las direcciones de San Dimas y las propaga por todo el pueblo: San Dimas volverá a

aparecer el miércoles a medianoche (es decir, el jueves, y de ahí el título de la película) y manda a que todos beban el agua curativa de Fontecilla. En efecto, el pueblo comienza a organizar una romería que, a diferencia de la romería en *Marcelino* que es propiciada por la pura fe alegre de los habitantes, es más bien un acto de comprobación y de fanatismo.

Así, el santo que estaba empolvado en un rincón de la iglesia cobra importancia y el grupo no deja de aprovecharse de esto: comienzan a vender el agua ahora "milagrosa" del balneario en botellas especiales y con publicidad especialmente hecha para el evento. Los pequeños nichos sociales del pueblo, incluyendo los niños de la escuela y hasta un equipo de fútbol que porta una pancarta ("El Fontecilla fútbol club saluda a San Dimas"), asisten a la procesión y están a la espera de que el santo por fin aparezca. Allí también estará en primera fila una de las pocas fuerzas femeninas de la película, la ya mencionada Doña Paquita, una vieja rezandera y creyente que, sin quererlo, está ayudando a que el milagro-engaño sea promovido, pues en una ocasión, antes de la gran peregrinación del pueblo, ella también dice haber presenciado el milagro. Así mismo, la figura del maestro seguido de sus alumnos con pancartas y velas será de gran fuerza durante el milagro, pues como el mismo lo dice, él es el "cronista oficial" del pueblo, y a la gente no le quedara más opción que creerle lo del milagro.

Al único que parece no importar todo esto es al sacerdote del pueblo, Don Fidel, y más bien tiene una actitud escéptica frente a los hechos: insiste que hasta que el milagro no sea explorado por la iglesia católica él no lo va a aceptar, de modo que su actitud y la de los "fieles" interesados en el milagro es completamente opuesta. Sin embargo, más adelante en la película, cuando el milagro parece ir cobrando más fuerza, el padre decide sacar la figura de San Dimas de su lugar oscuro y empolvado, para darle más prominencia; durante la película, la figura del padre jugará un papel representativo, pero que resulta bastante ambiguo, como se demostrará posteriormente, pues ni siquiera en la segunda parte de la producción parece estar de acuerdo con el milagro.

Supuestamente, por las mismas razones que el cura ("el milagro no tiene la aprobación eclesiástica") y por además sentirse enfermo, Don José se niega a

disfrazarse de San Dimas, pero al final todo el grupo logra arrastrarlo para que haga la escenificación. Las luces están listas, el gramófono encendido; de repente pasa el tren a una hora inesperada y termina dañando el gramófono, y las luces dejan de funcionar. Don José se niega a aparecer sin “los efectos especiales”, pues dice que el cura puede hacerle toda clase de preguntas. La música y la iluminación son los elementos perfectos para que el milagro sea de por sí un hecho incuestionable y en esto reside todo su poder, pues no tendría nada de milagroso si simplemente fuera la aparición de un hombre sin la escenificación: el milagro está hecho para que su público sea deslumbrado, no tanto por la figura aparecida, sino por el aura alrededor de éste. Se necesita que el milagro sea así, para que el deslumbramiento y el mutismo pesen más que la curiosidad del público. De nuevo, Berlanga logra explicar y fragmentar con humor el fenómeno del milagro, al mostrar la preocupación del grupo frente al posible cuestionamiento de la aparición, cosa que El Todopoderoso ni siquiera se preguntaría al enviar un milagro a la tierra:

Don José: Yo no me aparezco sin música. (...) está también don Fidel que me puede preguntar por cosas del cielo y decir qué es lo que hace San Nicasio... ¡y yo qué sé quién es San Nicasio!

Don Evaristo: A un pobre loco se le puede engañar, pero yo no sé si a trescientas personas.

Don José: Trescientas personas y un cura.

(Berlanga *Los jueves hay milagro*)

Al final, Don José logra escabullirse del escenario de aparición y el pueblo se queda expectante. Todos vuelven a sus casas y Don Fidel, que a la final ha ido sólo para comprobar la falsedad del hecho, tiene un diálogo bastante tenso con Don Salvador en el que no se sabe quién es más sarcástico:

Don Fidel: ¡Caramba! ¡Qué pronto se ha cansado usted de esperar!

Don Salvador: ¡Los niños! ¡Pobrecillos! ¡Tienen que dormir!

(Berlanga *Los jueves hay milagro*)

Apenas dicho lo anterior, Don Salvador golpea en la cabeza a dos de los niños, y éstos lo siguen sumisamente mientras cantan una canción de loor a San

Dimas. Cuando parece que el milagro está destinado al fracaso y que todo se va a resolver de la manera más patética y humorística posible, muy al estilo de Berlanga, la película cambia de tono y se nota inmediatamente la mano interventora de la censura. Ahora la intervención no es sólo de pequeños cortes en las escenas, sino de la reescritura del guión completo. Luis Berlanga pensaba que su ya clásico final de miseria en donde se descubre la falsedad del milagro, no tenía nada en contra de la iglesia, y que precisamente resultaba aleccionador:

Fue un asunto muy curioso. Yo, que tenía mis miedos por la censura, pensaba que lo ortodoxo sería, y así lo escribí, que el falso milagro acabara mal, o sea, que como unos señores habían inventado un milagro por intereses comerciales, sin ser santos ni ser Dios, el milagro tenía que fallar. Pero resulta que no, resulta que ellos querían que San Dimas apareciera de verdad. Total que, al final, no sabemos, ni yo mismo lo sé, si ese señor que aparece es un santo o un pícaro.

(Berlanga en Hernández Les e Hidalgo 72)

En efecto, el “verdadero” San Dimas llega sin previo aviso en uno de los vagones del tren y está siendo perseguido por la policía. El primero que lo encuentra es Mauro, pero es un encuentro más bien desafortunado: el tal pícaro se ha subido al vagón donde vive Mauro para escapar de los guardias y ha permitido que el vagón se ruede por las vías. Mauro, aún confiado del milagro, le reza a San Dimas para que haga algo por su vagón, y el hombre comienza a cuestionar a Mauro sobre su fe, a la par que indaga por lo del tal milagro. El ladrón parece saber qué decir en todo momento, se muestra con gran confianza, y el espectador ya intuye que ha venido para reformar, como él mismo lo dice, “las fuerzas vivas” de Fontecilla.

El pícaro se hace llamar posteriormente Martino Martino y es protagonizado por Richard Basehart, un actor reconocido por aquella época. Muchos críticos ven en su papel un elemento forzado y disruptivo que daña la esperpéntica armonía de la película: “Más discutible es la presencia de Basehart, de moda por aquellos años por su participación en *La Strada* de Fellini. El actor no parece sentirse cómodo en su papel en ningún momento” (Pulido, 2007). Si bien es verdad que se puede notar la falsa picardía de este actor, que además se distingue de los demás por su galantería, lo curioso del personaje de Martino es que llega como un irruptor del plan, no necesariamente para evidenciar que el grupo ha engañado al pueblo, sino para que el

milagrito que éstos habían creado se vuelva realidad, y así darles una lección. Abruptamente, Martino se presenta en el balneario como un invitado más, aunque no sin revelarle indirectamente a Don Ramón su conocimiento acerca del milagro falso. Martino aparecerá en varios de los escenarios del grupo (la peluquería, la escuela, etc.), como una figura omnisciente y omnipotente que por medio de bromas y trucos, sorprende a todos los miembros con el exceso de información que porta. A la final, los miembros del grupo se reúnen con él y por medio de más trucos, el pícaro demuestra que podría ser un potencial miembro del grupo, y así hacen un acuerdo en el que Basehart los ayudará a concretar el rumor del milagro. Es entendible desde un punto de vista de la censura que Martino quiera convertir el milagro en una realidad, y sin embargo, no deja de sorprender los cruces de discursos que hay entre lo sobrenatural y lo mágico, elementos que de cierto modo se contradicen entre sí, y hasta pueden resultar blasfemos (hay que recordar toda la historia inquisidora de España que no es ajena a toda esta problemática).

Sin embargo, Martino comienza a interceder de varias maneras, como si la omnipotencia no le bastara. A la vez, se vuelve un aleccionador personalizado del grupo: por ejemplo, termina hipnotizando a Don José, un tacaño empedernido, para que se vuelva filántropo. Martino se autoproclama el director del montaje del milagro y le entrega a cada miembro su función: Don Antonio y Don Salvador son mandados a fingir enfermedades mientras que los otros miembros del grupo tendrán que ayudar con la venta del agua milagrosa. Martino mismo se encarga de ordenar las publicidades de las botellas, mostrándose totalmente confiado en que todas se venderán. En ocasiones, Martino se muestra como un personaje listo, el gran *trickster* del grupo, pero a la vez no deja de proclamar un discurso moralizante y que aparece forzosamente insertado dentro de la película. En una escena donde Martino está en la torre de la iglesia junto con Don Antonio, éste comienza a proferir todo un monólogo sobre la perfección de la naturaleza que nada tiene que ver con la situación, y que le sentaría muy bien a una película como la de *Marcelino*: “El mayor milagro es que todo funcione de esta forma con tanta sencillez. Todo está en su sitio” (Berlanga *Los jueves hay milagro*).

Una vez está listo el plan, las cosas para el grupo salen de forma inesperada, pues las enfermedades de Don Antonio y Don Salvador se vuelven reales, y el agua que parecía ser una completa patraña es lo único que los va a curar. Allí vemos a doña Paquita, una de las más engañadas, llevando agua a todos los enfermos y es así como deja de estar en la mentira para estar en la verdad. El rumor empieza a regarse por toda Fontecilla y todos comienzan a ir al balneario por el agua milagrosa. A los que no pueden pagar por el agua que ya está haciendo rico a Don Ramón, Martino les dice que el agua que brota cerca de la estación del tren es la misma, y así queda completamente marcado para el espectador su labor de santo y del personaje que quiere caerle bien al público. El pueblo se convierte en un desfile de gentes miserables que intentan conmover al espectador desde lo más patético: niños y ancianos enfermos, paralíticos, pobres. Tal vez, la escena que intenta ser más conmovedora es la del niño que le reza fervorosamente a San Dimas por su perro Pepo y curiosamente el perro llega en un vagón del tren para reencontrarse con su amo. Por supuesto, Berlanga estaría completamente en contra de un tratamiento tan lastimero de las pasiones humanas; de hecho, en otra de sus entrevistas, el director habla sobre los límites que se deben tener entre lo tierno y lo lastimero, y lo que detesta en lo segundo sería una crítica a esa imagen forzada dentro de su propio filme del niño y el perro: "Para la ternura hay canales aceptables y canales inaceptables. El ternurismo es una gran trampa, un gran engaño. Yo detesto los tópicos de la falsa ternura: el perro fiel, el viejo bondadoso, el niño desvalido, la flor..." (Berlanga en Hernández Les e Hidalgo 62-63).

Para completar lo "milagroso" de la escena, aparece sin razón alguna el vagón de Mauro, y éste, lleno de felicidad, comienza a declarar otra vez el milagro y se une con varios creyentes que se dirigen a la iglesia para glorificar la estatua de San Dimas. Se esperaría que en este punto Don Fidel hubiera aceptado el milagro debido a los hechos contundentes (el agua y los rezos ya han empezado a curar a las personas), y sin embargo es el único personaje que permanece incrédulo; para una censura a la que le gustaba tanto los padres fervorosos, Don Fidel deja de ser un personaje contundente y más bien termina echando a todos los creyentes de la iglesia: "¡Fuera todos! La iglesia no es un gallinero. Aquí hay que venir los

domingos a las ocho de la mañana” (Berlanga *Los jueves hay milagro*). Cabe notar, no obstante, que cuando se queda solo de nuevo, se dirige a San Dimas con unas palabras enigmáticas que quedan en la completa ambigüedad: “¿Por qué no? ¿Por qué no, Dios mío?” (Berlanga *Los jueves hay milagro*).

Al presenciar el verdadero milagro, y al haber sido ellos mismos curados de su enfermedad, el grupo termina por arrepentirse de lo hecho, y Martino, en un dialógica socrática, intenta motivar a los miembros del grupo con todo el dinero que ya han ganado del milagro, pero éstos ya no parecen entusiasmados. Aunque ciertamente hay momentos de humor y sarcasmo que se le cuelan a la censura (por ejemplo, el carácter violento de Don Salvador con los niños, o la referencia a que Don Antonio, el alcalde, no necesita sobornar a nadie, porque con ser alcalde le basta), aquí el humor de los personajes queda completamente opacado por la moralina de la película y se lamentan de haber engañado al pueblo: comienzan a decir la verdad desde un balcón del balneario. Pero ahora, el pueblo que aparece más unido que nunca gracias al milagro, termina por descartar lo que está oyendo, pues demuestra que en realidad sí hubo milagro: aparecen de nuevo imágenes lastimeras de enfermos y niños paralíticos que dicen que el agua sí los ha curado y que el rumor se está esparciendo por todas las regiones cercanas.

El único que termina reprimiendo al grupo es el aún incrédulo Don Fidel que comienza a cuestionarlos, y cuando le cuentan sobre Martino, este último ya ha desaparecido y ha dejado una carta donde confiesa ser San Dimas, a la par que deja una foto al estilo “Clark Gable”, como dice Berlanga; ahora los santos también tienen su propio estilo para desaparecer. Con un *close-up* de la foto, la película llega a su fin y no se deja de sentir cierta inquietud frente a este final en el que la censura quiere restituir el valor del milagro dentro de la tradición española, a la par que intenta darle un nuevo *look*, una actualización a través de un personaje como Martino al que le queda todo, menos el papel de santo. Todo este final de cierto modo refleja los intentos de la Iglesia por hacer pervivir su religiosidad en un mundo cambiante en el que el milagro y su carácter sobrenatural parecieran no tener más espacio.

Nuevos tiempos, nuevas posturas: la vigencia de *Los jueves, milagro*

La producción berlanguiana, a la vez que *Marcelino, pan y vino* pueden contarse como una de las últimas películas españolas que tratan el tema de lo religioso. En efecto, el declive del cine religioso de la época se hace cada vez más evidente; un buen ejemplo de lo que sucedió con el cine católico, se puede ver en la Semana de Cine de Valladolid, un evento que intentaba “reconciliar el cine con la religión” (Pelaz López en Ruiz Sánchez 89) Un hecho que demuestra este desplazamiento es que para la tercera Semana de Cine, *Los jueves, milagro* fue de las películas que más presencia tuvo durante el festival, y de hecho ganó la premiación entre los filmes que se presentaron. Poco a poco la Semana de Cine de Valladolid, ante la falta de calidad de las películas nacionales, comenzó a llamar a cada vez más productores de cine internacionales que traían películas críticas. La diversificación temática no se hizo esperar y a España no le quedó más camino que el del cambio y una posición menos arcaica frente a los nuevos tiempos.

Los jueves, milagro es una película que sigue siendo estimuladora para la reflexión acerca de las ideologías tanto políticas, como religiosas que pueden componer un momento histórico específico, y no deja de hacer un eco mordaz sobre la composición conflictiva de muchas culturas, por ejemplo la española y también la latinoamericana, en donde la religión y sus distintas manifestaciones tienen una presencia tan marcada. El cine, en ese sentido, no solamente funciona como un espejo social, sino más bien tiene la potencia de funcionar como una crítica y posibilidad de posicionamiento frente a tales disquisiciones. De acuerdo con la crítica que propone la película de Berlanga, no es descabellado hacerse preguntas acerca de la manifestación del milagro en la cultura actual. ¿Qué tanta vigencia tiene este elemento dentro de los imaginarios populares en España y Latinoamérica? ¿Qué funciones puede cumplir esta manifestación cultural, y qué usos (y desusos) se le pueden dar?

No queda demás señalar que la pregunta queda abierta, pero como un abre bocas hacia este cuestionamiento que exitosamente la película de Berlanga plantea, se pueden mencionar los recientes y muy provocativos trabajos de exposiciones acerca de las manifestaciones religiosas en el mundo, los medios de

comunicación y el arte contemporáneo como *Habeas corpus: que tengas (un) cuerpo para (ex)poner* y *El (d)efecto barroco*. Habría que pensar, por ejemplo, en un trabajo como el de Claudia Llosa sobre *El niño Pepita*, un falso documental sobre un santo contemporáneo que expone ácidamente, casi que haciendo eco de la producción de Berlanga, la situación moderna en la que se encuentra lo religioso: elemento mágico y que cambia la cotidianidad monótona de una cultura; disculpa para el comercio, la publicidad y el turismo; barroquismo, kitsch y espectacularidad del mundo actual. Como lo simplifica el anuncio de la exposición³, "El 'Niño Pepita' es el único santo que ha decidido incorporarse a la modernidad. Utiliza herramientas 2.0 para llegar a sus fieles y vender productos y souvenirs. Su teletienda online es una de las más exitosas del mercado, pionera en su categoría" (Centro de Cultura Contemporánea de Barcelona).

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Multiplication of Plots and Realities in Hispanic Cinema

Impossible constructions do exist in cinema

(Christian Metz)

This paper aims to compare two cinematic texts - *Historias de la Radio*, J. S. de Heredia, 1955; *Babel*, A. G. Iñárritu, 2006 - analyzing their unusual structure and showing how a genre of a deeply national story develops into a global saga during a fifty year span. The first film was created in conditions of a completely isolated dictatorship representing a homogeneous Spanish society located in the capital Madrid and the furthest spatial transportation is to a Castilian village which at the end of the third story opens the window to another world symbolized by a plane taking off. The second film was produced by a Mexican director but it doesn't stick to any national identity and its constant switching from one space to another seems to have no physical boundaries. "In *The Making of Babel* (...) Iñárritu says he has always been fascinated by the air that we all breathe and travel through, that invisible entity that we all share. With this film he wants to show that although we are in different spaces and different time zones there is a literal cross-continental connection" (cited in Pisters 5). This fascination with the *air* echoes the radio *ether* of *Historias de la Radio* where the omnipresence of the media was just at its start but already predestined to burst into a television-video-computer- internet-cell phone madness embedded in *Babel*. The time acceleration and the space intensification are shown in both films forming a gradation within and between each of them. If in *Historias de la Radio* it is a binary opposition *city – country*, *Babel* offers a four element block starting with Moroccan village with its slow live tempo , ending with overpopulated Tokyo where life flows at unbearable speed and placing a sub binary of México – United States in between.

As was mentioned above, both films have an unusual structure which permits their comparative analysis and the first question to be addressed is what the social and aesthetic premises are for this type of structure in narrative forms like literature and cinema. Cinema being a child of all the arts, which have existed for centuries, inherited their techniques, mechanisms and styles in order to complete its main mission - to transmit a message provoking mental and emotional reactions and extrapolations of this message in the spheres of the intellectual and the imaginary. Both, literature and cinema are operating via a text (written, visual) and possess several common ontological characteristics – they represent a story, developing in time with a certain structure (though there always have been experimental deviations from this traditional deterministic model). In terms of receiving or processing the text by the public (or consumers) the common element is the fact of spending a certain amount of time, a period which abstracts the subject from the real world, on reading or watching; in other words, it is an event or experience anticipated by expectations of pleasure - individual or shared. In case of reading, the individual prevails, but it still might be shared in out-loud reading sessions or post-reading discussions. In case of film viewing, the collective perception was initially the case and sharing had a lot of meaning inside of the community: “My family was the first in our apartment building to buy a TV” – testifies Terrence Ross – “Neighbors would come over to see the Sid Caesar show and whatever boxing matches were broadcast (...) That these events took place was part of my family lore, our narrative” (Ross 19). Visiting the movie theatre had a lot of cultural and social meaning all over the world in the 20th century until the availability of all kind of personal media devices changed the whole paradigm of consuming film; the *one person – on screen* relation has become overwhelming. As Coates points out “the earlier viewer was part of a crowd with shared generic expectations, the modern one is alone in the dark” (31)

Technical progress is not the only reason for this individualization; it has to deal with global world’s changing in general. Migration, fragmentation, isolation, loss of national identity and the formation of a universal, global identity, contribute to an emotional and social independence which makes collective experiences unnecessary in spite of the fact that the virtual distances apparently do not exist

anymore. Coates characterizes the 21st century society as a “post - individual” one where a “post – individual subject” operates in a “crowd of disconnected and often mutually hostile plural impulses” (28).

Intercultural and international hybridization inevitably reforms the traditional text. In this regard Rita Barnard brings up Benedict Anderson’s meditations on the relationship between the nation and the novel extrapolating it to another level which is “a novel not of the nation but of the world” and questioning whether it is possible to “find a new kind of plot, with new coordinates of time and space, that may serve as a corollary to the brave neo world of millennial capitalism and perhaps even provide the conceptual preconditions for a cosmopolitan society” (207, 208). The *McOndo* generation artists (including writers Alberto Fuguet and Edmundo Paz Soldán as well as Alejandro González. Iñárritu, Guillermo del Toro, Alfonso Cuarón and Rodrigo García Márquez among others) respond to this cultural and social demand seeking “to abandon plot as such” and “to devise new and more cosmopolitan narrative forms: forms that might reshape our received notions of human interconnection, causality, temporality, social space and so forth” (Barnard 208). Metamorphoses which take place in the structure of 21st century global narrative (written or recorded) break the main conventions of a traditional national one which is a story developing in a chronological, linear order. Instead the audience is offered a text which is non-linear, has a multiple plot and, in the nearest future, will become interactive. Nowadays *parallel, bifurcating, fragmented, decentralized, mosaic, jigsaw, puzzle etc.* narrations are more suitable or comfortable for perception. We just don’t have time anymore to follow each particular story from the beginning to the end in a world where several torrents of information and a multi-tasking way of living have become the norm; we lose attention, we become bored. Instead, a matrix of several stories developing at the same moment and switching from one to another is better captured by our receptors and keeps us in the tension which is required in 21st century. “It is time for our art to approximate our minds more, and our minds are multilayered and non-linear” – proclaims Ross – “Our minds work on a variety of levels at once (...) with a variety of strands that jump around while coming more clearly or less clearly into the foreground of our

consciousness” (22). The latest experimentations in presenting fragmented scrambled realities in literature and art definitely proved to be successful but still its *representation* with a codified system of signs or with images on a flat surface leads to certain compromises and conventions which deserve special attention.

As has been stated earlier, novel and film possess common ontological features. Both deal with the phenomenon of *narration*. Both recount stories. “It is part of their narrative nature to produce series of diegetic images (...) in both the reader’s and the viewer’s mind. In order to recreate the story (...) the receptor needs to reconstruct the spatial images that occur in time”. (Cohen, cited in Mínguez – Arranz 39). In his further comparison of cinema and literature in terms of *narrativity*, Mínguez – Arranz demonstrates three aspects of how the former grew up from to the later: a) since all representations implicitly mean something for a social system which perceives them, finally all works of imagination lead to narration; b) the moving image is an easy means of expressing duration and transformation; c) initially cinema was just a “technically newfangled spectacle” and in order to become legitimate and transform into a noble art it had to develop its narrative capacities (40). There is no doubt that the first stories represented in cinema borrowed their structures from the novel – a well-established genre by that time; as Mínguez-Arranz puts it “a certain novelistic heritage can be found in all cases of cinematic narrativity” (40). But a fact that can definitely be considered an advantage for cinema and one that has been analyzed and theorized throughout the century of cinema development is that literature (which is expressed by language and is more narrative than representative by nature) and figurative arts (which are expressed by images or shapes and are representation themselves), are absorbed and in some sense superseded by cinema that has them both. In other words, it combines the iconic nature of the figurative arts being discontinuous due to its segmentation into separate shots, but at the same time there are three narrative mechanisms at work: sequences of shots, verbal discourse of the characters and a sound track (Mínguez – Arranz 41). This thesis could originate a system of oppositions which goes back to Greek concepts of *diegesis* versus *mimesis*.

The art of Cinema	
<i>diegesis</i>	<i>mimesis</i>
language sign (verbal)	icon (visual, aural)
narrates	represents
verbal	figurative
moving	still
sequence (* the conflict between two shots also produces a meaning)	shot
time	space

Regarding this system, an interesting tendency may be observed through the texts in question: *Historias de la Radio* is obviously more verbal. First of all, it has a narrator whose *voice over* appears twice in the film, introducing all the stories when we enter the studio for the first time and describing a backward Spanish village before the third story starts, which *per se* is a very novelistic feature. Secondly, the dialogues are very meaningful in this cinematic text; there is a lot of comic word play and the action would be incomprehensible (or absurd) without the discursive part which comes from its characters. Meanwhile *Babel* is obviously more visual and aural; the action in each episode is transparent and could be successfully deduced from the sequences even without hearing the dialogues. Picturesque, almost slow motion shots which are unconsciously fetichized by the spectator (e.g. views of Moroccan village stuck in antiquity versus the sights of extremely urbanized Tokyo) could be considered units by themselves and function independently of the sequence as static mimetic objects.

Coates' bold pronouncement that nowadays the "continuous narrative has collapsed" (27) is not unanimously supported by film and literature theorists. In our particular case we address certain contradictions regarding the narrative structure since the texts in question undoubtedly break the traditional pattern but, as becomes obvious from a deeper point of view, not to the extent of a complete destruction of its molecular structure. In his *Concepts of Film Theory* in the section dedicated to

narrative structure, Dudley Andrew gives the results of research by Soviet folklorist V. Propp who identified 31 repetitive functions (kinds of actions) which are met in 100 hundred Russian folk tales; each function has a stable position and appears in the same place in the sequence of other functions which means that the number of possible plots is reduced to 31 models which repeat themselves with minor variations. This finding had big resonance among film theorists who started considering these models as basic structures for all film plots (83). Andrew also gives various examples of further developments of Propps's system, one of which belongs to Claude Brémond. According to the latter "every event exists in a triadic form: a possibility conceived, a carrying out of that possibility (successfully or not), and a resultant state" (Andrew 83) This model fits perfectly each story of *Historias de la Radio* where the protagonists are given an opportunity for a qualitative change in their state.

Another extrapolation of Propp's system has been made by Tzvetan Todorov who brings it to a higher level of generalization which could be applied to our second text - *Babel*: "Every narrative is a movement between two states of equilibrium, which are similar but not identical. At the beginning there is always a balanced situation (...) then something comes along to break the calm and creates an imbalance (...) the equilibrium is then restored, but it is not the same as at the beginning" (cited in Dudley Andrew 84). David Bordwell borrows Russian formalist terms and concepts of *fabula* and *syuzhet* in order to analyze a film plot structure giving an absolute primacy to a causal mechanism:

In *fabula* terms, the reliance upon character cause and effect and the definition of the action as the attempt to achieve a goal are salient features of the canonic format. At the level of the *syuzhet*, the classical film respects the canonic pattern of establishing an initial state of affairs which gets violated and which must then be set right (...) the plot consists of an undisturbed stage, the disturbance, the struggle, and the elimination of the disturbance.

(Bordwell "Classical Hollywood Cinema" 19)

Bordwell states that this *syuzhet* pattern has been inherited from "the well-made play, the popular romance, and, crucially, the late nineteenth – century short story" rather than from the novel ("Classical Hollywood Cinema" 19), though the

desire to deviate from these stable canonic forms has been always present in literature and film artists (e.g. J. L. Borges *Ficciones*, 1956; Griffith, *Intolerance*, 1916).

According to Christian Metz and other film critics (Bordwell, Andrew etc.), the “breakdown of narrativity” mentioned above, is still a very questionable point since they disagree with that the contention that “in the past the cinema was entirely narrative and no longer is so today, or is so at least to a much lesser extent” (Metz 208). Metz believes that, on the contrary, modern film is more narrative and that “the main contribution of the new cinema is to have enriched the filmic narrative” (208). Andrew goes farther, affirming that “while literary artists may work in non-narrative modes, the cineaste seems condemned to some form of narrative just to rein in galloping connotations of images” since “narrative competence holds our significations in place to give them order and thrust” (76). In his essays Bordwell repeatedly advocates the same point of view opining that “however creative a movie twisted causation or temporal order or point of view is, its revisions are always intelligible to mainstream audiences” and even if the screenwriting manuals encourage the new non-linear trends in plotting, they “still demand intelligible exposition, unified strings of events, and vivid turning points” (“The Way” 72, 93). Bordwell’s preoccupations lie in the sphere of the consumption process which relates to the public’s motivation and capacity for perceiving the film. “How could innovations be made comprehensible and pleasurable to a wide audience?” – and – “How long can you keep the audience confused before they turn off?” (“The Way” 73). Both, Bordwell and Metz point out that artists as producers are still operating within a familiar system of codes since “the main figures of cinematographic intelligibility inhabit the film-makers’ minds to a much greater extent than they are aware of” and new “disjunctive techniques are situated within an orthodox plot” (Metz 211; Bordwell “The Way” 76).

What must be acknowledged though, is the fact that rather than a “breakdown”, there has been a vast renewal and enrichment of film *syntax* and its stylistic devices. According to Metz “the new cinema, far from having abandoned the narrative, gives us narratives that are more diversified, more ramified, and more

complex” (227). *Syntax* is the key word in this process of complication since what has undergone a modification in the texts in question is the *order* of presenting events; in other words, what has become apparently chaotic is the arrangement of meanings which differs in *real* and *representational times*.

Real time				Representational time			
consecutive happening				chronological order			
1 meaning	2 meaning	3 meaning	4 meaning	1 meaning	2 meaning	3 meaning	4 meaning
simultaneous happening				non-chronological order			
1 meaning				2 meaning	3 meaning	1 meaning	4 meaning
2 meaning							
3 meaning				present moment	following episode	flashback	episode following the 3d meaning
4 meaning				In case of simultaneity in real time, the representational time can have any order			

Each meaning corresponds to a segment which follows the other segment in real or representational time since we can perceive only one meaning at a time unless we are presented with a split screen narration which is not the case in the texts we are analyzing. The confusing effect is achieved by the fact that the real time order doesn't coincide with the representational time order as if the segments were started up in a “shuffle mode” but the nuclear structure of the segment remains intact; it doesn't break the narrative laws and even in extreme cases like *Irreversible* (Gaspar Noé, 2002) where the events are represented from the end to the beginning each segment is still narrated in a chronological order and the logical structure of these mini plots, which was described above, is actually working. Each story in *Babel* and in *Historias de la Radio* represents a mini drama with an exposition, a conflict, and its solution. What takes place in this type of texts is the interplay between familiar

and unfamiliar codes: the syntax on the level of micro narration, within the segment, is perceived as normal and comfortable; meanwhile on the level of macro narration it has a puzzling effect since the segments go in random order, but is it really random? Looking deeper into the structure of the texts in question, the interior logic is clearly detected and even their classification is possible. The spatial (semantic) and temporal (syntactic) dimensions betray the viewer in these cases but situational or contextual aspects (pragmatic) keeps the text from falling apart and finally gives it a meaning.

The structures in use for mosaic texts are usually based on one unifying element which could be a *location* (a common space where several personages function), an *event* (usually an accident in which several personages are involved), a common theme or problematic¹. The earlier film – *Historias de la Radio* - falls into the first category while *Babel*, obviously in the second. Represented in a scheme these structures look like an Internet map – a visualization of the modern way of processing the information which flows from multiple channels (See Appendix: figure 1, figure 2, figure 3). *Babel* consists of 22 blocks which switch from one space to another in random order. *Historias de la Radio* consists of three main blocks connected to the nucleus which is the radio station. The “satellite” of the nucleus is the apartment in Madrid where two ordinary *madrileños* are doing their morning exercise. The organization of events in real time described in *Babel* forms a complex ramified structure which is technically performed by crosscutting (figure 4). In *Historias de la Radio* the real time of each story including the romantic story line inside the radio station is generalized since after each story ends, the narration goes back to a common apartment in Madrid with two neighbors exercising in the morning.

Importantly enough, there is no direct link from one episode to another as it is the case in a linear story, but the connection is made through the nucleus which triggers all the events of the narration. When Bordwell stated, regarding classical Hollywood storytelling, that “the classical segment is not a sealed entity. Spatially

¹ There are other types of structure which are not discussed in this paper: a) an event as a central, core element and several interpretations of this event from different perspectives b) a bifurcating or forking plot where a protagonist goes through several versions of future development always coming back to the crucial point where he has to make a choice.

and temporally it is closed, but *causally* it is open. It works to advance the causal progression and open up new developments” (“Classical Hollywood” 20) he actually also described the mechanism of the non-linear, multi narrative text where the *cause* – *effect* mechanism functions on two levels – within the segment in a linear horizontal direction and between the segments in a non-linear vertical direction and the simultaneous development of all of them makes the picture complex and incomprehensible and only by the end of the film can all pieces of the puzzle be put together².

Regarding the polyphonic nature of mosaic texts an interesting problem arises: how do the characters of the segments and the segments themselves relate to each other? Is it coordination or subordination? Bordwell distinguishes two types of multiple narratives; in one case “the plot can fit the fates of several characters to the four-part structure, but usually some get slighted” but “in other ensemble films, several protagonists are given equal emphasis” (“The Way” 96). The texts in question obviously belong to the latter category where all protagonistic weight is distributed among the main characters of each episode.

In terms of temporal categories it would be difficult to acknowledge equality even if apparently none of the episodes is subordinated to the other in terms of dramatic development. Time is inexorable. And despite all the tricks with anachronic order, which are possible in fiction, the choice has to be made about the actual order in a final representation of the events, in other words, which episode will follow which. In his brilliant article titled “Film Futures” Bordwell observes: “the future, shown first supplies some preconditions for later ones, always for the audience and sometimes for the character. Psychologically, the primacy effect treats the first future as a benchmark setting down the conditions that will be repeated, varied, omitted, or negated in subsequent versions” (99). Elaborating on this statement it is possible to conclude that when navigating through a film, we accumulate experience and see the

² A. G. Iñarritu, in his interview on *Babel*, gives an interesting opinion regarding the fact that the episodes in a mosaic text are sealed spatially and temporally: “I think that *Babel*(...) are four stories that are never connected physically. They never see the face of each other; the actors met once at Cannes. But they are emotionally connected, so my job was to find the right visual language to make four stories that apparently should not have physical connections form a whole.” (<http://movies.ign.com/articles/742/742071p1.html>)

following event differently from if it had been incorporated earlier or later. These factors let the director manipulate audience perception achieving the intended effects:

In the first instance the reader's or viewer's interest is based on the novelty of the events to come that can contribute something to the story. In the second instance, this change of order can be used to harmonize initial suppositions, to postpone information, thus producing curiosity, to create more or less diffuse narrative spaces, and to produce greater subjectivity through the memory of the characters.

(Mínguez – Arranz 59)

When watching the first episode in *Historias de la Radio* the viewer is not sure about the denouement – whether it will be positive or negative and leave the protagonist satisfied or frustrated respectively. But after the first, and more, after the second story the certainty, that all other conflicts will be resolved, increases. In *Babel* the episode with a gunshot is shown two times from different perspectives and during the second time “it is completely unexpected for everyone on the bus. But, for the spectator who has seen the film's opening, this unexpected event stems from the activity of the boys” (McGowan 407). The fact that the gun shot was shown previously from the boy's point of view gives them more agency since not only did this event start their family tragedy but all four stories derive from this accident.

Causality, identified by Bordwell as a main moving force of any plot development, goes hand in hand with *casualty*, both forming a dialectical unity of logic – non logic, order – chaos, rational - irrational, light – darkness, God – Devil, if you will. The realm of casualty is: luck, chance, coincidence, destiny, fate etc. from which the characters of the drama cannot escape. The unpredictable and uncontrollable future is prevalent in a multi narrative plot which is also a mark of existential changes in modern reality:

The recent widespread incorporation of improvisation and chance has infiltrated surrealist factors into films whose narrative structures are often unable to bear the pressure of such an injection of the unforeseen. The resultant incoherence has always been latent in cinema, but only recent circumstances and directorial freedom have made it a central issue.

(Coates 30)

The impossibility of control of their own destiny leads to the loss of agency in the characters since they are manipulated by a hidden force lurking behind them (McGowan 406). Bordwell's suggestion that we "might expect that converging-fates plots, which riddle their scenes with coincidence work against the primacy of causal connections" ("The Way" 98) reflects an osmotic mutual dependence between two moving forces which leads to a relation between lack or presence of agency. In other words, at the moments of a fatal blow (like the gun shot in *Babel*) the protagonists completely lose their agency at the mercy of the bad luck but having recovered their will back, they start taking action and it finally brings them to a desired goal which is absolutely causal. A causal – casual model also works on another level in *Babel*: a gunshot is an accidental fact but it triggers a spreading net of consequences or effects. In *Historias de la Radio* coincidence is a key element too but in a positive way. In all three stories the characters are benefited by good luck which lets them change their desperate situations; in other words, a blind chance which is casual causes positive effects in the lives of the characters. Although a coincidence is seemingly unpredictable within the narration and is meant to produce a shocking effect, it still runs a danger of becoming conventional. As Bordwell states:

Sometimes the very overtness of the converging-fates strategy can make the plot cohere. Convergence is revealed not just through the selection of events but also through narrational strategies of ordering and emphasis. After all, in any story, some fairly chancy occurrence gets the ball rolling, and major characters tend to assemble at the climax.

("The Way" 99)

An American independent film maker, Lodge Kerrigan gives a more radical opinion asserting that: "the simple casualty you find in most films is a lie - in reality we do things and make decisions as a consequence of years of accumulated experience" (4) which implies that casualty is an accumulated causality. But even so, it still works as a stitching mechanism for the segments of the text, making their randomness more digestible for the spectator; in this case the coherence works on a higher pragmatic level. Another factor which contributes to the text's integrity is its "architectonics" or organizing principle. In *Historias de la Radio* a cyclical return to the morning exercises and to the radio station is used before the narration proceeds to

the next story which works as a familiar port not letting the spectator be completely disoriented. *Babel's* connections within the text are more complex since they function on the level of associations which the viewer is probably not aware of, e.g. , the first switch links the kids in Morocco to the kids in USA and the contrast in their life conditions is stunning; or when Amelia's nephew skillfully decapitates the chicken suddenly a switch to Morocco occurs with Susan bleeding and Richard trying to help her out. One scene is connected to the other by slaughter-victimization allusions; the scene where Susan is "operated on" by the local vet is contrasted to a sterile and absolutely high tech dentist's office in Japan which demonstrates a screaming abyss between two realities. If Eisenstein's theory of montage is based on a conflict and shocking effect between the shots, in this case it would be possible to apply it to the relationship formed between two segments of the film.

The comparative picture of *Historias de la Radio* and *Babel* shows the evolution of a mosaic text where "the frames of individual stories are opened up and intertwined in much more complex, subtle and sometimes even random ways" (Pisters 3). But a much greater potential is already foreseen for the future of visual narrative. The body of the text will become a range of hyperlinks inviting the viewer become a co-creator of a story and choose which plot line to pursue (Bordwell, "The Way" 103; Barnard 208). Regarding this perspective, the question remains open: does it mean a breakdown of narrativity or a break out from the prison of determined developments?..

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Appendix:

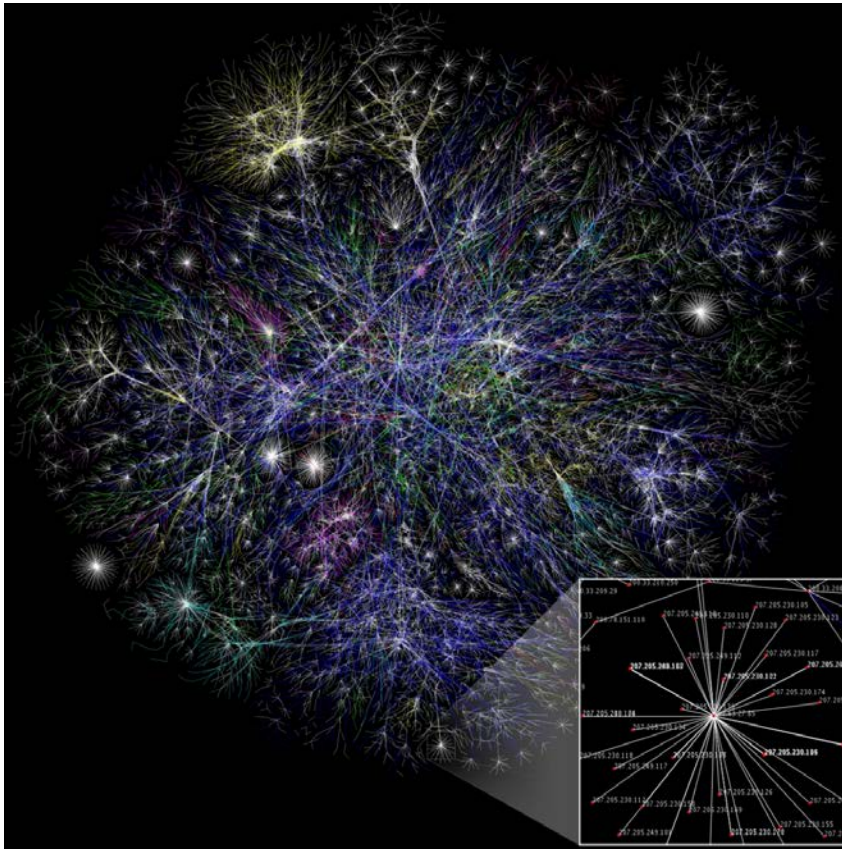


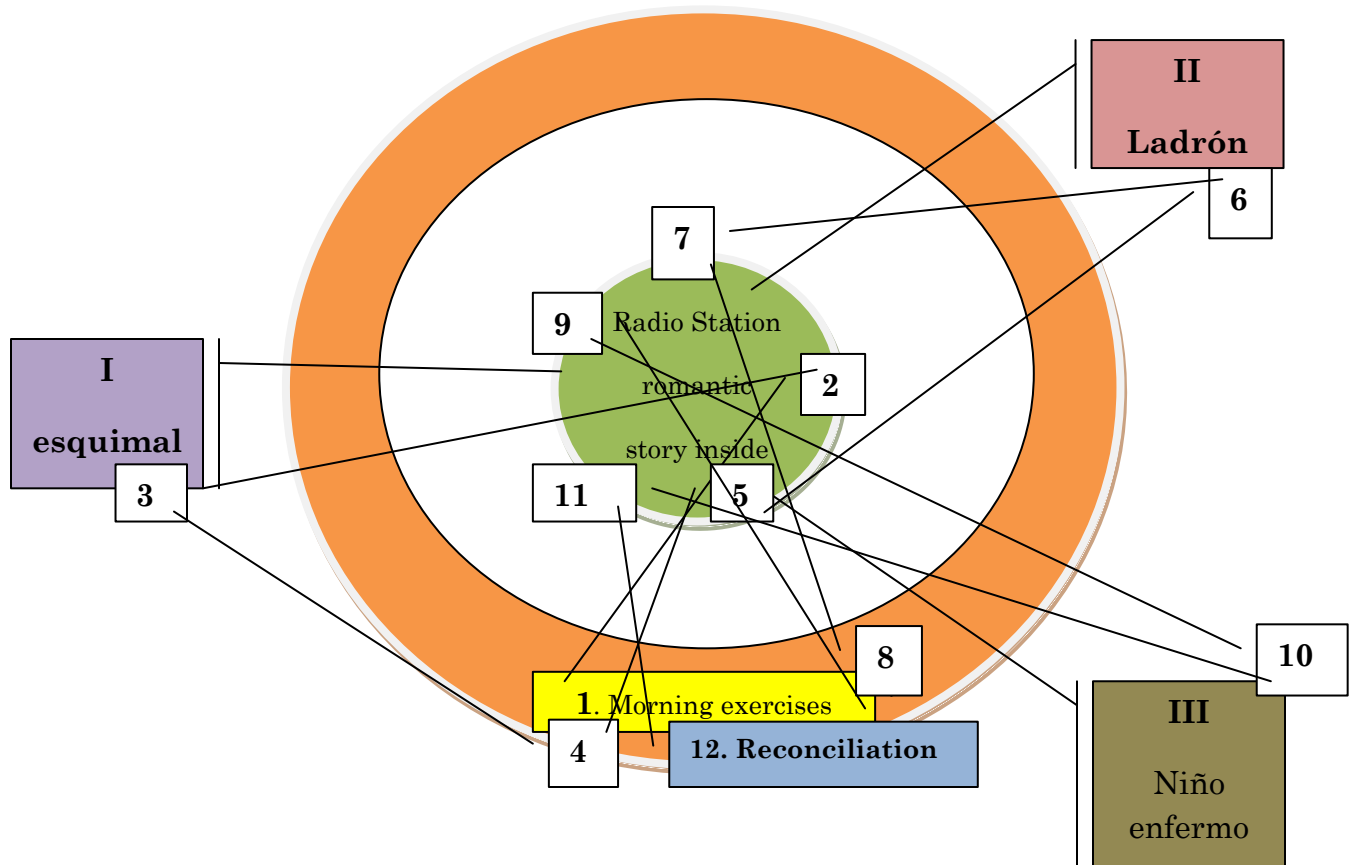
Figure 1

English: Partial map of the Internet based on the January 15, 2005 data found on opte.org. Each line is drawn between two nodes, representing two IP addresses. The length of the lines is indicative of the delay between those two nodes. This graph represents less than 30% of the Class C networks reachable by the data collection program in early 2005. Lines are color-coded according to their corresponding RFC 1918 allocation as follows:

- Dark blue: net, ca, us
- Green: com, org
- Red: mil, gov, edu
- Yellow: jp, cn, tw, au, de
- Magenta: uk, it, pl, fr
- Gold: br, kr, nl
- White: unknown

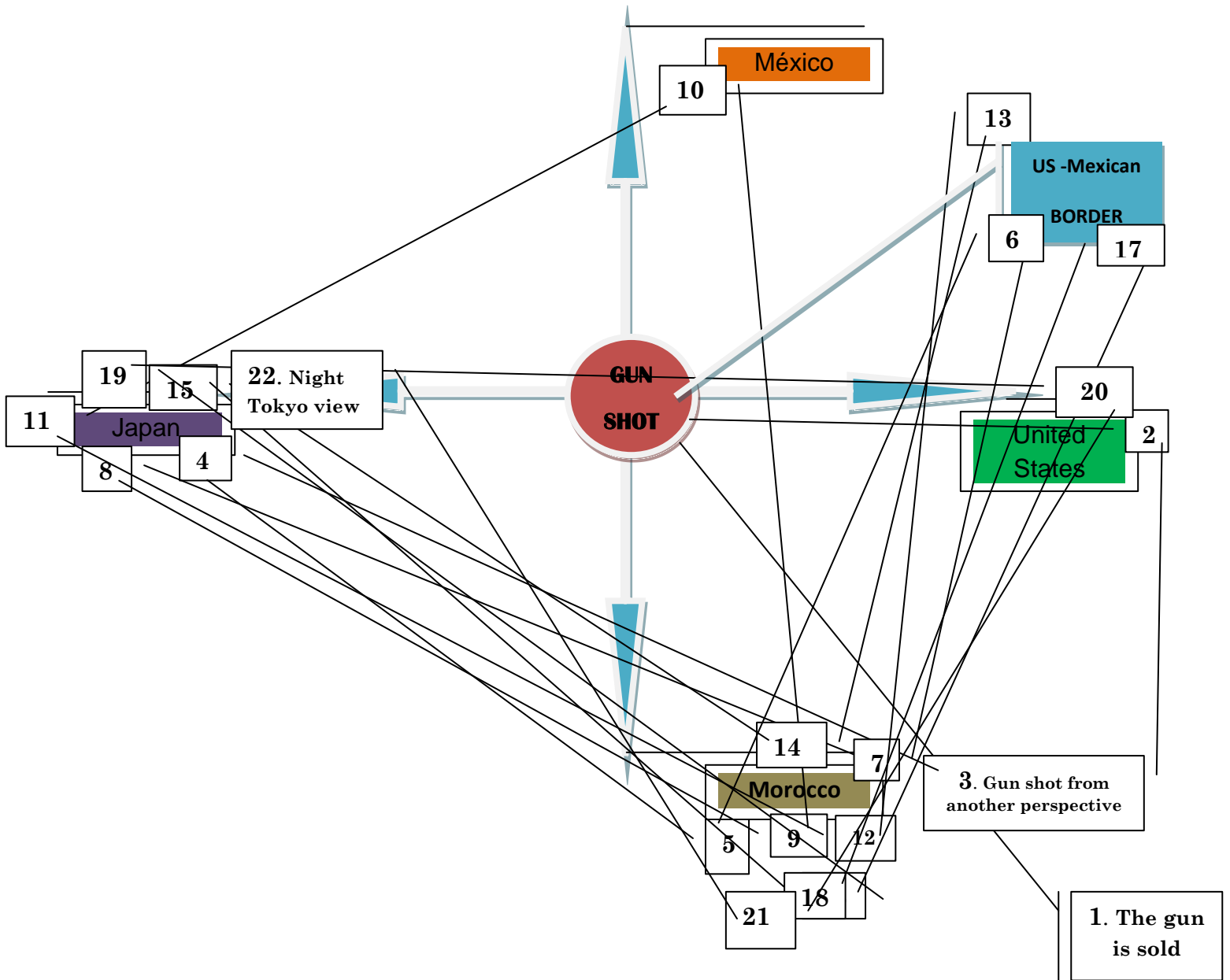
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Internet_map_1024.jpg

Figure 2



Historias de la Radio consists of three main blocks connected to the nuclear which is the radio station. The “satellite” of the nuclear is the apartment in Madrid where two common *madrileños* are performing their morning exercise

Figure 3



Babel consists of 22 blocks which switch from one space to another in random order.

<p><u>Japan</u> Cheiko's and her family's drama</p>	<p><i>Cheiko's Father gives The gun to A guide in Morroco</i></p>		<p>G U N S H O T</p>	<p><i>Cheiko is going through the adolescence crisis and dealing with trauma caused by her mother's suicide. The investigation regarding the gun identity is interfering with this line finally coinciding in a detective's meeting with Cheiko in her apartment which becomes crucial and helps her to overcome the crisis.</i></p>	
<p><u>USA</u> Richard & Susan's drama</p>				<p><i>Susan is shot and Richard is struggling for her salvation Susan is finally in the hospital and Richard calls home to ask Amelia to spend more time with their kids</i></p>	<p>P H O N E C A L L</p>
<p><u>México</u> Amelia's drama</p>				<p><i>Amelia takes the kids to her son's wedding and gets in trouble when crossing the border on her way back which finally causes her deportation to México.</i></p>	
<p><u>Morocco</u> Abdullah and his family's drama</p>		<p><i>The gun is sold</i></p>		<p><i>Abdullah's children Yussef and Ahmed are scared about their accidental criminal behavior. The investigation is going on and ends with Ahmed's death and Yussef's capitulation.</i></p>	
<p>-----> real chronological order -----></p>					

Figure 4





Hearing Film: The Voices of Spanish Cinema

During a rehearsal for his coronation, the soon-to-be monarch George VI is shaken from his mutterings of self-doubt by the sight of his speech teacher sitting on the wooden throne placed before the altar at Westminster Abbey:

King George VI: ¡Levántese! ¡No puede sentarse allí!

Lionel Logue: ¿Por qué? Es una silla.

George VI: ¡Es la c-c-s-s-silla de San Eduardo!

Logue (turning to examine the back of the chair): Aquí hay muchos nombres grabados ...

George VI (interrupting): ¡Escúcheme! ¡Escúcheme!

Logue: ¿Por qué voy a perder el tiempo escuchándole?

George VI: ¡Porque tengo voz!

Logue: Sí, la tiene.

The passage cited above is drawn from the Spanish dubbed trailer for *The King's Speech/El discurso del rey* (Tom Hooper. 2010). I include it here with a dual purpose in mind, to take advantage, first, of its thematic focus on the importance of the voice and speech (the ambiguity of the English title with its reference to a speech and speech, *habla*, is, tellingly, lost in translation), and second, to propose a fundamental reconsideration of what we talk about when we talk about cinema and cinema reception in Spain and more specifically of what Spanish audiences hear when they go to the movies--or, if recent reports are to be believed, download them¹.

¹ In her prologue to Alejandro Avila's 1997 book, *La historia del doblaje cinematográfico*, film historian Palmira González also calls for the expansion of the field of Spanish film history, of

If nearly 90% of the films seen in theaters last year in Spain, according to the most recent report in *El País* (“El cine español se asoma al absimo” Feb. 7, 2011) were non-Spanish, then audiences were clearly seeing and hearing a lot more of Colin Firth, Johnny Depp and Leonardo Dicaprio than Luis Tosar, Javier Cámara or Carmen Machi, or more accurately, of the actors and actresses providing the Spanish voices for the mostly English speaking performers appearing in the top box office films of 2010.

The reality is that dubbing is a central factor, the elephant in the sound studio, in any discussion of the sounds and voices of Spanish cinema, or cinema in Spain. The role of dubbing has been a controversial topic since the beginnings of sound cinema in the Peninsula. Although conventionally held to be a politically driven imposition that dates from the first years of the Franco dictatorship, the practice of dubbing first took hold during the Republic, with the first Spanish studios established in Barcelona beginning in 1932. The pros and cons of dubbing versus the use of subtitles were amply debated in the press of the period, with arguments distributed in unexpected ways across political lines. Certainly nationalism had its place. As an alternative to the Spanish versions of Hollywood films produced by Paramount and Fox with their pan-Hispanic jumble of accents, films dubbed in Spain had the advantage of preserving the ‘integrity’ of standard Castilian Spanish. Film critics on the left like Juan Piqueras, while arguing for the need to devote more resources to the production of Spanish films that might better express the national character and explore national problems, also made a series of populist and economic arguments in favor of dubbing as a way to assure access to popular films from abroad for a mass audience uncomfortable with or unable to read subtitles as well as a means to provide steady employment for actors and technicians in the cinema industry (Ballester Casado 64).

“nuestro cine,” to include “no sólo el cine realizado por cineastas autóctonos sino también el cine de origen foráneo que se exhibe en nuestras pantallas y que es visto—y oído—por nuestro público y que constituye en buena parte el ‘clima’ cinematográfico que se respira el país en una época determinada” (14-5).

Following the Civil War, the Franco regime made dubbing obligatory, although the April 23 1941 Ministerial Order proclaiming that fact was never published, as required, in the BOE and initially appeared in print in the Falangist film magazine *Primer Plano*, which also became the subsequent venue for bitter denunciations of the dubbing law on the part of critics, directors and producers as a dagger to the heart of the national film industry.² The prohibition of films in languages other than *castellano* stayed in effect until 1967 when the establishment of small urban cinemas “de arte y ensayo” opened the door to the showing of films in their original languages. Most if not nearly all research and writing on the history of dubbing in Spain has dealt with its industrial and ideological consequences, especially the opportunity it presented to Franco-era censors who effectively rewrote dialogue in the passage from the original language to Spanish in the attempt to cleanse films of their transgressive political or sexual charge. Anyone who has studied Spanish cinema of the period has heard the anecdotes about *Mogambo* (John Ford, 1953) and *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz 1942) which I will not repeat here.

Developments over the last 25 years in the study of cinema sound have given us an alternative approach to the question of voice and voices in film. Work by Mary Ann Doane, Kaja Silverman and Michel Chion, among others, has offered differing considerations of the relation between sound and image, voice and body and narrative and vocal authority--often with regard to issues of gender and as well as the potential effects of these conjunctions on spectators. While drawing on their concerns, my focus here is somewhat different and is anchored more in the tangible reception and material reconstruction of the voices of cinema in Spain, less on the semantic meaning of the words spoken than their sound quality, attending not so much the words but to the music of speech, as both reflective and productive of a broader cultural context.

² The text of the law reads as follows: “Queda prohibida la proyección cinematográfica en otro idioma que no sea el español, salvo autorización especial, que concederá el Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo, de acuerdo con el Ministerio de Industria y Comercio y siempre que las películas en cuestión hayan sido previamente dobladas. El doblaje debe realizarse en estudios españoles que radiquen en territorio nacional y por personal español” (cited in Ávila, *La historia del doblaje*, p. 158)

The first exhibit in this pursuit is a website called *El dobaje.com* (Figure 1). Although Spanish scholars like Alejandro Avila, the author of three books on various aspects of dubbing in Spain, have done important work in reconstructing the industrial and political history of the practice, in the process promoting recognition for the professionalism and talent of the actresses and actors working in the sector, while the basis of their success, their voices, have been inaccessible. Into this silence there has erupted a fascinating and extensive internet-based archive of these voices of Spanish cinema. Part business promotion, part nostalgia, part recuperation of another piece in the mosaic or refuse heap of historical memory, these sites provide a wealth of resources and suggestions for future research. One result is the recuperation of the better known voice actors and actresses of the ‘golden age’ of dubbing: to Rafael Luis Calvo hailed for his work as the voice of Clark Gable, John Wayne, Stewart Granger and Gregory Peck; Felix Acaso as the voice of Robert Mitchum, Joseph, Cotton, Henry Fonda and David Niven; Matilde Conesa, the ‘voz habitual’ for Bette Davis, Jean Arthur, Jane Wyman and Lauren Bacall; and the great Elsa Fabregas, who regularly dubbed the voice of Katherine Hepburn, Vivien Leigh, Gena Rowlands and Doris Day as well as Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (Charles Vidor. 1946) and Betsy Blair in *Calle mayor* (Juan Antonio Bardem. 1956).

Greater access to these matters allows us to formulate, and begin to answer, a series of questions: How much of a performance, of an actor or actress’s star image and his or her relation to spectators is attributable to the voice and what are the consequences for Spanish audiences of never hearing the real voice of an actor? While we do not yet have an established frame of reference or critical metalanguage for analyzing spoken voices un film, the issue has begun to attract greater attention. In a suggestive article on the voice in film, Martin Shingler refers to an article by David Bromwich published in the *London Review of Books* that explores the details of Jimmy Stewart’s use of voice: “A kind of stammer that trips naturally and convincingly” that is coupled with a “frequent decision to speak in a soft voice, always with perfect clarity and conveying a range of available senses for words. Stewart does this often in intimate scenes with women, but not only with them. . . . Even now, when fewer actors bring the wrong kind of theatricality from stage to

screen the freedom to modulate a speaking voice downward is rarely grasped” (1-2). What we can do through the magic of internet is contemplate an alternating sample of Stewart performances in the original and dubbed versions. (I direct readers here to the Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHZgsl1qnQ>).

The ability to reconstruct the circumstances of production and reception of certain notable dubbed films can provide further insights. Avila devotes a sub-chapter of *La historia del doblaje* to work on the Spanish version of *Gone with the Wind* which he terms “el gran doblaje de todas las décadas” (12). When the film finally arrived for dubbing in Spain in 1947--due to censorship problems it would not open until 1950--, the prestigious project was assigned to the historic Metro studios in Barcelona. Avila includes a table showing the full Spanish vocal cast with their Hollywood counterparts, led by Elsa Fabregas and Rafael Luis Calvo in the roles of Scarlet O’Hara and Rhett Butlet respectively. Among the supporting players, Avila singles out the work of Carmen Robles, with what he calls her characteristic “pseudo-Cuban” accent, who dubbed the role of Mammy (Hattie McDaniel), adding that “La juventud española de los años cincuenta solía gastar bromas en fiestas y reuniones, imitando a la gorda sirvienta negra con su peculiar acento diciendo aquello de . . . ‘Zeñorita Ecal.lata’” (175). Among its other potential meanings, *Gone with the Wind* in Spanish showcased the impressive level of achievement of the Spanish dubbing industry when drawing upon the best voices and technical resources.³

But beyond the virtuosic performances of *Gone With the Wind* and *The King’s Speech* it is important to look at the other side of the pervasive effects of dubbing—arguably even more troubling than the loss of the original actorial voices—which have to do with its role in promoting a standardization and typification of voices in Spanish original language films. In his 1997 book, *El doblaje*, published by Catedra, Avila includes a more practically oriented section directed at readers interested in exploring a career in dubbing. In the accompanying table (Figure 2) we see the ‘tone deaf’ typology and enumeration of theatrical types

³ A clip of Elsa Fabregas-dubbed Scarlet O’Hara “As God as my witness” scene is available on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwFgmZDfKtI>

and their vocal equivalents. This prescriptive codification alludes to a series of unwritten expectations and rules that continue to shape and restrict the kinds of voices Spanish audiences hear on screen. For while non-standard voices may be permitted and are even cultivated for comic and character actors—think of José Isbert, Rafaela Aparicio, Gracita Morales or Lola Gaos—leading roles continue to demand the “phonogenic” expression of the unproblematically feminine *dama buena* or equivalent masculine *galán bueno*. One example of this practice that led to the dubbing of even well-known Spanish actors or (more often) actresses is the case of Emma Penella. Nancy Berthier notes, in passing, in a study of *El Verdugo* (Luis García Berlanga, 1963), that Penella’s voice was considered “tellement inhabituelle” that she was regularly dubbed until Bardem “restored” her original voice to her in his 1953 film, *Cómicos* (86). If we consult [El doblaje.com](http://www.doblaje.com) we find a list of at least six films where Penella was dubbed by the likes of Elsa Fabregas and Mireya Mercedes. What was it about Penella’s voice that led to its silencing? Let’s listen to a scene from *El verdugo* (Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS5Sop7zAak>). Here of course Penella, true to the production habits of director Luis Berlanga, adds her own voice in post-production. Italian actor Nino Manfredi is dubbed by José María Prada, an actor known for his roles in Saura’s *La caza* (1966) and *Ana y los lobos* (1973).

In considering the distinctive quality of Penella’s voice, husky, with a slight rasp, we find an example of what Roland Barthes has famously called the grain of the voice, a discernable texture or roughness that carries, in Barthes’s words “the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue” (181). As this scene conveys, in the fusion of voice and corporal presence, Penella literally embodied an eroticism then unwelcome on Spanish screens.

But with Franco’s censorship long gone, both dubbing and the restrictions on voices in Spanish cinema continue. In an article published in August 2010 in *El País*, titled “El problema más grave del cine español,” John J. Healy offers a drastic diagnosis of the causes of the ongoing crisis in Spanish cinema, stating baldly that “La lengua española tal y como está expresada en España no casa bien con el cine.” The problem, he notes, is that all characters sound alike, talk the same, with the same

gestures and tones of voice across classes, regions and even languages. “La rigidez fanfarrona española comunica una sensación de libertad y falsa camaradería que la cámara detecta al momento, consiguiendo que mucha parte del público se distancia de la puesta en escena.” The practice of dubbing, in his estimation, bears much responsibility. The most knowledgeable filmgoers, fans and cinema professionals came to know the films of their beloved Billy Wilder, Nicholas Ray and John Ford through the voices of a handful of dubbing actors. With the films’ naturalness, authenticity and spontaneity suppressed, “se impuso el filtro de un castellano duro y revestido de los mismos clichés de tono que se oyen hoy en los teatros de la Gran Vía.” The films were so good they still communicated their essence but future directors learned not to value the importance of the voice in acting. This vocal orthodoxy and standardization has had negative consequences for the development of Spanish actors and their craft. Many great American actors, Marlon Brando, Robert de Niro, Marilyn Monroe, he notes, had peculiar ways of speaking. In Spain, he observes, they would never have found work. That same linguistic straight jacket applies to foreign actors in Spain: “Tengo amigos actores extranjeros que no pueden ejercer su oficio, aunque hablen el castellano perfectamente. En cuanto se les nota un deje de acento extranjero en un *casting*, quedan descalificados.”

There clearly remains much to explore in the investigation of the voices of Spanish cinema and of cinema in Spain, from analyses of individual films and film careers to an evaluation of the continued effects of a strictly enforced vocal homogeneity and typification across various media, including cinema but also television and advertising. It is my hope that the written “script” for what was conceived and delivered as an audio-visual presentation will serve to stimulate further dialogue and research on the topic.

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Appendix:

Figure 1

eldoblaje.com - la base de datos de doblaje en España

The screenshot shows the profile page for Fabregas, Elsa on the website eldoblaje.com. The page is organized into several sections:

- Navigation and Search:** A top navigation bar with 'eldoblaje.com' and a search bar. A secondary navigation bar lists categories: 'Base de Datos', 'El Busca Voces', 'Profesional', 'Formación', and 'Varios'. Below this, there are links for 'Bienvenidos', 'Consultas', 'Colaboradores', and 'Buscador >'. A search bar contains the text 'Buscamos actores y actrices de doblaje en gallego, vasco y catalán residentes en Madrid para incorporar a nuestra Empresa.'
- Professional Profile:** A section titled 'Profesional' with sub-sections: 'Estudios', 'Productos', 'Noticias / Tablón', and '¿Qué Necesitas?'. The 'Formación' section lists 'Escuelas Doblarje', 'Escuelas Sonido', 'Escuelas Varias', and 'Voces Nuevas'. The 'Varios' section lists 'El Proceso', 'Foros eldoblaje', 'Filosofía', and 'Tienda'.
- Biography:** A section titled 'FICHA DEL ACTOR/ACTRIZ DE DOBLAJE' for 'Nombre: FABREGAS, ELSA'. It includes:
 - Estado: En memoria
 - Tipo de Voz: Media
 - Primer papel: "El pequeño Jacques", en 1935
 - Datos Contratación: No especificados (más información sobre datos contratación Click Aquí >>>)
 - Ciudad de trabajo habitual: No especificada
 - Idiomas Doblarje: No especificados | Idiomas Locución: No especificados
 - Apellidos: No especificados
 - Curriculum: No disponible
 - Relación Ocupaciones: No especificadas | |
- Media Samples:** A section titled 'Multimedia:' containing:
 - Muestra de Audio 1: 0N
 - Muestra de Audio 2: 0N
 - Muestra de Audio 3: No disponible
 - Muestra de Audio 4: No disponible
 - Muestra de Video 1: No disponible
 - Muestra de Video 2: No disponible
- Footer and Social:** A footer section with 'Voces Habituales en Doblarje:' and a social media share button showing 'Me gusta 11' and 'Share 11'.

Figure 2

Alejandro Avila. *£/ doblaje*. Madrid: Catedra, 1997.

hace difícil escuchar una película doblada de este actor sin la personal voz de él.

Pese a que queda demostrado que el timbre no tiene par que coincidir con el aspecto físico de los actores, ciertos directores prefieren convocar siguiendo estos criterios físicos -excepto en determinados doblajes de algunas productoras donde se otorgan los papeles en función del resultado de unas pruebas de voz que son analizadas a través de un espectro digital. Por tanto, habrá voces que se corresponden con determinado físico de tal forma que se podría establecer esta breve sistematización.

Tipología física del personaje	Tipo de voz convencional
Galan bueno	Grave y seductora, que varía en función a la edad del actor
Galan malo	Grave y seductora, aunque en menor grado que la anterior
Dama buena	En general, dulce y femenina. Timbre media, pero más grave en función de la edad
Dama mala	En general, menos femenina y sensiblemente más grave que la anterior
Negro	Timbre grave. Voz algo rota
Indio Oriental	Timbre grave. Voz algo rota Timbre agudo. Voz fina
Niño	Voz de mujer con capacidad de interpretar en graves de falsete

Pero de la misma manera que algunos directores de doblaje conocen a los dobladores con voces de galán, oriental o negro, tampoco ignoran las características típicas que poseen los timbres de algunos profesionales, basados siempre en los usos convencionales. Han sido

OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO
THE HISPANIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT
FOR THE HELP AND ASSISTANCE WHICH MADE THIS PROJECT
POSSIBLE!