

(Re)Discovering 'America' **(Re)Descubriendo 'América'**

Road Movies and Other Travel Narratives in North America
Road movie y otras narrativas de viaje en América del Norte

6

Inter-American Studies | Estudios Interamericanos



Wilfried Raussert · Graciela Martínez-Zalce (Eds.)



Wilfried Raussert & Graciela Martinez-Zalce (Eds.)

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Arizona State University

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brp@asu.edu

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The project brought together Mexican, Canadian, U.S. American, and European scholars in an endeavor to explore alternative visions of the road in conjunction with a reconfiguration of our understanding of "America" from a transnational perspective.

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July 2012

Wilfried Raussert and Graciela Martinez-Zalce

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(Re)discovering "America": New Routes and Alternative Road Narratives in an Inter-American Perspective

WILFRIED RAUSSERT AND GRACIELA MARTINEZ-ZALCE

Resumen

En los estudios transculturales, una metodología unificada no resulta posible. Los acercamientos son diversos. Aunque estén relacionados, son diferentes. A través de nuestra lente interamericana, la transculturalidad ensancha los estudios "americanos," tal como se entienden en la academia estadounidense, para tener una connotación que implique al continente en su totalidad. Y, en el caso específico de este volumen, el estudio específico de las narrativas de viaje en la región de América del Norte (México, Estados Unidos y Canadá). La metodología abre puertas para una nueva exploración de "América" por medio de producciones recientes de *road movies* y narrativas de viaje, si bien de distintas nacionalidades, relacionadas transnacionalmente en varias ocasiones. Como los editores proponen, la transculturalidad funciona como tropo que expande nuestro vocabulario crítico, con el fin de explorar las zonas de contacto y las diferencias entre las áreas, las regiones y las naciones. Las perspectivas transculturales nos sirven para examinar las Américas, que se interconectan tanto por los procesos históricos de migración como por los contemporáneos de la globalización. De acuerdo a los editores, el género del *road movie* y las narrativas de viaje relacionadas se han expandido en las Américas y, durante este movimiento, han renegociado y redefinido sus formas de construcción, así como sus contenidos culturales, en expresiones globales de personas, ideas y estéticas que viajan.

"Kathy," I said as we boarded a Greyhound in Pittsburgh
"Michigan seems like a dream to me now
It took me four days to hitchhike from Saginaw
I've come to look for America."

Laughing on the bus; Playing games with the faces;
She said the man in the gabardine suit was a spy;
I said "Be careful his bowtie is really a camera."

"Toss me a cigarette, I think there's one in my raincoat."
"We smoked the last one an hour ago."
So I looked at the scenery, she read her magazine
And the moon rose over an open field.

"Kathy, I'm lost," I said, though I knew she was sleeping.
"I'm empty and aching and I don't know why."
Counting the cars on the New Jersey Turnpike:
They've all come to look for America

All come to look for America
All come to look for America

—Paul Simon, "America"

It was my dream that screwed up, the stupid hearthside idea
that it would be wonderful to follow one great red line across
America instead of trying various roads and routes.

—Jack Kerouac, *On The Road*

1. Roads Beyond the Nation: Toward Inter-American Perspectives on Road Narratives

According to Benedict Anderson, the realist novel and the daily newspaper "provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (25). "Nations are narrated like novels and newspapers" (73), as John McLeod reminds us. Indeed McLeod is right when he states that "the simultaneities of time and space exemplified in the form of the novel and the newspaper are at the very heart of the ways by which we consider ourselves part of a national community" (73). When we look at how nations have come into being, in particular in reference to the colonial histories of the Americas, we also have to consider what challenges and escapes the consensus suggested by an "imagined community" such as the nation. U.S. American national history, as Janis P. Stout points out, "begins with voyages, of exploration or escape or migration" (qtd. in Laderman 7). This also applies in many ways to the nation-building process of countries like Canada and Mexico, which are similarly embedded in processes of European discovery and colonization. What Stout's quotation demonstrates is that Anderson's concept—more interested in closure—does not tackle the issues of physical, intellectual, and cultural mobility that both precede and continue to shape and differentiate the nation from within and without. With the spatial turn in cultural studies we have become more and more aware of the fact that the local and the global are intertwined, that the national cannot be seen as detached from the transnational, and that contact zones (Pratt) shape the development of nations at the center as well as at their margins. In this context, road narratives acquire a special interest because roads historically have played an important role both in the geopolitical processes of nation-building as well as in expansionist imperial projects with a thrust beyond the borders of nation-states.

A recent shift in cultural studies focuses on the basic mobility of cultures (Clifford, Greenblatt) and centers new research on questions of travel, mobility, and new time-space connections (Harvey) in our epoch of intensified globalization. What then could be more appealing than to look at travel narratives in general and road movies in particular to explore contemporary aesthetic representations of the movement in time and space? It is Bakhtin who reminds us that road narratives are prototypical for an artistic rendering of the inseparability of time and space. When Bakhtin talks about the genre of adventure narratives he emphatically points out that "of special importance is

the close link between the motif of meeting and the chronotope of the road ('the open road')" and that "in the chronotope of the road, the unity of time and space markers is exhibited with exceptional precision and clarity" (98). In Bakhtin's reading, the road is no longer an abstract spatial concept but a steady contact zone full of cultural and historical meanings. Defining the process behind the chronotope, Bakhtin explains that "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movement of time, plot, and history" (84; cf. Ganser et al, "Chronotopes of the Road").

Clearly, Bakhtin refers to printed narratives and the novel in particular. Yet his concept of chronotope seems applicable also to visual narratives such as road movies. Robert Stam, for example, argues that the chronotope is most fully expressed in film, since here the intersection between time and space is made audible and visible at the same time (cf. 187). We would like to argue that its chronotopical nature also locates the road movie at the very center of narratives of the global. Without doubt mass migration, new media, rapidly expanding urbanization, and global trade challenge the social and cultural constitution of nation-states around the globe. The Americas in the new millennium present themselves more than ever as intertwined, interconnected, and entangled in cultural, political, and economic processes that transcend national boundaries. As Gilnter H. Lenz explains in reference to contemporary globalization,

The multiple interactions of the new communication networks, global migrations, and spatial and cultural de- and reterritorializations have made the old notion of spatially defined communities and cultures obsolete, or at least highly questionable. ... Therefore, seen in this perspective, the task of radically contextualizing Cultural Studies in the United States in its inter- and transcultural implications and dimensions turns out to be even more formidable and urgent. ("Toward a Dialogics of International American Culture Studies" 8)

In view of the dynamics of change that the new millennium has accelerated, it has become even more evident that national cultures have to be seen as an outdated concept. Looking at recent developments in the Americas, we can assert that the cultural and political landscape is subject to at times contradictory dynamics of change. New global players from the South, Brazil in particular, are gaining power, whereas the geopolitical hegemony of the United States appears to be gradually declining. New grassroots movements and new media communities affect the political systems across the Americas. Despite a wide digital gap in terms of South versus North, the global interconnect-edness of the World Wide Web is transforming community-building processes on a local, regional, national, and transnational level. The cultural flows of media industries traverse the Americas, albeit in an asymmetrical manner, and intensify cultural exchange and the distribution of ideas, ideologies, and cultural productions. Hence it comes as no surprise that the road movie genre (more than other travel narratives) has witnessed a tremendous explosion all across the Americas. With its plots centering around ideas of traveling, of embarking on a journey, of the importance of spatial mobility and the presence of mobilized identities on the search for roots among many

routes, the genre seems predestined to gain new momentum in times of heightened migration and globalization.

Many road narratives embrace a search for "America," often combined with a search for self and origins. We may think of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* but also of contemporary road movies such as *Transamerica*, *The Motorcycle Diaries*, *Bajo California*, and *Guantanamo*. In these narratives, the road appears inextricably connected with issues of individual, national, and transnational identities. In his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall juxtaposes postmodern views of identity against the yearning to authenticate one's cultural history in relation to the emerging diasporic Caribbean cultural production, cinema in particular. With reference to recent cinematic productions, Hall points out that cultural identity is conceived "in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self,' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves,' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (393). In other films, as Hall elaborates in his foundational essay, cultural identity does not rely upon the notion of a unified history but rather embraces the fact that identities are constantly on the move, are always in a state of becoming and forever producing and reproducing themselves through the "continuous play of history, culture, and power" (393). Although Hall does not explicitly talk about the genre of road movies, it appears evident that these films in particular engage with people, concepts, cultural productions, genres, and identities on the move.

Recent debates about the politics of cultural difference, in the context of fundamentalism and global terrorism, have directed critics' attention to the necessity of renegotiating the processes of identity formation in times of globalization and multiple migrations (Raussert 247). As Catherine Hall emphatically states, "In the late twentieth century questions about cultural identity seem to have become critical everywhere" (65). Indeed, identity has been at the forefront of literary, media, and cultural studies as one of the most privileged regulative concepts from which to explore the construction, performance, and shifts of "self in conjunction with cultural, political, historical, and global processes. In particular, multicultural and most recently trans/postnational approaches to film, literature, and cultures have circled around issues of identity, often grounding it in modes of experiencing and constructing difference. By programmatically focusing on actors "whose identity is its difference" (Spivak 272), they have transformed and expanded the standard identity model, exploring identity less as "being" (a stable, self-contained agent) and more as "becoming" (as processes of constructing, changing and, not least, preserving). Likewise they drastically changed our perception of relations between cultures, cultural production, and identity formation. Culture now is mobile (Greenblatt) and being viewed as a central resource for identity constructions, "the symbolic realm through which we enact a range of imaginative aspirations ... or exercise alternatives that supplement the leaden prose of the past" (Bhabha 181).

We are concerned here with the traveling of a genre and related issues of artistic, national, and transnational identities. In recent decades we have witnessed a reemer-

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gence of road movies on a global scale. What interests us here is the expansion of the genre in the Americas with a particular focus on what we like to label new and alternative road movies that have emerged in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. As scholars and critics, we intend to rediscover "America" through the lens of a transnational or, if you will, inter-American approach. While, cinematically speaking, we certainly can and must trace the filmic origins of road movies to the U.S. and Hollywood, we want to emphasize the importance of revisiting the genre within a North-South perspective and explore how the genre, if we may speak of one, has changed through the cultural flows of globalization in recent decades. While Hollywood remains the most powerful global player in the production and distribution of films in general, through our approach of looking at alternative road movie productions we also want to state that we do not consider this endeavor as a way to look at the center from the margins. Next to independent productions in U.S. cinema such as *Little Miss Sunshine*, the emergence of numerous road movies in Cuba, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Canada demonstrate that different national film industries and various directors across the Americas have absorbed the journey motif behind road movies and rendered their own unique visions of "traveling on the road," sometimes embedded in national as well as transnational historical contexts, sometimes in relation to moments of individual as well as national crisis in the face of changing societies in the process of globalization.

Hence our project also wants to establish a potential paradigm for studying film in the Americas as a transnational, transcultural, and inter-American endeavor. We are referring here also to the "transnational turn" in North American and Latin American Studies that has manifested itself in the scholarship of critics such as Gnter H. Lenz, John Carlos Rowe, Donald Pease, Sophia McClennen, Amy Kaplan, Walter D. Mignolo, Daniel Mato, and George Yudice. Our understanding of inter-American scholarship on films in the Americas represents a scholarly investigation into dynamics, tensions, and conflicts that characterize processes of cultural encounter, clash, and exchange in the Americas in a relational way. Inter-American scholarship, we argue, is based upon a transcultural imaginary that assumes an all-pervasive multiple interconnectedness between different cities, regions, and nations in the Americas and beyond. Accordingly, we conclude that to think of national cultures as container cultures no longer makes sense in view of the various flows of people, ideas, and goods in an increasingly globalized world. Similarly, a study of national cinema nowadays seems incomplete without taking into consideration the multiple transnational links that characterize the production, distribution, and reception of films. A fresh look at genres such as the road movie, nowadays and in retrospect, needs to go beyond the national horizon to get a more complete picture of how a genre defines and transforms itself in the course of time as well as during and after the process of crossing national, cultural, and aesthetic boundaries.

Parameters of the studies of national cultures, as important as they continue to be for the understanding of fundamental mythologies and ideologies of nation-states and their assumed imaginary community, need to be complemented by parameters of pro-

gressive, overlapping, and intersecting geopolitical and cultural spaces. Critics like Appadurai view cultures as complex systems of flows that affect the whole globe, and as a scholarly reaction to that Ulfried Reichardt argues that a so-called "global turn" in the field of cultural, literary, and film studies is taking place (19). While it is admittedly desirable to take a look at the whole picture to comprehend the global connections in our world today, we also need to keep in mind our individual specializations as scholars. Since the scholars involved in this project have a major research focus on film and cultural studies related to various national cultures in the Americas, we decided to look at road movies and their global expansion through a reduced but focused transcultural, inter-American lens. That means also that each scholar will contribute his or her expertise of certain national traditions in film production and distribution to our overall transnational approach to road movies produced in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. The fact that this volume comprises articles in English and Spanish is also a modest attempt to acknowledge the different cultural spectra of the Americas and express them through the language.

For the editors, "transculturality" as a theoretical model to approach the genre of road movies seems useful to capture and analyze the dialogics of cultural contacts within the Americas and to pay attention to national specifics as well as transnational expansions and transformations of the genre. Already in the 1940s Ortiz introduced his concept of "transculturation," which has thoroughly shaped the discourses in Latin American Studies ever since. While paying attention to power constellations within processes of cultural change, Ortiz presents a concept of multiple active cultures involved in cultural exchange (ix). Thus his concept permits us as critics to see various agents at work in the processes of expanding and transforming a genre such as road movies. Ortiz's concept has nourished various discourses on cultural complexity in Latin American as well as North American Studies, though his influence is not always explicitly mentioned. Latin American scholars such as Rama and Arguedas unfold concepts such as "narrative transculturation" as a means of presenting new world views (cf. Morana 142). In Arguedas's vision, Latin American societies are in constant flux and part of multiple transnational flows (cf. Bernal). Similarly the post-national discourses in North American Studies by scholars such as John Carlos Rowe and Donald Pease, as well as the border discourses in German American Studies, are surely indebted to Ortiz's earlier concept. Recently Raussert and Isensee have expanded the discourse on transculturality in the New American Studies with *Transcultural Visions in Images and Texts: Transatlantic American Studies*, a volume that establishes a dialogue between European and American scholars on recent issues of identity politics in the context of the transnationalization and globalization of the Americas. As one of the most important thinkers on "transculturality," Wolfgang Welsch sees concepts of interculturality and multiculturalism as outdated because they hold on to clear-cut boundaries either within or between cultures. Instead Welsch favors "transculturality" as an all-encompassing category that does away with "inner homogenization and outer separation" (195). With reference to Welsch, Ginter H.

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Lenz, in his most recent article on American Transcultural Studies, addresses transculturality as a potential alternative within the overall transnational turn of American Studies. His thoughts are as follows:

"Transcultural" is not the same as "transnational." Recent American studies are *transnational* in a double sense: (1) They question the meaning of "America" (qua USA), (potentially) decentering the U.S. perspective, take views from outside as co-foundational, and emphasize inter/transnational dialogue (international initiative of the ASA). (2) They reflect on and deconstruct the focus on the nation-state without prematurely discarding its boundaries as obsolete in political analyses, and they address the intra/ multicultural diversity and hybridity of U.S. culture(s) and transnational interactions in a time of globalization and relocalization. "Transcultural" also engages the complex and highly contested status of the nation-state in a globalizing world but is a wider-ranging, self-reflexive, and self-differentiated term that more specifically rearticulates the goals and strategies of American cultural studies. ("Toward a Dialogics of International American Culture Studies" 394)

We agree with Lenz that a unifying methodology of transcultural studies will never be realized (394). The approaches are manifold, related yet different. Through our inter-American lens, "transculturality" widens "American studies" to the studies of the Americas and, in the volume at hand, selectively to the study of travel narratives in North America (Mexico, the U.S., Canada). Methodologically, it opens venues to explore "America" anew by looking at various nationally different and often transnationally linked new productions of road movies and road narratives. As Raussert and Isensee remind us, "transculturality expands our critical vocabulary to explore contact zones and differences between regions, areas and nations. Transcultural perspectives help us to explore ... the Americas at large as variously interconnected ... within processes of historical migration as well as contemporary processes of globalization" (4). And, as Bhabha states, "it is that Third Space, though unrepresentable itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture [and identity] have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (37). We want to argue that the road movie genre and related travel narratives have expanded and, during this process, renegotiated and redefined their aesthetic modes as well as cultural contents to a global expression of traveling people, ideas, and aesthetics. Let us next explore some reflections on the road, the travel narrative, and the road movie as genre.

2. The Road Movie as a Genre

Long before "America" was used as a synonym for the United States, narratives related to "discovering" this geopolitical space were generated. With a nod to the post-structuralist belief that all reality is text-based, we may state that these narratives

started "inventing"¹ America approximately five hundred years ago. Throughout the 18th and the 19th centuries travel narratives continued to record, reflect, and interpret not only individual experiences of travelers but the mobility underlying colonial processes in the Americas at large. The road narrative did not lose its aesthetic and cultural appeal as rapid modernization and urbanization transformed the socio-political and cultural landscapes in the Americas, albeit at a different pace in each country. On the contrary, if we think of the aesthetic responses of John Steinbeck, John Ford, and Emilio "Indio" Fernandez to the Great Depression and the Mexican Revolution and of Jack Kerouac and the Beat generation's road narratives as responses to Cold War cultural politics and mainstream conservatism, we detect the tremendous significance that the journey motif occupies in cultural productions and identity politics in the Americas. As technology and media add new levels and forms of expression to the cultural spectrum today, literature and film enter into a dialogical exchange about alternative representations of travel. Ever since John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and John Ford's filmic adaptation the comings and goings between road literature and cinema are notable, as we will also see in several of the essays that make up this collection. Globalization, increased migration, and new transnational economic challenges have fueled a new expansion of road narratives across the Americas, have redefined the genre, and have addressed contemporary moments of crisis, be they personal, cultural, national, or economic, as they emerge from global interdependence. Carlos Sorin's *Historias minimas* and *El perm* may serve as two examples from Argentine cinema.

Referring to recent changes, Correa states that the road movie has been "un genero desesperado que responde a la reciente ruptura historica del sujeto masculine" (292), and that is why for a long time, according to Corrigan, we found in them "the buddy system ... a reflection of the voyeuristic mechanisms of a historically patriarchal medium through which all of the world might be seen as 'male' while being founded on heterosexual desire" (Corrigan, loc. 1637-45).

Following Bakhtin, Ganser, Puhlinger, and Rheindorf depart from the concepts of chronotope, space, and place ("Bakhtin's Chronotope on the Road" 2-14) to analyze road movies and how images of time and space vary from text to text. "In terms of Cultural Geography's analytical framework, place is understood as the socially and culturally marked intersection of space and time. Thus ... the road itself, like the vehicle, is ... a space ... located in a specific environment charged with social and cultural meanings" (15), the authors conclude. Road movies then can be reunited according to different types of chronotopes: the road as setting (with its potential for encounter and its snowballing effect of actions as the protagonists drive across spaces full of places and people), the chronotope of escape (which might mean the impossibility of the characters reintegrating into society after what has happened to them on the road), the chronotope of being stuck on the way, the chronotope of the quest for the

The term has been borrowed from Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman's book (1958), *La invention de America. Investigation acerca de la estructura historica del Nuevo Mundo*.

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Promised Land or its opposite, Dead End City. This classification is flexible and adds a very useful tool to the analysis not only of canonical films (i.e. the ones that happen in cars or motorcycles driven by male heterosexual protagonists across the U.S.A.) that define the genre, but also of those that subvert it.

For filmmaker Walter Salles (*Diarios de motocicleta*), road movies "are rarely guided by external conflicts; the conflicts that consume their characters are basically internal ones," which will, unpredictably, make them redefine themselves while along the road they gain almost as much as they lose. Put differently, because the road movie *per se* privileges movement and change it can be considered paradoxically antigeneric and tainted by a counter-cultural and rebellious sensitivity (Correa 272). Salles thinks that "the camera needs to remain in unison with characters who are in continual motion—a motion that shouldn't be controlled. The road movie tends, therefore, to be driven by a sense of immediacy" (*Diarios de motocicleta*). Henceforth, the limits between private and public tend to disappear and, as we like to argue, the metaphorical reading of the road must always be present while interpreting road movies as a genre.

But, even though there have been established what one might call canonical ways of writing, directing, and producing road movies, throughout their history films belonging to this genre have "interrogated the old ideological securities and ultimately disrupted the notion of home whether as 'the family' or 'America'" (Ganser/Pihringer/Rheindorf, "Bakhtin's Chronotope on the Road" 2). Not surprisingly, then, recent movies have also shifted the geopolitical terrain in which the plot is set, moving beyond the territory of the U.S. and the aesthetic realm of male protagonists on the move.

Reflecting on the road as trope Morris points out that "the road is not to be taken literally. ... The road teaches that the figural precedes the literal, that there can be no uninterpreted road" (26). Characters confronting new spaces experience and suffer from transformations; their journeys often represent a response to and a mirror of an identity crisis that frequently corresponds to a personal as well as collective level, be it related to gender, ethnicity or nationality. Within our transnational approach to road movies we also address the question of what happens when the road crosses borders. As the colonial past as well as its postcolonial aftermath has shown, in North America (representative here for the Americas at large) an encounter with the omnipresent other, the self-called "American," seems inevitable when crossing the border. As Correa reminds us,

En el siglo veinte, las autopistas y el automovil ... hicieron posible que los individuos se desplazaran en toda libertad por un territorio ya conquistado, asegurando la continuidad de esa necesidad de movimiento que ha guiado siempre a los Estados Unidos. Asimismo, el cine ... produjo a lo largo del siglo imageries en movimiento de las que necesitaba el pais para construir su imaginario. El road movie es un punto de convergencia privilegiado entre estas dos tradiciones tecnologicas absolutamente necesarias para comprender la experiencia norteamericana. Visto asi, este genero se convierte no unicamente en una de las formas mas provechosas de hacer cine y de pensar el cine, sino tambien de pensar los Estados Unidos y su civilizacion a traves del cine. (294-95)

Be it a Canadian or a Mexican road movie, we might state that even though travelers depart from the other side of the line, leaving their nation in search for themselves or of a different way of life, they are also looking for the U.S., maybe to reaffirm their differences and, thus, to recreate a sense of the regional or even the national identity or as a way to deconstruct a cultural mythology (by means of intertextual strategies, for example). Protagonists who uproot themselves in order to leave in search of the continent (the Northern subcontinent in this case) do not always find the ideal scenario they were looking for. While meeting other characters on the road, their ideas of nationality, citizenship, and illegality tend to be challenged and questioned. Moreover, the promise of a better life elsewhere is in many cases illusory; and in others, the transformation of the characters emerging from their experience on the road renders unexpected resolutions to the journey.

The American Dream, some contemporary road movies tell us, is not achievable along the way. But nonetheless it is almost always a reference point, albeit at times an explicitly ironic one. In non-canonical road movies, we like to postulate, the road repeatedly turns out to be the place where marginality and difference express themselves. So, ambivalence becomes an important trait in them, whether in the figure of a Chicano protagonist looking for redemption in the land of his ancestors in *Bajo California* or in the shape of a transsexual, in *Transamerica*, traveling throughout the country with his/her gay son in order to assert his/her sexual identity. As Jordanova expresses it, "diverse filmmakers are making the location a leading narrative element in their films. These films evolve around the premise, rarely spelled out but clearly articulated in images and action, that places and protagonists mutually define each other" (6). We may ask then if the road and the spaces it traverses change through the presence of these unconventional characters. Are "America" and "Americans" in a process of transformation because of these odd representations of dislocation and movement in space? The construction of these narratives shows that, as the length of the road widens across North America, different perspectives on U.S. American society and culture emerge that are frequently critical towards patterns of hegemony. Emphasizing the road movie's important role for cultural critique, Salles writes:

Road movies directly challenge [the] culture of conformity. They are about experiencing, above all. They are about the journey. They are about what can be learned from the other, from those who are different. In a world that increasingly challenges these ideals, the importance of road movies as a form of resistance can't be dismissed. (*Dia-rios de motocicleta*)

Through these unconventional characters and plots, the rediscovery of America might take place on the highways of the U.S.A. but it is seen through the eyes or camera lenses of those "others" who do not belong to mainstream culture, a clearly defined ethnic background or sexual preference. The America they leave behind, as projected in the rearview mirror image, might be small; the one that they discover and name might be one that takes into account a whole region, and why not a whole continent?

3. The Essays

This unconventional ride through "America," as we like to label our study of alternative visions of the road in recent Mexican, U.S. American, and Canadian cultural productions, starts with a couple of essays that deal with panoramic views of the main concerns of this collection: travel narratives and the construction of place and identity through mobility in "America," more specifically in road movies. According to Pohl, numerous contemporary road movies are more about "una movilidad mas filosofica y spiritual que geografica, mas colectivista que individualista" (55).

Will Straw's "Driving in Cars with Words" is an essay concerned with the cinematic connection of technology, movement, and landscape and with the intersection of the automobile as technological form and the picturesque landscape as medium through which the vehicle progresses. Specifically, the author refers to the sequences in which a car moves against a landscape while the respective film's credits unfold over both. Through a re-examination of American, Canadian, and Mexican film examples, Straw enquires about the extent to which, in a given national culture, travel is marked by freedom, interruption, difficulty or routine; the extent to which landscapes are spaces of detached contemplation or highly codified sites of menace or opportunity; the extent to which travel is an activity marked by individualistic exploration or bureau-cratized collective movement.

We start our analysis of North American roads and their cinematic and narrative representations with an initial focus on Canada. Canadian travel narratives and road movies are discussed that not only explore Canada, but also take the characters across the border, south into the U.S., following a tradition of defining a national identity through confrontation and differentiation: Quebequois versus Anglophone, Canadian versus American, or redefining intersections and connections between all of these versions of North America. **Ana Paulina Gil Vargas** discusses the process of what Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman called the invention of America in her essay "La mano que senala: una revision del *Diario de a bordo* de Cristobal Colon en *The Accidental Indies* de Robert Finley." The first voyage of Christopher Columbus to America has been revised several times in American and Latin American literature, either to criticize or to praise the life and deeds of the Genovese admiral. From a Canadian and postmodern point of view, Robert Finley in *The Accidental Indies* presents a road narrative capable of combining both approaches, admiration as well as criticism. The latter is synthesized by "the pointing hand," an image that symbolizes the nature of the relationship between "Self and "Other" within this work; what more important travel narrative to start with than the one that inaugurates a tradition that will name not only a continent but its regions?

In "Pare Belmont Flashback: Andre Forcier's *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge*" **Johanne Sloan** first discusses the reasons why the film can be described as a road movie, since it shows the romantic leads meeting in Montreal in 1968 and, soon thereafter, traveling around various locations in Louisiana. However, the author argues, because Forcier's film interweaves episodes of ordinary cinematic realism with fantastical elements, it would be plausible to regard this journey to the southern U.S.A. as pri-

marily an imaginative one. For both the protagonist Rex and the titular *comtes.se* herself, the desire to take to the road arises from within the precincts of Pare Belmont, the *declassé* and rather decrepit amusement park/fairground which had existed on the outskirts of Montreal since the 1920s. Pare Belmont functions as the narrative and conceptual epicenter of Forcier's film and it is this place which permits an investigation of (freakish) identity, while also allowing the very process of filmmaking to be put into question. As the essay demonstrates, *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge* is also a work of historical reconstruction concerning both personal and collective memory.

In "Representations and Implications of (Touring on) the Road in Bruce McDonald's *Hard Core Logo*" **Martin Butler** examines the visual and acoustic strategies of "screening" the road in this Canadian road movie, shedding light on its allegorical significance. He argues that touring on the road serves as a site of self-exploration for the protagonists (i.e. on the intradiegetic level) and, more importantly, as a site of narrating and negotiating the history of punk both as a musical genre and a political ideology, taking part in the discourse on the subculture's inherent dilemma (i.e. on the extradiegetic level). His analysis also takes into account Michael Turner's eponymous 1993 novel-in-verse as well as Nick Craine's 1996 comic adaptation of McDonald's film called *Portrait of a Thousand Punks: Hard Core Logo*, a road from the literary to the filmic, and back. Framing his reading of the film with a closer examination of these texts not only helps to understand the film's aesthetic make-up and its allegorical implications, but also contributes to illustrating that the road (though not particularly prominent in the film) in fact lies at both its aesthetic and ethical heart.

Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61* portrays another musical trip southwards from Canada to Louisiana. The film raises questions such as: What if what we see is different from what we hear? What if the soundtrack of a film has its own life and tells a story of musical history that is somewhat different from the narrator's account of U.S. American popular music in the same film? **Wilfried Raussert** in "From Thunder Bay to Way 'Down Yonder': The Road as Multilayered Concept and Traveling Sounds in Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61*" explores how this Canadian film takes us to the crossroads between road movie and music history. The author discusses how the film uses such seemingly opposite narrative strategies to create a narrative in which the road moves beyond consumption to become a trope for reflecting intercultural dynamics between Canada and the U.S. and to tell alternative musical histories of popular music in the Americas. *Highway 61* represents a postmodern eclectic road movie that riffs on several intertextual levels related to the history of the road movie as filmic genre, to musical histories of the Americas, and to processes of socio-cultural history.

Another force propelling travel from south to north is political Utopia, which looms large in Marshall Lewy's *Blue State*. As the film exposes, stereotypes of Canada as a land of tolerance and peace can seem appealing to those who feel discomfort with their national political circumstances. In 2007, U.S. filmmaker Marshall Lewy released his first film, *Blue State*, in which three genres intertwine: the road movie, the border movie, and the romantic comedy. In "Canada no es sinonimo de Utopia," **Graciela**

Martinez-Zalce states that in a poor attempt to satirize, the filmmaker ends up satirized himself due to the rigidity with which he imbues the protagonist of the film. Discussing the ways in which the film borrows from various cinematic traditions, the author analyzes the failed intersection of genres as a result of the paradoxical conservatism underlying the film.

As in the road movie, journeys are integral to most Westerns, and it has been repeatedly stated that both the border movie and the road movie are subgenres derived from the Western. While the road movie shares similar thematic, narrative, and visual tropes with the Western, these two genres are rarely compared and usually only to the extent that the road movie expands upon and remains largely different from the Western. **Niamh Thornton's** essay "'It just looks like more of Texas': Journeys and Travel Narratives in the Western" analyzes Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1968) as a particular example of the travel narrative in the Western and how both the period in which it is set, the Mexican Revolution, and the time in which it was made, the late sixties, give the film a particularly radical, countercultural hype, linking it to other alternative road movies made during the above mentioned politically as well as culturally turbulent period.

Other alternative visions of travel are offered by queer cinema and gender-based revisions of the road movie genre. In the essay "Driving around Los Angeles: On Gregg Araki's 'Irresponsible Movie' *The Living End* and the Urban Road Film" **Ger Zielinski** addresses the controversy around this breakthrough film, while situating it at a pivotal moment in the history of the road movie genre. He does so, first, by providing a textual analysis of the film in relation to postmodernist tropes of pastiche, parody, and citation, all in relation to films selected from Araki's own "queer" cinephilic sensibility; and, second, by interrogating certain problems posed by the film to the road movie genre, including its relationship to urban spaces. Key works of Reynar Banham on Los Angeles, Marc Auge on places and non-places, and Ignasi de Sola-Morales's reworking of the *terrain vague* are all adapted to articulate the expanded road narrative that Araki's film proposes.

Subverting the tradition of the buddy road movie through a radicalized gender lens, Duncan Tucker's *Transamerica* (2005) narrates the journey of a transsexual and her gay son from the East to the West and links the trip experience to the two individuals' shifting identitarian politics. In "Travelin' through: el camino de regreso a casa" **Paulina Sanchez** draws upon narrative-audiovisual analysis to point out the film's key road movie ingredients. Her main focus, though, lies on the film's alternative visions that the author locates in the tradition of independent cinema and the choice of a trans-border subject as protagonist challenging both heterosexual as well as homosexual conventions.

" Juan Carlos Vargas in "Hibridacion y transnacionalidad en *Hide*, de K.C. Bas-combe" revisits the genre by exploring an odd transnational product that wants to erase its Canadian origin and poses as a product of mainstream Hollywood cinema. However, some particularities like its visual stylization and its complex intertextuality set

the film apart from the conventions of commercial cinema. *Hide* is a globalized hybrid which offers a dystopian vision of the world. Its vague social commentary lacks a historical context that is replaced by an aesthetic practice linked to postmodern pastiche, most prominently in the intertextual games and genre mixing of the film. *Hide* is also a fiction that combines hyperrealism with a fantasy imaginary to distance itself from mainstream cinematic conventions. As the author demonstrates, this film confirms the unstable and shifting character of the road movie genre.

Other transnational dimensions emerge from films that dramatize border crossings directly. Interestingly enough, not everyone wants to look for "America" in the U.S. and many characters continue to move south. In "'Miles to go before I sleep': Narrative Reconfigurations and Generic Border-Crossings in the Films of Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez" **Caroline Bern** examines the formal relationship between *From Dusk Till Dawn* and the double-bill pastiche *Grindhouse*. Both projects rely on a narrative structure which is divided into two parts and draw from a variety of B-movie subgenres such as, most prominently, the zombie or vampire movie and the car chase movie. As she points out, however, it is the road movie which provides the formal backdrop to both of these projects. Thus, in the case of *From Dusk Till Dawn*, the transition from thriller to horror film is signified, quite literally, in the crossing of the U.S.-Mexico border halfway through the film. Bern suggests that there is something inherent to the road movie which renders it resistant to what might be termed "transgeneric cannibalism," thus setting it apart from other, arguably weaker film genres and subgenres. Furthermore, an important undercurrent of this essay revolves around the symbolic function of border crossings—particularly from the U.S. into Mexico—for the generic exploration at work in the above films.

Pursuing another transnationally oriented project, **Miriam Brandel** in her essay "Homeless in the Borderlands: (Re)defining the Concept of 'Home' in *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*" explores the concept of "home" in relation to borderland experiences and cinematic representation. Drawing upon Mexican-American border discourses, the author renegotiates the relationship between the journey motif, the conflict loaded borderland experience, and an ambivalent sense of longing for "home" in Tommy Lee Jones's well acclaimed crossover between road movie and borderland Western. Assertions that "there's no place like home" and "you can't go home again" frame the general discussion and guide the author's exploration into the implications of these seemingly ambivalent ideas in relation to the process of identity formation. Brandel intends to (re)define the concept of home as it appears in this particular kind of road movie, hence yielding a new perspective on home as a trope for identitarian politics as well as critically questioning the conception of home as a static concept.

The concept of home also surfaces as an important theme in a number of the Mexican films that are analyzed in the next section. Although Mexico geographically is part of North America, culturally and historically it seems that its bonds are tighter with Latin America. Tracing the genre of the road movie into Mexican cinematic production, we think it is worthwhile investigating how regional and cultural contexts

lead to a redefinition of the genre as transnational dynamics and national differences shape the appropriation of a genre cinematically at home in Hollywood. **Alvaro A. Fernandez** in his essay "El road movie en Mexico: hacia el cronotopo del viaje" explores two particular cases of Mexican road movies: Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* and Carlos Bolado's *Bajo California: el límite del tiempo*. As a theoretical-methodological basis he resorts to the concept of "chronotope" introduced by Bakhtin in his studies of the novel and expands its use to study other types of cinematographic narratives such as the road movie. Fernandez tests how different narrative instances can expose a series of spatial and temporary relations of the story and how small chronotopes are articulated and tied to the vertebral column of the journey's chronotope; finally, he pursues the question of how micro-histories relate to each other and are narrated to construct a space and time correlation that might affect more the reality or the historical world of the spectator than the story that is presented on the screen.

Diego Zavala Scherer and Alivsi Hernandez in their joint essay "Apuntes sobre la familia mexicana y el viaje hacia la madurez: una revisión de las películas *¡Ay Jalisco... no te rajes!*, *Los hijos de Sánchez*, *Y tu mamá también*" offer a thorough hermeneutical analysis that addresses the notion of "voyage" as part of well established narratives in Mexican cinema. The approach moves from the stereotypical representation of the family to more complex relations between family members. Moreover it pursues questions of how the genre of melodrama evolves, fuses with narratives of the road, and seeks to depict social change. The mythical figures of the protective mother and the paternal authority are puzzled and questioned by the stories of the new generation narrated in these movies. The authors focus on generational shifts temporally and spatially reflected in the voyage motif to point out how these narratives reflect the need to dissolve the mystification of the family as a fundamental social structure and how they lay the matrix to establish complex and functioning ways of human interaction.

In "*One Hell of a Trip: polisemias del viaje en Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna)*" **Cesar Othon Hernandez** provides us with a journey narrative by Jose Agustín that takes us from Mexico City to Acapulco, and from there to Laguna de Coyuca. Whereas there are neither transnational trips, nor cross country journeys in *Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna)*, Rafael, the protagonist of the novel, travels to large abysmal regions. Inside a tropical paradise, he looks for a metaphysical one. His psychic journeys are triggered off by his use of marijuana and psilocybin. Hernandez inquires into the axes that motivate and articulate this journey and he focuses on the mono-myth as narrative pattern, particularly the *katabatic* subgenre or descent to the underworld mytheme. According to Hernandez, Agustín's novel reworks *katabasis* from a countercultural point of view, while rock music converges with the use of drugs to set the pace for the initiation journey.

The circle of this compilation closes with a critical analysis of the aesthetic rendering of a journey on the road northbound from Mexico to Canada in "De Pachuca a Toronto: un *Ciclo* vital." Perhaps one of the most important experiences for a human being is the crossing of borders, writes **Victor Manuel Granados Garnica** in his es-

say on Andrea Martinez Crowther's documentary film *Ciclo*. The film recaptures the journey by bike that Arturo and Gustavo Martinez undertook in 1953 from Mexico to Canada. In his essay the author addresses both the reenactment of the original journey in 2006 and the learning experience that is aesthetically embodied in the transgression of disciplinary and genre boundaries in Andrea Martinez Crowther's film. The essay highlights the film's special attention to the self-reflective role played by the production crew in the creation of the documentary. The analysis of Martinez Crowther's film shows that the documentary is part of a school of thought that distances itself from objectivity, openly acknowledging the process of creation and self-reflection. As both the film and the author's reflections manifest, physical voyages are not the only way for human beings to overcome boundaries that appear to be naturally as well as socially constructed. There are always psychological, cognitive, and emotional processes involved that also shape the aesthetic rendering of the journey motif in film and narrative. While the journey of North America has come full circle in this volume the editors would like to emphasize that this compilation can only represent the beginning of further investigations into the expansion, connections, and intertextualities of road movies and narratives in the Americas at large, their relatedness to global media processes, and their importance for the representation, reflection, and expression of ever-changing identity patterns, as ideas, goods, and people continue to travel virtually and literally in our age of intensified globalization.

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Driving in Cars with Words

WILL STRAW

Resumen

"Driving in Cars with Words," escrito por Will Straw, es un artículo enfocado en la conexión cinemática de la tecnología, el movimiento y el paisaje, y en la intersección entre el automóvil como forma tecnológica y el paisaje plástico como un medio a través del cual el vehículo avanza. El autor se refiere, específicamente, a las secuencias en las cuales un auto se mueve contra el paisaje, mientras que los créditos de la película se despliegan sobre ambos. Por medio de una revisión de ejemplos de películas estadounidenses, canadienses y mexicanas, Straw se pregunta acerca de la manera en que la cultura nacional incide en la idea de viaje y cómo se relaciona esta con conceptos como la libertad, la interrupción, la dificultad o la mitina; hasta donde los paisajes constituyen espacios de contemplación lejana o sitios amenazantes o lugares de oportunidad sumamente codificados; que tanto el viaje se considera como una actividad de exploración individual, o bien como un movimiento colectivo burocratizado.

1. Introduction

It is appropriate to the themes of this book that I begin with a film whose narrative trajectory joins together the three largest nations of North America. In 1954, Tony Curtis starred as a racing car driver in a Hollywood film entitled *Johnny Dark*. This little-known movie deals with a car race between the Canadian and Mexican borders. As the race begins, Canadian Mounted Police hover in the background, conveying in shorthand fashion that we are in Canada. Indeed, both Canada and Mexico appear for only a few seconds in the film, the latter as the end point of the race, similarly signaled by stereotypical features of national architecture and dress. Although it is minor by almost any standards, this film offers a combination of visual elements that, I will argue, has become central to the experience of cinema. This combination is that of technology, movement, and landscape—of the automobile as technological form and the picturesque landscape as that through which an automobile moves. In this combination, I will suggest, the movement of an automobile justifies an extended gaze upon a landscape, while the pictorial qualities of the landscape compensate for the limited narrative information contained in the image of a moving automobile.

This essay is concerned with a more limited variation of this relationship, however, one in which a vehicle moves against a landscape while a film's credits unfold over both. I will call such scenes "driving credit sequences," though the sequences to be discussed include a few in which the moving vehicle is a train and the film's central characters are passengers rather than drivers. From the 1950s through the 1980s, one of the most common ways to present a film's credits was against the visual backdrop of a human figure moving through a landscape, in or upon a transportation vehicle—a car, train, or motorcycle. While this particular cinematic figure has roots which reach back into the 1920s, it would become particularly common in the decades following World War II.

2. Genealogies of the Driving Credit Sequence

The emergence of the driving credit sequence is one event within the cinema's long negotiation of its relationship to the written word.¹ The credits of films are examples of what Gerard Genette has called "paratexts," elements of textual structure whose relationship to the main body of a text is uncertain and often the source of a certain cultural anxiety (Genette 1). Part of this anxiety stems from the extent to which words or titles employ materials of expression (typeset or scripted words) which, by convention, are not part of a film's fictional world and, as a result, challenge its coherence or specificity. The precise function and effect of film credits has been the focus of new interest on the part of film scholars, many of them European, over the past decade (cf., for example, Innocenti/Re; Tylski.) Recent theoretical writing has argued, for example, that credits occupy a liminal, transitional function within film, mediating between the world outside the film (that of the spectator, sitting in a darkened theatre) and the film text itself. As Valentina Re suggests, film credits facilitate the passage between the time before a film begins and the point at which the events of its narrative are set in play.²

If credit sequences may be designated "rituals" of opening, the most common of such rituals, from the 1920s through the 1950s, took their models from other media. Film credits would be designed to resemble (or even to represent) the title page of a book, the opening of a theatrical curtain, or the emblematic slide common in 19th-century lectures or magic lantern shows. Such credit sequences usually contained little movement, concerned as they were with reproducing a stable viewing experience associated with theatrical spectatorship or the act of reading. The static character of these credit sequences added to the sense of their autonomy, of their difference from those scenes featuring movement (of human characters and objects) that indicated the commencement of a film's narrative. From the 1920s onwards, however, we find increased experimentation with a variety of means for reducing the autonomy of the credit

I have analyzed this relationship elsewhere, with different emphases. Cf. Straw.

Cf., for example, the extended discussion of these issues in Re.

sequence. In films set within theatrical worlds, credits might be displayed on theatre marquees, with the implicit suggestion that such marquees were part of the world of a film's narrative. In other films, credits might be inscribed in sand on a beach, or revealed as the pages of a magazine whose pages are flipped. Credits increasingly borrowed the supports and typographic forms of urban textual forms like the newspaper or the billboard, in a practice that smoothed the passage from credit sequence to narrative space (Straw).

During and after World War II, in the national cinemas of several countries, credits would be bound more and more to the movement of humans. Occasionally, this movement would take the form of walking, with characters encountering credits as pieces of advertising or graffiti affixed to the sides of buildings (e.g., *The Lady is Willing*; *Open Secret*). A much more common tendency set credits against the movement of technologically-mediated forms of transportation. From the 1940s onwards, credits might unfold against the movement of an inter-city bus, which dropped off its main character just as the credits ended (*The Fallen Angel*; *Some Came Running*). Other films would use the geometries of the railroad train (its serpentine shape, or the rotation of its wheels) to give graphic unity to the words of the credits (*Night Train to Paris*; *Charade*). The movement of motorcyclists along highways or freeways would hold attention during the credit sequences of such films as *Medium Cool* and *The Takers*.

The most frequent use of technologically-mediated transportation in credit sequences involved the use of automobiles and their movement. Within the hundreds of credit sequences which have used automobile journeys, since the 1940s, subdivisions are easily identifiable. There are credit sequences designed to be seen through the windshield of a moving car (*Kiss Me Deadly*; *Hour of Glory*; *125 Rue Montmartre*; *Hell is a City*), others in which we watch police cars rush out of a parking garage into city streets (*On Dangerous Ground*; *Blueprint for Murder*), and others still in which a car pulls up to a remote house in which mysteries will be unveiled (*Le Monocle Noir*; *Cause to Kill/Shaji*; *Dead of Night*). In one of the most common uses of automobile journeys, cars will drive to or from airports during credit sequences, as a means of tracing the travel with which narrative lines are initiated (e.g., *A Fine Pair*; *Come Fly With Me*).

Across this rich and varied history of the driving credit sequence, we may observe several shifts of sensibility. Imagery from the 1940s of trucks, bus or automobiles rumbling in bumpy fashion along highways would give way, in the 1950s, to the steady urgency of automobile journeys prompted by criminal acts or investigations. In the 1960s, driving credit sequences were often marked by the smooth gliding of contemporary sports cars or limousines, in scenes which conveyed the luxury, freedom or elegance of silent, unconstrained movement. In at least some small way, then, the history of driving credit sequences is tied to changes in automobile technology, but of course this is not the whole story. The great driving credit sequences of the 1960s (for example, *The Italian Job* or *A Man and a Woman* (Un Homme et une Femme)) are

clearly part of a new culture of heightened speed and technological sleekness in which the sports car has become pre-eminent. At the same time, driving credit sequences such as these partake of the mannerism and pictorial extravagance of 1960s cinema, marked by an indulgence in unusual and extended visual effects. Key stylistic gestures of this period, like the splitting of light from points in a landscape or use of narrative ellipsis, will often find their fullest development in scenes of individuals driving cars.

By the late 1950s, credit sequences in films of the United States and several other countries had become longer. In part, this was because credit sequences were increasingly accompanied by title songs, which were becoming key elements in the marketing of films and whose complete unfolding they must accommodate. At the same time, the growing number of film personnel for whom credit was now common and required stretched the duration of the credit sequence. Under these conditions, the credit sequence became the pretext for exercises in audiovisual form. One of the best known of these exercises was the animated credit sequence, in which a film's key thematic and narrative elements were usually condensed in a prologue lasting from two to five minutes. (The animated credit sequences to the Pink Panther films of the 1960s are the best known of these.) The other exercise, which concerns us here, was the driving credit sequence, in which credits unfolded against the backdrop of a moving automobile or some other mode of transportation. While, in the early 1950s, images of moving automobiles were simply means for beginning a narrative before a film's credits had concluded, a decade later the driving sequence had become the pretext for extravagant visual exercises with little precise narrative function.

In the 1960s, the driving credit sequence became emblematic of the cinema's capacity to evoke movement and to set this movement against picturesque landscapes which exploited the ascendant use of widescreen filming and easily available color processes. Driving credit sequences, with their low levels of narrative detail, justified a sustained gaze on landscapes both urban and natural. The increase in international co-productions during the 1960s made the driving credit sequence a useful pretext for the display of photogenic locations (like the Swiss Alps) and touristic cityscapes (like those of Rome or Paris.)

From its earliest days, as noted, the cinema had turned to other media (like the book or theatre) for devices to be employed in a film's own rituals of opening. If we treat the automobile window as itself a medium, through which vision is framed and flattened, we may consider it one of the last media to which the cinema has turned in its ongoing experimentation with such rituals. (If it is not the very last, it is because a range of films now use computer screens or other new media forms to present their credits, as with the "digital rain" of letters employed in the credit sequence of *The Matrix*.)

2.1 Landscape and the driving credit sequence

In his book *Cinema 2: L'Image-Temps* {*Cinema 2: The Time Image*}, Gilles Deleuze quotes the French critic Serge Daney on the differential status of movement in the films of different geographical regions. In a 1982 article in the newspaper *Liberation*, Daney argued that "the Americans have taken the study of continuous movement a very long way ... through a movement which empties the image of its weight and its material" (Deleuze 75, n. 12). Daney contrasts this tendency of U.S. cinema with the treatment of movement within Eastern European cinema. In films of the latter, he suggests, the cinema works to slow down movement, to document the accumulation of matter and of historical encumbrances to change. While Daney's reference to the cinema of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is precise here, we may borrow these ideas for a broader examination of national differences in the sorts of movement conveyed in credit sequences.

In 1942, Luchino Visconti opened his film *Ossessione* (Obsession) with a long sequence in which we watch the highway pass through the window of a truck, as the letters of the film's credits appear in sequence. This convention was not unprecedented, even in 1942. Nevertheless, we might see this film as helping to inaugurate a distinctive version of modernity in the cinema. This modernity is characterized by the silent passing of a landscape which, while clearly outside of any city, lacks the picturesque qualities of the natural or pristinely rural. The sequence of credits—of written titles—gives the scene a purpose, but the words are the pretext, as well, for a contemplative relationship to a degraded landscape. The speed of movement of this scene is not a speed that is required by dramatic narrative action (this is not a chase scene, for example.) Neither, however, is it the casual, variable speed of the walking stroller. Rather, our attention is held within a controlled velocity which feels at least slightly constraining. Our estrangement from the background of dirty highways and seemingly neglected fields is doubly generated. In the first place, this estrangement is thematized as the detachment of the invisible driver from a landscape which is presented as aged and uninviting. Arguably, that landscape bears the weight of natural and human histories, of the sort described by Serge Daney in the passage quoted earlier. At the same time, the automobile moves just fast enough for the images of landscape to dissolve at various moments into abstraction. In a great many driving credit sequences, landscape has this double function, then: as a signifier of geographical and historical context, and as a play with abstract forms.

In her book *L'Image pay sage: iconologie et cinema* (The Landscape Image: Ico-nology and Cinema) Maurizia Natali argues that "no filmic landscape can resist, for very long, such things as montage, filmic time, narrative rhythm or the appearance of human characters" (16). If the static landscape invites (or even requires) the quick intrusion of cinematic movement and temporality, a whole set of impulses in the history of cinema have sought to linger on the landscape and prolong its autonomy from any narrative time or movement. The driving credit sequence, arguably, is one partial resolution of this tension. The passage of a moving vehicle brings a sense of time, of mov-

ing towards an end, to the visual experience of landscape. This same movement authorizes a sustained gaze upon that landscape and a foregrounding of its pictorial qualities. The sequence of credits, with which we are usually familiar, locates us at any moment in temporal relation to a conclusion which we know is inevitable.

3. The Driving Credit Sequence: U.S. Examples

I would like to pursue these ideas further through a look at three credit sequences from U.S. films and television programs, one each from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s. In the credit sequences to the film *The Pawnbroker*, the film's central character, a Holocaust survivor who manages a pawnshop in Harlem, drives in to work from one of New York City's outer boroughs. The landscape through which he passes is one of semiotic clutter (signs, both commercial and official, of various shapes) and of a diversity of material forms constitutive of urban infrastructure, many of them obviously in a state of decay. The dominant features of this sequence were repeated in the credit sequence that opened each episode of the television program *The Sopranos*. (Indeed, the credit sequence to *The Sopranos* seems clearly an homage to that of *The Pawnbroker*.) Both the eponymous main character of *The Pawnbroker* and Tony Soprano drive with purpose and self-possession through this landscape, wielding their respective automobiles as instruments of a secure mobility. In our third example, from the 1980 film *American Gigolo*, Richard Gere drives in a convertible through a luxurious southern California landscape as the credits unfold.

In all three of these examples from U.S. texts, the male persona is given what literary theorists might call characterological depth. His silent concentration invites us to ascribe to him a reflective, contemplative relationship to the landscape, all the while setting in place an uncertainty as to his moral and psychological state. We are given extended time in which to contemplate these male characters, but their own attention is focused elsewhere, on the act of driving and on the substance of their inner life.

These kinds of sequences represent particular ways of representing moving vehicles, like automobiles, and of offering a sustained view of natural or industrial landscapes. At the same time, these sequences work to produce a distinctive image of the human figure and to induce, at the very least, a mild curiosity about that figure's psychological interiority. It is typical of the *topos* of the driving credit sequence that the human figure, most often a man, remains silent. It is as if the man is rendered mute by the printed words of the credits, as they follow their familiar sequence, and kept silent, in many cases, by the unfolding of a self-contained piece of music.

The pieces of music in these three sequences have different relationships to the spectator's project of ascribing an interiority to the main character. The Blondie song, "Call Me," which runs over the *American Gigolo* credit sequence, represents the clearest example of song and film promoting each other, but its precise resonance with the film's key themes is inconsistent, in part because the singing voice is female. The theme song to *The Sopranos*, "Woke up this morning," with its 2nd person mode of

address ("You woke up this morning, got yourself a gun"), catches one of the predicaments of Tony Soprano himself—his entrapment within familiar relationships and expectations—but this only partially illuminates his character in the series. Quincy Jones's wordless music for the credits to *The Pawnbroker* suggests a tension and turmoil that one may ascribe either to the main character or to New York City itself, but this is left unresolved.

This topos of the driving credit sequence consists, we might say, of various layers of form in which the human figure is wrapped or enclosed. In the three examples just offered, this figure is contained in a vehicle, but he is also covered over, in a sense, by written words and by music which works to banish other sounds from the scene. Typically, in these scenes, the arrival of the human figure at his destination coincides with the appearance of the final credit—that which identifies the film's director. At that point, both the moving human and the printed words of the credits typically disappear, and the music concludes. The human being is returned to a social world in which dialogue is necessary and in which the introspection conveyed in the driving credit sequence is interrupted.

The urban and suburban landscapes in which the driving credit sequences of *The Pawnbroker* and *The Sopranos* unfold move in and out of a state of visual abstraction. In one moment, that landscape is a signifier of industrial and architectural clutter and decay; in another, it has become a set of hazy, aestheticized forms. (*American Gigolo*, in contrast, is content to leave the clichéd beauty of the southern Californian coastline in its most clearly legible and enjoyable condition.) The specific temporality of these sequences is often uncertain, further enhancing their abstract, metaphorical qualities. Some driving credit sequences are about a specific instance of driving but most are about the typicality of a repeated act, offered in something like a filmic equivalent to the imperfect tense in language.

The quick, determined movement of characters through these landscapes recalls Serge Daney's reference to cinematic movement which removes, from the image, any sense of material weight (Deleuze 293, n. 12). The concrete and metal freeway structures filling the credit sequences of *The Pawnbroker* and *The Sopranos* are obviously weighty in a material sense, but man and automobile glide through them with ease and purpose. It is not in their automobiles that these men confront the thickets of personal history and narrative entanglement that will dominate the stories which follow. Rather these histories and entanglements come as the characters leave the protective shells of their automobiles and enter the world of others.

4. The Driving Credit Sequence: Mexican and Canadian Examples

" Serge Daney's remarks on the status of movement in different cinematic traditions invite us to look specifically at the driving credit sequence as a filmic figure in which culturally specific investments in movement are laid bare. While the risks of cultural essentialism and distorted samples in this exercise are obvious, I want to develop some

observations concerning those credit sequences from Mexican and Canadian films in which a character partakes of technologically-mediated movement. In the very different cinemas of Mexico and Canada, I would suggest, we find tendencies distinct from those of U.S. cinema. In Mexican cinema, driving credit sequences show a tendency to present mobility as an encounter with menacing forces. In Canadian cinema, mobility is the allegorical rendering of social change, and it is typically constrained and interrupted by forces, bureaucratic and otherwise, that work to limit a character's freedom. In neither national cinema does one find, as one does in the American cinema, a preponderance of images of technologically-mediated movement suggestive of self-sufficiency.

In the credit sequence of the Mexican film *La edad de la violencia* (The State of Violence), the members of a motorcycle gang ride, side by side, through the streets of Mexico City's Centre Historico and from there out to one of the city's main thoroughfares. In their smooth, seemingly unconstrained mobility, these riders offer an image of night-time freedom, and of their domination of these streets. At the same time, of course, the logic of the exploitation film requires that this same freedom convey a sense of menace and of the somewhat cynically constructed "social problem" of youth. (These reactions are underscored by the official voice which provides voice-over narration and by the "crime jazz" music which runs throughout this scene.)

Three of my other Mexican examples take place at night, as well, and we might see the cinematic night as a chronotope—a temporal territory—full of menace and unexpected adventure into which each film's main characters ride. In the 1953 *lucha libre* (Wrestling) film *El Enmascarado de Plata* (The Man in the Silver Mask), the wrestler hero rides his motorcycle into the night (against an obviously back projected landscape) while the credits unfold. The psychological thriller *Vagabundo en la lluvia* (The Tramp in the Rain) offers its credits over images of a woman who, having left a costume party, drives a car through a threatening and barely visible landscape on the edges of a city. *Karla contro los jaguars* (Karla Against the Jaguars), one of a series of Mexican films that often used Columbian locations and Argentinian personnel, similarly opens with an automobile voyage into nocturnal obscurity, as does the first episode in the anthology film *La Puerta y la mujer del carnicero* (The Door and the Butcher's Wife). A daytime driving credit sequence serves as an interlude in which the main characters flee a bank robbery in the comedy-thriller *Persiguelas y ... alcan-zalas!* (Chase Them ... Get Them!). The driving which unfolds behind the credits to Arthur Ripstein's much more serious *Lecumberri* (Lecumberri) takes place in the day, but we must wait some time before the scene moves from the darkness of the police van to the daylight image of the prison to which the characters are being transported.

This corpus is limited, but it consists of all the driving credit sequences found in a sampling of fifty Mexican films from the 1940s through the 1970s. In none of these Mexican films is the landscape against which movement and credits unfold rendered as picturesque in any pleasing sense. The obscuring of landscape in several of these films is clearly a result, at some level, of reduced budgets, but this adds considerably

to the sense of disorientation and menace that marks these driving credit sequences. The blurring of terrain at the periphery of an automobile or motorcycle, which might, in an American or European film, represent an indulgence in visual abstraction, serves here to produce a threatening sense of dislocation and oppressive placelessness.

One of the most extended and conventional driving credit sequences featuring a Canadian landscape does not appear in a Canadian film. In the 1958 British thriller *Intent to Kill* assassins have come to Montreal to kill the President of a South American country who has gone to Canada for medical treatment. The credit sequence follows the killers as they drive from Montreal's Dorval airport through suburban thoroughfares and into the middle of the city, in an extended vision of snowy urban landscapes. In an examination of films produced in Canada by Canadian interests, there are a few surprises. Canonical Canadian films associated most strongly with travel, mobility, and escape, like *Coin' Down the Road*, *Nobody Waved Goodbye*, and *Highway 61* do not have driving credit sequences. Indeed, one is struck, on reviewing these films, by the extent to which movement is less important than its consequences; scenes of travel, in these films so clearly remembered as "road movies," are briefer and less central than the much longer scenes in which those characters reflect upon their displacement.

Across the limited sample of films examined here, some differences between the driving credit sequences of Mexican or Canadian films, on the one hand, and U.S. driving credit sequences on the other, become immediately apparent. In the films of Mexico and Canada, the range of vehicles seems greater, for one thing. There are more motorcycles in the Mexican examples, and a greater variety of modes of transport in the Canadian films. Women were more likely to appear as the mobile human figures in Mexican and Canadian credit sequences than in those from the United States. The image of the lone man in an automobile, which dominates the American corpus (and, incidentally, that of Western European cinema as well) is much less predominant in the films of Mexico and Canada.

The lead character of the Canadian film *Why Shoot the Teacher*, played by the diminutive actor Bud Cort, is dwarfed in that film's credit sequence by the much larger trains that carry him to a small prairie town as an agent of bureaucratized development. A train-ride credit sequence opens Denys Arcand's *Gina*, a film in which, as in so many other Quebec films of the 1960s and 1970s, female characters are the tableaux on which social change is registered. The lead character's introspective look out the window of a train, as she travels through a landscape of small working class Quebec towns, anticipates her own assumption of active subjecthood which occurs later in the film.

Eulalie, the central female character in Joyce Wieland's *The Far Shore*, sets off newly married, in an automobile, as that film's credits unfold. The ride is bumpy, however, and interrupted by farm animals. As viewers familiar with English-Canadian films, we watch this sequence in the certainty that its promises of freedom and mobility will soon be destroyed. As Emily West argues, with respect to Canadian historical

films and television series, these almost inevitably play upon the gap between the enlightened present of the viewer and the ignorance or unrealized hopes of characters whose lives are set in the past (West). The failure of smooth mobility in these films is thus one index of ameliorative lessons to be conveyed and learned in the historical gap between a film's historical period and the present. In other Canadian examples, credit sequences present images of technologically-mediated movement that is similarly frustrated and doomed: the driver in congested traffic during the credits of *The Rubber Gun*, or the bumbling snow removal vehicle operator, hounded by his wife, boss, and neighborhood children as he tries to do his job, in the title sequence of *La Vie heureuse de Leopold Z* (The Merry World of Leopold Z).

5. Conclusions

We may trace some of these differences outlined here to the particular conditions of film production characteristic of each country. In Mexico, the use of the driving credit sequence coincided with the waning of the *epoca de oro* or Golden Age in Mexican cinema, and with the turn towards popular genres like horror, the fantastic adventure film, and the film of youthful rebellion. The motorcycle functions effectively as both the familiar vehicle of the juvenile delinquent and the perfect accessory of the crime-fighting superhero. The narrative dispatching of a female character to confront various kinds of menace would be a recurrent pattern in these films. In Canada, the situation is almost diametrically opposed. Canadian films of the 1960s and 1970s were usually made as "art" films—as highly subsidized pieces of social commentary which did not belong to popular genres. As a result, these films were often historical, and were more likely than American popular films to have females as their central characters. In the driving credit sequences of Mexican films, characters drive into spaces of enigma and uncertainty because, as genre films, these work to delay the revelation of their film's secrets. In the Canadian examples, in contrast, films made only after significant economic struggle strain to show off their resources, and to foreground, through multiple registers of irony, the historical failures of bureaucratic or technological promise. In the driving credit sequences of American films, as in the American cinema more generally, characters move to demonstrate their control over expanses of territory and to enact changes in their lives. In the Canadian films I've looked at, characters often move as the agents of broader socio-historical changes of which they are often little more than tokens.

We can say, of the driving credit sequence, that its specific variations within different national cinemas are symptomatic of different aspects of those cinemas: Driving credit sequences suggest the extent to which, in a given national culture, travel is marked by freedom, interruption, difficulty or routine. They convey the extent to which landscapes are spaces of detached contemplation or highly codified sites of menace or opportunity; they insinuate something of the extent to which travel is an activity marked by individualistic exploration or bureaucratized collective movement.

In broader terms, driving credit sequences are distinctive unities of cultural expression through which the aesthetic, social, and political meanings of human mobility are foregrounded.

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La mano que senala: una revision del *Diario de a bordo* de Cristobal Colon en *The Accidental Indies* de Robert Finley¹

ANA PAULINA GIL VARGAS

It is the pointing hand, the index, the finger that names,
decrees, instructs, and governs, the hand whose will is
fulfilled. The hand that points is magical: it has the powers of
levitation, of transformation, of creation and self-creation,
and alas, of assimilation and of extermination.

—Robert Finley, *The Accidental Indies*

Abstract

Ana Paulina Gil Vargas discusses the process of what Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman called the invention of America in her article "La mano que senala: una revision del *Diario de a bordo* de Cristobal Colon en *The Accidental Indies* de Robert Finley." The first voyage of Christopher Columbus to America has been reviewed several times in American and Latin American literature, either to criticize or to praise the life and deeds of the Genovese admiral. From a Canadian and postmodern point of view, Robert Finley in *The Accidental Indies* presents a road narrative capable of combining both approaches, admiration as well as criticism. The latter is synthesized by "the pointing hand," an image that symbolizes the nature of the relationship between "Self and "Other" within this work; what more important travel narrative to start with than the one that inaugurates a tradition that will name not only a continent but its regions?

1. Introduction

La literature de viaje ocupa un lugar muy singular dentro de la historia de las letras, ya que suele colocarse en la frontera entre disciplinas aparentemente discordantes como lo son la ciencia y la literature; tambien resulta dificil establecer sus limites genericos, pues se caracteriza por tomar la forma de diversos generos, tales como la cronica, el diario y la novela. En general, se suele dividir en viajes ficticios, como los relatos de Julio Verne, y viajes reales o no ficticios, como las cronicas de los exploradores del

Este articulo esta basado en la investigation que realice para presentar mi tesis de maestria, titulada: La reescritura del *Diario de a bordo* y la figura de Cristobal Colon en *The Accidental Indies* de Robert Finley.

siglo XVI. Lo cierto es que la exploración europea y el descubrimiento de nuevos pueblos y culturas siempre han ido de la mano con la literatura de viaje.

La escritura de relatos de viaje ha sido crucial para la cultura occidental al momento de otorgar un lugar a lo nuevo y lo desconocido. Escribir, nombrar algo, es el primer paso para la asimilación del otro, ya que permite hacerlo parte de un código conocido. Los exploradores hacen mapas y utilizan herramientas para medir y clasificar y posteriormente escribir los resultados de sus investigaciones, las cuales a menudo se encuentran plagadas de prejuicios dictados por prácticas de escritura milenarias, así como por los modos de percibir y describir que Occidente ha adoptado tradicionalmente en sus encuentros con el resto del mundo. En palabras de Stephen Greenblatt:

we can demonstrate that, in the face of the unknown, Europeans used their conventional intellectual and organizational structures, fashioned over centuries of mediated contact with other cultures, and that this structured greatly impeded a clear grasp of the radical otherness of the American lands and peoples. (54)

Dentro del ámbito literario, la literatura de viaje ocupa un lugar privilegiado ya que, a pesar de encontrarse en el límite entre la historia y la ficción, por estar compuesta de la experiencia personal de un viajero cuyo punto de vista media entre la realidad y el texto, se le suele otorgar un valor mayor como documento histórico e incluso científico: "el moderno relato de viajes, sobre todo el que se centra en el llamado 'Nuevo Mundo,' busca la experiencia y su transmisión. Esto justifica una lectura que considera y analiza los relatos de viajes como fuentes históricas, sociológicas o geográficas" (Ette 32). Este valor otorgado por las ciencias humanas y sociales le da una autoridad que la literatura posmoderna desafía con textos como *The Accidental Indies*, que transforma uno de los documentos más importantes para la historia oficial y la literatura de viaje: el *Diario de a bordo* de Cristóbal Colón.

Noé Jitrik retoma los conceptos de "monumento" y "documento" que Michel Foucault desarrolla en *La arqueología del saber* para estudiar la trascendencia del *Diario* dentro de la cultura occidental. Como "texto fundido a una historia de los orígenes de la modernidad" (Jitrik 9) el *Diario de a bordo* es un monumento, es decir, ha sido considerado por mucho tiempo como fuente de una verdad y, por lo tanto, es motivo de reverencia; pero el texto colombino también es un documento, ya que pertenece a la clase de escritos en los cuales podemos leer "más que lo que suscitan en su lejanía, algo anterior, acompañante, y ulterior, ... que se nos vuelven a ofrecer y que, como tales, establecen algún tipo de convenio o contrato" (9).

La "historia oficial," ese discurso europeo que lleva la cuenta de lo que considera los acontecimientos más importantes, ha elegido algunos documentos históricos para convertirlos en monumentos. Como podemos concluir a partir de las palabras de Jitrik, un monumento es una piedra inamovible a la que se rinde culto; un texto convertido en monumento es considerado como la versión más aceptada de los hechos y, aun más, como sinónimo de verdad.

Un monumento no admite crítica ni cuestionamientos y, por lo tanto, nos obliga a mantenernos como observadores pasivos; en cambio, un documento puede leerse de

formas diversas con el paso del tiempo. La capacidad de poder seguir leyendo un texto, considerarlo un documento, y "justamente, renunciar a la pasividad da lugar a lo que de todos modos podemos llamar la 'critica,' tanto en un sentido de distanciamiento como de posibilidad de operar" (Jitrik 10). El *Diario* ha sido leído y analizado desde diferentes puntos de vista (algunos a favor y otros antagonicos) durante mas de medio milenio; para una novela posmoderna como *The Accidental Indies* deja de ser un monumento, deja de representar una verdad inamovible, y se convierte en un documento flexible cuyas convenciones pueden ser cuestionadas y reelaboradas.

2. Antecedentes al sur de la frontera

El primer viaje de Cristobal Colon a America ha sido retomado y revisado una y otra vez por el cine y la literatura; y el *Diario de a bordo* que documenta esta primera tra-vesia ha sido de una importancia particular para la literatura del continente americano, tanto en lengua inglesa como en espanola, sobre todo en relacion al debate en torno a temas como la identidad, la colonizacion, la evangelizacion y el mestizaje.

Si bien Europa "invento" a America, como nos indica Edmundo O'Gorman, para otorgarle un lugar dentro de su cosmovision occidental del mundo, las naciones ameri-canas, a partir de su independencia, han tratado de reinventarse, y uno de los pasajes a los que recurren para autodefinirse es precisamente el "Descubrimiento de America." A riesgo de reducir, quisiera destacar dos posturas distintas en la literatura del continente y en las discusiones acerca de la identidad americana: una proviene de la parte anglosajona, en particular de Estados Unidos; la otra de America Latina. Considero que las obras mas representativas de estas dos posturas son: la biografia del almirante de Washington Irving publicada por primera vez en 1828, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, y la novela de Alejo Carpentier *El arpay la sombra* de 1978.

Irving describe a Colon como el modelo a seguir por el hombre norteamericano de su epoca. El escritor estadounidense del siglo XIX convierte al almirante en un heroe cultural; en primer lugar Colon es un *self-made man*:

He was one of those men of strong natural genius, who, from having to contend at their very outset with privations and impediments, acquire an intrepidity in encountering and a facility in vanquishing difficulties, throughout their career. Such men learn to effect great purposes with small means, supplying this deficiency by the resources of their own energy and invention. (*Life and Voyages* 20)

Para el escritor estadounidense, Colon poseyo desde el inicio un espiritu perseverante y resuelto (*Life and Voyages* 20) que lo ayudo a seguir adelante a pesar de las adversi-dades. Resulta sorprendente como Irving transforma a una figura portadora de la ideo-logia catolica de finales del Medioevo en el protestante perfecto. Ademas de describir a Colon como alto y apuesto, musculoso y de buen porte, en esta biografia se destaca su templanza, su capacidad de dominarse a si mismo y controlar un caracter fuerte (*Viday viajes* 314).

El Colon de Irving responde a una vision muy estadounidense de America. Para los colonos europeos que poblaron esta zona del continente, el almirante abrio el camino hacia una nueva vida y la posibilidad de fundar una Utopia en la tierra prometeida; como indica O'Gorman, estas nuevas tierras simbolizaron para los colonos anglo-sajones "la oportunidad de ejercer, sin los impedimentos tradicionales, la libertad reli-giosa y politica y de dar libre curso al esfuerzo y al ingenio personales" (157).

Si bien Irving ofrece a Colon como el ideal del nuevo hombre norteamericano, esta asimismo consciente de dos aspectos que parecerian ir en detrimento de la figura que trata de construir, pues tambien presenta al almirante como heredero de las fantasias de su epoca' y lamenta, como lo hizo Fray Bartolome de las Casas en su momento, el papel que el genoves desempeno como iniciador del esclavismo y la exterminacion de los indigenas americanos. Sin embargo, a pesar de este ultimo episodico negative, Colon el heroe es el que perdura como legado de Irving en la literatura estadounidense.³

Esta percepcion de Colon persiste incluso hasta el siglo XX, por ejemplo en William Carlos Williams, quien en un ensayo proporciona la siguiente description de Colon: "aquel cuerpo contenia todo lo que de sagrado, de valiente o de valioso puede haber en un hombre. Es cierto que fue un genio quien hizo el primer gran viaje, un hombre poseido de esa pureza de intencion, arrolladora como un torrente que llamamos genio" (Williams 24).

Como contraparte, tenemos una percepcion diferente de Cristobal Colon en *El arpa y la sombra*; Carpentier escribe esta obra como respuesta a la lectura de textos acerca del almirante con un marcado tono hagiografico. El escritor cubano pone al genoves en pleno juicio, presenta las posiciones de sus defensores junto a las de sus detractores y, sobre todo, desarrolla a un personaje muy humano. El Colon de Carpentier no es un heroe, y mucho menos un santo, pero si un oportunista que engatusa a sus patrocinadores con citas y mas citas de autoridades eclesiasticas, y que es capaz de admitir su codicia e ignorancia.

La novela de Carpentier es una interiorizacion cruda que enfatiza los vicios, antes que las virtudes, del almirante: "me fui volviendo grande e intrepido embustero" (85); "no tengo ni idea de donde vinimos a parar" (118); "Dije: ORO. Viendo tal maravilla, senti como un arrebat interior. Una codicia, jamas conocida, me germinaba en las entranas. Me temblaban las manos. Alterado, sudoroso, empecinado, ... trate de saber de donde venia ese oro" (125).

"Esta era precisamente la singular naturaleza del viaje: una serie continua de dorados suefios y todas las fantasticas interpretaciones del exagerado volumen de Marco Polo" (Irving, *Viday viajes* 78).

Otro autor estadounidense que comparte la misma admiracion por Colon es Walt Whitman. En su poema "Prayer of Columbus," Whitman se identifica con el almirante como un genio al que no se ha hecho justicia; en "A Thought of Columbus" el poeta invoca a Colon como fundador del mundo occidental moderno (Shurr).

Al igual que Irving, Carpentier no nos presenta una vision maniquea de Colon. En este caso, la figura de Colon no es totalmente negativa, el almirante es capaz de la autocritica, como cuando admite que las cosas se le salieron de las manos: "Quise cenir la Tierra y la Tierra me quedo grande" (187), o cuando tiene la oportunidad de hacer un recuento de su vida y lamentar el haberse convertido para America en "Chris-tophoros que ni un solo versiculo de los Evangelios cito al escribir sus cartas y rela-ciones- fue, en realidad, un Principe de Trastornos, Principe de Sangre, Principe de Lagrimas, Principe de Plagas -jinete de Apocalipsis" (181).

Colon visto como un "Principe de Trastornos" y "Principe de Sangre," como el mismo se designa en la novela de Carpentier, es una idea comun dentro de los textos latinoamericanos que hablan del almirante. La literatura en America Latina que proble-matiza la idea del "Descubrimiento" ha tratado de romper la imagen cuasi mitologica de "Cristobal Colon, el heroe de Occidente"; ya desde 1892 Justo Sierra contraponia dos caras del almirante y presentaba "en primer lugar, a Colon, el heroe sin tacha de la leyenda, al heroe que es blanco de todas las envidias, ambiciones e ingratitudes. Empero, ... Colon no fue adivino, ni iluminado, ni santo, sino un hombre de came y hueso: pirata, codicioso, avariento, seductor y cruel con los indios" (Bosch 161).

Esta perspectiva que trata de hacer consciente al mundo del daflo que el almirante y su "Descubrimiento"⁴ hicieron a los pueblos americanos se convirtio en eje central de las discusiones en torno a la celebracion del quinto centenario de dicho aconte-cimiento. Para 1992 America Latina sabia que, para definir su identidad, tenia que vol-tear con una mirada critica hacia los hechos desencadenados a partir del 12 de octubre de 1492.⁵

La polemica y las discusiones que se llevaron a cabo en torno al quinto centenario respondian a las inquietudes de America Latina que, a diferencia de los Estados Unidos de Irving, ha tratado de definirse como una cultura mestiza. Estas reflexiones se desarrollaron en una epoca prolifica en cuanto a critica historica, como lo fue la segunda mitad del siglo XX, cuando las naciones colonizadas de Asia y Africa, ahora independientes, ya habian desarrollado una literatura poscolonial y miraban las reac-ciones latinoamericanas ante el "Descubrimiento" como un reflejo de su propia situa-cion.

El termino "Descubrimiento de America" nos molesta tanto a los latinoamericanos que ya lo hemos tratado de sustituir con otros titulos como "Dia de la Raza" o "Encuentro de dos mundos"; incluso en Venezuela, en el 2005, se le cambio el nombre por el de "Dia de la Resistencia Indigena." Por el contrario, en Estados Unidos se celebra el 12 de octubre como "Columbus Day" y en Espana es la "Fiesta Nacional de Espafia" o "Dia de la His-panidad."

En palabras de Leopoldo Zea: "No se trata, desde luego, de festejar la fecha, no se festeja el inicio de la conquista, mucho menos de ponderar ahora una expresion anacronica de im-perialismo, sino de recordar y, al recordar, reflexionar sobre lo que este hecho signifique y significa para el propio desarrollo de la region y como expresion de la identidad de estos pueblos. Permitira asi tomar conciencia de esta identidad a partir del hecho que le dio origen" (7).

Aquel año de 1992 en que América Latina exigía tomar en cuenta también los aspectos negativos de Cristóbal Colón y su proyecto, la única nación americana que eligió una posición neutral y prefirió no tomar parte en las discusiones fue Canadá. El historiador Barry Gough resume esta decisión: "Canada conveniently chose to stand aside. Of all the states and jurisdictions of the Americas, except the Falkland Islands, Canada alone had no quincentenary commission. Perhaps Canada is the most politically correct of all the American states" (9).

Gough comprende la posición de Canadá, que en aquel momento eligió la neutralidad al estar consciente de su pasado europeo, multicultural e indígena; sin embargo, ¿no era ese el momento de dejar de ser "políticamente correctos" y entrar de lleno en la discusión que animaba al resto del continente? El historiador canadiense continúa diciendo que esa neutralidad negó la oportunidad a Canadá de detenerse a estudiar y reflexionar acerca de una parte importante de su historia: "the Columbian era of Canadian history can reveal the rich dimensions of the human world existing in northern North America in the fifteenth century" (10).

Lo anterior no significa que el pueblo canadiense, o los diferentes pueblos que lo conforman, ignorara la importancia del "Descubrimiento" para su identidad nacional; sin embargo, la respuesta esperada provino de los márgenes. Fueron las voces indígenas de Canadá las que comunicaron su postura al resto del mundo, los llamados Primeros Pueblos, que por muchos años fueron desplazados y mantenidos al margen de la nación pero que, en las últimas décadas, han sido protegidos por leyes y estatutos que deberían servir como ejemplo al resto de las naciones americanas con población indígena. El mensaje de los pueblos indígenas canadienses en 1992 fue el siguiente: "For First Nations to celebrate the near destruction of our culture and identity would be insane ... And we want to say First Nations have survived and will continue to be here for the next 500 years" (Gough 10).

A pesar de la presencia de esta voz indígena, Canadá no tenía una tradición literaria sólida alrededor de la figura de Colón y el "Descubrimiento" como la estado-unidense y latinoamericana. Si ha existido un interés constante en la literatura canadiense por la literatura de viaje pero, como argumenta Gough, faltaba reflexionar acerca del pasaje colombino como parte relevante de la historia canadiense. *The Accidental Indies* es una respuesta a esta urgencia, y comienza a llenar el vacío de la figura de Colón dentro la discusión histórica y literaria canadiense. Dicha novela ofrece además una alternativa al "Where is here?" de Northrop Frye, pregunta a la que el texto de Finley responde: "Aquí también es América."

3. La mano que señala

The Accidental Indies de Robert Finley nos ofrece una perspectiva canadiense del acontecimiento que tanto ha significado para todo el continente. Esta obra sigue a Colón desde la cuna hasta su presentación en la corte española tras concluir su primer viaje, y para ello, recurre al **Diario de a bordo** del almirante genovés, así como a otros

textos colombinos.⁶ El texto canadiense presenta una alternativa media entre la admiración de los estadounidenses y la indignación de los latinoamericanos, o mas bien, nos enfrenta a las dos posturas al mismo tiempo. Lo anterior es posible gracias a que esta obra se coloca en un contexto posmoderno, es decir, se trata de un texto que entabla una relación muy particular con la ficción, por un lado, y la historia, por el otro. En palabras de Linda Hutcheon, las novelas posmodernas canadienses están conscientes de ser ficciones literarias y ven a la ficción como una forma de comprender el pasado y el presente de nuestro mundo; además, revisan a la historia y las relaciones que esta entabla con el arte (Hutcheon, *Canadian Postmodern* x-xi).

Si bien *The Accidental Indies* es fundamentalmente una revisión crítica del *Diario de a bordo*, comenzaremos con algunos ejemplos de la admiración que esta obra canadiense manifiesta cuando se trata de considerar a la figura del almirante que lo protagoniza. En primer lugar, tenemos un pasaje al inicio de la narración, en donde se nos muestra a Colón como un niño que ya desde la cuna muestra un sentido de misión: "we should note here in the child the sense not of a destination but of a destiny, and how the two are twisted in a single thread. He is onto something big it's true" (5); el texto de Finley sugiere que el genovés era un hombre destinado a hacer algo grande. *The Accidental Indies* incluso muestra cierto grado de respeto hacia el espíritu inquisitivo del almirante y hacia su perseverancia.

Otro ejemplo, es la empatía que el mismo autor siente por Colón como navegante, ya que dentro de los agradecimientos que encontramos al final de su texto relata como durante su infancia navegó por las costas de Nueva Escocia y Terranova, contemplando las distancias entre la niebla atlántica: "from this perspective," indica Finley, "the world can seem at once uncertain and especially vivid and precious. ... It was a great place to begin thinking about the distances that inform this book" (101).

Sin embargo, lo que aquí nos interesa más es la revisión crítica que *The Accidental Indies* hace del *Diario de a bordo* y del contexto en torno a la escritura de este documento. Dicha postura crítica se resume en una imagen presente, en primer lugar, de manera visual en el texto canadiense, y posteriormente desarrollada de manera verbal; se trata de la mano que señala:

Además del *Diario*, *The Accidental Indies* alude a la carta con la que Colón anunció el éxito de su primer viaje a toda Europa, la versión más conocida de esta carta es la Carta a Santangel (Luis de Santangel era "escribano" en la corte de los Reyes Católicos, en realidad sus funciones eran más bien financieras). Asimismo, el texto de Finley recurre a otras tres obras posteriores a la muerte de Colón: la biografía del almirante escrita por su hijo Fernando Colón, la Historia de las Indias de Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (a cuya intervención debemos también la versión del *Diario* que ha llegado hasta nosotros) y el estudio de mediados del siglo XX, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea* de Samuel Eliot Morison. Lo anterior es solamente un vistazo de la compleja red intertextual que *The Accidental Indies* teje en torno a otros textos que retoman a la figura de Cristóbal Colón y la realización de su proyecto.

La mano que señala es uno entre muchos ejemplos de la importancia que tienen las imágenes dentro de *The Accidental Indies*. Esta obra canadiense es muy visual; no solo porque



Imagen I: La mano que senala.

Originalmente, la mano que senala era un dibujo que Colon utilizaba para marcar los pasajes que le interesaban en un texto determinado, sus famosas apostillas. Finley retoma esta imagen para enfatizar dos temas: la literatura de viaje que esta detras del *Diario* y el proyecto de Colon, sobre todo la "otredad" o los seres maravillosos que suelen contener estos relatos de viaje y, finalmente apunta hacia Colon mismo, lo que el representa como figura historica a traves de su propio nombre.

En primer lugar, la mano que senala nos habla de una curiosa sociedad: "*The Society of the Pointing Hand*." Detras de esta mano se encuentran las autoridades clasicas y judeocristianas, que se habian dedicado a describir el mundo, la tradition de textos detras de Colon. En *The Accidental Indies* se menciona especificamente a Plinio el Viejo, Sir John Mandeville, Pierre d'Ailly, Aristoteles, Platon, Esdras, San Ambrosio, San Agustin y, por supuesto, Marco Polo. Se trata de una lista, contenida en unas cuantas paginas, junto con citas de algunos de sus textos, a la que se podrian ir agregando mas y mas autoridades en la materia de la descripcion y extension del mundo, tal y como este era concebido a finales de la Edad Media e inicios del Renacimiento; sin embargo, como indique antes, todo este bagaje bibliografico se encuentra resumido en una sola imagen.

Lo que todas estas autoridades tienen en comun -de acuerdo con *The Accidental Indies*- es que se han dedicado a senalar, clasificar e imponer una identidad al "otro" explorado y descrito dentro de los relatos de viaje. Algunos de los "poderes" de esta sociedad de exploradores-escritores, incluyen la capacidad de transformar, asimilar y exterminar al "otro"; el texto canadiense continua enumerando los poderes autoritarios de este simbolo: "it is not the loved one or the friend that is pointed out with the pointing hand, it is the thief in our midst, the pariah, the stranger. The pointing hand is the final gesture of judicial murder, of assassination, of genocide; it says, 'I name, I sentence'" (Finley 18).

Colon utiliza la mano que senala para resaltar los pasajes que le interesaban al margen de un libro, *The Accidental Indies* la utiliza para poner el dedo en la llaga y

cada una de las cuatro partes en las que se divide el libro es introducida por una imagen que evoca los relatos de viaje medievales (por ejemplo, un grabado de Colon, a bordo de su carabela, listo para partir; un monstruo marino que podria salir de cualquier bestiario medieval), sino tambien por su prosa poetica. Una y otra vez nos encontramos con imagenes poeticas (sobre todo visuales, pero que tambien apelan a otros sentidos como el gusto y el olfato) en los pasajes que corresponden a la exploracion y descripcion de las islas del Caribe dentro del texto de Finley.

"And Columbus ... marks the margin of Imago Mundi with the sign of a pointing hand" (Finley 14).

decirnos que la literatura de viaje ha servido a Occidente para describir y otorgar una identidad al resto del mundo, a menudo basandose en prejuicios y falsedades que tra-tan de fijar al "otro" en un sistema que no le pertenece. Asi, la "marginalia" medieval, la simple nota al margen, se convierte en un simbolo de aquellos que se encuentran en el margen o marginados. Asimismo, la mano que senala introduce un tema que se desarrolla a lo largo de *The Accidental Indies*: la otredad como un discurso que se aprende, que se recrea a partir de otros textos, en lugar de crearse en el momento de explorar lugares desconocidos para Occidente.

De acuerdo con esta novela canadiense, la mano que senala muestra como Colon observa el Nuevo Mundo segun lo dicta su deseo (el deseo de hallar las riquezas orientales que confirmen que ha encontrado una nueva ruta a las Indias), no de acuerdo a su realidad fisica (y tambien se podria decir geografica y sociologica): "The pointing hand is no less a thing than the constellation under which Columbus will greet the unknown Other on the shores of the New World, ... under its influence we find that which we desire, the world as we desire it" (18). Esta es una critica a los textos colon-binos, y a la literatura de viaje en general, en donde se pierde lo que caracteriza en particular a un nuevo mundo, lo que lo hace unico, cuando se elige generalizar su descripcion de acuerdo con las convenciones establecidas por siglos de literatura de viaje. Como indica Barbara Korte: "accounts of travel are never objective; they inevitably reveal the culture-specific and individual patterns of perception and knowledge which every traveler brings to the traveled world" (6).

Si bien la mano que senala pertenece a los patrones de percepcion europeos que habia heredado Colon, es aun mas importante considerar lo que se encuentra del otro lado de su dedo indice autoritario. Jugando con la ubicacion original del dibujo que se encontraba en el margen de los libros que leia y anotaba Colon, *The Accidental Indies* nos indica que esta imagen "leads us through a whole new world of marginalia: 'of fantasies, of grotesques, of titillations and taboos'" (16). Es decir, la mano pertenece al "Yo" europeo que senala al "Otro" que esta al margen (y por lo tanto marginado): canibales, sirenas, amazonas, la gente con cola y/o cabeza de perro, los que estan fuera de Europa, en todas esas tierras designadas en conjunto como "Las Indias." Hay que recordar que "it is not the loved one or the friend that is pointed out with the pointing hand, it is the thief in our midst, the pariah, the stranger" (18). Es esta gama de seres maravillosos la que hizo tan popular textos como *El libro de las cosas maravillosas* de Marco Polo o *Los viajes* de Sir John Mandeville; sin importar si eran mas fantasia que realidad, los relatos que contenian estas obras no solo fueron una lectura sumamente popular en la epoca de Colon, sino que tambien se transmitian de forma oral entre los marineros.

En su estudio de las maravillas que encontramos dentro de la literatura de viaje, Stephen Greenblatt indica que la fuerza narrativa de los relatos de viaje de finales de la Edad Media e inicios del Renacimiento yace precisamente en "the shock of the unfamiliar, the provocation of an intense curiosity, the local excitement of discontinuous wonders" (2). Estas maravillas -en otras palabras, este tipo de "otredad"- nos siguen

causando asombro como curiosidades, pero en ese entonces eran muy reales, como nos invita a reflexionar el narrador de *The Accidental Indies*: "Before you, reader, scoff at the credulousness of our white-haired student of geography ..., or at this, his society of fellows, his marginalia, his beliefs, remember, all of these things were true. And you, and I too, grew up in fear of the dreadful Anthropophagi" (17-18).

La mano que senala no simboliza unicamente a las autoridades de los relatos de viaje y la marginalia que describen, sino que Colon, dentro de la obra canadiense, utiliza esta imagen para senalarse a si mismo, con una especie de parentesis en donde se encuentra reproducida la rabrica de Colon:



Imagen II: La rabrica de Colon entre dos manos que senalan.⁹

Los significados que contiene el nombre de Colon y como estos han ido evolucionando a lo largo de los años siempre ha sido un tema importante para los que han estudiado su vida y obra. El mismo almirante creo esta rabrica que estampaba como su firma, para destacar su labor evangelizadora, para autonombrarse el "portador de Cristo,"¹⁰ en alusion a su nombre y a la historia de San Cristobal (que ademas era el santo patron de los marineros).

Sin embargo, con el paso del tiempo, el nombre de Cristobal Colon ha ido adquiriendo mas significados, asociados por un lado con el descubrimiento y la mision y, por el otro, con la invencion y el colonialismo. La novela canadiense enfatiza desde el inicio el papel de Colon como mensajero, responsabilidad que el almirante lleva en su mismo nombre. No solo es "Christopher: Xpo Ferens" (Finley 6), el que lleva a Cristo, con el potencial evangelizador que el mismo genoves exploto despues, sino tambien el colonizador: "Colon, arch coloniarch, or (from the Spanish) the dove of discord carrying in its beak a dead branch, a limb, a clause of itself across the wastes of seas, Colombo (us), bringer of news" (Finley 6).

En ingles, el almirante es *Columbus*, la paloma mensajera, pero al ser tambien Colon (en espanol como lo indica el texto canadiense), su nombre resulta ominoso, el mensaje esta destinado a desembocar en una colonizacion. Al exponer los diversos significados de su nombre, la obra de Finley enfatiza el proyecto colonialista y evangelizador que aparece a lo largo de todo el *Diario de abordo*. Y es que, si bien Colon in-

"Even in his dreams everything is labelled with the pointing hand; ... even himself (Finley 15).

Vid. "Introduccion" de Consuelo Varela a los Textos y documentos completos de Cristobal Colon, 2a edicion publicada por Alianza Universidad.

siste en llamarse así mismo "el portador de Cristo," sus escritos revelan abiertamente otra situación.

Por desgracia, lo que el almirante enfatiza acerca de los pueblos indígenas que encuentra en lo que después conoceríamos como las islas del Caribe es a favor de la promoción de una fácil conquista y conversión al cristianismo. Basándose en sus observaciones, Colón concluye en su *Diario* que los "indios" no tienen religión ni armas: "no creed is known to them, and I believe that they would be speedily converted to Christianity" (*Journal*, 16.10.1492); "these people have no spears or darts or any other arms, nor have the others in all this island" (*Journal*, 21.12.1492). Aún más, los considera de antemano vasallos de la corona española: "He hold them to be already Christians and to belong to the Sovereigns of Castile more than do the peoples of Castile" (*Journal*, 21.12.1492).

El *Diario* maneja abiertamente un discurso colonialista. Para ello, el almirante utiliza diversas estrategias como: renombrar todos los lugares que visita, mencionar las riquezas naturales que pueden ser explotadas en beneficio de la corona española y considerar a los nativos, de antemano, como súbditos españoles. *The Accidental Indies* logra sintetizar todo lo anterior en la imagen de la mano que señala y, sobre todo, cuando esta señala de manera tan enfática el nombre de Colón y todas sus implicaciones.

Cristóbal Colón fue la voz europea que tuvo la oportunidad de dar voz a América por primera vez ante Occidente, aun sin saberlo; el problema es que no pudo transmitir este mensaje adecuadamente, en primer lugar, porque desconocía su lengua y apenas pudo comunicarse por señas y, en un segundo término, porque le importaba más presentar este Nuevo Mundo de una forma que fuera comprendida por los europeos (Ferdman) e identificada como "Las Indias" de Marco Polo en lugar de ser fiel a la realidad americana. Como transmisor, Colón fue más fiel a sus lectores que a la cultura origen.

El primer viaje de Colón marcó un hito en la comunicación y el intercambio entre dos culturas; el problema es que la cultura que tenía los medios escritos para transmitir este "encuentro" no entendió, ni atendió, a la realidad del "otro." Colón esperaba encontrarse con un "otro" oriental, con las maravillas y riquezas de Oriente; sus textos revelan el deseo de que esa otredad por él observada fuera la misma que otros viajeros medievales habían visto en "Las Indias" (Ferdman). Este deseo de concordar con lo que otros habían presenciado y descrito con anterioridad es la causa principal de que sus propias descripciones estén basadas en una percepción ideologizada.

Como la mano que lo señala, el nombre de Colón posee varios significados incluso contradictorios, que lo convierten en un personaje complejo dentro de *The Accidental Indies*. A pesar de señalar lo que ha llegado a significar su nombre, el texto canadiense no juzga al almirante como el único culpable del esclavismo y la colonización americana, sino que lo muestra como un producto de su época; sus prejuicios, deseos y fantasías responden al contexto en que se mueve, sobre todo a la cosmovisión medieval que perduraba en aquellos tiempos de cambio; aspectos de los que el na-

rrador de esta novela nos pide estar conscientes para no juzgar a Colon con demasiado rigor.

No es que el texto canadiense trate de restar responsabilidad al almirante, sine que nos insta a reflexionar acerca de los antecedentes y el contexto en que se desa-rrollo su proyecto. Cabe recordar que el texto canadiense senala que Colon no viaja solo, sino acompañado por centurias de literatura de viaje. Con esto volvemos a la idea de que, si bien *The Accidental Indies* logra, como texto posmoderno, revisar de manera critica el pasado, la figura de Colon y el *Diario de a bordo*, no deja de mostrar -por otro lado- cierta simpatia por su protagonista. La novela canadiense esta consciente de que el *Diario* si contiene un discurso de apropiacion que promueve el colonialismo y esta escrito a partir de formulas prefabricadas que impiden leer a la verdadera America, pero tambien sabe que esto era de esperarse en su epoca ya que obedecia a las con-vencciones de otros relatos de viaje.

Dentro de su exploracion del *Diario de a bordo*, cuya critica, y la del contexto historico y literario del que proviene, se encuentran resumidas en la mano que senala, *The Accidental Indies* es capaz de mirar simultaneamente el pasado y el presente, el lado positivo y negativo del almirante. Un solo personaje, una sola imagen, pueden representar varias cosas a la vez, que en primera instancia parecerian contradictorias. Lo anterior es posible gracias a que el texto de Finley se inserta en un contexto pos-moderno; dicho de otro modo, como obra literaria, nos presenta una revision critica del pasado (Hutcheon 4) y sus textos.

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Pare Belmont Flashback: Andre Forcier's *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge*

JOHANNE SLOAN

Resumen

En "Pare Belmont Flashback: Andre Forcier's *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge*," Johanne Sloan discute, en primer lugar, las razones por las cuales esta película podría incluirse en el género del *road movie*, en tanto muestra un encuentro romántico en Montreal de 1968 e, inmediatamente después, viajes por diversas localidades en Louisiana. La autora afirma, sin embargo, que dado que Forcier entreteje en su película episodios de realismo cinematográfico con elementos fantásticos, sería posible interpretar este viaje al sur de los Estados Unidos como imaginario. Tanto para Rex, el protagonista, como para la condesa que da nombre a la película, el deseo de lanzarse al camino surge del interior del Pare Belmont, el decrepito y decadente parque de diversiones que existió en las orillas de Montreal desde la década de los veinte. El Pare Belmont funciona como el epicentro narrativo y conceptual de la película de Forcier y este lugar permite una investigación de la identidad (rara o estrafalaria); pero, además, permite cuestionar el proceso mismo de la cinematografía. Tal como lo demuestra este artículo, *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge* es, también, una obra de reconstrucción histórica que se relaciona con la memoria personal y con la colectiva.

Andre Forcier's 1998 *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge* (The Countess of Baton Rouge) could be described as a road movie, since the film shows the romantic leads meeting in Montreal in 1968, and soon thereafter traveling around various locations in Louisiana. However, since Forcier's film interweaves episodes of ordinary cinematic realism with fantastical elements, it would be plausible to regard this journey to the southern U.S.A. as primarily an imaginative one. For both the protagonist Rex (played by Robin Aubert) and for the titular countess herself (played by Genevieve Brouillette), the desire to take to the road arises from within the precincts of Pare Belmont, the decline and rather decrepit amusement park/fairground which has existed on the outskirts of Montreal since the 1920s. It is while visiting this place that Rex accidentally meets and instantly falls in love with Paula Paul de Nerval, later known as the "Comtesse de Baton Rouge," and habitually referred to as the most beautiful bearded lady in the world; the countess belongs to Pare Belmont's community of side-show freaks. Another inhabitant of Pare Belmont who makes a strong impression on the hero (and on us, the viewers of the film) is the cyclop Zenon, who attempts to spook Rex with his esoteric practice of cinematic projection. The odd characters, circus acts, carnival pro-

cessions, and roadside attractions that are eventually encountered on the road in Louisiana are in a sense extensions of the strange Franco-American universe first encountered at Pare Belmont. The site of Pare Belmont and the travel-episodes that unravel from it can therefore be regarded as a continuum. Pare Belmont functions as the narrative and conceptual epicenter of Forcier's film, I want to argue, and it is this place which permits an investigation of (freakish) identity, while also allowing the very process of filmmaking to be put into question. *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge* is also a work of historical reconstruction, concerning both personal and collective memory, and so I will address the significance of returning to the period of 1960s Montreal through these particular characters and sites.

It is evident from the start that *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge's* journey is explicitly concerned with shifting modes of cinematic representation. The film opens with the main protagonist, Rex Prince, in the present day (1990s), screening a film he has made about his own past. Almost immediately, a flashback to the 1960s introduces us to the persona of the young filmmaker as he earnestly attempts to gather material for a documentary film, and indeed the visual tropes which often accompany such urban documentary projects are quickly provided; we see Rex crouched behind a fence in an impoverished Montreal neighborhood, pointing his camera at some children as they attempt to steal a bicycle, then following them as they queue at the door of an imposing ecclesiastical structure for the charitable distribution of food. Rex is then seen lying on the ground near some railroad tracks, filming an old man who is picking up scraps of wood. At this point the documentarian-hero meets a professional film editor, Edouard Dore, who offers to help the young man because he recognizes a fellow cine-phile, and apparently not because, as Rex tells him pointedly, "*le parti a besoin de vous*" ("The party needs you!"). Rex announces his affiliation with a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party, which is sponsoring a film about poverty in Montreal, but it is not much later that he will be seen telling Edouard that this same party has turned against him: "*ow m 'accuse de revisionnisme. Le parti veut ma peau, mon film et ma camera*" ("they're accusing me of revisionism. The party wants my skin, my film, and my camera"). Forcier doesn't provide his audience with much concrete information about the goals or ideological orientation of this particular party, nor do we learn the circumstances of Rex's involvement, but this type of political allegiance is certainly historically appropriate, as a plethora of left-leaning and anti-colonial parties and activist organizations was operating in Quebec throughout the late 1960s. As Sean Mills remarks, "For radicals coming of age in the 1960s, the language of decolonization, with its emphasis on Quebec's cultural and economic alienation, provided a framework within which they could understand their own experiences" (35). Still, Forcier offers only a codified set of points regarding the scope of Rex's politico-cinematic ambitions at this juncture: there is indication of a collective political agenda, and of a socially-engaged documentary project, complete with improvised shooting in the street, and scenes of gritty realism.

Not very long after these scenes the filmmaker-hero is shown abruptly abandoning this political commitment and its accompanying mode of cinematic engagement. As soon as he crosses the threshold of Pare Belmont the aspiring documentary filmmaker is pulled into another visual regime, another form of cinematic consciousness. But this initial scene-setting of socially responsible documentary filmmaking is important to the unfolding narrative precisely because it does establish one crucial *point de depart* or starting point for the journey to come. In fact, Montreal was a hotbed of activist documentary filmmaking in the 1960s. Many individuals and groups shared our fictional hero's determination to harness the power of film for social ends, but it was the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) which supplied the most institutional support for these endeavors. The NFB, in existence since 1939, had a mandate to sponsor and produce films that would actively contribute to the cultural capital of the Canadian nation-state. Indeed, a majority of the films produced under the auspices of the NFB were documentary, while this filmic activity was complemented by a busy documentary photography department. It was a new kind of documentary project that was being formulated at this very moment, however: launched in 1967, this new initiative was called *Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle*. The National Film Board's *Challenge for Change* program was a response to the fact that the whole apparatus of documentary film conventionally rested in the hands of cultural elites, however well-meaning these might be. The advocates for a new kind of documentary argued that it was possible and indeed necessary for socially disenfranchised people to gain control of the means of representation. The *Challenge for Change* program, at least in its rhetoric, was concerned with empowering such individuals and groups by giving them access to cameras and training, and encouraging them to tell their own stories and to make films about themselves.

A recent publication edited by film scholar Thomas Waugh and two of his students reassesses the impact of the *Challenge for Change* program, which came to encompass over 200 films and videos made across the country, between the years 1967 and 1980.¹ One early and prototypical result of this new documentary initiative was the 1969 film *Operation boule de neige* (VTR St-Jacques), directed by Bonnie Sherr Klein. Saint-Jacques was one of those neighborhoods in Montreal with an industrial, manufacturing base, and a population that would now be characterized as the "working poor." A few years earlier a progressive provincial endeavor had resulted in the formation of local citizens' groups; and it was this group that Klein and her fellow collaborator from the NFB Dorothy Henaut contacted, handing over camera equipment to some of these ordinary citizens, and then following them around with another camera

Cf. Waugh/Baker/Kingston; in the introduction the editors refer to the *Challenge for Change* program as "a glittering chunk of both Canadian arts and Canadian democracy, with its bold experimentation and its political dreams of transformation" (4).

For a discussion of the distinctive *animation sociale* practiced in Quebec, and more specifically the citizens committees, cf. Druick.

crew as they interviewed and filmed each other. In a text written at the time Renault and Klein wrote:

The firm consensus (was) that the video-tape recording equipment should be used to serve the aims of the Citizens' committee and should not distract the members from those aims. The broad objectives of the Citizens' committee of Saint-Jacques are to work as citizens to gain as much control as possible over their own lives. (25-26)

This quote speaks to the transformative social potential these activists perceived in documentary film practice, and yet there is a moralizing tendency here too, evident when the authors insist that the "video equipment ... should not distract the members from their aims." It is implied that this experimental community project would encourage citizens to engage with film as a medium, but only in certain pre-established ways; the NFB activists are apparently reluctant to accommodate those residents of St-Jacques who might entertain aims or cinematic desires other than to directly serve the community organization. This debate about the role of documentary filmmaking at the National Film Board of Canada in the 1960s is directly relevant to *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge*; Andre Forcier's invented character Rex Prince starts off as a member of a socially-committed team that is akin to the groups of activist documentarians affiliated with the *Challenge for Change* movement, but the film's narrative evolves as it does, and the road-trip occurs, because Rex is quite definitely "distracted" and led astray by errant desires and apparently non-political aims.

The radically different kind of filmmaking Rex will be drawn to turns out to be close at hand, across town in fact. When Rex complains that he can't afford to buy film for his camera, the film editor Edouard sends him to see his good friend Zenon, who will supposedly be able to procure some film stock for him, as a favor. The action then moves to the Pare Belmont fairground, and more specifically to the "*tente des creatures*" (which could be translated as tent of freaks or monsters) which houses the side-show freaks. Zenon's physiognomic peculiarity is revealed to us dramatically: the camera moves up close to a man reading a newspaper, and when he lowers the paper we see a middle-aged man with one bright (and realistic-looking) eye perfectly centered above his nose. During this scene Zenon is backstage sorrowfully bidding farewell to the bearded Paula, who is planning to leave that very night, to take up a new life in Louisiana. Rex arrives just as Zenon is beginning his last presentation of the evening and of the season (the master of ceremonies has announced to the public this appearance of the "only, the unique Canadian cyclop") in a tent filled with fairground visitors. The cyclop notes his arrival, laughingly saying to him, "I like receiving people from the world of cinema." And when Rex tells him that he has come to Pare Belmont because he needs *pellicule* (that is to say celluloid film), Zenon laughs again and says, "*La pellicule, c'est depasse, mon pauvre Rex*" ("My poor Rex, film is a thing of the past"). He then informs the audience that there is neither camera projector nor film hidden from view in the *tente des creatures*. The lights dim, and as Zenon turns to face a screen, a beam of light is emitted from his single eye, and an image is projected onto the screen. It is an image of Rex that appears, initially resembling the young man

in the audience, although this portrait rapidly morphs to show him greying and aging until he is a grotesquely wizened old creature. The real Rex who is in the audience is visibly traumatized by what he is witnessing, although the show is over quickly and Rex is swept along by a now-jovial Zenon, who brings him along to the end-of-season party for the Pare Belmont freaks. It is at this party that Rex is made to dance with the amorous Bebe Crocodile, the reptilian-skinned woman, and if he seems to find this particular freak repulsive, he then sets eyes on Paula, who he finds utterly enchanting.

The scene featuring Zenon's act of fantastical projection might be a short one, but it is nonetheless key, because it allows Forcier to thus introduce two antithetical understandings of what cinema might be, and what it is capable of. On the one hand, we become acquainted with a documentary film project embedded in community goals and social activism. And then, another kind of cinema surges up, and while it is fantastical and idiosyncratic, this too has a venerable genealogy which extends back to the very origins of cinema. The most striking example of this early anti-realistic tendency is the production of the impresario and magician Georges Melies, from the first decade of the 20th century. Not unlike Zenon's ability to magically produce moving images, Melies would often appear to unleash cinematic effects purely out of his own imagination and consciousness. It can be noted too that some of the first public venues for the exhibition of films took place in the context of popular fairgrounds, where the "cinema of attractions" became part of a package of sensational entertainments. It is also important to remember, however, that the supposedly fantastical or surreal aspects of filmic representation would ultimately be incorporated into the vocabulary of conventional realistic filmmaking, through commonly accepted ways of depicting dream sequences and flashbacks, or through other radical spatial and temporal disjunctions which became normalized and familiar to the movie-going public. Indeed, Andre Forcier himself, in an interview about *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge*, stated that the idea for this film came about as he was reflecting on the flashback as a taken-for-granted fragment of cinematic storytelling that he wanted to problematize (cf. Gagan/Loiselle 8). The road trip undertaken in *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge* comes about (at least in part) as a response to these divergent cinematic trajectories. And if they are initially presented as oppositional and seem to be irreconcilable, the road trip sets in motion a desire to re-negotiate the terms of the cinematic project. It is not that *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge* presents us with the aesthetically complete integration of these tendencies, however, because by the end of the film we have seen elements of social realism repeatedly juxtaposed to moments of fantasy, subjectivism, and escapism. Forcier makes this sustained state of tension possible by moving his story back and forth between past and present, and by introducing a film-within-the film.

Once the story re-locates to Louisiana, where Rex is reunited with his beloved bearded lady at a small traveling circus, the romantic leads we have been introduced to actually disappear from the screen and are replaced by actors playing these characters appearing in the film-within-the-film. (Isabel Richer is the countess and David Boutin takes on the role of Rex.) The story keeps cutting back to the present day as well,

showing the filmmaker (a theatrically-aged Aubert) interacting with his cast, friends, and family, as he struggles to represent the past and to confront the resurrected ghosts from the past—in particular, the "real" countess who died during that fateful journey. It is this duplicated story which provides most of the recognizable road movie features. Only in the film-within-the-film do we get to see the Rex character driving around in his picturesque old Edsel car, having adventures and misadventures as he initially searches for the countess and subsequently travels around with her once they are reunited. Forcier thus complicates our cinematic access to the past, even if this is a fictional past. The viewer gets to witness two versions of the events: the apparent reality performed by an initial set of actors, and then the explicitly fictionalized filmed version, where the superficially more attractive second set of leads flesh out the rudimentary story-line of a half-remembered past, in a rather melodramatic fashion. In *La Comtesse de Batou Rouge*, the episodic road movie offers a way, albeit a convoluted way, into the past.

Forcier has made a number of films that delve into the past, and it could be said that much of his recent work is a form of experimentation in this regard, in that he not only chooses distinct historical moments, but also sets out to investigate different modes of historical engagement. *Je me souviens* (I remember), from 2009, is a black-and-white film set in the mining community of Abitibi in 1948, while *Les États-Unis d'Albert* (The United States of Albert), from 2005, follows an aspiring Quebecois actor as he follows his dream down to Hollywood in the 1920s. In these films as in *La Comtesse de Batou Rouge* the past surges up, but veers between tragic and comic modes of emplotment and between realistic and dreamlike modes of pictorialization. If Forcier's films share something with the tradition of Latin American magic realism, it is in the sense that the surreal dimension of Forcier's work relates to the vagaries of collective memory and serves to illuminate Quebecois cultural identity and history in a new way.

The Pare Belmont site itself plays a key role in *La Comtesse de Batou Rouge*, as I have mentioned, so it is necessary to explore the status of this Montreal institution in order to understand how it becomes, in Forcier's film, the very site of historical consciousness or memory-work. As a marginal fragment of the urban environment, Pare Belmont is played off against the city itself, or at least against the glimpses of Montreal provided early in the film: the precarious domestic architecture that houses the poor, the traces of industrial activity in these same neighborhoods, and, importantly, one of those grandiose stone buildings that are part of a network of ecclesiastical structures to be found throughout Montreal, speaking to the widespread influence and power of the Catholic Church before the secularizing "quiet revolution" that had transformed the entire destiny of the Quebecois by the end of the 1960s. If these architectural elements can be regarded as ideological component-parts of the city of Montreal, then we could ask what Pare Belmont signifies in relation to these, while the period setting of *La Comtesse de Batou Rouge* also makes it imperative to consider Expo 67, the world's fair that was held in Montreal during the summer of 1967—which is to say, the year before Forcier's story unfolds. The world's fair doesn't figure in the film,

except that a sign for "*Terre des Hommes*" is briefly visible in the background of the train station scene when the bearded lady leaves town. Certainly in architectural terms Expo 67 was spectacular, offering to both visitors and to the inhabitants of Montreal a futuristic vision of urban life; while Montreal had recently acquired new skyscrapers, elevated highways, and an underground metro system, the world's fair proposed that the city of the future might also include Expo-style "megastructural" constructions, ephemeral architectural modules, and more plug-in islands. As an international cultural event Expo 67 was much more than an opportunity to encounter architectural innovation, of course, and as millions of visitors came to the world's fair from around the world, it was understood that Montreal in its future incarnation would likewise be inhabited by cosmopolitan citizens.

Andre Forcier was actually a contributor to Expo 67 in a small way. At the age of 19 he'd directed a short film entitled *Chroniques Labradoriennes* (Labrador Chronicles) (1967). This film premiered at the Expo 67's Youth Pavilion, and with its mix of social realism and far-fetched fictionalization, it already prefigured his later work.³ Despite his first-hand knowledge of this event, the spectacular world's fair site was not the Montreal environment Forcier chose to return to 30 years later. Instead, Forcier positioned his story one year later at the low-brow, low-status fairground Pare Belmont, which had been in operation on the northern edge of the island since the 1920s. Pare Belmont can indeed be regarded as a kind of anti-Expo 67. Where the world's fair was glamorous, futuristic, and cosmopolitan, the Pare Belmont fairground was parochial and sleazy. It was Expo 67 that seemed successfully to situate the city of Montreal and its inhabitants at a global crossroads, suggesting that personal or national identities were now embedded in networks of mobility and communication. What could Pare Belmont offer that might rival Expo 67 in terms of cultural and/or imaginative power? And yet, in Forcier's alternative history, Pare Belmont does become a kind of portal, allowing the main characters to depart from an everyday world, to provisionally leave behind their homes in Montreal and Quebec, to lose sight of their old selves, and to construct alternative identities for themselves. As Katie Mills describes in her book *The Road Story and the Rebel*,

The very idea of losing oneself contradicts the various "habits" of identity we use to anchor our sense of self and our sense of others. It is those very aspects of modern identity—namely, the limiting terms of race, gender, money, sexual orientation, and conformity—that set the wheels in motion, so to speak, for the conflicts explored in road narratives. (20)

In fact, Expo 67 was built with its own adjacent amusement park, known as "La Ronde," which was sustained as a seasonal attraction after the world's fair was over, and it was the success of this shiny new facility which signaled the ultimate demise of Pare Belmont, even if the older establishment managed to hang on and keep its doors

For a discussion of how a new Quebecois identity was being negotiated in the Youth Pavilion at Expo 67, cf. Cote.

open until 1983. What Pare Belmont possessed that the world's fair across town didn't was its unmistakable whiff of social danger, epitomized by the community of freaks encountered by the hero Rex (although it should be noted that Expo 67 represents a late 20th-century sanitized version of the world's fair paradigm, which in its earlier incarnations in Europe and North America had very often included racy "midway" attractions as well as degrading displays of racial and ethnic otherness). If Forcier invented the magnificent Zenon and some of the other idiosyncratic freaks appearing in *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge*, the presence of such folk at Pare Belmont is nonetheless a matter of historical record: the American Pete Kortes toured his side-show (interestingly once known as the "World's Fair Museum"⁴) far and wide around particular North American sites, and throughout the 1950s Montreal's Belmont Park was an important part of his yearly circuit, while the Sam Alexander side-show seems to have been one of the more regularly-appearing troupes passing through the Montreal fairground during the 1960s and 1970s. "An aggregation of top-drawing crowd-pleasing attractions and freaks," reads one of the Kortes advertisements, which also boasts of another successful season at Montreal's Pare Belmont (*Billboard Magazine* 158). If the freak shows and side-shows consisted of people who were always in motion from one fairground to another, to be a freak in this show-business sense was by definition to be on the road, to be engaged in a perpetual road-trip. Pare Belmont was certainly not characterized by the high-minded cultural exchange and global transactions to be found at Expo 67, but the site chosen by Forcier to serve as the portal or jumping-off point must nevertheless be understood as the nodal point of multiple journeys and travelogues.

The term "freak show" is used deliberately and with some bitterness by Paula Paul de Nerval, the bearded lady, when she explains to the cyclop Zenon why she is leaving Pare Belmont. "I hate Pare Belmont as much as you love it, Zenon," she says ... and then, using the English expression, she says that she despises "les freak show." Shortly after, in the bar with Rex, she teases him that he is "*im cineaste parmi les creatures*" ("a filmmaker amongst the freaks/monsters"), and at some level she seems already to understand what he has not yet admitted to himself, that he feels at home with the freaks. This is the difference between Rex and Paula—that he (rather childishly) wants to run away to join the circus to liberate and fulfill himself, while she is running away to join a small traveling circus in Louisiana because she has convinced herself that it is one step up from the degrading freak show she's been a part of at Pare Belmont; the circus she is heading for is called the "*Cirque du Bonheur*" ("Circus of Happiness"). In other words, just as he's falling in love with a freak, she's attempting her escape from the freak show. Here it should be noted that Paula the countess has a very light beard, the equivalent to a man's stubble after a few days of not shaving. But

Billboard Magazine followed the fortunes of carnivals and side-shows as part of its show-business coverage, and Pete Kortes is mentioned often throughout the 1940s and 1950s, sometimes in relation to Pare Belmont/Belmont Park. The reference to his "world's fair museum" is in *Billboard Magazine*, 18 January, 1947 (44).

it doesn't really matter whether she has a full beard and moustache or not, in a sense; the fact that she hasn't tried to disguise her oddity by removing the hair, that she has instead opted to flaunt her hairy face, is enough to thoroughly transgress conventional ideals of femininity, and to place her in the same category as the micro-cephalic pin-heads, the armless musicians, and other deformed human beings who had historically been part of the freak show tribe.

At the end of *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge* we find ourselves back in Montreal with the middle-aged Rex, back in the present day, and apparently far removed from the freakish identity-quest of his youth. And yet, quite unexpectedly the now-aged cyclop Zenon shows up to add his gifts to a screening of the otherwise banal film-within-the-film. And so we understand that the filmmaker will continue his quest for the most effective flashback, and will continue to explore cinematic journeys into the past.

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Representations and Implications of (Touring on) the Road in Bruce McDonald's *Hard Core Logo*

MARTIN BUTLER

Resumen

En "Representations and Implications of (Touring on) the Road in Bruce McDonald's *Hard Core Logo*" Martin Butler analiza las estrategias para exhibir el camino en este *road movie* canadiense, iluminando su significado alegorico. El autor afirma que, cuando se anda de gira, el camino sirve como un lugar de autoexploracion para los protagonistas (por ejemplo, en el nivel intradiegetico) y -algo que para el resulta mas importante- como un sitio para narrar y negociar la historia del punk en tanto genero musical e ideologia politica, con lo cual se convierte en parte del discurso del dilema inherente a esta subcultura (cosa que sucede en el nivel extradiegetico). Su analisis tambien hace referencia a la novela eponima de Michael Turner, publicada tambien en 1996, asi como a su adaptacion a novela grafica por obra de Nick Craine, publicada en 1996 con el titulo de *Portrait of a Thousand Punks: Hard Core Logo*, se trata, en-tonces, de un viaje de lo literario a lo filmico y de regreso. Al encuadrar su lectura en el examen de estos textos, comprendemos mejor la factura artistica de la pelicula y sus implicaciones alegoricas; pero entendemos, ademas, que aunque la carretera no aparezca de manera prominente en la pelicula, es, de hecho, su fundamento estetico y etico.

1. Introduction

Bruce McDonald's 1996 'rock 'n' road' movie *Hard Core Logo*, which, in a documentary fashion, portrays the re-union tour of a (fictional) coming of age Canadian punk rock band, received considerable attention among film critics and is "widely considered Bruce McDonald's most successful film" (Druick, qtd. in Beaty et al. 172). In the same vein, Aaron Taylor points out that *Hard Core Logo* is McDonald's "last major commercial and critical success" (201), and critic Steve Gravestock even calls the film "McDonald's undisputed masterpiece" (250). Yet, while the majority of reviewers, such as *New York Times* writer Stephen Holden, regard it as a "clever mock documentary" (n. pag), others less enthusiastically put it into the 'average-shelf of their all-time favorites, pointing out that the film "is worth seeing if you're interested in the subject matter" (Schulte n. pag.). To be sure, this mixed bag of reviews may well be due to the film's all-too-famous predecessor, *This Is Spinal Tap*, still setting the

standards in the genre (c.f., e.g., Laderman 296) and constituting one of the film's "crucial intertexts" (Dickinson 189, cf. also 193f). Yet, the somewhat ambivalent reactions to the film could also be due to some seeming incongruencies in the film's aesthetics and its way of storytelling, as Holden observes in his review, stating that *Hard Core Logo* "blends satire with sentiment in a way that keeps you emotionally off balance" (n. pag.). He goes on:

For every suggestion that it is poking fun at the punk-rock esthetic (onstage, the bullying, alcoholic lead singer Joe Dick spits in the faces of his fellow band members), there are stronger hints that the movie, handsomely photographed by Danny Nowak, aspires to be a kind of romantic elegy to the punk-rock movement. As *Hard Core Logo* makes its way across the prairie, shots of its battered tour bus rolling through the farmland convey a mood of grand desolation. What does punk rock and its esthetic of defiance have to do with this landscape, you wonder? (n. pag.)

Interestingly, however, the reviewer's elaborations, which are supposed to express his slight irritation resulting from the film's strange combination of punk rock's "aesthetics of defiance" with a romanticizing portrayal of a rural landscape, do not only give substance to his claim that the film "keeps you emotionally off balance;" they also hint at one of the film's most significant sites, i.e., the road, where the poetics of punk rock clash with those of the prairie, and which connects both the band members as a group of travelers as well as the destinations of their re-union tour.

Taking these observations as a starting point, my contribution sets out to examine the visual and acoustic strategies of 'screening' the road in Bruce McDonald's film *Hard Core Logo*, thus shedding light on its allegorical significance. It argues that (touring on) the road serves both as a site of self-exploration for the protagonists (i.e., on the intradiegetic level) and, more importantly, as a site of narrating and negotiating the history of punk both as a musical genre and a political ideology, taking part in the discourse on the subculture's inherent dilemma (i.e., on the extradiegetic level). Though I will focus on Bruce McDonald's *Hard Core Logo*, my analysis will also take into account Michael Turner's eponymous 1993 novel in verse (which served as a model for McDonald's screenplay) as well as Nick Craine's 1996 comic adaptation of McDonald's film called *Portrait of a Thousand Punks: Hard Core Logo*. Framing my reading of the film with a closer examination of these texts not only helps understand the film's aesthetic make-up and its allegorical implications, but may also contribute to both illustrating that the road (though not particularly prominent in the film) in fact lies at both its aesthetic and ethical heart and explaining why McDonald's piece indeed leaves us with an odd feeling of dissatisfaction.

2. The Sights and Sounds of Touring: On the Poetics of the Road in *Hard Core Logo*

Art Bergmann, one of Vancouver's most famous punk performers (cf. Beaty 11), once called Michael Turner's book *Hard Core Logo* (which served as a source of inspi-

Interestingly, as Ban comic book form by *Core Logo (1991)*" (5 i McDonald's adaptatio of the fascinating thin;

ration for Bruce McDonald's 'mockumentary') "the loudest book I've ever read about the hell-fire that is today's music business" (qtd. in Beaty 11). Besides being 'loud,' as one may add, Turner's book is also an incredibly fast read, just as fast as the music it deals with. Indeed, "[a] subdued and melancholy meditation on passing fame, diminished expectations, and the dissolution of friendships" (Beaty 11), his novel in verse—a "hybrid book, which can ... be read as at once a documentary poem and a picaresque novel" (Dickinson 187)—contains a melange of lyrics, poetry, and photographs which, like verbal and visual snapshots, provide us with short glimpses into the band's re-union tour, which starts in Vancouver and includes gigs in Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton. In the course of this 'roundtrip,' we get to know the band members' memories, their hopes, their wishes, their aspirations. We listen to phone calls with tour managers, to interviews with experienced and not-so-experienced journalists, we learn about the band leader's (Joe Dick) financial calculations of costs and benefits as regards the band's tour, we are allowed to indulge into the very private thoughts and feelings of the four protagonists (which, most often, are printed in italics to indicate their status). Yet, as soon as we feel that we know whom we are confronted with, the tour's last gig is over and the band splits again.

Movement, it seems, is thus evoked not at all by describing it, but by the deliberate attempt at slowing down and/or accelerating the reading speed and, thus, the turning of the book's pages. The road is not described either; what we get instead is an occasional place name—of a town, a club, or a restaurant—and one or the other photograph of rural landscapes, supposedly taken from the backseat of the tour bus (cf. Turner 127), with blurred contours suggesting speed (cf. Turner 93). In this vein, the poems vis-a-vis the pictures in the book provide but bits and pieces of the band's traveling and thus constitute a "framework of interpretative interstices" that have to be filled in by the readers: "It's lean and spare, full of gaps and silences, the eloquence of things left unsaid" (qtd. in Dickinson 191). With these words, Noel Baker, the film's screenwriter, characterizes Turner's piece. Moreover, it seems as if the text conflates space with time, with the route of the band's tour being eventually equated with the latter's linearity: "Avola Clearwater Kamloops Merritt" are the only four words on page 192, followed by "Hope Chilliwack Surrey Burnaby" on page 194, and finally—as if replaced—succeeded by "June July August September" on page 196.

This collage-like design of Turner's novel in verse that emulates the road by putting up temporal and spatial signposts along the band's 'way' is taken up in McDonald's screen adaptation,² which, as Bart Beaty observes, "presents concerns arising from Turner's highly fragmented and poetic style" (11). Indeed, McDonald

Interestingly, as Bart Beaty states, Bruce McDonald's film has itself "been adapted into comic book form by cartoonist Nick Craine as ... *Pot-trait of a Thousand Punks: Hard Core Logo* (1997)" (5).

McDonald's adaptation is only one among many; cf. Dickinson, who points out that "one of the fascinating things about *Hard Core Logo* ... is its status as an ongoing adaptive phe-

mirrors the fragmentary nature of the book by introducing new narrative elements into the film and shooting it in a faux-documentary style [which] allows the director to rely upon the ... visual aesthetic of *assemblage* to bridge narrative absences and enable the characters to reveal themselves by speaking directly to the camera or to McDonald [who, in a metareferential twist, gets involved in the film's actions time and again] as a camera substitute. (Beaty 12)

In this vein, his 'mockumentary' draws on a similar technique of putting together scenes that, more often than not, are only loosely connected to one another, but contain enough 'information' for the viewer to create a coherent narrative of the band's tour. As Aaron Taylor puts it, the film is

a bonanza of visual tomfoolery. McDonald and his collaborators mix colour and black and white stocks; manufacture 'found' Super-8 footage of early band performances; concoct a wild 'acid' sequence; employ complex dissolves, superimpositions, and graphic inserts; and play around with various split-screen effects on the Avid. (216)

Through this episodic structure emulating the aesthetics of Turner's piece, McDonald's *Hard Core Logo* also assumes a distinctly 'lyrical' quality right from its very beginning, be it as an epic about a band's rise and ruin, a "kind of romantic elegy to the punk-rock movement," as Holden has it in his review of the film, or, as Taylor concludes, "a heartfelt, but unromantic, ode to Vancouver punk" (213)—mind the generic characterizations by Holden and Taylor.

In this poetic attempt to sketch the biography of the (fictional) Canadian punk rock legend *Hard Core Logo*, which, as Beaty observes, turns out to be "a combination *cinema verite/road* film about male losers from the margins of Canadian society" (12),³ the film employs a number of visual and acoustic devices to allude to the symbolic potential of the road both for the band as well as for the music they play. First of all, and perhaps most significantly, the road (though only rarely shown directly) is set off from the distinctly urban concert venues through the creation of a particularly rural, almost 'archaic' atmosphere (both visual and acoustic) during the band's travels from one city to the next. In this respect, *Hard Core Logo* in fact follows the generic conventions of the road movie, in which "[t]he road [typically] defines the space between town and country. It is an empty expanse, a *tabula rasa*, the last true frontier" (Dargis, qtd. in Cohan/Hark 1). Indeed, not only do we witness the most forlorn countryside, we are also exposed to the sounds of traditional, and distinctly 'non-Western' instruments that evoke images of Native cultures, such as pan flutes and didgeridoos, which fade in as soon as the band starts to pack their tour bus and head off to their first gig.

nomenon, one that is—since the book's publication in 1993—remarkably resilient and ... adaptable" (188).

For a comprehensive gender-oriented reading of the film, cf. Dickinson 186-201.

Similarly, Laderman argues that "the road movie's iconography [includes] the vast, open landscape bordered by seductive horizons. These expansive spaces obviously recall the Western's compelling articulation of the frontier, and more generally the shifting nature/-culture divide" (14).

Interestingly, the acoustic vision of the natural and unspoiled is already introduced at the very beginning of the film, which features the sound of tribal drums in the background.

3. Touring as an Allegory: The Road as a Site of Self-Exploration and Negotiating Genre History

It is on the road, then, where the (particularly urban) visual and acoustic aesthetics of punk, characterized by an aggressive outlook and loud, heavily amplified and distorted sounds, is replaced by—and, at the same time, linked to—an aesthetics of the wilderness marked by land- and soundscapes that call forth images of Aboriginal dance and sacrifice in a way that George Melnyk has labeled "absurdist magical realism" (215), emphasized by a low-key voiceover reminiscent of a lone wanderer talking to himself. In an almost narcotizing mode of contemplation, in which the distinctness of sounds and sights dissolves into spherical chimes and an impressionist *melange* of colors respectively, and in which contours get blurred in the interplay of light and shadow, traveling on the road thus becomes a 'ritual,' which cuts off the band members from their daily grind and throws them back onto their very selves, which as the film progresses, turn out to be highly incompatible with one another: "Along the road," as Aaron Taylor remarks, "the band begins to self-destruct: a pair of groupies make off with their cash; John forgets his medication and suffers a mental breakdown; Bucky disowns Joe for exploiting him; and Billy secretly plans to abandon Joe to play in an up-and-coming LA band, Jenifur" (214).

Hard Core Logo thus stages the road—both visually and acoustically—as a site of radical self-exploration, which, besides the often comic mode of the film, adds a particularly dramatic tone to McDonald's 'mockumentary,' gathering momentum, quite literally, 'on the road.' To be precise, it is on the road (and not on the stage) in the first place that the band members' different concepts of life are articulated, and the film's make-up contributes to suggesting that the 'road of life' is anything but straight: More often than not—and again in a form of 'absurdist magical realism'—the road is displayed as a paper reel, on which the yellow line that separates the lanes twists and winds, no longer implying linearity, but chaos, disorder, and confusion. At the same time, we see a counter of the number of kilometers driven as well as the gallons of fuel used; the highway becomes never-ending, and its linearity is called into question with a vengeance as soon as we learn that the most eastern destination of the band's tour in Winnipeg turns out to its ultimate anti-climax, for the club in which they are supposed to play was closed without any notice shortly before the band's arrival. As a consequence, the band members start to argue heavily about who is to blame and what to do; eventually, they have to return, frustrated, disenchanted, being fully aware that the group is indeed no longer a group.

It is at this point in the movie that the viewer might easily question at least the first part of Aaron Taylor's observation that the band "becomes a self-contained, al-

most hermetically sealed unit, one that prohibits growth on any level" (252), as the four guys do not appear as united at all. Yet, they indeed do not 'grow,' and one might wonder whether perhaps the most central generic constituent of the road movie, i.e., "the theme that being on the road is transformative" (Mills 188) applies to the band and their story. In fact, the "metamorphosis" (188), which is supposed to be triggered by traveling on the road (cf. Mills 188), does not take place, at least not in a positive sense. What we witness instead is a process of disintegration of sorts, during which each of the four band members sticks to an individual, at times highly idiosyncratic way of seeing things differently until the very end of the film, with "the camera increasingly fram[ing] the band as three separate entities rather than a united foursome" (Beatty 14).⁵ While Joe Dick does not tire of pointing out his 'authenticity' as a punk (thereby undermining it at the same time), believing, as he does, that the band 'never sells out,' the guitarist Billy Tallent has willingly given in to the mechanisms of the culture industry, as he has—at least in the eyes of Joe Dick—"sold" himself and his skills to a major label. To be sure, in the course of the band's traveling, we witness what Dickinson describes as "the exclusive and exclusionary intimacy between the band's two front men" (193), and indeed the relationship between Joe and Billy is shown to be a prime example of male homoerotic, or homosexual, desire (cf. Dickinson 200). It is, however, exactly due to this intimacy that they eventually alienate themselves from each other, no longer being able to integrate the other's wishes and demands into their individual (and often highly contradictory) ideas about 'the good life.' So, in the end, as Peter Dickinson has it, McDonald's 'mockumentary' cleverly stages "a melodramatic narrative of adolescent male binding and adult male estrangement" (200).

The two other band members are also affected by the struggle between Joe and Billy, and remain somewhat skeptical of the endeavor of re-uniting; however, they do not seem to be involved too much; rather they share a particularly pragmatic point of view as regards their re-union tour, constantly trading off the costs and benefits of their endeavor. Right from the beginning of McDonald's 'mockumentary,' the audience is made to feel this skeptical ambivalence of the band members—except Joe Dick—towards re-uniting, which becomes manifest both through a number of interviews conducted by McDonald (who also appears on the diegetic level, fostering the band's disintegration deliberately by asking the wrong questions or sharing 'confidential' information) as well as through some situations of open conflict, such as the one in Winnipeg. The four 'versions' of life thus 'collide' on the road and force the band members into a dilemma situation, characterized by both a feeling of nostalgia for a

One could indeed argue that the filming staging of these 'ways of seeing things differently' is also enhanced by the collage-like aesthetics of the film, which provides us with short glimpses into the band members' thoughts and feelings in a range of interview passages, never, however, integrating them. As Dickinson points out, "the splicing and intercutting of one-on-one band member interviews is used to comment (again retrospectively) on the increasing tensions among individuals" (200).

past long gone and the disillusionment of the present, with the question of 'what if (we went on with the music back then)?' constantly lingering on their minds. Eventually, however, the nostalgic momentum is completely replaced by deep frustration among the band members. The following excerpt from bass player John Oxenberger's tour diary (this time from Michael Turner's book) nicely captures this change of mind and mood during what Billy Tallent calls a 'retro shit hayride' (Turner 173):

This reunion tour appealed to me because I felt the time off had done us some good—particularly between Joe and Bill. It seemed that we'd all mellowed a bit, that we'd all learned from our past mistakes, and that we could all get back to where we started. It makes me sick that I could have been so wrong. It's the same old shit all over again. A triumph of selfishness, ignorance, and stupidity. This is the worst mistake I've ever made in my life. And it breaks my heart to have to mail this home. (171)

Interestingly, it is through Oxenberger's tour diary, which—in Turner's novel, in McDonald's film (as a voice-over), and in Nick Craine's comic adaptation of the screenplay—serves as a structuring device in a highly episodic narrative and as a most sensitive 'seismograph' of the band members' development on tour (cf. also Laderman 296), that the viewers are drawn into a similar mode of self-reflection. His tour diary, as one may argue, indeed functions as a mediator, 'connecting,' as it were, the intra-diegetic with the extradiegetic through its evocation of intimacy. In this vein, "the telling [and] reading ... of the story of life on the road brings texts, readers, and authors into a dialogue of self-exploration" (Primeau 69-70).

Eventually, *Hard Core Logo*'s tour turns out to be, quite literally, a dead end. Somewhat unexpectedly, but nevertheless in tune with the characters' 'staticism,' it culminates in Joe Dick's committing suicide shortly after an open conflict between him and Billy Talent, manifesting the final break-up of the band. Peter Dickinson even argues that "the film's coda arguably (and very melodramatically) shows death as the logical extension of ... Joe's inability to negotiate any longer the performative codes of his particular subcultural masculinity" (201), and indeed, his chauvinistic 'wanna-be-authenticity' infused by a naïve form of nostalgic longing for the past does not seem to be a viable concept for living at all. So, indeed, the death of Joe is the death of the band. And the death of the band, as one may argue, may well be read as metonymically alluding to the fate of the subculture and its ideological stance.

Consequently, the road is used in the film not only as a site of reflecting on the biographical 'routes' of the band's members (and, as such, as an allegory of life), but also, and perhaps more importantly, as a site of narrating and negotiating the development and 'fate' of a subculture that is said to have been turned 'mainstream.'⁶ The band's touring on the road, in other words, becomes a genre history 'in mice,' and the ideological struggle of punk rock between subversion and sell-out, between 'authenti-

Cf. also Druick, who, however, only hints at this twofold potential of the film without elaborating on it: "The film traces the band's desperate Western Canadian reunion tour, as they, like punk rock itself, fall apart" (172).

city' and commodification, seems to be embodied by the two protagonists, as Druick's observation implies:

As punk rock icons, the boys of Hard Core Logo have achieved a certain limited national notoriety and, in the case of Billy Tallent, are being sought out by the powerful members of the American music industry. Yet, in another way, they emblemize the backwoods anti-fashion punk sensibility particular to Vancouver, one that distinctively negotiated its identity away from the cross-dressing, urbane, and ironic New York and Los Angeles scenes. (173)

This symbolic 'doubling,' I believe, makes perfect sense as soon as we consider the close affiliation of the road movie (as a genre) with rock music. As Laderman observes, "[t]he distinctive emergence of the road movie in the late 1960s is culturally interwoven with the advent of rock and popular music, and the genre usually deploys the former as another aesthetic expression of the visceral and sensual thrill of driving, of moving at high speed" (16). He goes on elaborating on this connection and comes to the conclusion that

[a]n illuminating road movie subcategory in this respect is the 'rock 'n' road' movie: road movies about rock musicians or fans on tour, or merely on the road. Rock 'n' road movies bring into clear focus the truly formative link between rock music and the road movie, both cultural offspring of 1950s youth culture and the 1960s counterculture. Thus, the generic definition of the road movie is crucially bound up with the anti-establishment counterculture of the 1960s (which, let us recall, included the neo-pastoralist environmental movement and 'back to nature' trends). (19)

Not only, as Laderman states, does the 'rock 'n' road' movie paradigmatically exemplify the "truly formative link" between the road movie and rock music; it also (and perhaps more importantly so) highlights the generally rebellious attitude connected to the genre. However, as he argues, the distinctly countercultural notion of the road movie is 'balanced' by a particular, at times highly subtle stance of frustration about the impossibility of a successful cultural revolution and the eventual triumph of the hegemonic (cf. 19-20), as the "(t)he road movie is born as a genre in and through the early 1970s souring of the counterculture" (19). As a consequence, its "generic core is constituted more precisely by a *tension* between rebellion and conformity" (20).

Against this backdrop, I believe that the genre of the road movie thus turns out to be an ideal site of narrating and negotiating the history of punk rock, which is characterized by precisely the same 'tension between rebellion and conformity' ever since its 'mainstreamization' that began to gain momentum in the late 1980s/early 1990s. Indeed, punk rock seems to be stuck in a subcultural 'crisis' and has long lost its position as an oppositional cultural practice; at the same time, it constantly attempts to redefine this very position, thus satisfying the need for countercultural demarcation, e.g. by establishing a 'subcultural memory'—a memory which works as "a stable source of value and meaning" (Tannock 455) and provides the basis for the accumulation of what Sarah Thornton, with reference to Pierre Bourdieu, has called 'subcultural capital' (cf. Thornton; Kassabian 119). This strategic turn, then, is intended to contribute to the reconstruction of a shared subcultural identity, which, in turn, might help to

reassure the genre's, or subculture's, position on a highly contested field of cultural production. Without doubt, this field is contested by trends of commercialization and by the commodification of subcultural aesthetics; in other words: by a number of forces that threaten the symbolic capital of punk.

Hard Core Logo stages this negotiation of capital, sketching the 'subcultural identity politics' in which the band members, especially lead singer Joe Dick and guitarist Billy Tallent, are involved. They represent distinct positions in an ideological continuum, with Joe Dick exemplifying a hopelessly nostalgic and romanticizing approach to the band and its music on the one hand and Billy as the 'wanna-be celebrity' on the other, thrilled by music manager calls from Los Angeles, the symbolic epicenter of subcultural sell-out and commodification. The oppositional character of their stand-points is perhaps best summarized by a frequently quoted statement by Joe Dick, who bluntly states that "[t]here's two ways to look at it: *Billy* wants the models and limousines, while I'm happy with hookers and taxicabs." On the road, then, these stand-points are—explicitly and implicitly—articulated and negotiated, and in the end, the audience does not only witness a band, but also a genre as well as an ideology falling into pieces.

4. By Way of Conclusion: On the (Trans)National Implications of McDonald's 'Mockumentary'

To come back full circle, let us once again pick up Stephen Holden's observation that *Hard Core Logo* "aspires to be a kind of romantic elegy to the punk-rock movement," which, against the backdrop of my brief argument, turns out to be particularly precise. Indeed, it inscribes into the band's story sad overtones of loss and decay that, as we have seen, can be traced in nearly every 'chapter' of the narrative. This elegiac mode of McDonald's film, then, featuring the road as a 'road of life and death' (both of the band and of punk rock as a genre), does not only leave the audience somewhat puzzled; it also, and more importantly so, reveals the film to be entirely different from its U.S. American counterpart *This is Spinal Tap*, to which it has been compared ever since its publication (cf. e.g. Dickinson 189f, 193f). To be sure, it might probably be unfair and blatantly stereotypical to call *Hard Core Logo* a distinctly Canadian feature due to the "mood of grand desolation" (Holden) it creates and communicates. Moreover, though one might also be tempted to read the film as a variation of the theme of "the siren song of American glamour vs. the folkish warbling of Canadian integrity"

Cf. Butler; Butler/Sepp. For a discussion of the reasons and functions of these nostalgic 'turns' to the past, cf. Tannock. Some of Tannock's ideas about nostalgia are also central to my argument here, e.g. his general observation that "[n]ostalgia ... invokes a positively evaluated past world in response to a deficient present world. The nostalgic subject turns to the past to find/construct sources of identity, agency, or community, that are felt to be lacking, blocked, subverted, or threatened in the present" (454; cf. also 456f. et passim).

(Taylor 214), Aaron Taylor is quite confident that "McDonald is not interested in simply re-treading Can-Lit clichés" (214), and so shouldn't we.

Yet, there is indeed something particularly Canadian about this film (and about its staging of the road), which has already been acknowledged by a number of critics. Peter Dickinson, for instance, calls it "a highly characteristic Canadian text combining Canadian cultural institutional traditions and Hollywood" (qtd. in Druick 172), which, as Druick argues, is basically the result of "the intertextual combination of American popular culture with Canadian authorized discourse" (173). Aaron Taylor asserts that McDonald's films in general are characterized by an "intersection of pop and experimental proclivities, resulting in a consistent critical investigation of North American popular culture" (201).

Hard Core Logo is certainly no exception in this respect; however, in agreeing with Taylor I argue that the film refrains from straightforwardly juxtaposing "the siren song of American glamour" with "the folkish warbling of Canadian integrity" (214). Instead, 'glamour' and 'integrity' (or, correspondingly, 'sell-out' and 'subversion') can no longer be associated with a nationally specific realm of cultural production, with the latter being ascribed to Canada and the former being associated with the United States. Rather, McDonald's film works as a subcultural 'swan song' without stepping into the pitfall of staging the ail-too cliché-ridden dichotomy of a 'virtuous' Canada and a 'corrupted' United States. To be sure, the U.S. and its gigantic and powerful culture industry are constantly (if only latently) present in the film in the shape of the ominous Jenifur, and, for many Canadians, "selling out to Uncle Sam could be said to betray what Canada stands for" (Simmons). Yet, through its highly artistic staging of the band's tour and its members' wishes, desires, and aspirations being articulated on the road, I believe that McDonald's 'mockumentary' manages at least partly to dissolve the band's disintegration from the omnipresent temptations of the U.S. American mainstream, cleverly incorporating narratives of individual success and failure with discourses on the (transnational) fate of a subculture. Thus, the film is indeed neither distinctly Canadian in its critique of U.S. American cultural hegemony, nor is it simply a re-making of a U.S. American pretext (*Spinal Tap*) with a Canadian tinge, but, as Goddard observes, it turns out to be an "End-of-the-road-movie for an entire generation."

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From Thunder Bay to Way "Down Yonder": The Road as Multilayered Concept and Traveling Sounds in Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61*

WILFRIED RAUSSERT

Big wind big wind's comin'
From daylight till dusk we've been a workin' in the dust
Pickin' cotton workin' side by side
Oh I can't forget I still remember yet
the way my daddy looked at me and cried
Big wind's a comin' listen to the hummin'
hurry up now be quick don't stall
You know we can't be slow take the kids and get below
If we don't hurry it'll surely get us all
I ran across the field so scared my lips was scaled
To warn my mom the storm was on its way
Now I knew I'd won the race when I'd see my mama's face
And the way she looked at me and said
Big wind's a comin'...
Oh but dad was on the cellar and by now the sky was yellow
The wind was blowin' trees were fallin'
And outside I heard him cry in' and as he lay there dyin'
It seemed I could still hear him sayin'
Big wind's a comin'...
Big wind big wind's comin'
—Wayne P. Walker; Alex Zanetis; George McCormick

Resumen

Highway 61, de Bruce McDonald, retrata otro viaje musical rumbo al sur, de Canadá a Luisiana. Las preguntas que la película plantea son: ¿Qué sucede si lo que vemos es distinto a lo que escuchamos? ¿Qué pasa cuando la banda musical de una película tiene vida propia y narra una historia musical hasta cierto punto diferente del relato que el narrador hace de la música popular estadounidense? Wilfried Raussert, en "From Thunder Bay to Way 'Down Yonder': The Road as Multilayered Concept and Traveling Sounds in Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61*," examina cómo esta película canadiense nos lleva al cruce de caminos entre el *road movie* y la historia de la música. El autor analiza cómo la película utiliza estrategias narrativas opuestas, en las cuales el camino se aleja del consumo para convertirse en un tropo que refleja las dinámicas interculturales entre

Canada y Estados Unidos, para contar historias alternativas de la musica popular en las Americas. *Highway 61* es un *road movie* posmoderno y eclectico que "improvisa" en varies niveles intertextuales que se relacionan con el *road movie*, con las historias musicales de America y con los procesos de la historia sociocultural.

What if what we see is different from what we hear? What if the soundtrack of a film has its own life and tells a story of musical history that is somewhat different from the narrator's account of U.S. American popular music in the same film? Bruce McDonald's film *High-way 61* (1991) takes us to the crossroads between road movie and music and uses the disjunction between soundtrack and narrative to create a road movie in which the road becomes a trope for reflecting intercultural dynamics between Canada and the U.S. and tells us multilayered alternative histories of popular music in the Americas. *Highway 61* is an eclectic postmodern road movie that riffs on several inter-textual levels, from the history of the road movie as a film genre to musical histories of the Americas to processes of socio-cultural history. Clearly, *Highway 61* feeds on a well-established connection between road narrative and music. David Laderman reminds us of the fundamental importance of music for road movies when he talks about "a vigorous music soundtrack" as a major aesthetic element of road movie plot lines:

The distinctive emergence of the road movie in the late 1960s is culturally interwoven with the advent of rock and popular music, and the genre usually deploys the former as another aesthetic expression of the visceral and sensual thrill of driving, of moving at high speed. (16)

By and large, Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61* fits what Laderman describes as a road movie subcategory. In the words of Laderman, "rock 'n' road movies bring into clear focus the truly formative link between rock music and the road movie" (19).

As I shall argue, *Highway 61* expands the well-established link between road movies and music to present 'Highway 61' as a conceptual road and to rewrite U.S. American-Canadian relations through both synchronic and different narratives of mobile and hybrid musical cultures. With a nod to the recent turn toward postnational and postnationalistic studies of the Americas—we can think of critics such as John Carlos Rowe, Donald Pease, and Walter D. Mignolo—I consider the study of road narratives to be paradigmatic for the shift from a purely national to transnational studies of the Americas. Road narratives, after all, claim mobility as their central theme and cinematic images travel fast, cross national and cultural boundaries constantly, and feed on cultural exchange both in processes of production and reception. The analysis of the intersection of road narrative and music as alternative narrative voices in Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61* offers a unique lens with which to focus various debates in cultural studies, media studies, literary studies, history, sociology, and anthropology that try to come to terms with issues of migration, shifting identities, intercultural exchange, and processes of commodification in times of globalization. Tracing the complex presence of music in *Highway 61*, this essay hopes to illustrate that the road be-

comes a central trope to explore the complex processes of musical and cultural exchange between Canada and the U.S.

The fascinating thing about studying road movies, or any kind of road narrative for that matter, is their inherent connection with mobility. Mobility is something we seek for from birth onward. We eagerly use our arms and legs to explore the world around us as soon as our bodies permit us to do so. Through mobility we achieve exploration, encounter, and experience. All this is accompanied by our own movement in and through space. When cultural products such as literature and film dedicate themselves to depictions of the road, they precisely bring us back to our fundamental urge for and fascination with mobility. Mobility studies, a fairly recent academic enterprise advocated by critics such as James Clifford and Stephen Greenblatt, have called our attention to moving beyond concepts of cultures as fixed and static to viewing cultures as fundamentally and inherently mobile. As James Clifford emphasizes, "If we rethink culture and its science, anthropology, in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalizing bias of the term 'culture'—seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies, and so on—is questioned. Constructed and disputed *historicitities*, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view" (25).

American Studies as an academic discipline has historically never been far from investigating concepts of mobility. All too evident is the presence of mobility in the myth-making processes of U.S. American exceptionalism; concepts such as the frontier, westward expansion, and the American dream of upward mobility all point toward the omnipresence of mobility in U.S. American ideology. As David Carithers reminds us,

long before Jack Kerouac affixed the highway in the American imagination as the ultimate experience where movement through the vast land and encounters with its diverse people are tantamount to creation of the new, the open road held a mythical place in the American mind in general and was a particularly powerful metaphor for pragmatism. (1)

And he quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Dewey with "Everything good is on the highway" (Emerson 481), as Emerson phrased it in "Experience," and John Dewey who added that one "finds truth in the highway, in the untaught endeavor, the unexpected idea" (75), to make his point. Referring to Cornel West, who describes the Emersonian self as "a rather contingent, arbitrary, and instrumental affair, a mobile, performative, and protean entity perennially in process, always on an adventurous pilgrimage" (26), David Carithers concludes that "the highway, either literally or metaphorically, is its natural home" and further maintains that

one might dismiss the metaphor of the highway as a mindless philosophy valuing movement for movement's sake only, but the American pragmatists viewed movement and flux as more than just random motion. Activity itself was a method of invention, especially if it involved provocation of the active mind. (1)

To make this clear from the start, Bruce McDonald is a postmodern Canadian film director and not an American pragmatist in the philosophical sense. Still, the associative link between the highway and the unexpected idea that we can draw from Emer-

son and Dewey hovers behind McDonald's conceptual use of the road as a marker of alternative musical histories.

The metaphor of the highway is crucial to a more complex reading of Bruce McDonald's film *Highway 61* beyond its comic appeal and it may guide us into a more profound discussion of what constitutes a road movie in terms of concept and genre. While many narratives in film and literature use the road to represent action, to change scenery, and to connect different plot locations, these narratives cannot necessarily be considered road narratives or road movies per se. Whereas for David Laderman, *Easy Rider* (1969) marks the moment when the road movie through the equation of "transient mobility with rebellious liberation" (71) became a distinct genre in its own right, I tend to agree with Jason Wood who points out that "the conferring of full genre status on the road movie has proved problematic" (xvii). Jason Wood rightly argues that the road movie infracts with films in "more recognizable and more established genre categories or film types" (xvii). Among these Wood mentions the Western, the documentary, the comedy, the horror film, and the buddy movie.

Wood and Laderman would certainly agree that in archetypal terms, "road movies commonly entail the undertaking of a journey by one or more protagonists as they seek out adventure, redemption or escape from the constricting norms of society and its laws" (Wood xv); or in the words of David Laderman:

The driving force propelling most road movies is an embrace of the journey as a means of cultural critique. Road movies generally aim beyond the borders of cultural familiarity, seeking the unfamiliar for revelation, or at least for the thrill of the unknown. Such traveling, coded as defamiliarization, likewise suggests a mobile refuge from social circumstances felt to be lacking or oppressive in some way. ... Thus the road movie celebrates subversion as a literal venturing outside the community. (2)

The diversity of so-called road movies that books by David Laderman diachronically and synchronically illustrate exposes the multiplicity of cultural production that seems rather lavishly be subsumed under one umbrella category. While many attempts to define the road movie offer fruitful insights—moments of crisis, movement outside the conventional, search for self, etc.—that help us comprehend important aspects that frequently propel the journey portrayed in narratives, oddly enough the road as a concept appears rather absent from such endeavors at defining concise traits of the road movie genre.

To make this clear, I do not intend to look for a prescriptive or essentialist generic definition of road movies here. Yet, while all these attempts at defining the road movie as genre or subgenre refer to "the road" as a major category, they strikingly fail to address the function of the road in its own right. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark rightly point out that "the road has always been a persistent theme of American culture" (1). To them the road marks a way out of hegemonic structures: "Forging a travel narrative out of a particular conjunction of plot and setting that sets the liberation of the road against the oppression of hegemonic norms" (1). As they continue, "road movies project Western mythology onto the landscape traversed and bound by the nation's highways" (1). What they do not consider here is that many a contemporary

road movies transgress national borders and enter transnational realms. As Jason Wood rightly points out,

it is essential to note that the road movie is by no means an exclusively American domain and has been historically embraced by filmmakers around the world from across the globe. ... Directors working outside the U.S. have also frequently reformulated the American road movie as a means of sustaining a dialogue with the notion of American imperialism and the global exportation of American culture, (xix-xx)

Since most of the classical definitions of the road movie are related to national contexts we have to rethink our concept of road and nation as soon as road movies feature significant border crossings between nations. Moreover, I would like to argue, the road cannot simply be reduced to the "emancipatory design" Grob and Klein (6) are assigning it. As Wood reminds us "the road movie arguably ranks among the American cinema's most enduring gifts to contemporary film culture" but he also concludes "closer inspection reveals the dream of the road to be tarnished" (xv). Similar to Dargis's definition of the road "as *tabula rasa*, the last true frontier" (1), Cohan and Hark seem strongly entrenched in American mythology and view the road as a primarily Utopian space. Hence the link between road and history is rather absent; likewise they neglect to take more fully into consideration the expansion of road movies in the Americas and beyond and that these recent films should also be analyzed from a truly transnational perspective. Within such an approach, I maintain, we are more likely to encounter multifaceted meanings of the road as a concept.

What I want to call attention to here is a distinction between the road as "consumption" and the road as "concept." In many film types such as the Western and the buddy movie we frequently encounter the road as pure consumption. Road movies like *Highway 61*, however, are different in that they turn the road into a complex time-space "concept" that enables us to link the road to cultural, historical, and transnational processes of mobility. As mobility has gone global, such a conceptual approach needs to address transnational flows and their connections with mediascapes in contemporary times. Arjun Appadurai "has undertaken an analysis of the disjunctions and contradictions generated by transnationalism" (Rueschmann xiii). In the era of globalization and mass mobility, as he argues, media and migration are the two major forces shaping contemporary subjectivity and socio-cultural change. Appadurai points out five global cultural flows—of people, technology, media, capital, and ideas/ideologies—when he asserts that cultural production and human imagination play key roles in transformative social processes beyond national identities and interests (31). According to Rueschmann, Appadurai's vision of global interactions is also echoed by scholars working in the fields of migration and diaspora as well as in media arts and film. Scholarly work done by critics such as Stuart Hall, Robert Stam, and Ella Shohat among others has added polycentric perspectives to the studies on how global processes are medialized and visualized in contemporary media and cinema (xiii). To trace recent developments in cinema, it seems particularly enticing to look at cultural products that engage with mobility on thematic and structural levels as well as on a level of self-reflection. Without doubt road narratives appear perfectly apt as objects

for further investigation. As critics such as Greenblatt and Clifford have pointed out, geographical and social mobility lead to new spatial contact zones for identity formation; routes increasingly replace roots in the attempt to define one's positionality in a fast-paced world of globalization and digital medialization. With respect to social and sociopolitical changes it appears interesting to explore an artistic genre that historically has dedicated itself to narratives of mobility in moments of crisis (Laderman). The genre of the road movie, whose origins may be traced back to early examples of U.S. cinema in the 1940s and whose contours as a genre emerged more clearly in the 1950s and 1960s, has expanded its presence in the Americas (and world-wide). As a vibrant part of transnational processes, we can witness an increasing emergence of road movies from Brazil to Canada. While they may partly borrow from earlier productions of U.S. American cinema, they create their own unique references to national and transnational contexts. We may think of Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* (And Your Mother Too) (Mexico), Carlos Sorín's *Historias mínimas* (Minimal Stories) and *El perro* (The Dog) (Argentina) or Walter Salles's *Central do Brasil* (Central Station) and *Diários de motocicleta* (The Motorcycle Diaries) (Brazil) to mention but a few.

In the context of Canadian cinema, Bruce McDonald's films along with the works of Peter Mettler, Atom Egoyan, and Patricia Rozema have helped initiate "The 'Renaissance of English Canadian cinema' in the late 1980s and early 1990s" (Lavoie 139). Based in Toronto, where he launched his company Shadow Shows, Bruce McDonald delivered his feature debut, *Roadkill*, in 1989. It was the first of a trilogy of road movies—including *Highway 61* (1991) and *Hard Core Logo* (1996)—that established his reputation as a radical independent filmmaker. His road movies cleverly combine sound and image and express an underlying "ironic comic tone" (Wise 141). *Roadkill* was an immediate success with audiences and critics alike. At the 1989 Toronto film festival it received the Citytv Award for best Canadian feature. *Highway 61* was then named best Canadian feature at the 1991 Vancouver Film Festival and won numerous awards at festivals in Europe, such as in Brussels and San Sebastian. Finally in 1996, *Hard Core Logo* won the Citytv Award for best Canadian feature at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Highway 61 represents a comedy-type of road movie and a playful satire on Canadian-U.S. relations as well as on the excesses of U.S. American commodity culture. The film stars Don McKellar as Pokey Jones, an orphaned barber in a small town near Thunder Bay, Ontario, who dreams of becoming a jazz musician.

One morning, he finds a frozen body in the bathtub in his backyard. Shortly after he meets Jackie Bangs, a mysterious roadie who claims her origin is from nowhere and everywhere and that the dead man is her brother. As the spectator soon discovers, Jackie's real intention is to use the body, a complete stranger in town, to smuggle stolen drugs into the United States. While her attempts to hitch-hike with corpse and coffin naturally fail, she manages to convince Pokey to drive her to New Orleans to bury her brother. Jackie and Pokey eventually begin their journey along Highway 61, in Pokey's parents' car, which has not been driven in decades, coffin strapped to the top.



In the car, Pokey tells Jackie about his life as an orphan, the special relationship he has with the car as the last remainder of family ties, his fascination with America and U.S. American music and of his dream of becoming a jazz musician. Together they follow Bob Dylan's U.S. Highway 61 and famous tourist route south through the heart of the U.S. down to the cradle of blues and jazz. A suspense narrative about the corpse further spices the film as Pokey and Jackie are pursued by Mr. Skin, who believes he is Satan. As an obsessive collector of souls he wants to reclaim the body of the man that earlier had sold Mr. Skin his soul.



Most humor in the film is based on a satire of American and Canadian cultural differences. Discussing the pitfalls of discourses that simply equate cinema and national identity, Paul McEwan argues that

it is preferable ... to consider film on the level of criticism—that is, one step removed from the nation itself, commenting on and critiquing both the nation itself and the discourses of nationhood that have come before. Allowing a film the status of critical discourse is particularly useful in the Canadian context. It has often been suggested, sometimes in jest and sometimes more seriously, that fretting about national identity is the defining marker of Canadians. This endless discussion and self-examination is taken as a lack of self-assuredness, the never-ending ability to critique ourselves or compare Canada to other nations and find ourselves lacking. (120)

While McDonald juggles a series of stereotypes about Canada and the U.S. such as Canadian modesty versus American excess and extravagance, Canadian mildness versus American toughness—most evident in the interaction between Pokey and Jackie and mocked in the border crossing scene from Canada into the United States—*Highway 61* addresses transnational flows beyond the nation and provides us with a concept of the road that—with a nod to John Dewey—presents us with some unexpected ideas. As I argue, the visual and the musical counter narratives to Pokey's clichéd admiration of U.S. American musical culture add new levels of intercultural critique to the surface level satire. Not only do these counter narratives transform U.S.-Canadian cultural relations in an interrelational fashion, they also undermine simple inferior-superior cultural models by letting the music of the soundtrack echo an always-already-there presence of Canadian musical heritage in the United States. While Pokey's admiration of U.S. American popular culture and his notion that "he can play his horn" only down south give voice to a long felt Canadian anxiety about U.S. American cultural hegemony, the film uses a synchronicity of narratives to create what Paul McEwan aptly calls a commentary "about Canada in relation to the U.S. that openly questions notions of centrality between Canada and the U.S., rural areas and big cities, masculinity and femininity" (123). In my opinion this is the case because McDonald's road in *Highway 61* is both conceptual and transnational.

Bruce McDonald's film fuses narrative technique with visual and musical sound strategies to give us a more complex truth about the highway connecting Canada and Louisiana. Pokey begins his journey with a romanticized vision of Highway 61 and U.S. American music culture. And, indeed, he never loses his awe completely. The spectator of the road movie, on the contrary, is presented with a multilayered conceptual vision of the road that juxtaposes various narratives of human and cultural mobility within U.S. American culture and its transnational links. Pokey functions as a narrator and chronicler in the film and in some ways as a tour guide pointing us toward Highway 61 as one of the central roads in contemporary standard tourist packages for the international traveler in search of authentic American music culture. Through his narration we learn about Highway 61 and most of all about its links with U.S. American musical history. Pokey, on the one hand, introduces his fellow traveler to key figures of blues, jazz, folk, and rock music, as they emerged in various locations along-

side Highway 61; on the other hand he communicates his road experience in postcards to his friend in Canada. While Pokey's narration celebrates U.S. American musical heritage, pointing us toward the achievements of musicians such as Bob Dylan, Miles Davis, Louis Armstrong, Muddy Waters, and Robert Johnson, the camera shots juxtapose a pastoral image of Canada with industrial and waste-land images of U.S. American landscape. As soon as the protagonists cross the border, images of billboards and junkyards spoil the Arcadian pastoral the spectator had encountered in the shots of Canada.



As I would like to argue, the visual strategy presents an alternative narration that also refers to Highway 61's historical role in a more ambiguous way since it riffs on the road's complex role in African American migrations from south to north. Many of the camera shots focus on African American blue collar workers, their poor living conditions, and images of marginalized black individuals, culminating in a shot of a black woman sleeping on the sidewalks of New Orleans. What the visual narration reminds us of is that African American culture has not only functioned as the "sound of freedom" and the countercultural force feeding into many musical traditions during the 20th and 21st centuries but has always had to fight against marginalization and racial as well as socio-economic forms of oppression. Hence the camera shots present a perhaps clichéd but radically different visual narration to Pokey's romanticizing narrative of African American music and its flows in American culture(s). They emphasize images of African American labor force, marginalization, and poverty.

Fittingly, and in tune with the subtle satiric frame of McDonald's film, we do not listen to the sounds of Bob Dylan, Miles Davis, Louis Armstrong or Robert Johnson while the protagonists are traveling south. If you want, Pokey's heroes are rendered silent. Instead, Zydeco music such as "Zydeco Heehaw," written by Wilson Chavis and performed for the soundtrack by Boozoo Chavis, and Zydeco musical elements in

the folk fusion version of "Big Wind is A Comin,'" performed by Sonny Terry and Brown McGee, infuse much of the soundtrack with hybrid sounds not only pointing to the intercultural processes underlying Creole and Cajun music in the Americas but also to Acadian influences on U.S. American popular music. Canadian composers and, Canadian bands such as Bourbon Tabernacle Choir with "Put Your Head On," Nash the Slash with "Into the Land of Fire" and other Canadian alternative bands such as Jellyfishbabies loom large behind the film's instrumental soundtrack. It also bears mentioning that Nash the Slash composed the instrumental score to the film and along with others provides the "Canadian" musical accompaniment to Pokey's narration of U.S. American musical history. While the road maps U.S. American musical territory in *Highway 61*, a complex net of music and musical references emerges commenting on transnational musical flows within the Americas (Creole, Cajun, Acadian, African American) and between Canada and the U.S. in particular. It is not surprising that McDonald chooses Louisiana as the final destination for the road trip. More than any other region, Louisiana has witnessed cultural crossovers in relation to music history and new musical production (Rausert 255).

As a result of the various narrative and audio-visual strategies, the road in *Highway 61* continues as a site of mobility in the road movie genre (the classical shots of the road from a windshield perspective) but also becomes a mobile concept with multi-layered cultural and historical references. Beyond the already mentioned connotations of African American social, economic and cultural migrations, McDonald's choice of Highway 61 bears reference to Canadian history and Acadian migration from Canada to Louisiana (Ostendorf 110). When we listen to the Zydeco sounds in the film, Louisiana's vibrant Cajun culture comes to mind, which can trace its origins to the arrival of Acadians expelled from Canada in mid-18th century. In terms of musical history Zydeco also points back to the role that Cajun music played in the emergence of blues and rhythm and blues.¹ Hence McDonald's juxtaposition of various hybrid musical traditions offers a rewriting of the origins of U.S. American popular music and places the road at the center of multiple migrations between north and south. With a nod to Dewey, we may confirm that the spectator encounters a complex and frequently neglected truth about musical histories on the highway in *Highway 61* that incorporates Canadian musical traditions more firmly into the canon of popular music in the Americas. McDonald's vision of redefining musical histories is more complex than Pokey's idealistic vision on and of Highway 61 and more subtle than the film's sometimes blatant use of "satire as magnifying glass" at first glimpse seems.

Riffing on clichéd assumptions about Canadian inferiority complexes towards the big brother south of the border, McDonald, tongue-in-cheek, reveals that what Pokey is really embracing is not American mainstream commodity culture but precisely the alternative and sometimes countercultural forces embodied by the many cross-refer-

<<http://www.musicline.de/de/genre/lexikon/Andere+Genres>>

<<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zydeco>>

<<http://www.akuma.de/zydeco-kreolische-akkordeonmusik/stl,dll3,index.html>>

ences to African American music and the alternative voices of 1960s protest culture, both results of a continuous process of musical hybridization. Similarly the film mocks the excesses of U.S. American pop culture and its star cult phenomenon. The spectator witnesses several comic encounters between the film's protagonists and a single father, who believes in the American credo that "everyone can make it," and tours the country with his three untalented daughters (whom he has named after important local reference points within music history: Mississippi, Minnesota, and Louisiana) in a musical act that aims to spread "our own unique blend of feel-good pop." He adds, in his naive and enthusiastic way, "America is just dying for good family music" thus expressing his hope to turn his children into famous pop stars soon. In contrast to that excursion into star-cult and commodity culture, the film offers a musically rich and hybrid soundtrack full of African American, Canadian, French-Creole, and Acadian musical elements signaling that what lies underneath Pokey's imaginary America is a blend of alternative and heterogeneous musical traditions. At the intersection of Pokey's narration and the images of the road with their historical and cultural connotations, the spectator can perceive Highway 61 as a literal and metaphorical road that takes him on a transnational journey through music history.

With its carnival-like undertone and its embrace of parody and pastiche, *Highway 61* inscribes itself in postmodern traditions of film making. *Highway 61* is eclectic in that many of its elements are comic references to classic road movies such as *Easy Rider* and *Bonnie and Clyde*—be it the presence of the motorcycle gang, the sexually dominant woman or the close affiliation of Pokey with his parents' car. On an inter-textual level *Highway 61* bears references to Bob Dylan's album *Highway 61 Revisited* and Highway 61 songs in the long history of blues music. Clearly Bruce McDonald's film riffs on postmodern conflations of the transcendent and the mundane when he inserts the story of his soul-catching and self-proclaimed devil Mr. Jones into the narrative of the film. For that he borrows from and twists a Robert Johnson legend, about the blues musician who sold his soul to the devil. On a structural level McDonald aims at simultaneity and multiplicity to create a filmic rewriting of musical histories. The journey from Thunder Bay in Ontario down south to New Orleans progresses frequently with at times simultaneously present juxtapositions of verbal narrative/image and musical narrative/image, sometimes through fast-paced cuts that link several parallel narratives in a progressive time-space continuum. Here we may think of the intersections between musical, visual, and verbal narration.

The technique of parallel and overlapping narratives protrudes most explicitly in the three story lines that are presented simultaneously once the protagonists enter the South. They are visualized through extremely rapid camera shifts and film cuts from one narrative to the next; the three narratives are intertwined for aesthetic and satirical purposes: Jackie Bangs forces Pokey into sexual intercourse in a southern rural cemetery while in the nearby chapel an African American gospel choir performs "Nobody Can Do Me Better than Jesus" and the self-acclaimed soul-hunting devil Mr. Skin wins it all at the southern bingo parlor. Classical opposites such as love and death, religion

and capitalist economy, faith and bigotry, femininity and masculinity are wittily juxtaposed and deconstructed. What is striking is that the synchronic overlapping of different locations (church, cemetery, bingo parlor) bears direct reference to McDonald's use of the road as spatial concept in time. Just as the three narratives comment on each other (all three are full of sexual references), the road's various literal and metaphorical connotations are dialogically intertwined and provide reflections on cultural mobility and exchange in a synchronic and diachronic fashion.

Pokey's journey in *Highway 61* traces multiple musical routes and connects multiple musical and cultural roots. The concept of a geopolitically, historically, and culturally multilayered road—a reference to the geographical link between southern Canada and the southern United States, the reference to tourist tracks, the reference to the road as narrative of U.S. American popular music history and the reference to Highway 61 as historical route for black labor migration from south to north—show that the trip way down "yonder" is an interculturally loaded journey that not only fosters the Canadian-Other romance between Pokey Jones and Jackie Bangs but also reunites Pokey's imaginary American musical roots (his admiration for jazz in particular) with the presence of French-Canadian musical traditions in Louisiana; when Pokey finally finds his musical voice as trumpet player at the end of the film, the soundtrack shifts to Zydeco style music emphasizing the obvious preexistence of French Canadian musical traditions within U.S. American musical culture. While Pokey is traveling towards the roots of blues and the cradle of jazz, as U.S. American music mythology would have it, the spectator of the film encounters its French-Canadian roots at the same time. In a burlesque manner director Bruce McDonald parodies Canadian and U.S. relations and reveals that Canada has more to offer than a coffin with a corpse filled with drugs; as the soundtrack as alternative narrative voice suggests, Canadian culture has always had its vital impact on U.S. popular culture. *Highway 61* choreographs the road as a concept of multidirectional and temporally layered intercultural processes that expose alternative cultures within national frameworks and place the nations in a mobile net of diachronic as well as synchronic contact and exchange. The road becomes chronotopical in a Bakhtinian sense in that it embodies the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed" (84). As Alexandra Ganser et al point out, "The chronotype operates on two important levels: first, as a means by which a text represents history; and second, as the relation between images of time and space in the text, out of which any representation of history must be constructed" (2). In McDonald's film the road is inextricably linked with various layers of cultural history and tells musical histories anew. As a road movie *Highway 61* demonstrates that routes have multiplied and have turned into "transroutes" moving in various directions and linking geographically distant roots in an increasingly globalized world.

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Canadá no es sinónimo de Utopía

GRACIELA MARTÍNEZ-ZALCE

Abstract

Another force propelling travel from south to north is political Utopia, which looms large in Marshall Lewy's *Blue State*. As the film exposes, stereotypes of Canada as a land of tolerance and peace can seem appealing to those who feel discomfort with their national political circumstances. In 2007, U.S. filmmaker Marshall Lewy premiered his first film, *Blue State*, in which three genres intertwine: the road movie, the border movie, and the romantic comedy. In "Canadá no es sinónimo de Utopía" Graciela Martínez-Zalce states that in a poor attempt to satirize, the filmmaker ends up satirized himself due to the rigidity with which he imbues the protagonist of the film. Discussing the ways in which the film borrows from various cinematic traditions, the author analyzes the failed intersection of genres as a result of the paradoxical conservatism underlying the film.

1. Canada, un medio ambiente "contrario"

Parecería que el cineasta Marshall Lewy leyó el ensayo de Marshall McLuhan, "Canada as Counter-Environment," cuando escribió el guion para su película *Blue State* (2007), que es un *road movie* que se entrecruza con otros dos géneros, el fronterizo y el de la comedia romántica.

McLuhan escribió: "Los canadienses y los estadounidenses comparten algo muypreciado: un sentido de la última frontera. El norte canadiense ha reemplazado al oeste 'americano'" (71). En este viaje, el norte es el horizonte fallido al que los protagonistas se dirigirán, tratando de borrar el pasado, en busca de un lugar al cual puedan llamar hogar, y en esa última frontera solo hallaran un espejo retrovisor que les sirviera para echarse en reversa y reafirmar sus identidades estadounidenses.¹

La crítica fue ambigua en relación con la película: Robert Koehler afirma: "Lewy's visual sense isn't much to write home about, but he certainly earns marks for finding the right tone with his co-stars. Production elements are solidly pro, and for all the exaggerations, Canuck locales are smartly used" (<<http://www.variety.com/review/VE111>>). En cambio, David Nusair señala que "Marshall Lewy's political agenda becomes awfully difficult to stomach" (<<http://www.reelfilm.com/rva08.htm>>).

2. El prólogo

He'll be gone in four years ... And then,
we get to get ready for Jeb.

—John Logue, protagonista de *Blue State*¹

San Francisco, California, 2004. "I swear ... I promise on my life that I will move to Canada ... No more Bush, no more Bush." Este es el epitafio que labra sobre su lapida social el bloggero y diseñador John Logue, protagonista de *Blue State*, cuando en un noticiario local declara que, en caso de que George W. Bush se reelija, el se mudara a Canada.²

En una muy breve definición del género, podríamos decir que en un *road movie* los protagonistas se mueven. Se trata de la condition fronteriza, dado que uno de sus códigos es el descubrimiento, mas bien el autodescubrimiento (Hayward 300-01). La promesa publica de John Logue es lo que inserta esta narración en el genero aquí defi-nido. En tanto genero, el *road movie* va de A a B en un tiempo cronológico y finito: John Logue viajara de San Francisco a Winnipeg, en varios días de viaje de ida, una cortísima estancia en el país vecino y un retorno. La narración sigue una secuencia ordenada de eventos que inexorablemente desembocan en un final bueno o malo; en este caso, será fallido para las expectativas de los protagonistas y, por ello, de los espectadores.

En este primer bloque de la película vemos las ilusiones del protagonista derrumbarse: George W. Bush se reelige; por haber decidido dedicarse de tiempo complete a la campana de John Kerry, John Logue pierde tanto su empleo como a su novia; a su alrededor, la presión para que cumpla su promesa crece.

Por primera vez aparece lo que se convertirá en un leit-motiv en la película. Los estadounidenses demócratas creen que tienen más en común con los canadienses que con sus compatriotas republicanos, reaccionarios, derechistas. ¿Lo probara el viaje de Logue a Canadá? ¿Cómo sobrevivirá el camino que lo enfrente a si mismo; cómo el cruce de la frontera?

Entre los muchos mensajes que Logue encuentra en la contestadora esta el de Gloria O'Neill —de Winnipeg, Manitoba- quien promueve la pagina *marryacanadian*, "dot com," dice Logue; "dot ca," aclara Gloria. Con esta broma se inicia el interminable subrayado de las diferencias entre canadienses y estadounidenses. Así, en vista de que Gloria posee muchos datos acerca de John, el pregunta: "What are you, the CIA"? "Canada doesn't have any invasive organizations like that. We let people enjoy their privacy ... We're nice sometimes up here for no good reason."

¹ Dado que el protagonista vive en California, resulta interesante que no decida mudarse a México; mas adelante nos enteraremos de que entiende español; es decir, no es por el idioma sino por algo que exploraremos mas adelante: desde el punto de esta película, los canadienses, a primera vista, parecen ser semejantes a los estadounidenses. Esta premisa sera refutada en el instante en que crucen la frontera.

Y así, buscando la amabilidad de los extranjeros, de los que parecen similares, hermanables, comienza la aventura fallida del que se define a si mismo como demócrata descontento y devastado, y quien para la mudanza a Canadá busca compañero de viaje a Winnipeg.

En paralelo, en una escena mínima, vemos a una mujer que también quiere un cambio y lo lleva a cabo en su cuerpo, frente a la cámara, sin palabras, para esconder quien fuera anteriormente; transforma su apariencia tiñendo mechones azules en su cabello y perforándose la nariz para ponerse una arracada.

Logue entrevista a sus tripulantes. La escena tiene un tono paródico fallido, que será recurrente en la película debido a que la predica política que subyace en los diálogos resulta excesiva. Uno de los aspirantes, que habla de su expediente en el FBI, quiere abandonar la "América" corporativa; otro, que voto por Bush, necesita un aventón para visitar a su novia en Vancouver; otro mas suena con viajar con música de fon-do de Neil Diamond; y por ultimo, esta la mujer del cambio de look, Chloe Hamon,³ que es, mas bien, quien hace las preguntas, preguntas tan sensatas como "a quien le puede importar" que John se mude a Canadá, aunque el crea que es importante que cualquiera haga una afirmación política.

Cohan y Hark señalan que la pareja tiende a ser la configuración dominante en las películas del género, por razones practicas en el relate; dos personas en el asiento delantero de un vehículo son fáciles de encuadrar y mantienen vivo el dialogo (8).

Cuando John Logue organiza su plan para dejar un país conservador que, según él, no va a cambiar, para luego renunciar a su ciudadanía estadounidense, parece estar pensando en que encontrara un refugio en Manitoba. Lo que aún no sabe es que él también es un conservador, incapaz de cambiar. En esta tautología radica la paradoja de una película que pretendía ser irónica y resulto ironizada.

3. El viaje

Dice McLuhan: "Los norteamericanos llevan la frontera con ellos; así, sus carros, su forma mas preciada de privacidad, están diseñados para lograr un efecto especial de encierro silencioso" (76).

Si una de las características del genero es que el auto refleje la personalidad del personaje, la de John Logue -quien se cree un espíritu libre- es la de un conservador que busca la seguridad: una camioneta Volvo "for life," blanca, vieja y sucia, adornada con una calcomanía de la campana de Kerry y Edwards en la defensa, en la cual ondea una bandera estadounidense que cobija la leyenda "A stronger America."

A lo largo del viaje, ni la vagoneta ni el paisaje serán importantes. No hay panorámicas significativas que enmarquen el auto en el camino. Las paradas serán tan importantes como los diálogos en la ruta para que los personajes se descubran a si

³Logue le hace una broma acerca de la similitud fonetica entre Hamon y jamon; ella, origi-naria de San Diego, no comprende el sentido del chiste.

mismos y uno al otro. Sin embargo, será el falso espejo canadiense, esa similitud que los estadounidenses creen que encontrarán en los anglocanadienses como si estos fueran una suerte de reflejo de ellos del otro lado de la frontera, lo que los haga mirar en el retrovisor y descubrir que no existe ningún sitio que se compare con el hogar.

Si como Seargeant y Watson señalan, el *road movie* existe como un género muy crítico de la sociedad y formula hipótesis sobre el movimiento geográfico como un aliado de los cambios culturales, la promesa del viaje de Logue tendría que ser representativo de estas características (6-20). La crítica no es solo a la sociedad que eligió un líder como Bush, lo es también a un adversario que no está dispuesto a dar la batalla, como Kerry. El movimiento geográfico debería llevarlo a adoptar las costumbres de un pueblo distinto, más abierto, ¿más democrático?

En su primer alto, Logue recoge a su compañera y de inmediato se profundiza en las características de cada uno. Ella solo escucha porque oculta algo de lo cual es obvio que está huyendo. Para ser un liberal, él está lleno de certezas. Su acercamiento inicial está relacionado con el dinero, cuando él lanza una perorata sobre los gastos. En lugar de abrir un mapa, lo que revisan es un presupuesto de gasolina, comida y hoteles, que Logue apunta en una agenda junto con la "mejor" ruta para dejar el país y una lista de gasolineras de Loores y de Petrocanada, para no dar apoyo a los energéticos que provienen de Medio Oriente, marcadas todas en el itinerario. Un mapa hubiera significado la existencia de rutas alternativas, de posibilidades distintas a elegir. Para Logue, el camino es una línea con un inicio y un final definidos; con paradas convenientes para apoyar su ideología y comprobar las verdades que la conforman. La conversación se lleva a cabo con un convencional campo/contracampo, congruente con el conservadurismo del personaje; él habla, ella responde, aparentemente sumisa. En defensa de la libertad, o de lo que él considera como tal, Logue es un autoritario: planear, decidir que es lo mejor antes de cada aventura, ese es el motto de este *road movie*. En una nota que podría ser irónica, en la carretera, junto al auto, viaja un grupo de motociclistas que también dejan la ciudad.

Las diferencias ideológicas se manifiestan, sobre todo, en cada una de las diez paradas que hacen en el camino. En la primera, por ejemplo, él, que es vegetariano, compra comida saludable, mientras ella engulle chatarra; ella se burla de él por su necesidad e inmadurez, él se decepciona porque ella no se le parece. John es un predicador anti-Bush, anti-guerra, que se queja y se queja; su obsesión con la política lo hace escuchar noticieros, grabar cd-s con citas tontas de Bush, masturbarse frente a las *naked news*, ella es un misterio, que elude las preguntas con respecto a su vida y se expresa solo con medias verdades.

Tanto John como Chloe son fronterizos, aunque provienen de las líneas que limitan a su país al norte y al sur. Él es de un pueblo al norte de Washington, ella de San Diego y no entiende español.

Conforme se encaminan rumbo al norte, el clima se vuelve lluvioso, el paisaje boscoso, de coníferas.

La quinta pausa en el viaje es una de las más importantes, como paso previo para que los personajes tengan su primer encuentro verdadero en la frontera. John vuelve al "hogar,"⁴ a la casa familiar. La configuración del espacio, recargado de símbolos "patrióticos" (el listén amarillo en el árbol, la bandera estadounidense, el mono blanco y el letrero de apoyo a las tropas a las que perteneció el otro hijo, el verdadero héroe, el que murió por la patria), es un indicio de una escena climática en que padre e hijo se enfrentan a causa de sus ideologías encontradas respecto a lo que se entiende por "americano." El padre no conversa, se dirige a los demás como si estuviera conduciendo un programa de radio.

La secuencia, que pretendía ser irónica, se convierte en un grotesco sainete entre dos bandos fundamentalistas. El padre de Logue afirma: "Come back to America-Town with your tail between your legs, eh, Comrade Lenin? ... Poster boy of what's wrong with America today: cynical, sarcastic, energy-sucking liberals." Lo increíble es que, a pesar del tono fársico, luego de haber escuchado al protagonista pontificar durante la mitad de la película, no podemos dejar de concordar un poco con el caricaturesco padre.

La frontera es un símbolo de tránsito, de transformación. La frontera se acerca. Este es el punto ideal de la diégesis para que llegue el clímax. El guion nos ha ido preparando para el destape de Chloe así que sabemos que algo está por estallar debido al calor con el que continúa la discusión que se había iniciado entre padre e hijo a causa de la guerra, aunque esta vez es entre John y Chloe, quien por primera vez se apasiona. La sexta parada, consecuentemente, es la de la revelación; el camino ha llegado al final del territorio de los Estados Unidos y las señales indican la inminencia de la frontera. Empieza la cadena de estereotipos que se había insinuado durante el prólogo. La película se tiñe de un velo neblinoso azulado que tiene una connotación de frío; más aún, las cabezas de los protagonistas están cubiertas con gorros. El auto se estaciona antes del último retorno a Canadá. Los tonos tanto de la ropa que visten como del paisaje, son azulosos. El secreto se devela, Chloe huye porque quiere desertar del ejército; John cree que el viaje ha adquirido una verdadera causa: salvar una vida de los peligros de la guerra.

A partir de la toma abierta que retrata un paisaje gélido y un cielo casi blanco en el cual ondean las banderas rojiblancas, el *road movie* se entrecruza con el género fronterizo y, así, lo que hasta entonces había sido un pintoresco relato de un par de viajeros llenos de mafias se convierte en una catarata de estereotipos y lugares comunes. Los personajes se preparan para cruzar la línea que marca su paso a la transformación.

Con un dejo de ironía, McLuhan escribió:

Conforme la frontera entre el espacio interno y el externo, entre la extroversión agresiva del mercado y la sociabilidad fácil del hogar, se borra gradualmente, Norteamérica necesitara otro refugio, un lugar donde la nostalgia, por ejemplo, podría servir como un nexo con la estabilidad de los tiemposidos. Si un ciudadano estadounidense así lo decidiera, Canadá podría convertirse en un enorme parque temático psíquico; algo así como un set de Hollywood que une simultáneamente el pasado con el presente, la ciudad con el parame. (73)

Antes, por teléfono, Logue ha anunciado su visita a su madre con observaciones ofensivas en relación con Chloe: tiene pelo azul y puede ser lesbiana.



El Volvo lodoso cruza al norte en Columbia Británica, quizás en busca de ese parque temático, de ese país a la antigua con un modo de vida *retro* donde existan tiempos mejores.

Y uno se pregunta, ¿por qué habla el guardia de migración con un grueso acento francés? Los chistes que se harán en adelante -a costillas de los canadienses, por supuesto- son malas copias de otros hechos en textos irónicos como *Canadian Bacon*, de Michael Moore, y *South Park, Bigger, Longer and Uncut*, de Trey Parker y Matt Stone. Así pues, desde la bienvenida a Canadá, la construcción de personajes se convierte en un juicio devaluatorio continuo y muy poco afortunado.

Por ejemplo, el primer incidente belicoso que sucede entre los estadounidenses y los canadienses surge en un partido de hockey, por un comentario negativo acerca de la cerveza: en *Blue State*, el guardia de migración pregunta si traen cerveza; ellos dicen que no sabían que era ilegal; él contesta que no lo es pero que sabe a pipi. Mas adelante, en casa de Gloria O'Neill, habrá observaciones por parte de los personajes acerca de la pronunciación de



Una cantina es siempre un buen lugar para "soltar la lengua": las confidencias y el alcohol, a partir del cruce de la frontera, permiten que John comience a conocer a Chloe. ¿De qué escapa? No solo del ejército sino de sus malas decisiones; si el ejército parecía una salida fácil a una vida sin propósito, Canadá parece otra salida fácil para una vida que se dirige a la muerte. Aquí, aparece abiertamente el tercer género involucrado, la comedia romántica. La huida de Chloe tiende un puente con la ideología de John; el inicio de la amistad, el deseo fallido y la borrachera se unen en lo que se perfila como una estancia en el absurdo. Cuando el adicto a las noticias enciende la tele, en lugar de encontrar una discusión inteligente o comunicados frente a los cuales reaccionar, lo que hay es una encuesta que pretende hacer del sasquatch el animal nacional de Canadá.

El viaje a Winnipeg se enmarca en un escenario rural. Y el noveno y penúltimo alto en *Marry a Canadian* es otro clímax fallido, que lleva su pretendida pero errada ironía a otra secuencia ridícula por su acumulación de estereotipos.⁶ De nuevo, el espacio está cargado de símbolos: banderas, puertas abiertas y letreros que rezan "Welcome Home." Una vez que trasponen la puerta, los personajes deben ponerse un botón con una bandera estadounidense o canadiense -según su nacionalidad- que los identifique y les permita encontrar la pareja que les otorgara la oportunidad de una estancia legal en el país. Según McLuhan, "La ambivalencia calculada del canadiense es una forma muy eficiente de mantener un perfil bajo, un campo fértil para las fantasías de otras personas" (73), y eso mismo sostienen los personajes⁷ que se esfuerzan en ser

"about"; este es un leit-motiv en la película de *South Park*. En ambos casos, los chistes parecen poco graciosos, puesto que el estereotipo no está relacionado con la ironía.

³ David Cornelius opina: "When the two arrive in Winnipeg, the movie takes a weird shift in tone, dropping the road trip character study and picking up a grab bag of kooky characters and political satire" (<<http://www.dvdtalk.com/reviews/32298/blue-state/>>).

Uno de ellos se refiere a "the tall poppy syndrome": a nadie le gusta sobresalir, porque el que asoma la cabeza entre la multitud corre el riesgo de que se la corten.

amables, simpáticos, gentiles, ¿Tal vez demasiado? ¿Se puede ser demasiado amable, simpático, gentil? Este exceso de lo aparentemente bueno se convertirá en la característica principal de los canadienses: son un grupo de bebedores extravagantes, nerds o retro-hippies que, escondidos bajo el velo de la amabilidad, odian a los estadounidenses. La hipérbole es, pues, la figura retórica con base en la cual están contruidos Winnipeg y sus habitantes.

Mientras la actitud de Chloe, atizada por los celos, es de beligerancia y menosprecio, la de John es de sorpresa. En esta reiterada ambigüedad que caracteriza a la narración, no se sabe que es peor, si los comentarios que ella hace con sorna ("Aquí todos son 'tan' amables" o "Nos tomara diez minutos conocer la ciudad") o la ignorancia condescendiente de él, a quien Winnipeg le recuerda a "América" cuando era niño ("Es como los ochenta sin Reagan").

Pese a que, defendiendo el eterno tópico de la identidad nacional que se opone a la estadounidense, según el personaje excéntrico, Gloria O'Neill, la organizadora de los matrimonios cibernéticos transfronterizos y anfitriona de los protagonistas en Winnipeg, no se trata de comparar porque cada quien tiene lo suyo, y lo de los canadienses, por supuesto, es el curling (otra situación de comicidad fallida donde este deporte se ridiculiza y se identifica con características nacionales canadienses), la comparación convertida en enfrentamiento es lo que caracteriza la estancia de John y Chloe en Canadá.

Cuando, una vez mas orillado por la afirmación que se convirtió en epitafio -debido a su hueco activismo político- John se ve presionado para firmar la solicitud de matrimonio, cuando al fin tiene frente a si la posibilidad de renunciar a su ciudadanía estadounidense y convertirse, en palabras de Gloria, en un ser complete -es decir, un canadiense-, la confrontación con lo que su nacionalidad implica se vuelve abrumadora.

De nuevo, la ironía falla y el discurso se convierte en predica. Hemos escuchado a Logue perorar toda la película en contra de lo que esta mal en EU; sin embargo, cuando estos "defectos" son señalados por un servidor público canadiense, dado que la construcción retórica de la ironía no está bien lograda, utilizando de nuevo el recurso de campo/contracampo, el discurso político resulta ridículo. Se menciona la falta de derechos y privilegios ciudadanos de los estadounidenses, por ejemplo.

- Is it true that 45 million Americans are not insured?
- How do Canadians know all these facts about us?
- It's like a one way mirror across the border. We look across and we see you, and your movies, and your politicians and your Paris Hiltons, then you look across the border and you just see yourselves. Like you said, selfish. ...
- I thought Canadians were supposed to be nice!
- We ought to be, but you guys have been pushing us lately.
- It's not us, it's our leaders.
- Who elects the leaders, the people?
- Technically in the States it's the Electoral College.
- See, how do you know that fact?
- Because we have to take a whole year of stupid US history ...

Canadá no es sinónimo de Utopía

Logue queda estupefacto ante algo que McLuhan, citando al historiador Kenneth McNaught, señala como una de las características nacionales en su país: "En ocasiones se dice que los estadounidenses están, benevolentemente, desinformados sobre Canadá, mientras que los canadienses están, malévolamente, bien informados sobre Estados Unidos, lo cual es una de las grandes características fronterizas de los canadienses" (McLuhan 83).

- like a one-way mirror across the border. We look across and see you and your movies, and your politicians and your Paris Hiltons. Then you look across the border and you just see yourselves. Like I said ... selfish.
- He doesn't like us ... Americans.
- Oh, don't worry, you're one of the good guys now.

Al igual que la forma en la que el padre definió a Logue es, hasta cierto punto, verdadera, lo que el burócrata canadiense afirma también lo es. Chloe y John viajan a Winnipeg tan solo para sentirse más orgullosos de ser "americanos," en ese preciso sentido que utiliza el gentilicio de todo un continente para definir su "grandeza" y para excluir a los demás. Si el viaje los ha transformado, es tan solo para reafirmar lo que ya eran.

La huida de *Marry a Canadian dot ca*, pistola en mano,⁸ provoca el regreso a Columbia Británica, en busca de una ciudad verdadera, más civilizada o "¿americanizada?" y culmina con el encuentro que será el único espejo verdadero que les permita tener la epifanía acerca de su destino. En su intento por encontrar una gasolinera de Petrocanada, la camioneta se queda sin combustible; la persona que los salva en un merendero es un exilado de San Francisco, que cruzó la frontera cuando le llegó la noticia de reclutamiento, treinta y cinco años antes; un fabricante de cervezas con nombres de manifiestos políticos, que vive en soledad en una cabaña construida por sí mismo, y que disfruta la compañía porque es una mercancía extraña⁹ en el desolado rumbo en el que la vida, la política belicista y el ejército estadounidense lo orillaron a permanecer. La presencia de este personaje, un espejo del probable futuro de ambos, debería funcionar como un catalizador de la epifanía. En el caso de Logue, permite con-firmar su conservadurismo, pues para él no hay identificación ni revelación. Para Chloe, sí; la epifanía significa que es mejor la cárcel en EU que una vida futura en Canadá.

Y una vez más, la ambigüedad en que suceden estas situaciones nunca nos permite saber que piensa Lewy de los estadounidenses y si su ridiculización de los canadienses es de buena voluntad o si, como el escorpión de la fábula, el veneno está en su naturaleza.

Misma que Chloe obtiene de un afroamericano terrorista que descubre la identidad de Chloe y que anda buscando un socio para ir a matar a Bush.

A "rare commodity," así la define.

El epílogo

Luego de una noche de alcohol y mas sexo, el replanteamiento de por que regresar a EU se vuelve inminente. Cuando Chloe se baja del auto para entregarse a Migration en la frontera, y John se dirige a lo que debería ser su nueva vida, por casi única vez, el auto se vuelve importante en el discurso: la bandera estadounidense se refleja no en el retrovisor sino en el espejo lateral, y la vuelta en U hacia el lado estadounidense de la frontera es la única salida posible porque lo que esta simboliza no es lo que queda atrás, sino lo que siempre acompaña al protagonista.



La inutilidad de la guerra, sus muertes sin sentido, no impiden que los personajes crean que no hay ningún lugar que iguale a su país, que el hogar solo puede estar allá. Sargeant y Watson dicen que, en ciertos casos "los protagonistas maduros son demasiado viejos, demasiado conservadores y están muy espantados para soportar el viaje psíquico que es parte del geográfico" (8). A pesar de sus escasos 30 años, así sucede con Logue y Chloe.





Las decisiones de vida pueden implicar separación y cárcel, pero la vida no puede estar en otra parte. En la única elipsis en la narración, después de un año, John y la camioneta esperan a Chloe, en la puerta de la cárcel, para iniciar un nuevo camino.

Si la ruta permite el conocimiento de los personajes y simboliza su cambio, la paradoja subyacente en *Blue State* radica precisamente en que no hay transformación posible; en todo caso, el camino tan solo confirmó que, según la película, la ideología de los personajes es la correcta, la "verdadera." Un liberal aferrado a sus creencias y una desertora que sigue siendo patriota. El trayecto a Canadá solo comprobó que la Utopía no existe, al menos en el norte, y que, como dice en inglés el dicho, "There's no place like home."

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"It just looks like more of Texas": Journeys and Travel Narratives in the Western

NIAMH THORNTON

Resumen

Tanto en el *western* como en el *road movie*, el viaje es sustantivo y se ha afirmado que tanto el cine fronterizo como el *road movie* son subgéneros que se derivan de este. A pesar de que el *road movie* comparte temáticas, narrativas y tropos visuales similares al *western*, no se les ha comparado o solo se ha hecho para señalar que tan distinto es aquel de este. El artículo "'It just looks like more of Texas': Journeys and Travel Narratives in the Western" de Niamh Thorton analiza *The Wild Bunch* (1968) de Sam Peckinpah como un ejemplo peculiar de narrativa de viaje dentro del *western*, y de que forma dos hechos -que se le situara en la época de la revolución mexicana y que fuera filmada a finales de los sesenta- le han dado un particular aire radical y contracultural, que la relacionan con otros *road movies* alternativos producidos en este periodo político y culturalmente turbulento.

1. Out of the Familiar

As evidenced in the recent *True Grit* (2010) and *Meek's Cutoff* (2010), journeys are integral to many Westerns. As is the case in road movies, travel is a neat narrative device, which pushes characters out of the routine of the ordinary, into contact with individuals from across class and racial divides, and impels them into situations which create drama. The location(s) of these tensions varies. *True Grit* makes references to Arkansas and Oklahoma, with a Texas Ranger marked as a clear outsider. While many films with similar journeys at their center are shot in multiple locations, such as Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995)—shot in Nevada, Oregon, Arizona, and New York—, the archetypal Western location is the U.S.-Mexican border. Sam Peckinpah goes further and locates most of *The Wild Bunch* (1969) south of the border, in Mexico. It is in the border crossing that the characters are pushed out of their comfort zone and are forced to confront difference and similarities in a terrain that is both consonant with and outside of their lived experiences: linguistically, geographically, and culturally. This chapter will consider the journey narrative in *The Wild Bunch* as an instance of a deliberate stepping outside of the familiar and a self-conscious negotiation of what the border means in the U.S. (and Peckinpah's) imaginary.

Described as a "film experience," *The Wild Bunch* is an anti-Western, because its principles are outlaws, and elicits empathy for them and their ventures (McKinney 81). Set circa 1913, "while civilization has a world war brewing, the frontier and the freedom it allowed the bandit are narrowing rapidly" (82). The film follows the journey of two groups of men. The first are the Bunch made up of Pike Bishop (William Holden), Dutch Engstrom (Ernest Borgnine), Angel (Jaime Sanchez), and the Gorch brothers, Lyle (Warren Gates) and Tector (Ben Johnson). These are seasoned criminals whose raid on a South Texas Rail Road administrative office at the opening of the film results in the massacre of innocent bystanders, the death of some of their original numbers, as well as of the bounty hunters who attempted to stop them in their tracks. This long, bloody, opening sequence establishes them as murderers and thieves and sets the tone for the film. The second group are a raggle-taggle band of bounty hunters and railroad men led by Deke Thornton (Robert Ryan), who describes them as "egg sucking, chicken stealing, gutter trash." Some of whom appear to enjoy the sport of killing, whilst others are there under duress. Deke is one of the latter, a leader who takes part only to avoid returning to prison. As the railroad owner, Mr Harrigan (Albert Dekker) says to him, "thirty days to get Pike, or thirty days back to Yuma." After the successful escape by the Bunch from the ambush, Pike and his gang go to Mexico in the hope of raiding a train carrying U.S. arms on the border. Through their Mexican member, Angel and his jealous murder of his former paramour, Teresa (Sonia Amelio), who has become the Federalist general, Mapache's (Emilio Fernandez) lover, the Bunch becomes involved in the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). They fight against Mapache, siding with the Mexican people, thereby complicating their characterisation from being individualistic, self-motivated thieves and murderers to acting on behalf of a higher and noble calling that aims to improve conditions for the Mexican people. The narrative is further nuanced by the long time friendship between Pike and Deke, which had lasted up to Deke's arrest and his abandonment by Pike.

The Wild Bunch is a "professional Western" where the hero is "working for money ... doing a job. They are specialists who possess the unique skills used in their profession [with a] ... profitable skill" (Carroll 47). In a professional Western set in Mexico, Mexican society is foregrounded "generally in the form of some sort of indigenous revolution" (49). Unlike those set in the U.S. at this time, where "the centre of value, and ordinary society more or less disappears, or functions only as the backdrop against which professional competitions are staged" (49). There is a different inflection when set in Mexico, as the heroes become engaged in that struggle on an emotional level "with these resistance movements ... they are willing to stake their very lives on their outcome" (49). Thereby, the characters change from being 'bad' to being 'good badmen' as they show that "he serves a Higher Law" and "though technically a criminal, may become a folk hero by serving the higher cause of justice. He takes it upon himself ... to restore moral order" (Ladd Steckmesser 141). This is the case in *The Wild Bunch* with the characters participating in the Revolutionary struggle, and ultimately defeating the tyrannical strongman Mapache.

Any ambiguity about the reasons for their engagement in this struggle is avoided through dialogue, as this exchange between Dutch, Pike, and Angel reveals:

Dutch: Generalissimo [referring to Mapache], like hell. He's just another bandit: grab all he can for himself.

Pike: Not like others I could mention.

Dutch: We ain't nothing like him. We don't hang nobody. I hope someday these people kick him and scum like him right into their graves.

Angel: We will, if it takes forever.

Pike's wry comment, and both Dutch's response and the Gorch brothers' subsequent laughter display a self-awareness that their behaviour isn't for any higher cause than their own personal gain. Dutch's response that 'we don't hang nobody' indicates that there is honour among thieves and that they are, at least in their own eyes, superior to Mapache, and that there is a standard of behaviour to which they feel they conform. Also, as a moment of encounter between two cultures, there is no sense that Mapa-che's difference lies in his Mexicaness, rather that he is, simply put, a 'bad' badman. They have the capacity to compare him with themselves as fellow bandits, although he is of a lower order because of his behaviour not his nationality. However, Angel's interjection and his use of the first person plural subtly positions his otherness and difference. He is aligning himself with his people, thereby setting himself apart from them. Yet, it is his position that they come to identify with, and indeed fight for, by the end of the film. Solidarity with the people and their struggle is shown to be an issue of natural justice rather than a question of national fealty.

With the growth in popularity of the road movie as a way of working through the mythology of the unknown and unexplored America, the 1960s saw a decline in the Western in Hollywood, while many were produced elsewhere, in particular the so-called Spaghetti Westerns in Italy (Buscombe/Pearson 1). At this time, a few filmmakers continued to make films that moved away from the traditional Western populated by noble frontiersmen and women. Peckinpah's innovation was to create a recognisable aesthetic that portrayed the West as ultra-violent, and his films are set in a world in decline.

Peckinpah's Western is a countercultural representation of the West at a crucial moment when one era is coming to a close and another is beginning. It differs greatly from the aggrandising reading of the past by his predecessors, such as John Ford's "chivalric and idealised West," where Peckinpah moved "toward a more psychopathic and mud-spattered landscape" (Prince xvii). The changed conceptualization of the West and the sense that we are witnessing the end of a significant stage in U.S. history is repeatedly foreshadowed in the film. As Pike describes it, "We gotta start thinking beyond our guns, those days are closing fast."

For Grant, the road movie and the Western belong to the same type of genre that is they are "defined by narrative and setting," as opposed to those labelled "body genres [concerned with the] ... emotional effect of the film" (such as horror, pornography, comedy, and melodrama) (23.) The road movie borrowed the Western trope of

the frontier as a wide and open expanse to be explored and traversed. Therefore, their setting is in many ways contiguous. There are borrowings and references between the two genres. For example, in *Easy Rider* (1969) the principle characters were called Wyatt and Billy after Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid, which is a direct nod to the Western (cf. Roberts 51). Previous studies compare the road movie to traditional Westerns, such as *Stagecoach* whose "simple journey, traditional goal, and closure seldom occur for the protagonists of road films" (53). This is a neat comparison with the traditional Western, and Sargeant and Watson identify the roots of the road movie in the classic Western, originating in the idea of America as a frontierland with frontiersmen and women as the embodiment of this ideal, often escaping the structures of 'old world' Europe to the freedom of the U.S. (Sargeant/Watson 6-7). While such readings are appropriate to the traditional Western and countercultural Westerns, such as *The Wild Bunch* have much in common with this reading, Peckinpah pushes the Western closer to the countercultural road movie. The wide expanse of the frontier is no longer there to be explored and conquered. Instead, the Bunch escape from a dangerous context in the U.S. where capital, personified by Mr Harrigan, rules and is willing to sacrifice unarmed citizens to protect his interests, to then cross the border into an equally unjust locale subject to the whims of a strongman, supported by the transnational capital of German arms dealers (Fernando Wagner and Jorge Rado). This image of the U.S. to which nobody returns alive, is not the idealised space ripe for occupation, rather it is an unjust and violent place as dangerous as the territory south of the border.

Self-reflection and an examination of significant cultural concerns are tropes in both the Western and road movies. Laderman expands the idea of the road movie as "cultural critique":

The driving force propelling most road movies ... is an embrace of the journey as a means of cultural critique. Road movies generally aim beyond the borders of cultural familiarity, seeking the unfamiliar for revelation, or at least for the thrill of the unknown. Such travelling, coded as defamiliarization, likewise suggests a mobile refuge from social circumstances felt to be lacking or oppressive in some way. (1-2)

The journey in both genres is not a simple conceit, particularly in the context of the 1960s and 1970s. In road movies such as *Easy Rider* or *Rain People* (1969), the characters are disillusioned with dominant contemporary culture, and the films tap into a sense of a need for change and protest that was present in the wider culture, evident in protests against the Vietnam War and the growing civil rights movements.¹ In this context *The Wild Bunch* has much in common with these road movies. Although the characters in *The Wild Bunch* are older, they are facing a world that is changing rapidly around them and is quickly becoming the very constraining, conservative one that the characters in *Easy Rider* and *Rain People* seek to escape.

Just as the road movie and the Western have much in common, beyond the simple narrative device of the journey, there are definite differences. The concerns of

For more on the facts and figures of 1960s violence, cf. Prince.

the road movie relate to a "modernist sensibility" (Laderman 6). Whereas in the Western there is a nostalgia for the pre-modern, or at least in the case of *The Wild Bunch*, the point at which the modern was being formulated. A moment of bathos in the film demonstrates how the film critiques the modern and the fact that these men have no place in it. On their first night in Mexico, Pike and Dutch discuss their futures. Pike says that this is his last job and that he wants to "make one good score and back off," to which Dutch replies, "Back off to what?." The question remains rhetorical as the two shot of the men chatting, prostrate, side by side cuts to a close shot of Pike's face, which shows his confusion and realisation that he has no plan beyond this present quest. This scene is an instance of a recurring theme in the film in which, through camera, dialogue and editing, Peckinpah reveals men in the midst of dramatic change, unsure of where to plot their futures.

There is a return to this theme of men figuring through what to do now that their time has come to a close and they are faced with few options. At the end of the film, there is a mid-shot of Deke leaning against the wall outside Mapache's barracks after the massacre. His men have left, singing "I went to the river," a U.S. folk song, carrying the bodies of Pike, Dutch, and the Gorch Brothers on horseback. The scene cuts between Deke, still in the same place, and his band of men, obviously having gotten far away, and now singing a different song to signify the passing of time. Gunshots are heard in the distance, Deke smiles, but still remains without moving. Men, women, and children, who are non-combatants, stream out of the barracks past him. Freddy Sykes (Edmond O'Brien), one of the Bunch, who was left behind assumed dead before the rest of the Bunch entered the barracks, arrives with people from Angel's village. He asks Deke, "what are you going to do?," Deke replies, "Drift around down here, try to stay out of jail." Freddy responds, "Me and the boys here," signaling the villagers, "we've work to do. Do you want to come along? It ain't like it used to be, but it'll do." This is the reoccurrence of the theme that the film is an account of an end of an era. Deke smiles, pauses, Freddy laughs, then Deke moves to join them. To the tune of a Mexican *corrida* (folk songs popular during the Revolution), the group ride off. This is inter-cut with shots from earlier in the film of Dutch, Pike, the Gorch brothers, and Angel laughing over the closing credits, giving the moment a bittersweet feel. While Freddy and Deke are joining up to fight in what we are to believe is a good cause, thanks to Angel's many heartfelt speeches, their involvement is that of 'good' badmen continuing to engage in violence and bloodshed, which is perceived as integral to their natural condition. There is some poignancy in this closing sequence as there is hope in the nobility of the struggle that Deke has joined, yet no real sense that he has an ideological attachment to the cause. The laughter suggests that there were happier times. However, laughter is also often used by the men to dispel fear and tension, rather than as an expression of hilarity. Therefore, this is not a light-hearted close, but an unsettling and ambiguous end.

2. Exploration, Transportation, and Modernity

According to Laderman, the creation of the U.S. is based on journeys of exploration, conquest and adventure (7). This notion of the existence of a frontier territory ready for exploration is integral to both genres. In contrast, these men are shown to be ready to adapt to the local: Dutch speaks Spanish; the Gorch brothers become softened (for a brief time) by the charms of a young local woman; they wear traditional *scrape* blankets to fend off the cold; and, most importantly, they fight in the Revolution. The ending, with its implicit integrationist message, suggests that they are not there to exploit the other, instead, that these are violent men, happy to adapt to any context in which they can continue to survive. In many ways they become the vanquished in this narrative, rather than taking on the role of conqueror typical of the traditional Western heroes.

Another difference between the road movie and the Western is the mode of transport and its significance. In the road movie the car (for the most part) is a symbol of an "'increasingly mechanized' framework of automobile modernity" (Laderman 2). In contrast in *The Wild Bunch*, when the men come across an automobile for the first time they are in Mexico where Mapache is being driven in a brand new model. On seeing the car, Dutch asks, "Now, what the hell is that?." To which the other men speculate about the car and discuss rumours of flying machines. Close shots of their faces show that they are obviously bewildered by this innovation. Modernity is as alien to them as it is integral to the road movie. Yet, the presence of the car and their wonder at it demonstrates that they belong to a pre-modern time, which is now passing rapidly. What Peckinpah is showing here is the clash between the past and the future, and how the men are being superseded by a new future that is just as brutal as the one that they currently inhabit.

Interestingly, Laderman's definition of the distinctiveness of the road movie and its connection to modernity elides modernity with the counterculture,

the road movie distinguishes itself from all these classical genres [Western, family melodrama, musical, showbiz productions, gangster movies] by virtue of its literal (as opposed to figurative) portrayal of rebellion. This literal quality derives from the genre's explicit modernist narrative approach—itsself directly shaped and inspired by the 1960s counterculture. (35)

As evidenced in *The Wild Bunch*, while the characters are pre-modern, or at least temporarily located in the transitional encounter between the pre-modern and the coming of the machine age, the sensibility of the film and the context in which it was made is definitely that of the counterculture. Indeed, the modern is often a source of destruction as well as wonder. The aforementioned car is used as a form of torture. Angel is dragged behind it on a rope tied to his wrists by Mapache, as children jump on his trailing body for fun. Another modern invention, the machine gun, much coveted by Mapache and the German arms dealers who accompany him, is a tool of mass annihilation, whose power to kill is a show of a destructive modernity. As Prince states, "The violence of that film [*The Wild Bunch*], and of Peckinpah's work in general, fed off the

climate of violence endemic to the era [in which it was made] and was a conscious response to it, not a mere reflection of it" (Prince 27). While being key to Peckinpah's dramatic, highly choreographed, and fast paced shoot out scene, the kinetic force of the machine gun is negative and functions implicitly as part of his critique of modernity.

3. Peckinpah the Man

Textual assessments of Peckinpah as auteur are read through his sometimes controversial and colourful life. These are often celebratory stories of excess and high drama on shoots, in post-production and in his private life. For example, Evan's account of his time as a scriptwriter working on set on the making of *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970), sums Peckinpah up as "the complete enigma in a wheel made of contradictions, spinning swiftly, full of spokes, with every other one in absolute opposition" (2). As McKinney states, "we do not approach Peckinpah's films in a vacuum," as his reputation as a hard drinking, impulsive, and short-tempered man has affected readings of his films (9). There are many "folklore and legends that surrounded Peckinpah" (Prince xiii).

For Peckinpah,

the West was ... an authentic place and experience that he briefly encountered in his youth during visits to the Sierra Nevada and his grandfather's ranch. The loss of that ranch haunted him as an adult and was a paradigmatic experience underlying his treatment on film of a vanishing West, (xiv)

In many ways Peckinpah was witness to this dying world of the West and its demise was something that he deeply felt, whilst also using his films as a way of exploring what was wrong with the U.S. of the 1960s. Through his disillusionment with the U.S. he displaces his nostalgia for the past, which often characterises the Western, onto Mexico, which is, for him an idealised locale brutalised by corrupt government. Whilst set in the specific context of the Mexican Revolution, U.S. politics, culture, and society was undergoing a particularly dramatic period of violent disturbance at the time the film was made. This foreign battlefield could be read as a parallel for the one at home. Although he can be criticised for idealising Mexico as a country populated by noble people ready to fight for their freedom, the film is ultimately about the U.S. as a troubled place in the 1960s. There is this tension between the present and the past in *The Wild Bunch* and, rather than locate his struggle in the one place and thereby consider a story solely set in the U.S., he expands it to include Mexico thereby using it as a space to further explore the present through the lens of a different culture. In addition, the displacement of the characters onto a different geographical space provides a useful narrative device to throw them into relief and bring to the fore dialogues about difference and otherness. Curiously, this move away from the local actually encourages comparisons and shows up similarities rather than highlighting difference.

4. Violence

Peckinpah is renowned for being one of a group of directors who brought a new level of violence to the screen.¹ His use of montage, fast editing, slow motion, and graphic depictions of wounds both aestheticize the violence and serve to critique it. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* Peckinpah states that violence in his films is:

about the violence in all of us. The violence which is reflecting on the political condition of the world today. It serves a dual purpose. I intended it to have a cathartic effect. Someone may feel a strange, sick, exultation at the violence, but he should then ask himself, 'What is going on in my heart?' I wanted to achieve a catharsis through pity and fear. (Evans 81)

This idea of violence being an inherent characteristic of all men, is explored as a reading for *The Wild Bunch* by McKinney. For him, the film shows

that certain circumstances can lead to an idea of justifiable cause, based on the realization of the capacity for violence in all of us. Abhorring violence is not enough; we must recognise that the enemy is within, and understand how that capacity for violence works and shows itself. Eventually, it lays bare the real threat of war as a practical inevitability of human nature. (88)

The depiction of brutal violence is a political and, Prince argues, moral choice, which provides Peckinpah with an opportunity to challenge the viewers to reflect on what such violence means to him or her (xv). Peckinpah acknowledges the problem that there may be those for whom such violence is appealing in and of itself, and he cannot impel the audience to think beyond this. However, for both Peckinpah and McKinney the graphic violence of the film should make the viewer consider their own implication in similar violence, such as that which was prevalent in the 1960s.

The fact that this film is set in Mexico is an opportunity to take what could be read as a parallel period of unrest and explore the complexities involved. Peckinpah represents the Revolution as an inevitable reaction to violent oligarchs, such as Mapa-che, yet, he also reveals the enormous cost of lives that take place in order to defeat him. Curiously, there are some contradictions in his stance on the Revolution that are evident in his portrayal of a distant battle where Mapache's troops are forced to retreat from Pancho Villa's army.⁴ Whereas the battle between the Bunch and Mapache is highly personalised and presented ambiguously as a reaction to Angel's death, the battle showing the defeat of Mapache's troops is glorious in its use of a triumphant *corrida* and the wide shots of the mass mobilization of troops. Its framing and composition, and the use of a train as a means of escape, is reminiscent of films of the Mexican Revolution by Emilio Fernandez in the 1940s.⁵ If war is a real threat and inevita-

Another is Arthur Penn with *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967).

For more on this, cf. Seydor.

For more on the treatment of Pancho Villa in U.S. film, cf. de Orellana.

For more on Fernandez's aesthetics, cf. Tierney.

bility, as McKinney suggests, Peckinpah is exploring both its appeal and its terrible consequences.

5. Places and Spaces

One of the key elements to the road movie are "vast, open landscape bordered by seductive horizons," which recall the frontier of Westerns. For Laderman,

the genre's plot often carves out a rambling, picaresque narrative path. As a result, the road movie may not possess a clear-cut beginning, middle, or end; likewise, the genre often shifts gears regarding mood and plot with a certain disorienting, open-air free will. Generally it distances itself from the Aristotelian dramatic unities, in favour of the episodic style of Cervantes or Brecht. By foregrounding the journey in a nomadic vein, the road movie evokes a countercinema in relation to classical narrative (just as its themes generally tend to be countercultural). (17)

Similarly, the episodic nature of *The Wild Bunch* disrupts any dramatic unity, because as the story evolves, the raid on the railroad offices in the opening merely establishes mode and style, then escape becomes imperative for the Bunch, which then changes to the robbery of an arms shipment, and finally it segues into engagement in the Revolutionary struggle. There is no single quest which they must complete, which suggests that their enterprise is neither heroic nor complete. For example, their successful trading of the stolen arms with Mapache, while tense, is almost anti-climactic. Where there was an apparent threat to their lives, they cleverly navigate this obstacle and complete the exchange, only to lose Angel over his apparently noble act of stealing a case of guns for his people to use in the war.

All road movies and Westerns have a quest or quests at their center. However, the difference between the traditional forms of both genres and the countercultural, that Laderman delineates above, is that the quest has a singular purpose that provides unity in the narrative. For Sargeant and Watson such quests recall Homer's *Odyssey* (Sargeant/Watson 16), whilst Lackey traces this travel narrative to chivalric and picaresque tales (Lackey 7-9). Where the chivalric is about individual enterprise and self-discovery, the picaresque examines the character's interaction and movement through different strata of society, thereby functioning as a critique of the same. The road movie not only mines the rich seam of the Western, in common with literary road narratives it "draw[s] upon a rich genre memory [in the Bakhtinian sense] of literary conventions extending as far back as ancient travel literature, religious pilgrimages and mythic quests" (Primeau 5). The countercultural Western serves to undermine the heroic and noble quest narrative and instead carries out a cultural critique.

Early on in *The Wild Bunch*, whilst looking out over the Rio Grande, before the Bunch cross the border from Texas into Mexico, the following exchange takes place:

Angel: Mexico Undo.

Lyle: I don't see nothing lindo about it.

Lector: It just looks like more of Texas, as far as I'm concerned.

Angel: Ah, you have no eyes.

This is a pointed conversation, which highlights the theme of sameness and difference that runs through the film. Angel's opening in Spanish, could alienate his interlocutors if they didn't understand the language. However, the fact that Lyle can code switch and use the word in a way that evidences his understanding of its meaning breaks down the linguistic border between the men. Angel is not linguistically separated from them. Tector's statement suggests that there is not only a physical similarity between the two countries, but also implies that despite his knowledge of Spanish, he has never been to Mexico. We can conclude from the code switching that Texas, where they are from, is not linguistically homogenous. Angel, having a sense of national pride and emotional investment in the differences between the two countries, claims that there are distinctions. The differences aren't physical or purely cultural (language being a significant marker of the same), but conceptual. This is a radical suggestion, made at a time when the Cold War was at his height and border divisions and territoriality were hot subjects of debate.

Although brief and rather syncopated—as is much of the dialogue in the film—this exchange is loaded with many layers of meaning. Rather than stasis and fixity being the basis of culture, according to James Clifford travel is actually a condition common to most cultures (cf. Clifford). In Primeau's words,

Travel has been seen as the social glue that binds society together, a way to discover one's real self in a release from everyday constraints, a way to participate more fully in daily events, and a chance to repair any number of internal mechanisms. (5)

Peckinpah demonstrates these cultural flows through this scene. It provides an insight into the sense of cultural belonging and the significance of place for the characters. Space is both deeply felt to have sentimental importance and to be subject to a negotiated understanding of its significance.

There is a long tradition of border representation from both sides.⁶ For Fregoso,

In the cultural imaginary of both the United States and Mexico, the border figures as the trope for absolute alterity, a 'no-man's land' symbolizing eroticized underdevelopment—an untamed breeding ground for otherness and the site of unrepressed libidinal energies. Its inhabitants are coded as outcasts, degenerates, sexually hungry subalterns and outlaws. (Fregoso 53)

Peckinpah turns the no-man's land into a point of negotiation and even puzzlement. Angel and the Gorch brothers are both clear where they are coming from and going to as political and cultural concepts, but the similarity and difference of the two sides becomes subjective. The border is both an interstitial space and one of well-defined difference, dependent on individual interpretation.

Cf. Leen for more on the significance of the border.

6. Conclusion

According to Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark "The road movie is ... like the musical or the Western, a Hollywood genre that catches particularly American dreams, tensions and anxieties" (Cohan/Rae Hark 2). The dream (or nightmare) that Peckinpah captured was the very particular, tense, violent period of change of the late 1960s. He created a narrative that is brutal, challenging, sometimes contradictory and reveals misogyny at the root of the culture that can be difficult to watch. His film is populated by individuals, who are unlike the heroes of the traditional Western, who are "superior in degree to other men and to his environment" (Pye 190). However, Peckinpah's anti-Western is populated by outlaws and outsiders; individuals who no longer belong to a rapidly changing society. These have much in common with the protagonists of the road movie made at this time. They have a generalised desire to escape from the constraints of society, because they are considered to be outsiders or they have an actual need to escape the law, which are common tropes in both genres. The Western comprises "the intersection of a range of categories, the interplay of which generates meaning within a context narrow enough for recognition of the genre to take place but wide enough to allow enormous individual variation" (Pye 187). One of these intersections is the road movie. The journey as a central conceit is integral to both genres. This may be the desire to get away and find the "real America," which motivates the characters in *Easy Rider* (1969) or the multiple imperatives that motivate the characters in *The Wild Bunch* (Cohan/Rae Hark 2-4).

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Driving around Los Angeles: On Gregg Araki's "Irresponsible Movie" *The Living End* and the Urban Road Film¹

GER ZIELINSKI

Jon: I'm not going to fondle your crotch right now.

Luke: Why not? Jon: Because I'm a
responsible driver.

—Araki, *The Living End*

Resumen

El cine *queer* y las revisiones del género del *road movie* ofrecen perspectivas alternativas del viaje. En el artículo "Driving around Los Angeles: On Gregg Araki's 'Irresponsible Movie' *The Living End* and the Urban Road Film," Ger Zielinski se enfoca en la controversia que generó esta película de avanzada, situada en un momento fundamental para el género. Esto se logra mediante un análisis textual de la película con base en los tropos posmodernos de pastiche, parodia y citación, todo ello relacionado con películas que fueron seleccionadas por la sensibilidad cinefílica extraña ("queer") del mismo Araki; pero también al señalar ciertos cuestionamientos planteados por la película al género del *road movie*, incluyendo su relación con los espacios urbanos. Ciertos conceptos de Reynar Banham sobre Los Ángeles, de Marc Auge sobre los lugares y los no-lugares, y de Ignasi de Sola-Morales sobre el terreno vago se adaptan para articular la narrativa del camino expandido que la película de Araki propone.

1. Araki and His Reluctant Road Film

In this paper I reconsider Gregg Araki's *The Living End* (1992) in terms of genre pastiche and intertextual elements to show how the film itself works to trouble and redraw the boundaries of the road movie in the early 1990s, but also how this in-turn opens up Los Angeles and its seemingly infinite freeways and pronounced automobile-based

I would like to acknowledge the generous critical comments and suggestions made by my good colleague Johanne Sloan on an earlier version of this paper; they prompted me to clarify and expand upon several aspects covered in the original, which in my estimation has allowed for a marked improvement.

culture to the genre. Part of my larger aim here is to rethink the road movie's relationship to the city, albeit an anomalous city, through the case study of Araki's film.

The Living End worked to establish the director and define his themes related to the darker sides of disenchanted contemporary youth culture and the west-coast independent music scenes. Beyond *The Living End* and its famous punk, post-punk, industrial, post-industrial, and other types of DIY indie music on the soundtrack, the so-called Teenage Apocalypse Trilogy of films (*Totally F***ed Up*, *The Doom Generation*, *Nowhere*) solidified Araki's diverse publics and fans, young and old, cool and geek, queer and straight. A short list of the bands heard in the film defines its tone and demonstrates Araki's connoisseurship well outside of the mainstream: Coil, Braindead Sound Machine, KMFDM, Babyland, Psychic TV, Biohazard PCB, among many others. Kylo-Patrick Hart has written extensively on what he terms Araki's "postpunk style" in relation to his choice of music and style of filmmaking (30 f., 2003); Katie Mills has written on Araki's important pioneering contribution to the emergence of what has become known as the AIDS film (1997). My aim is to build on their excellent work, effectively complementing it while also taking the analysis in a new direction.

I wish to argue that *The Living End* combines genre elements from the road film, buddy film, and classical Hollywood cinema, set in the broader context of the global cinematic city that is Los Angeles, an anomalous urban sprawl of streets, freeways, and low-rise buildings. Los Angeles, as a limitless suburban city, effectively invites, even posits, what I would name the urban road movie.

In brief, the story is centered on the developing relationship between Jon, a young mild-mannered film critic, and Luke, a street-smart hustler. They finally meet while Jon is driving his car distracted by his recent diagnosis of HIV-positive and as Luke is escaping a potential attack in an underground garage. Jon is attracted to Luke's impulsive character, very much unlike his own. Together they drive off on a random improvised venture to San Francisco, and then back to Los Angeles, with the final scene set on a vacant, anonymous section of beach. The two main characters go through a wide range of experiences along the trip in, out, and around Los Angeles, including murder, stealing, as well as passionate fights and sex between them. Moreover, the film does not attempt to evade its historical period. Following the final credits is the statement: "dedicated to craig lee (1954-1991) and the hundreds of thousands who've died and the hundreds of thousands more who will die because of a big white house full of republican fuckheads" (final credit panel in film, original in lower case), which strongly situates the film in relation to the politics of the early 1990s and the President George H. W. Bush's highly criticized stand of not responding to the AIDS crisis.

2. On the (Queer Cinephilic) Road

Oh my, a romantic drifter, a lonesome cowboy
hitching across the country like Jack Kerouac.
How romantic. Isn't that just fucking romantic.

—Fern (based on *The/ma and Louise*) in *The Living End*

Curiously, at the time of the film's initial screenings Araki insisted categorically in several interviews' that *The Living End* was not a road movie. Clearly, he had something else in mind. Araki states in interview,

To me, *The Living End* is a revisionist entry in the genre [of couples-on-the-run] in many ways, besides it being about two male lovers. The film is set up in a sort of conventional way, but about halfway through it turns into something else: It becomes less about cops and robbers and guns and cars and becomes this sort of existential journey within the characters. This movie, to me, is much more about the relationship, the 'doomed lovers in a hostile world' kind of scenario. (Emerson 1992)

On the one hand, he apparently understood "road movie" in an older sense, from the 1970s and 1980s meaning of the genre, or even of the earlier Depression Era. On the other hand, his own postmodern project of citation and genre play seemed to exceed any one genre in itself. Perhaps, as a young up-and-coming art film director, he did not want to associate himself or his work with a particular genre of any sort. Over the years, however, he appears to have accepted the road movie category as applied to the film, but its very definition has shifted in meaning and substance from the early 1990s on.

Provisionally, I take Timothy Corrigan's attempt at a schematic set of six criteria for the road film. As with any attempt to fix the definition of a genre such as the road movie, it is bound at least to become problematic or eventually show signs of its formation, as in Corrigan's case from 1991. As Corrigan writes,

What most of the films of this genre share is, quite obviously, a quest motif, which propels the usually male characters along the road of discovery ... They are peopled with male buddies, usually a pair whose questing will only be distracted or, at best, complemented by the women who intrude from time to time. (144)

The six criteria for the genre can be summarized as:

1. concerning a crisis in male subjectivity, including the breakdown of the family unit: "More and more, the family unit, that oedipal centerpiece of classical narrative, begins to break apart, preserved only as a memory or desire with less and less substance" (145);
2. external events that act on the characters (not characters creating events): "Unlike other genres, such as the detective film where characters initiate events, in the road movie events act upon the characters: the historical world is always too

The director in numerous interviews, typically along the university and college circuit of screenings, expresses this attempt to clarify and distinguish the film as a film outside of the road narrative genre.

- much of a context, and objects along the road are usually menacing and materially assertive" (145);
3. with characters that are notably self-conscious: "As this genre develops through the fifties, the quest motif becomes increasingly mechanized through those central vehicles in a manner far different from even the industrial quests of the nineteenth and early twentieth century" (145);
 4. the vehicle itself representing the camera: in the road movie "the perspective of the camera comes closest of any genre to the mechanical unrolling of images that defines the movie camera" (146);
 5. carrying a quest, where the identity of the protagonist becomes manifest in the material vehicle: "movies about cars, trucks, motorcycles, or some other motor ing soul-descendant of the nineteenth-century train" (144), and "by the midsixties, the protagonist's identity is almost fully displaced into a human or spiri
tual reality" (145); and
 6. involving the distanciation of the everyday roads and places along the route: "the space that is explored in these films is usually familiar land that has somehow become unfamiliar: the road and the country may be known, but something has made it foreign" (147).

Written in the late 1980s Corrigan's criteria come from an earlier era, specifically following the Second World War, and take Kerouac's book *On the Road* from the 1950s and Hopper's *Easy Rider* as models. Perhaps this idea of road film was also in Araki's mind when he tried hard to distinguish his film from the road genre. While aspects of the older road movie persist in *The Living End*, the important new elements or motifs, as Corrigan calls them, situate the film in a changed historical period in the early 1990s.

Regarding Araki's film, the crisis in masculinity was reworked dissolving any concern with the fracturing of the family unit and resituating it among HIV-positive gay or bisexual men, as are the two main characters in the film. The film aims to re-empower doubly those at the margins of an already marginal group. In a sense, Jon and Luke are reacting to the external event of AIDS, and the film portrays an active, vital response that overcomes any demoralized withdrawal. Curiously, outside of the external reality of AIDS, there is a fascinating assortment of possible dangerous encounters, on the one hand, and benign enigmatic situations, on the other hand. The more violent encounters involve anonymous bigots or "fag-bashers" in several short scenes that seem to puncture the early part of the film, while the more enigmatic Araki-signature zombies and freaks float rather unthreateningly through other scenes, as at least one main character looks on in amusement. Another contrast with the earlier road genre conventions is the simple lack of any real identifiable quest; there is no overarching purpose to the travel from the beginning in Los Angeles to San Francisco, eventually to a beach in L.A. again, save part fugitive from the law, part romance. However, one tie that is retained with the older conventions concerns the distanciation of the landscapes that are traversed; indeed much of the nighttime scenes lend the film a strangeness that would be missing had it been set during regular daylight. There is no

significant identification of any character with his or her vehicle; the vehicles seem banal, everyday, to be used to travel somewhere, however vaguely defined a destination. The characters do not appear to have any personal investment in them. Luke steals a car at one point, and then abandons it later. There is clearly no proud identification invested in the cars. In a sense, Araki's film retains some continuity with the older road genre, but it also shows signs of new breaks and innovation, aspects expected of and important to any new art or auteur film.

By inverting genre expectations with demonstrated cinephilic prowess, Araki's film enters the art film circuit. Much work has been done on the importance of cultural capital to the recognition and reception of new films (e.g., Czach, de Valck). This sort of research often borrows its conceptual framework from Pierre Bourdieu, and more specifically his theories of distinction and cultural capital in relation to the arts and levels of taste (especially 1984, 1993, 1997). Bourdieu's theory of the forms of capital is particularly sensitive to how each form or type of capital, namely economic, social and cultural, may be converted from one to another in simple or complicated ways (cf. "The Forms of Capital"). Films are certainly subject to such an accumulation of capital, enabled through their circulation and exhibition at prestigious film festivals around the world.³ A prize or honorable mention at one can do wonders to the career of a film; attention in a critical review can also lend a film some significant cultural capital. This applies to any new film vying for entry into the network of highly differentiated film festivals and its subsequent recognition.

The career of Araki's film evidently shows the fortunate signs of recognition in making its American premiere at the January 1992 Sundance Film Festival, a festival dedicated to independent cinema, where it was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize. Moreover, it was discovered in part by critic B. Ruby Rich and importantly mentioned in her well-known *Village Voice* article that proclaimed the emergence of a collection of films that she named the "new queer cinema" and promoted their New York City screenings at the Museum of Modern Art. Her revised *Sight and Sound* version of the article of the same year is less New York-oriented and includes statements by the directors who participated on a panel dedicated to queer cinema at Sundance. The *Village Voice* article enthusiastically celebrates the films that she had noticed at a handful of important international film festivals, specifically Sundance, Berlin, Toronto, and Amsterdam, with the tag line "FROM TORONTO TO BERLIN TO NEW YORK THE WORD IS OUT—A NEW GAY CINEMA IS HERE" (upper case in the original). These films were noted for their crossover⁴ appeal, i.e. films with gay or lesbian

De Valck addresses the case of the highly-respected Venice festival "Mostra" and the added value that it gives through the awarding of prizes, while Czach is concerned with the question of national canon formation and the effect of film festival programming.

The concept of crossover appeal or a crossover film has been in film studies for many years but definitely needs more critical attention. A significant amount of material has been published regarding the crossover appeal in Black film studies, cf. Guerrero's work on Blaxploitation films (69-111), and George's book on African-American music in the 1970s (147-69).

content but, through their particular treatment of the material, of interest to a larger public. According to Rich, these films combine exciting, fresh, and brash stories with intelligent, informed formal innovations, with themes touching on, but not exclusive to, a broadened range of sexual identities (1992).

One month following its Sundance screening, Araki's film received its international premier appropriately in the Panorama section of the Berlinale. The highly-respected film programmer Wieland Speck inaugurated his longstanding tenure as head of the Panorama screenings the same year. The Panorama itself serves as a showcase for challenging international independent, auteur films. Araki's particular kind of art film, with its legible cinephilic elements, instantly found its larger international public along the festival network, thereby raising expectations for the films to come.

If at least part of the definition of the auteur director is his or her self-conscious, deliberate striving to be recognized as such, then Araki's film efficiently demonstrates not only his love of, but also his significant knowledge of, the history of cinema. Araki's cinephilic allegiances and commitments are made manifest in part in the main character of the young film critic Jon, who is busy writing a lamentful essay on the death of cinema,⁶ suggesting a pun on Godard's ultimate social-satirical road movie *Week End* (1967). Furthermore, the space of Jon's apartment is replete with posters of films of note, namely Warhol's *Blow Job*, Godard's *Made in USA* and photographs in a film magazine, and Derek Jarman's name flashes from another page. There is even an endearing inflatable plastic Godzilla, from the Japanese monster genre. As the characters circulate through the apartment in several scenes, these cinephilic markers are presented to the film spectators. Moreover, as a number of critics have pointed out, the first names, Jon and Luke, when combined, strongly suggest a homage to Araki's idol Jean-Luc Godard (Mills). With such a storm of visible references, cinephiles are left to draw the connections between the film and others. Araki's cinephilia extends well beyond cloistered art-house cinema to include monster movies, popular cinema, and even campy old Hollywood films, certainly a constant favorite of many queer cinephiles.

While cinephilia is often discussed more as a mode of reception, it can also be mobilized by a filmmaker in the making of a film. Araki, like many of his generation of filmmakers, seems to relish dropping hints and references to his favorite directors and films. In fact, they are revealed quite openly. His particular blend of cinephilia blends what Sontag laments in the mid 1990s (1997) and that special practice of appreciation that she addresses in the early 1960s, namely gay camp (1964). In his insightful article "AIDS and Gay Cinephilia," Roger Hallas provides an important analysis of

While it is typical that the Berlin Film Festival screens films as premiers, films previously screened at Sundance are commonly accepted, since Park City, Utah, is not easy for European critics to visit.

Curiously, Araki is echoing the cinephile's lament and perhaps anticipating Susan Sontag's own lament over the death of cinephilia that was published several years later in the New York Times (1996). It is no secret that Los Angeles is not a friendly territory for the cinem-phile; New York City owned that identity in the United States.

how certain gay men and lesbians engage films and videos, both in terms of reception and as producers. He further narrows the meaning of cinephilia when he offers the definition of 'gay cinephilia' as

the set of gay cultural practices revolving around a collectively shared passion for cinema and its history ... The specific advantage in deploying the concept of gay cinephilia in the analysis of these films lies in its ability to account for their cinematic meaning and affect in terms of a set of cultural practices shared by both filmmakers and audiences. Moreover, cinephilia is a dynamic that, I would argue, structures the reading practices of gay viewers and the formal techniques taken up by gay filmmakers. (89)

While I am somewhat hesitant to use the concept of gay or lesbian cinephilia without making some clarification, perhaps the best way to understand, say, gay cinephilia is by asking just what makes it gay. My point here, as a clarification, is that gay or lesbian cinephilia requires a special investment in the (mainly historical) culture of gay men or lesbians, in how certain films are found and received. To be sure, cinephilia of whatever type would require cultivation, as Bourdieu would remind us. I would argue that there is no single gay cinephilia or lesbian cinephilia, but rather a wide multiplicity of cinephilic practices centered on particular strategies of reception. Following Bourdieu in part, I posit gay or lesbian cinephilia as a largely cultivated activity that is shared among those gay men or lesbians who choose to participate. To be sure, not all gays and lesbians are cinephiles, and there are likely different types of cinephilia among different groups, according to a wide range of affinities and dislikes.

Film scholar Brett Farmer explores the pre-Stonewall practices of gay reception, and especially the question of cinephilia, in an interview with Annamarie Jagose (2001). He summarizes his account of the historical formation of these practices thus,

Organized around the consumption of what, as you note, is a vigorously heterocentrist cultural form, gay spectatorship would seem fundamentally riven by paradox. In fact, from the perspective of a certain tradition of film theory where cinema is characterized as a massively functioning apparatus for the production of phallic heterosexual identification, gay spectatorship might even seem a veritable contradiction in terms. Yet, it is precisely this contradictory tension that grounds gay spectatorship and furnishes much of its structural dynamism. In the face of a representational system anchored in compulsory heterosexuality and predicated, more often than not, on the explicit exclusion of homosexual desire, gay audiences of Hollywood film have been forced to engage resistant reception practices and to develop a versatile repertoire of counternormative reading processes. Camp, subtextual interrogation, star gossip, intertextual referencing and other such forms of resistant reading have been widely used by gay spectators to combat cinematic heterocentrism and to reconstitute film with a variety of gay significances. (Jagose)

My interest here in the notion of gay or lesbian cinephilia is not to detail a psychological theory of resistant gay or lesbian reception, but rather to show how remaining types of gay or lesbian cinephilia informed the development of lesbian and gay films and filmmakers.⁷ Evidently, Araki, among other queer filmmakers, is well schooled in gay

I treat this topic in greater detail in relation to the emergence of LGBT film festivals elsewhere (Zielinski, *Furtive Glances* 295 f).

cinophilia and related reception reading strategies, particularly attentive to old camp classics but also new ones.

2.1 Araki's Po-Mo Pastiche

The word 'pastiche' stems etymologically through the French, from the Italian 'pasticcio,' a cobbled-together pie crust, with an accent on the disparate elements that are put into relation with one another through their deliberate jumbling together. In short, the text of pastiche proudly shows its seams; there is no attempt to conceal any joints. Within postmodernism it is an essential strategy of assemblage or bricolage, of bringing together various parts into a text, in the larger sense of Barthes.⁹ Generally, film has proven to be an excellent medium in its capacity to open itself to strategies of pastiche. Many auteur films of the early 1990s demonstrate a high degree of pastiche in several different ways, particularly those cited by Ruby Rich as part of the new queer cinema (1992). More specifically, their manner of pastiche evinced their respective director's type of cinephilia, social and aesthetic allegiances, and sensibility. While Gus van Sant interweaves long passages from Shakespeare, road movie, and even a bad boy theme of adolescent rites of passage that resonates with Mark Twain's Huck Finn in his *My Own Private Idaho*, Araki reanimates an old Hollywood camp classic, appropriates characters from a contemporary film, and inverts aspects of the inherited road genre.

According to interviews with the director, and however seemingly unlikely, the film's tag-line "an irresponsible movie" itself refers to auteur critic Robin Wood's description of Katerine Hepburn's irrepressible character Susan in Howard Hawks's screwball comedy *Bringing Up Baby*. In a chapter titled "The Lure of Irresponsibility" Wood compares Susan and David's (Gary Grant) absent girlfriend, thus

[o]n the one side is his mousy, earnest, sexless secretary-fiancee, who refuses a honeymoon on the grounds that it would interfere with his work; on the other there is Susan (Hepburn). It is easy to see them as Duty (conceived as deadeningly dry and repressive) and Nature (conceived as amoral and entirely irresponsible); and tempting to simplify further (the film encourages it) and see them in Freudian terms as Superego and Id. (70)

Susan is radically impulsive and unconcerned with any consequences. Wood goes on to describe Hepburn's character as "not so much wwmoral as amoral: she seems never to feel a twinge of guilt, never acknowledging responsibility for the comic disasters she precipitates" (70, Wood's emphasis). Nevertheless and perhaps on account of her radical amoral character, the hyperactive dialogue and twisting plot line captivate.

Araki makes reference to the lived experience of the festival circuit in the company of these filmmakers in an interview. He mentions, "[w]e see each other at screenings and festivals and stuff, but we don't sit down and plot 'the new queer aesthetic'" (Emerson H07).

Cf. Barthes's well-known essay "From Work to Text" (1979), in which he addresses this issue, while comparing and contrasting the concepts of (closed, traditional) work and (radically open) text.

On a first viewing the films seem very opposing in tone and theme, but relations in structure and characters can be easily revealed. In effect, Araki adapts Hawks's narrative into a thrilling gay love story between film critic Jon (similar to the responsible but willing Professor "David" Huxley) and street hustler, bad boy Luke (similar to the irresponsible Susan), both HIV-positive and on the lam. Huxley's mousy secretary wife-to-be is similar to Doris, Jon's best friend and confidant. Instead of Jon and Doris breaking up, Doris is so distracted by Jon's recent HIV diagnosis that she shows less and less interest in her own relationship. During Jon's road trip, her boyfriend reveals his own infidelity, and she promptly ends their relationship. Single again, she remains selflessly devoted to her gay friend, perhaps in parallel with David and his fiancée's relationship. Toward the end of his essay on *Bringing Up Baby* Wood ponders,

one is forced also to contemplate Hepburn as a suitable life-partner for [Grant]. One can only feel uneasy, and question whether the triumph of total irresponsibility the film appears to be offering as fitting resolution is in fact acceptable. There is no sense of a possible synthesis or even compromise; the only alternative to Susan is made so ridiculous as to be instantly discounted. (71)

While Susan and David travel from New York to Connecticut and back, Jon and Luke venture from L.A. to San Francisco and then wind their way back alongside and through L.A. to one of its beaches.

The title of the film is itself curious, and derives from a nearly extinct American slang expression. The definition in *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms* states, "Living end, the. The utmost in any situation, something quite extraordinary, as in When he threw the stereo out the window—well, that was the living end! Or That performance was the living end. [Colloquial; late 1930s]" (Ammer 391). It suggests something extraordinary, extreme, outrageous or ultimate, such as in the phrase, "That performance was the living end!" It indicates something, someone capable of succeeding and making it right up and until the end, just as the characters Jon and Luke survive the narrative, including the final scene of Luke's failed ecstatic suicide at the height of orgasm. There were no more bullets in the gun. While death on the anonymous Los Angeles beach would have brought some narrative closure, the two characters are left with the ambivalent promise of life and even love, but without any escape plan. Remarkably, at the end they are still living. If this is not a fantasy, we wonder how limited their freedom has become. In Hawks's raucous film romantic love prevails but, after Susan inadvertently destroys Professor Huxley's careful reconstruction of a dinosaur. This is *the living end* of another sort!

While Araki's film appropriates Hawks to its own end and pays homage to *Week End* (1967) and Jean-Luc Godard, Andy Warhol, Derek Jarman, *Godzilla*, among others, it also parodies, even queers¹⁰ *Thelma and Louise* (1991), making explicit the latent lesbian relationship between the two main characters, turning the female buddy

I am using the verb 'queer' here in the technical sense of producing a queer reading or interpretation of a text, following the work of Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick (cf. Zielinski, "Queer Theory").

film lesbian. Ridley Scott's popular MGM film *Thelma and Louise*, with script by Callie Khouri, marks a notable turning point in the history of road movies with the introduction of the female buddy narrative—along with its obvious queer reading between the lines, so to speak. The film's unexpected brash story revived interest in the genre for the larger public and scholars in film studies.¹¹ In Araki's film, we are introduced to Luke as an aimless hitchhiker who is picked up by a stranger-than-life lesbian couple Daisy and Fern, based on the Thelma and Louise characters, it seems. They take him to the edge of the city, while one woman threatens his life and the other makes the first fiercely jealous for her obvious flirtations with Luke. Luke stands in for the related JD (the common legal and police acronym for 'juvenile delinquent'), played by a young Brad Pitt in Scott's film. When the women stop the car for a rest-room break and an unexpected, unwanted snake in the bush (pun likely intended), Luke steals the women's car. Just as JD in a calculated way momentarily seduces Thelma in order to steal her money, Luke takes advantage of the confusion in the bushes to steal the women's car. Similarly, just as *Thelma and Louise* innovates through the gender inversion of the conventionally male exploitation, buddy road film, Araki's film innovates in its transformation of the intense homosociality of the buddy film into a highly desublimated homosexual love affair. However, *The Living End* carefully works to capture the road trip as an articulation of iconic spaces not only outside of but also within Los Angeles. Moreover, such iconic spaces need not be remarkable but indeed distinguishing, such as the many images of representative parts of the city. Their specific framing cues them as integral to the urban space and includes flat outdoor parking lots, shabby low-rise strip malls that were designed to cater to shoppers with automobiles, the lonely skyscrapers of the financial district—itsself a strange no man's land where defiant skyscrapers are permitted in spite of the countless active fault lines crisscrossing the city—as well as the persistent underground express lanes that allow cars to bypass swaths of the city unseen, and of course the expansive sandy beaches that define the city's western-most interface with the Pacific Ocean.¹²

3. Los Angeles as Cinematic City of Freeways

Dark: L.A. is like ... nowhere.
Everybody who lives here is lost.

—Araki, *Nowhere*

Mark Shiel, in his introduction, characterizes the cinematic city as not only a city where films are made, but also whose films produce and reproduce representations of that city articulated through fiction and documentary modes of filmmaking and other

An entire issue of a film studies journal and several books were dedicated to the film, its reception and interpretation.

Postmodern urban theorists have written much on the complexity of Los Angeles through adaptations of Foucault's concept of heterotopia, cf. especially Soja.

media practices.¹³ This whole process is reflexive in nature, folding back onto itself while generating and circulating narratives, myths, images of the city within the city itself and exporting them elsewhere (Shiel/Fitzmaurice, *Cinema and the City*). As Shiel and Fitzmaurice state,

The nexus *cinema-city*, then, provides a rich avenue for investigation and discussion of key issues which ought to be of common interest in the study of society (in this case, the city) and in the study of culture (in this case, the cinema) and in the study of their thematic, formal, and industrial relationship historically and today. Indeed, interest in their relationship has been growing significantly of late—particularly with regard to the thematic and formal representation of the city—in the fields of Film Studies, Cultural Studies, and Architecture. (2)

We learn of many cities vicariously through its rich cinematic representations. On the one hand, Los Angeles defines the global cinematic city, along with Paris, Mumbai, Tokyo, and New York, among others, while on the other hand, it challenges the traditional idea of city itself through its profound structural dependence on the automobile.¹⁴ In a city where nobody walks, streets and automobiles provide the rules of negotiating the city, making one's way between any two points.

The Living End is in part a road movie, as discussed above, but unlike road movies that are set primarily on open-sky highways and bypass routes in open areas between cities and *picturesque* rural landscapes, it continues the road narrative on the freeways and streets of Los Angeles. Architectural historian Reyner Banham lays out his four ecologies of Los Angeles: namely, Surfurbia, the Foothills, the Plains of Id, and Autopia in his well-known pioneering book on the city (1971).¹⁵ *The Living End* in particular captures the ecology of the Autopia as Jon and Luke drive through the city, apparently aimlessly, without an evident destination or purpose, otherwise put, effectively driving for the sake of driving. The initial sequence of shots of the film sets the tone and frames the cityscape from the northern hills, as Luke sprays graffiti, vents his rage, and throws the paint can down the hill. He then stands, somewhat momentarily stupefied in awe, himself pausing to admire the cityscape beneath him. For Ban-ham, the freeways of the Autopia of Los Angeles symbolize the tension between "private freedom and public discipline" (198) and "private car and public freeway" (199). Luke's impulsive tension and defiance toward all authority seems to represent a

Cf., for example, Shiel and Fitzmaurice's two excellent anthologies on contemporary approaches to the concept and analysis of cinematic cities.

On the somewhat related discourse on global cities, cf. Saskia Sassen's pioneering book *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* which contributed and immensely spurred research on the relationships between cities and globalization that continues today.

Banham was of a rare breed of architectural historian that defended LA as a city, its architecture and urban planning. Of particular interest to film scholars would be Banham's documentary *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles* made for BBC television, in which he boosts the city for many of the same reasons that the city is often criticized.

certain reluctant "surrender of will to the instructions on the signs" (201), which Ban-ham describes as an important aspect of living in the quintessential Autopia.

3.1 Non-Places: Placeless Spaces

Much more general than Banham's Autopia, the French anthropologist Marc Auge borrows from and elaborates on the work of Michel de Certeau to posit the concept of the non-place, a crystallization of means-ends rationality through modernist architectural and urban planning paradigms. A typical non-place, for Auge, would be the airport or the highway, i.e. any location that serves as a strongly functional space, where instrumental intention and usage prevail, with a distinct loss in social significance that would characterize anthropological places. Auge borrows the concept of place from anthropology, which understands such spaces as replete in the possibility of personal meaning, open to the contingency of social interaction and significance. Auge argues, "Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten" (79). Moreover, Auge's contentious, arguably hyperbolic claim that whoever enters a non-place "becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or driver" (103) seems to ring too total. Such extreme functionalism is not really lived; experience is much more porous. Unlike de Certeau's emboldened, enabled weak with their tactics,¹⁶ Auge does not offer much possibility to reclaim or (re)appropriate the space; it ignores the casual banter and relations that escape the totalizing wish of Auge's functionalist, hyper-modernist spaces. These non-places can be and are troubled, their boundaries blurred by participants performing their roles against the grain in some way.

After driving around Los Angeles, Jon and Luke decide to drive to San Francisco, fleeing from the law after Luke suspects that he had shot a policeman dead earlier in the day. San Francisco becomes an ostensible destination, but remarkably precarious and unconfirmed, since it depends on impulsive Luke's claim to know someone in that northern Californian city but, he also has no definite address, telephone number or contact name. The overnight drive from Los Angeles passed through all sorts of roadside signage, billboards, fast-food restaurants, fenced-in interstitial desolate areas, etc., as it continued along interstate 1-5 north through Oakland into San Francisco on the strongly identifiable Golden Gate Bridge. The celebrated bridge combined with the distinctive Victorian-era-style wooden houses immediately signaled their arrival in San Francisco. The fugitives arrive exhausted at a typical gated home, and Luke asks the man who answers the door whether he remembers him from some previous Pride weekend years ago, but the man simply and silently closes the door in

In de Certeau's famous chapter "'Making Do': Uses and Tactics" he contrasts the larger highly spatialized *strategies* of the powerful with the often improvised, local survival *tactics* of the weak.

Luke's face without a word uttered. The romance of the all-night, near sleepless drive has worn thin with the disappointing non-greeting, growing weariness, and fatigue.

Curiously, Araki coyly acknowledges the picturesque but without the conventional pleasure afforded by the wide-screen long-take. On the drive back to L.A., he punctuates the film with stunning landscapes shots from the moving car. They are bracketed by black and of very short duration, creating a distinct rhythm and effectively teasing the spectators. This curtailment of visual pleasure likely stems from the filmmaker's "postpunk" and Nouvelle-Vague-cinephilic sensibility, namely to rough up conventions of pleasure in popular culture.

3.2 *Terrain Vague*: Interstitial Spaces at the Edge

Complementing those non-places and places, and situated at their edges in the broadest figurative sense, is the old concept of the "*terrain vague*" which the Catalan architect and urban planner Ignasi de Sola-Morales (1995) develops in an important essay¹⁷ of the same name. He maintains that *terrain vague* refers to those "indeterminate, imprecise, blurred, and uncertain" (120) places, typically derelict, abandoned, unused parts of cities, set off from the ordered, functioning parts. If freeways, highways, airports define the non-place, then each of their edges, both physical and figurative, comprise some sort of interstitial, ambiguous *terrain vague*. Sola-Morales writes, "[f]rom the economic point of view, industrial areas, railway stations, ports, unsafe residential neighborhoods, contaminated places, have become the areas where it can be said that the city is no longer. They are its margins (121). I would extend his concept to apply also to spaces that transform into *terrains vagues* at different times, of ephemeral duration, for example the large parking lot or public park at night, after official opening hours. Similarly, their "function" is temporally determined according to time of day or season and those choosing to use the space.

Araki's film is a fluent articulation of precisely these *terrains vagues* along the streets and freeways of Los Angeles as well as along the various interstate highways outside of the city at the limits of the non-places of Auge. These wastelands are for Sola-Morales spaces of transformation, which allow participants the opportunity to experience the city and other spaces in new, exploratory ways. He argues that the "relation between the absence of use, of activity, and the sense of freedom, of expectancy, is fundamental to understanding all the evocative potential that the city's *terrains vagues* have accrued as part of the very perception of the city in recent years" (119). I would open the concept to include not only the functionalist city but also the broader application of instrumental reason in the attempt to regulate and discipline landscapes

Perhaps art historian T.J. Clark's book *Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* and its study of Paris' urban landscapes at the edges of the city brought the concept of *terrain vague* back into use in English-language art and architectural discourse. Sola-Morales clearly develops it for urban planning, with less of a concern for aesthetics.

through law, planning, rationalization of resources, roads, highways, and so on. To be sure, the contradictions, cracks, gaps, and fissures in the application of the rationale also work to produce the terrains vagues.

Jon and Luke's road trips are punctuated with such intervals, various *terrains vagues* along the highways and city streets of Los Angeles, e.g. the underground parking lots, outdoor commercial plazas isolated by desolate parking lots and shimmering fluorescent street lights. Sola-Morales considers such spaces full of potential for discovery, and describes them as "Void, then, as absence, and yet also as promise, as encounter, as the space of the possible, expectation" (121). I argue that this particular vagueness and energetic indeterminacy speaks to "expectations of mobility, vagrant roving, free time, liberty," namely some of the crucial preconditions of the road narrative itself.

4. Concluding Comments

I think America on the whole right
now is a very unhappy place.

—Araki (in interview in 1992)

Gregg Araki's first major "breakthrough" film articulates itself through the distinct postmodernist strategies of pastiche, parody, appropriation, and citation, which in turn produces a highly self-conscious film, even "irresponsible," as the director names it; it is, to be sure, a film that demands to be read through its referentiality. While he is not himself, as an aspiring young auteur, committed to any one genre, the resulting film may be seen as a new type of road movie that acknowledges but also troubles the inherited rules. Corrigan writes on the road genre in the 1980s and before,

As with the movie experience, time on the road becomes figurative space, and the buddy system, which informs most road movies, could be seen similarly as a reflection through which all the world might be seen as "male" while being founded on heterosexual desire. (146)

Araki queers the male buddy film into a literal gay love affair, while heterosexual desire is nearly completely absent throughout the film. The largely writ quest is lacking. The road trip is at first fugitive but attempts to end ecstatically *ad nihilum* with Luke's "death drive at orgasm" request, but the gun was empty, and still no quest has been reached or is in sight. In general, Araki brings into play not only the wide open-sky highway and rural roads but also mobilizes Los Angeles as a cinematic city of roads and automobiles, as the Autopia that it is, breathlessly folding cityscapes into the road genre. Moreover, the love story is both disturbed and enhanced by AIDS, by the plight of those living with it, and by its own angry, defiant meditation on the paucity of political will at the time to act. While Jon may claim to be a *responsible* driver in a city of freeways, the force of the film stems from its *irresponsible* narrative that serves as a cry into the loud political reticence of the era, where from time to time shock is necessary.

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PAULINA SANCHEZ

Travelin' through¹: el camino de regreso a casa

Abstract

Subverting the tradition of the buddy road movie through a radicalized gender lens, Duncan Tucker's *Transamerica* (2005) narrates the journey of a transsexual and her gay son from the East to the West and links the trip experience to the two individuals' shifting identitarian politics. In "Travelin' through: el camino de regreso a casa" Paulina Sanchez draws upon narrative-audiovisual analysis to point out the film's key road movie ingredients. Her main focus, though, lies on the film's alternative visions that the author locates in the tradition of independent cinema and the choice of a trans-border subject as a protagonist who challenges both heterosexual as well as homosexual conventions.

1. Preámbulo al viaje

El género de las *road movies* se ha definido e identificado en la cinematografía universal por el viaje. El hilo y peso argumental del filme se basa en la travesía que emprende el personaje principal al desplazarse de un lugar a otro, en una dinámica que permite transitar del espacio tópico al heterópico. Es decir, del lugar propio al de los otros, en una especie de exilio que va desdibujando y quebrantando fronteras físicas y emocionales y que reconstruye la mirada subjetiva sobre la otredad.

El viaje, en el momento de su emprendimiento, tiene un objetivo del que no siempre resulta consciente el personaje protagónico. Y su finalidad es producir un cambio en este: en la experiencia de vida, en el sentido de la existencia.

En las *road movies* la vida se re-significa a través del viaje y los personajes llevan a cabo un itinerario geográfico en algún tipo de vehículo que les revela algunas condiciones sociopolíticas de su país.²

Easy Rider (1969), de Dennis Hopper, es un filme inaugural para el género que da cuenta sobre las especificidades mencionadas a la vez que los personajes realizan un viaje interior.

El título del presente artículo es alusivo a la canción principal del filme *Transamerica* titulada *Thravellin Thru*, que en español es traducida como *Viajando de principio a fin*. La canción fue escrita e interpretada por Dolly Parton y obtuvo la nominación a mejor canción original en los premios Óscar de la Academia en el año 2006.

Es necesario mencionar que la especificidad mencionada se encuentra basada en un texto que habla sobre los géneros clásicos cinematográficos, y del cual no se cuenta con la referencia completa.

En un considerable número de casos y en términos de producción, distribución y exhibición, los filmes clasificados dentro del género *road movie* en los Estados Unidos se han distinguido por producirse de forma independiente y ser dirigidos por cineastas considerados *underground* o desvinculados de Hollywood en algunos aspectos. Y a nivel argumental, porque sus historias presentan personajes marginales o inadaptados socialmente. Personajes que viven fuera del mainstream y/o status quo, que escapan de la convención social y buscan como incluirse desde sus propios márgenes. Pareciera que la elección del género *road movie* en combinación con la construcción de una historia protagonizada por personajes *outsiders* y producida de forma independiente, denota una apuesta cinematográfica propositiva para mostrar mundos reales, posibles y diferentes.

La historia del cine independiente en los Estados Unidos⁴ puede situarse durante los años sesenta bajo un contexto de profundos y revolucionarios cambios culturales. Esta independencia de la industria filmica hollywoodense refiere a la autonomía económica y sobre todo a la libertad creadora de los cineastas. Figuras como John Cassavettes y Peter Bogdanovich resultan claves, así como durante los setenta lo serían Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Dennis Hopper, Sydney Lumet, Sydney Pollack, entre otros.

Como se menciona en el largometraje documental *A Decade Under the Influence* (2003), realizado por Ted Demme y Richard LaGravenesse, durante los sesenta y setenta, los cineastas norteamericanos, estuvieron profundamente inspirados e influenciados por las nuevas vanguardias cinematográficas de Europa y Asia: de la Nouvelle Vague en Francia al cine italiano y asiático de Federico Fellini y Akira Kurosawa, pasando por el denominado nuevo cine alemán de Wim Wenders y Werner Herzog.

Los jóvenes cineastas decidieron hacer un cine que, tal como sus colegas extranjeros lo hacían, trascendiera por una parte el set cinematográfico y en el resto implicara ruptura. En este sentido, *Breathless* (1960) de Jean Luc Godard es un filme independiente de culto, inspirador e influyente para el cine vanguardista de la época. Película que marcaría un hito en el lenguaje cinematográfico por sus alcances y posibilidades estéticas y narrativas.

Así, surgió en Hollywood un movimiento cinematográfico que rompía con las convenciones, ortodoxias y clasicismos de los géneros, estructuras narrativas y contenidos temáticos que se separaban de los lugares comunes y estereotipos.

Esta afirmación se sustenta en la reflexión y revisión sobre algunos de los cineastas estadounidenses más importantes del cine independiente y del género *road movie* como Jim Jarmusch, quien junto con otra figura como Gus Van Sant han destacado como "cineastas independientes." Además los personajes protagónicos de sus historias suelen ser "outsiders."

La afirmación significa que durante esos años el cine independiente estadounidense tomó una relevancia y trascendencia social y cultural sumamente importante al constituirse como un movimiento cinematográfico generacional que antes de los sesenta y sobre todo los setenta, no había sido posible.

Esto causó un impacto en los espectadores, acostumbrados a apreciar un cine que ya había agotado la fórmula conocida. Los cineastas de ese tiempo, sin despreciar su historia cinematográfica y, por el contrario, siendo muy conscientes de ello, identifican su cine como uno que explícitamente abordó lo prohibido, lo indecible, al romper tabúes y mostrar en pantalla lo que realmente preocupaba a la sociedad de ese tiempo en términos políticos y sociales. Un cine independiente y cercano a la crítica social, sin caer necesariamente en paroxismos o proselitismos, y llevado a cabo con una inversión presupuestal baja.

Sydney Pollack, en entrevista para el largometraje documental arriba mencionado (*A Decade Under the Influence*), afirma que la libertad creadora fue el hito o parte-aguas que permitió revolucionar desde la raíz el cine. Los cineastas de aquel tiempo fueron conscientes sobre la necesidad de crear un vínculo proxémico con la audiencia.

En el cine independiente contemporáneo⁵ de los Estados Unidos, cineastas como John Waters, Gus Van Sant, David Lynch, Todd Solondz, Alex Cox, Abel Ferrara, Vincent Gallo y Jim Jarmusch son exponentes importantes. Este último, Jarmusch, es uno de los representantes imprescindibles del género *road movie*.

La película que compete el presente texto, escrita por el director y guionista norteamericano Duncan Tucker y titulada *Transamerica*,⁶ del año 2005, pertenece al género cinematográfico del *road movie* y cumple con las características mencionadas anteriormente, al inscribirse dentro del cine independiente estadounidense y tener como protagonista a un personaje marginal.

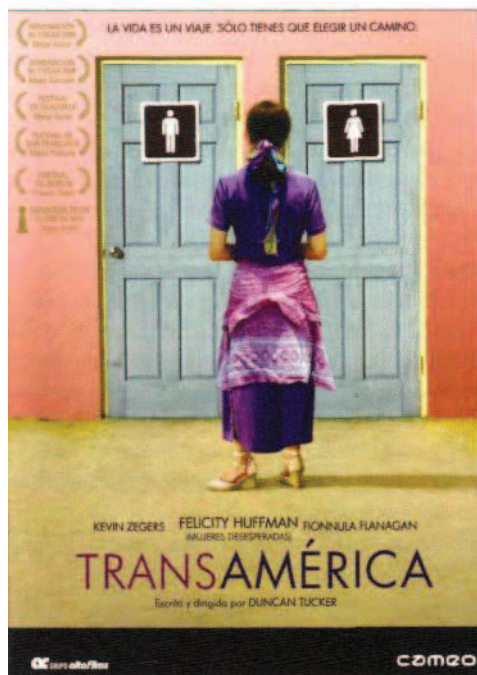
2. La movilidad del género

Partiendo de un análisis realizado por Loreto Rebolledo (2006),⁷ establezco una premisa a partir de su propia tesis, la cual afirma que, históricamente, los desplazamientos

5. En palabras de Lorena Ortiz: "El nuevo Hollywood y el cine independiente estadounidense han seguido caminos paralelos a lo largo de sus últimas décadas, la eclosión de películas independientes a mediados de los ochenta se produjo, en gran medida, como resultado de la creciente especialización del cine comercial en las grandes superproducciones, fenómeno que dejó libre un espacio que productores y directores independientes se apresuraron a llenar. Este espacio ensanchado cada vez más por el creciente temor de los grandes estudios a alienar a su público potencial, está constituido no solo por narraciones y estilos más experimentales, sino también por representaciones de los sectores marginales de la población: gays, negros, hispanos, mujeres o ideologías de izquierda, así como por un cine de inspiración más clásica, que no encuentra su sitio en los *blockbusters*." (Consultado en <<http://www.elojoquepiensa.net/elojoquepiensa/index.php/articulos/160>>)

6. Este filme es la obra prima de Tucker.

7. Loreto Rebolledo realiza una investigación sobre las mujeres chilenas que tuvieron que emigrar a distintos lugares en calidad de exiliadas una vez que en su país se llevó a cabo el golpe de Estado. En este análisis es donde Rebolledo plantea la pregunta por las identidades en tránsito; es decir, identidades que se construyen a partir del desplazamiento.



se han asociado al género masculino, quedando pendiente el rol que las mujeres han jugado en las travesías. Ya sea en su papel de compañeras de los propios viajeros, conquistadores, aventureros; o incluso siendo ellas las que por voluntad propia deciden emigrar o quienes viajan en contra de sus deseos, en calidad de exiliadas.

A la mujer, como afirma el mismo autor, se le ha confinado a espacios particulares como el hogar y a determinadas prácticas sociales. El rompimiento con esos límites territoriales, y los efectos que ello produce a nivel emocional y psicológico, han quedado relegados a nivel histórico cultural.

En este sentido, cabe la pregunta por la representación de los viajes protagonizados por las personas que no se definen por su sexo

biológico ni por el género socialmente construido, sino que reconstruyen su identidad a partir de la transgresión del saber científico y de la etiqueta o convención social. Es decir, los individuos transgéneros.

Desde una visión sociocultural, podría decirse que el papel de los transgéneros y sus trayectos y dinámicas en la vida social han sido mayormente sesgados y su con-finamiento mucho mas reducido que en el caso de las mujeres. Las razones radican en problemas sociales como la discriminación, el rechazo, la repulsión y la marginación, en una lógica social que etiqueta o imputa identidades a partir de heteropercepciones construidas desde el poder de las instituciones y las industrias culturales: la ciencia medica, la religión, los medios de comunicación, entre otros.

Al existir en las sociedades estrategias de control relacionadas con el sometimiento del cuerpo y sus delimitaciones, la primera figura que aparece es la del cuerpo femenino y, posteriormente, la del cuerpo anómalo. Siguiendo el pensamiento de Michel Foucault, podría decirse que el del transgénero, su representación y forma, encaja en algunas de las características que distinguen a los anormales, al transgredir precisamente las leyes de la naturaleza y las leyes del hombre, dado que la ubicuidad del transgénero, así como su presencia social, ponen en un debate científico, ético y moral a quienes están detrás de las normas, de las reglas, de las técnicas del saber y del poder.

Parece que el transgénero resulta ser preponderantemente el monstruo al que Foucault describió, figura que en palabras del filósofo, va a trastocar y retomar a lo largo del siglo XVIII elementos de las otras dos categorías: la del incorregible y la del masturbador.⁸ Foucault dice: "el monstruo se refiere a una historia natural esencialmente centrada en torno de la distinción absoluta e infranqueable de las especies, los géneros, los reinos, etcetera" (67).

El monstruo, personificado por los individuos hermafroditas que Foucault describe, parece ser la génesis de la forma en que *se* va a percibir en la época actual a las personas transexuales, incluso homosexuales, en el sentido de considerarlos enfermos, desviados, por poseer una naturaleza de compartimiento irracional.

Así, la transgresión de los géneros masculino y femenino implica una rareza. Además, el discurso sobre la monstruosidad hermafrodita se transforma durante el siglo XVIII. En un principio, se adjudica su razón a un desvío de la propia naturaleza, y posteriormente se entenderá lo monstruoso ya no como algo natural, sino como un constitutivo del comportamiento. Es decir, desde las técnicas del saber y poder se ha configurado la idea sobre el comportamiento anormal y monstruoso de los portadores de un cuerpo diferente, en una lógica que entiende el género a partir del sexo que *se* posee. Puede decirse que el discurso hegemónico concibe a los transgéneros como aquellos individuos que poseen una personalidad desviada, anormal, digna de los enfermos o trastornados mentales; lo cual ha ocasionado su confinamiento a ciertos espacios y su ocultamiento de ciertas prácticas sociales.

La teoría sobre la biopolítica del cuerpo (Heller/Feher) establece que los individuos exóticos y excéntricos -como podrían ser los transgéneros- no pueden ser invisibles fuera de su hábitat y viven en la auto clausura: "los que traen la marca tienen la sensación de que destacan... su cuerpo parece ser fuente de sorpresas secretas constantes ante los ojos inquisitivos que los otros quieren atisbar" (50).

Me interesa reflexionar sobre el rol que juega la representación de un transgénero en un filme como *Transamerica*, pensando que esto permite la re-significación en algunos aspectos del género *road movie*, apelando a la hipótesis siguiente: el personaje en sí mismo es una metáfora sobre el viaje, la transición y la movilidad a partir de su propia y diaria metamorfosis. En este sentido, se intenta trazar una respuesta a la pregunta sobre como es representada la ruptura y transgresión sociocultural prota-

Aquí es necesario aclarar que no estoy haciendo converger la teoría del género contemporáneo con la teoría del onanista de Foucault, solo afirmo lo que el filósofo menciona: las tres figuras se trastocan principalmente a lo largo del siglo XIX hasta formar una sola. Michel Foucault en su obra *Los Anormales* realiza un estudio histórico, una arqueología sobre los individuos considerados anómalos o peligrosos a partir de las prácticas medico-legales. A las tres figuras claves que emergen principalmente durante el siglo XVIII, Foucault las denomina el *monstruo*, que tiene como marco de referencia las leyes de la naturaleza y el hombre; el *incorregible*, que se encuentra en relación con la familia, las instituciones. Sobre él recaen las nuevas formas de domesticación y control sobre el cuerpo. Por último, el masturbador u onanista que tiene como referencia el pensamiento, saber y técnicas pedagógicas del siglo XVIII.

gonizada por individuos transgéneros en *Transamerica*, y si en su génesis constitutiva e identitaria se marca ya la ruptura -lo que, en palabras de Wilfried Raussert, se denomina "la movilidad del género."⁹

Traer a la discusión la pregunta sobre la transgresión que representa el transgénero permite dar cuenta sobre el sentido de ello en el filme *Transamerica*.

La primera secuencia que sirve de introducción al personaje principal y su contexto establece la movilidad del género, el desplazamiento simbólico que implica ir de un lugar a otro en el espacio íntimo.

A través de una serie montada de sucesivos *pianos detalles* o *close ups* y *primeros planos*, se muestra la transmutación que realiza la protagonista Bree (Felicity Huffman) para convertirse en mujer. Aquí se representa su metamorfosis diaria, una identidad en tránsito continuo. Dicha transformación es alegórica a un viaje; es re significar un instante diario de la vida para emprender la aventura de caminar el mundo siendo lo otro y deseable.

La presentación del filme es importante, al marcar el resto del desarrollo estético y el tratamiento argumental. La secuencia inicia con el *primer plano* de un transexual (Andrea James) aleccionando sobre como lograr femineidad en la voz. Se descubre a continuación que la imagen proviene de un televisor cuando el plano se abre y muestra a Bree de espaldas apagando el aparato.

Una secuencia construida *por planos detalle* encuadra partes de la figura de Bree en lo que representa el arreglo cotidiano del personaje. Posteriormente, la cámara hace un *till up* que inicia con la mano que toma un labial para pintarse la boca, hacia el rostro andrógino de Bree, recién descubierto para el espectador. La canción de Miriam Makeba (*Jol'Inkomo*) y el resaltante tono rosa de la imagen nos introducen a la vida de este personaje: su manera de vestir, de maquillarse, el lugar donde vive, la calle que camina. Los tonos claros y suaves como el color rosa y púrpura funcionan como alegoría a su universo femenino.

Aquí se lleva a cabo una yuxtaposición entre la imagen y la música *extradieética*, que seguirá a lo largo del filme. El contrapunto es la melodía alegre/jubilosa y la sugerente muestra de conflicto en el rostro de la protagonista, aún mas evidente por su andar torpe en las calles, debido a los tacones que lleva puestos.

En la introducción o detonador del filme quedan claras varias cuestiones fundametales de la puesta en escena: se muestra a un transgénero que viste formal y recatadamente, con un exceso de maquillaje sobre el rostro. El gesto del exceso de maquillaje sugiere cierta inocencia sobre su propia concepción de lo femenino aplicado a su persona. Y por otra parte, la indumentaria del personaje ocasiona la primera ruptura del estereotipo del transexual. Es decir, lo excéntrico versus lo modesto; el intento de pasar desapercibido.

Wilfried Raussert se refirió de esta manera al filme *Transamerica* durante una plática en el marco del Coloquio Internacional sobre *road movies* celebrado en febrero de 2011 con sede en la UNAM en la Ciudad de México.

Sin embargo, el personaje se presenta como un individuo que se sabe anormal o diferente en el mundo. Rossana Reguillo¹⁰ dice junto con Nestor García Canclini que la diferencia es situada y relacional. Es decir, es necesario que el individuo anormal o el que porta un cuerpo "extraño," se sepa diferente y por tanto, sea consciente de su condición, lo cual lo coloca en una posición de desigualdad en el momento de la interacción cultural -como sucede con el personaje de Bree. Por ejemplo, en la escena donde llega a la parada del transporte público, pareciera que se sabe observada al tiempo que, efectivamente, es observada por la gente que la rodea. Personas de origen latino, mujeres, niños, hombres que van a trabajar y/o a la escuela. Individuos *outsiders* del sueño americano.



Por otra parte, Bree es presentada a través de sus espacios de interacción: los consultorios médicos y psiquiátricos, su casa y su trabajo en un restaurante de comida mexicana.

En la introducción del filme se evidencia el conflicto del personaje. Bree lleva a cabo el proceso necesario para emprender un cambio definitivo en su vida: su *leitmotiv* a lo largo de la historia: Bree desea someterse a la operación de reasignación de sexo.

La idea mencionada se obtuvo del artículo *Condensaciones y desplazamientos. Las políticas del miedo en los cuerpos contemporáneos* realizado por la Dra. Rossana Reguillo y del cual no cuento con la referencia completa debido a que obtuve este valioso documento vía electrónica sin la información correspondiente. Razón por la que no aparece en la bibliografía de este texto.

3. Emprendimiento de un viaje forzado

El objeto de deseo de Bree es trastocado tras la llamada inesperada de su hijo -cuya existencia desconocía-, producto de la única relación heterosexual que mantuvo siendo joven. Este memento marca el giro dramático. Es decir, es el acontecimiento in-esperado que provoca que la historia tome un camino distinto al que tenía previsto el personaje principal y, por lo tanto, complica la consumación del deseo. El objeto de deseo se ve obstruido cuando la psiquiatra de Bree le niega la carta que le permitirá operarse.

El detonador y/o introducción de la película se ha construido en interiores (casa, oficina, consultorio, trabajo) y a través de planos cerrados. El uso recurrente de *primeros planos* y *overshoulders* da cuenta de ello. La estructura narrativa se ha desarrollado a través de las conversaciones que Bree ha establecido con las personas que en ese momento rodean su vida. Los diálogos resaltan a cada momento la condición de transgénero de Bree, pues todo gira en torno a su posible y futura operación y a su misma condición. A través de las aseveraciones que el doctor le hace a Bree, se plantea la discriminación y el rechazo prevaleciente sobre los individuos que desean la operación de reasignación de sexo a nivel científico y social, al considerar que la disforia de genero es un trastorno mental. A su vez, se deja claro que Bree vive insatisfecha y que será plenamente feliz el día de su operación.

El primer obstáculo que Bree debe traspasar para llevar a cabo su operación es encontrarse con su hijo. Ella viaja desde Los Ángeles a Nueva York, hacia la correccional de menores donde este se encuentra. El viaje es presentado de un corte a otro en una elipsis que presenta a Bree frente a un oficial de la institución. Él le pide que le diga cual es la relación que mantiene con el menor. Esta situación es antecedida por una confusión entre la identidad masculina vista en la credencial de Bree y su aspecto femenino/travestido. Bree, ante la confusión y la pregunta, acepta de manera temerosa e incluso podría decirse avergonzada, que el menor es su hijo.

Una vez que Bree se encuentra con su hijo, Toby (Kevin Zegers), ella le inventa que es afiliada de una iglesia y que esta ahí para ayudarlo en un acto de filantropía y compasión.

En este momento, al deseo de Bree de convertirse en mujer se añade el conflicto del secreto; es decir, guardar ante su hijo el secreto sobre su verdadero sexo y parentesco. Así, el resto de la trama ira teniendo mementos climáticos precisamente cuando el secreto este a punto de revelarse o descubrirse ante Toby.

Bree descubre que su hijo vive una vida contraria a lo que ella considera decente en términos morales. Se confronta con aspectos de la vida de Toby que repudia y le provocan asco: lo insalubre de la vivienda en Nueva York, el uso de algunas drogas, su actividad como prostituto en las calles de la urbe, los amigos que lo rodean.

El desplazamiento por carretera en automóvil inicia después del encuentro. Los momentos de tensión durante el trayecto de regreso hacia Los Ángeles se manifiestan entre ambos personajes cuando se evidencia esta oposición y/o contraste de carácter entre la actitud conservadora, moralina y recatada de Bree, y la desenfadada y rebelde

manera de ser de Toby. Los puntos de vista de ambos personajes se contradicen u opo-nen, y tienen que buscar un momento de conciliación.

El paisaje de carretera y exteriores son poco explotados y explorados en términos de imagen, al tener mayor peso dramático las acciones que se suceden en espacios cerrados o interiores y debido al uso recurrente de los *primeros planos* y *planos medios*.

Por ejemplo, el paisaje externo funciona como referencia de ubicación, de reiteración del viaje. Sin embargo, el mayor peso argumental durante el recorrido recae en las puestas en escena que se suceden en el interior del automóvil. Esto, sin embargo, no significa el detrimento de los espacios exteriores para el desarrollo del filme. Las secuencias del viaje dentro del carro son momentos breves musicalizados con country que cumplen una función *extradieética* y sintomática (por ejemplo *Take 'em Away* de Old Crow Medicine Show; *There's a new moon over my shoulder* de Larry Sparks). Y representan los instantes en los que parece surgir empatía entre los personajes protagónicos.

La iconografía que ha caracterizado a las *road movies* esta presente en *Transamerica*. Carreteras que pasan del atardecer al anochecer; paisajes que van del desierto a las montañas en el ocaso; paradas en gasolineras, hospedajes en moteles de paso, puestos de *souvenirs*.

El avance en el recorrido sobre la carretera acrecienta la dramatización y melodrama del filme. La travesía se construye dramáticamente de diversos momentos climáticos durante todo el filme. A lo largo del viaje, cada descanso o parada manifiesta lo anterior por suponer el posible descubrimiento del secreto de Bree ante Toby. Así, cada cambio de secuencia y escena temporal/espacial esta marcado por estos momentos de tensión que permiten el continuo desarrollo de la historia.

Al mismo tiempo, a través de este recorrido se va mostrando la América que los personajes de *Transamerica* van descubriendo. Una América que, a través de la mirada de Bree, se muestra diversa y pertenece a los márgenes, al ser representada por minorías sociales: negros, indios, neohippies, yonkis, latinos, etc. Por ejemplo, una madre afroamericana con su hija se encuentran solas desayunando en un restaurante frente a la mesa de Bree. La interacción entre estos personajes es provocada por la pequeña, quien, dudosa ante la identidad femenina o masculina de Bree, pregunta a su madre si la persona es hombre o mujer; un hombre adulto que maneja un tráiler y con el que Toby se prostituye; un indio nativo que le ofrece ayuda a Bree, un neo hippie que les roba el automóvil en el que viajan.

La representación de la diversidad cultural en el filme puede ser la contra-respuesta a la representación de una hegemonía cultural: homogénea, estática, utópica. *Transamerica* representa a los personajes que aparecen durante el viaje como *outsiders* del sueño americano. Como Lorena Ortiz lo menciona en un texto sobre el cine de Jar-mush: "hombres y mujeres que transitan en ciudades casi abandonadas, sin esperanza, ni propósito. Perdedores, solitarios, sin mucho que hacer. La otra cara de Norteamérica, la que nadie quiere ver."¹¹

Consultar <<http://www.elojoquepiensa.net/elajoquepiensa/index.php/articulos/160>>.



Estas interacciones culturales que Bree establece con el resto de *outsiders* la lleva a tener momentos emocionales contrastantes. La niña negra que le pregunta a su madre ocasiona en Bree el llanto por haber sido "descubierta"; el indio consuela su amor propio cuando le muestra su caballerosidad y atenciones; el neo hippie le hace reiterar su desprecio por los jóvenes que no son "decentes," etc.

La primera fisura entre los personajes principales se lleva a cabo cuando Bree obliga a Toby a acudir a la casa de su padrastro. Un pasado oscuro es revelado: Toby delata las violaciones sexuales de las que era objeto por parte de su supuesto protector.

Continúan su camino y llegan a Dallas, Texas, para hospedarse en la casa de una transexual, donde una amiga de Bree recomendó que se quedaran. En el momento que llegan a su casa, Bree y Toby se encuentran ante una reunión de transgeneros. La escena sorprende a ambos. Bree no sabe que hacer ante el asombro de Toby, quien, con desconcierto, no relaciona a la iglesia -representada supuestamente por Bree- con la vida transexual.

Esta secuencia es importante, por presentar a varias personas narrando breve-mente sus experiencias como transgeneros: operaciones, romances, vida cotidiana. Se les muestra en una posición acomodada. El tratamiento del filme se deslinda de estereotipos y lugares comunes vinculados a determinismos sociales.

Bree se muestra incomoda e incluso denota rechazo ante las conversaciones de sus pares. Este encuentro es el preámbulo a la ruptura del secreto.

Cuando abandonan la reunión, el verdadero sexo de Bree es descubierto por Toby en el momento en que ella baja del carro para orinar sobre la carretera. Toby, en un puesto de souvenirs y ante un extraño, humilla a Bree, haciendo mofa de su verdadera identidad.

Bree camina indignada y le dice a Toby: "Mi cuerpo puede ser un trabajo en progreso pero no hay nada de malo con mi alma. Jesús me hizo así por alguna razón para que yo sufriera y renaciera como él lo hizo."

Este dialogo es importante, por connotar en Bree la aceptación y concientización de una condición marginal que gira en torno a la idea del cuerpo que esta en busca de la identidad (*work in progress*) y, por tanto, es susceptible y vulnerable; al reiterar que es consciente de su diferencia y por lo tanto, de su desigualdad social en términos de aceptación, y en su afán por ocultar su verdadera identidad masculina.

El discurso de Bree posee una fuerte carga religiosa que separa el cuerpo y el alma; un cuerpo que peca, un alma sana que lo salvara del pecado. Un cuerpo que, en este sentido, sufre y debe sufrir. El cuerpo del anormal que tendrá su reivindicación en el momento que surja la mujer que siempre llevo dentro. En el discurso de Bree, además, se reitera su personalidad recatada y mustia, siempre preocupada por los buenos modales y la educación cívica.

Un personaje secundario importante en la trama es el indio Dwight (Graham Greene). Un nativo que Bree conoce en un restaurante y quien le ayuda a solucionar su situación económica en ese momento. Dwight la corteja de manera discreta.

El rol que juega este personaje es incrementar la seguridad de Bree hacia su propia percepción como mujer. Al mismo tiempo, la secuencia constituye un momento de descanso para el espectador, en el que vemos como surge la atracción entre ambos, situación amorosa que debe contener cualquier melodrama en el cine y que, en el caso de *Transamerica*, no se consuma, lo cual va acorde con la personalidad de Bree. Dwight aloja en su casa a Bree y a Toby. A la mañana siguiente, los deja en el último lugar del recorrido: la casa de los padres de Bree, momento anti-climático del filme.

La madre de Bree (Fionnula Flanagan) es una mujer conservadora que vive de las apariencias y que pretende pertenecer a la clase alta. Lo primero que hace cuando re-conoce a su hijo, ahora travestido de mujer, es meterlo a su casa "antes de que los vecinos lo vean" y una vez dentro, tocarle sus partes íntimas para comprobar que aún sigue siendo varón. El desprecio de la madre se ve trastocado cuando Bree le confiesa que el chico que la acompaña es su nieto.

Posteriormente, una serie de sucesos se desencadenan y tensionan la revelación del secreto. El momento climático de la película se lleva a cabo cuando Toby le de-clara su enamoramiento a Bree, diciéndole que la encuentra atractiva. Bree le confiesa que ella es su padre, y Toby termina por darle un golpe en la cara, para después escapar de la casa de sus recién descubiertos abuelos.

La resolución del conflicto se presenta en el momento en que Bree entra a la sala de operaciones. Quien la visita posteriormente es su psiquiatra y confidente Margaret (Elizabeth Pena). Ante ella, Bree llora desconsolada. Toby, por su parte, ha cumplido su objetivo de trabajar en el cine porno gay de Los Ángeles.

El cierre del filme sugiere el paso del tiempo. Toby visita a Bree en su casa. Ambos personajes se concilian sin disculpas y sin hablar sobre lo acontecido en el pasado. Bree sigue mostrando su actitud conservadora y Toby su desenfadada forma de ser. En la última escena, Toby sube los pies a la mesa de centro de la sala de Bree y ella le pide que baje los pies; ello como reiteración de sus personalidades y hábitos.

4. El final del viaje

En *Transamerica*, el sentido sobre la representación de los individuos que poseen el constitutivo identitario del movimiento, tránsito y/o desplazamiento del género, se manifiesta desde un espacio de inclusión y comprensión.

Por una parte, el camino recorrido por la protagonista muestra la América periférica, híbrida, diversa; y por otra parte, las relaciones humanas y fraternas, los lazos inquebrantables de la familia, van redefiniendo la relación que el personaje tiene con el mundo.

Tucker trata de alejarse de los estereotipos al romper estigmas en torno a la identidad de los individuos transgeneros. El personaje de Bree constituye una prueba de ello: es recatada, viste de forma seria, es mustia, tiene un pensamiento conservador, incluso radical en algunos momentos. Su discurso sobre su condición está connotado de un fuerte criterio moral en el que Dios y la religión no están exentos. Bree, además, es un transexual educado a pesar de que no terminó ninguna licenciatura; conoce sobre artes, antropología, ciencia, etc. Escucha música instrumental, clásica. Tiene una voz queda, habla con pertinencia y prudencia. Es por eso que se muestra incomoda en el momento en que convive con otros transgeneros, por ser estos abiertos y desinhibidos, ya que, a diferencia de ellos, tiene la convicción de ocultar su verdadera identidad. Rechaza su pasado y su cuerpo de anatomía masculina. Sabe que, una vez operada, nadie se dará cuenta de su identidad "original." Los vestigios se borrarán por completo.

A pesar de todo Bree se sabe infeliz y supone que el día que se cumpla su deseo de operarse y convertirse en mujer será una persona feliz. Tal y como sucede en una de las escenas del inicio, en la que un doctor le pregunta: "¿Se considera usted una persona feliz?" Y Bree responde: "Sí." Hace una pausa y, titubeando, prosigue: "quiero decir, no. Quiero decir, lo seré."

La identidad de Bree se reconfigura a partir del viaje y resulta en un cambio introspectivo. Su vida se re-significa emocionalmente a partir de la relación con su hijo y de su reiteración femenina, al mostrarse frente al mundo en un recorrido que atravesó la parte central y sur de Estados Unidos y que le permitió conocer otros mundos posibles. Por eso acepta al final que su hijo sea actor de pornos gays.

Transitar, y por lo tanto mostrarse y exhibirse ante el resto, posibilita el viaje interior en la protagonista, entre la reiteración sobre su condición femenina y el deseo de ser aceptada y re-conocida como mujer. La inseguridad mostrada al inicio por Bree se va desdibujando a lo largo del recorrido.

Hacia el final del filme, una toma cenital de Bree la muestra bañándose: desnuda con genitales femeninos. Lo anterior representa el primer gesto de satisfacción del personaje. El gesto es una alegoría al renacimiento o resurgimiento del personaje: la son-risa simboliza su sublevación. Y todo en conjunto remite a una emancipación moral, religiosa - espiritual, social y cultural. Por ejemplo, cuando Bree aun no era operada, trabajaba en un restaurante de comida mexicana, confinada al rincón: oculta, lavando platos en la cocina. Una vez transformada en mujer, aparece al frente, trabajando como

mesera, sirviendo a los comensales. Dicha escena simboliza su aceptación social. A su vez reitera la discriminación y ocultamiento que vive el portador de un cuerpo diferente, en este caso, a partir de su sexo. Como sucedía con los hermafroditas que Foucault estudiaba.

Uno de los intertextos en esta película es la postulación en contra del pensamiento científico que sigue concibiendo a este tipo de personas como enfermas, y en cambio, rompe con determinismos sociales. Los transgeneros que aparecen a lo largo del filme muestran una vida acomodada, de una clase social privilegiada.

El filme se desplaza discursiva y críticamente sobre la disforia de genero del saber científico estigmatizador. Es decir, se muestra a una sociedad que observa extrañada, que apunta o señala la diferencia, a una ciencia que condena. Y conforme avanza la trama, el discurso se flexibiliza y se torna incluyente. Esto es representado a través de ciertos personajes claves como Dwight, Toby e incluso la misma familia de Bree. Es decir, se pasa de situaciones narrativas y discursivas que van de lo excluyente a lo incluyente.

Sin que esto signifique restarle complejidad a la representación sobre la confrontación que provoca el cuerpo transgénero en una sociedad que aún lo rechaza. Incluso, a pesar de encontrarse frente a otros con una condición desigual socialmente hablando. Mostrar durante el recorrido a personajes marginales que, de una u otra manera, interactúan con Bree -quien también forma parte de las llamadas minorías sociales-, es hacer participe la diversidad cultural que conforma la unión americana y hacerla visible con sus propias contradicciones.

No en vano, el hijo de Bree es uno mas de estas minorías excluidas: personaje que ha padecido el abandono familiar, que vivió en las calles entre yonkies, prostituto, gay, etc; sin embargo, con aspiraciones que le permitan incluirse en la vida laboral y social, aunque esto sea la industria pornográfica gay de Los Ángeles. Es decir, se trata de incluir desde los propios márgenes.

El viaje representa para este género cinematográfico la transformación y redescubrimiento de los personajes a nivel introspectivo y sociocultural. El viaje suele tener un regreso en el que se vuelve transformado para bien o para mal, como sucede con los personajes de Jim Jarmusch en *Broken Flowers* (2005), *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984) y *Down by Law* (1986); o con Bud Clay en *Brown Bunny* (2003) de Vincent Gallo.

El *road movie*, puede decirse, es re significado a través de la representación de este cuerpo politizado al que Tucker dignifica y al que hace interactuar en una cotidianidad que corresponde a la época moderna, que confronta las diversidades culturales. Bree irrumpe el espacio ordenado y sale azarosa, a pesar de que estas intervenciones le generan a lo largo del trayecto confusiones, llanto y conflicto, por la marcada ruptura que el cuerpo transgénero significa ante los otros "normales."

Filmes como *La vida de Sebastian Cole* (1998), de Tod Williams, o el documental danés/noruego *Todo sobre mi padre* (2002), de Even Benestad, se relacionan con *Transamerica* por el tono, tratamiento y por dar cabida a la reflexión.



Felicity Huffman dijo en su momento que Tucker hizo una película humana y emotiva, alejada de lo moralista del tema. En este sentido, Tucker no trata de darle una lección al público acerca de que los transgéneros considerados anormales (monstruos) por una gran mayoría "son humanos también."

Freaks (1932), de Tod Browning, es un caso en el que encuentro una relación paradójica con *Transamerica*, al representar ambos filmes al cuerpo anómalo. Mientras el filme de Browning sí pretendió aleccionar al espectador, como lo demuestra la introducción que precede a las primeras escenas, a Tucker no le interesa ser moralista.

El viaje para Bree funciona como metáfora de su propia movilidad íntima. Mientras el secreto es el *leitmotiv* del viaje, paradójicamente es la travesía la que provoca su develación. Un secreto que es una alegoría a la condición de las personas transgéneros, y que, efectuado el retorno a casa, vuelve a guardarse; tal como sucede con la protagonista de *Transamerica*, Bree.

Dentro del material extra que contiene el dvd de la película, se encuentran una serie de entrevistas realizadas a los personajes principales de *Transamerica*. La cita fue extraída de ese material. Cabe mencionar que Huffman obtuvo una nominación a mejor actriz en Los Globos de Oro y los Oscar en el año 2006 por su interpretación como Bree.

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Hibridación y transnacionalidad en *Hide*, de K.C. Bascombe

JUAN CARLOS VARGAS

Abstract

Juan Carlos Vargas in "Hibridación y transnacionalidad en *Hide*, de K.C. Bascombe" revisits the genre by exploring an odd transnational product that wants to erase its Canadian origin and poses as a product of mainstream Hollywood cinema. However, some particularities like its visual stylization and its complex intertextuality set the film apart from the conventions of commercial cinema. *Hide* is a globalized hybrid which offers a dystopian vision of the world. Its vague social commentary lacks a historical context, which is replaced by an aesthetic practice linked to postmodern pastiche, most prominently in the intertextual games and genre mixing in the film. *Hide* is also a fiction that combines hyperrealism with a fantasy imaginary to distance itself from mainstream cinematic conventions. As the author demonstrates, this film confirms the unstable and shifting character of the road movie genre.

Geoff Pevere afirma que la *road movie*¹ "is a deeply canuck form" (64). Sin embargo, el cine canadiense ha producido pocos ejemplos destacables del género y varios expertos que han escrito sobre el tema como Monk, Gittings,² Simmons, Taylor y Melnyck, abordan su análisis a partir de la trilogía anglo-canadiense de Bruce McDonald, en especial de su obra *Highway 61* (Canada, 1991).³ Realizada con poco presupuesto, el

"For lo general, un *road movie* tiene como eje central un relato de búsqueda que es también un relato de carretera. Se caracteriza entonces por la presencia de héroes viajeros o nómadas -usualmente una pareja y a veces un grupo de héroes-, personajes jóvenes y marginales cuyo malestar social los convierte a menudo en verdaderos parias. Dado que para desplazarse por los inmensos espacios del continente los protagonistas deben recurrir a los medios de transporte modernos, el género confiere una gran importancia a la tecnología: los personajes se identifican con los vehículos que conducen, llegando incluso a 'humanizá-los.' Asimismo, debido a la presencia constante de referencias concretas tanto a la geografía como a las particularidades históricas del continente norteamericano, el contexto socio-histórico de los relatos tiene un papel fundamental en el género. Por otro lado, el *road movie* muestra una preferencia marcada por el género masculino y, en consecuencia, por las tensiones existentes entre la vida doméstica de la ciudad y la libertad que promete la carretera" (Correa 272).

Gittings considera otras dos *road movies* anglo-canadienses como emblemáticas: *Coin' Down the Road* (Don Shebib, 1970) y *My American Cousin* (Sandy Wilson, 1985).

Las otras dos películas que componen la trilogía son *Roadkill* (Canada, 1989), mezcla de comedia y *thriller*, y el *mockumentary* sobre una banda punk *Hard Core Logo* (Canada,

Filme es un híbrido de comedia negra, fantasía y romance, sobre una pareja de perdedores que cruzan la frontera de Canadá y viajan por varios lugares de los Estados Unidos. Dichos autores valoran a *Highway 61* por su capacidad de apropiarse de los cánones de un género de origen hollywoodense, así como de elementos de la cultura popular estadounidense para subvertirlos sin perder su esencia identitaria. Para Gittings, el *road movie* canadiense "projects a Canadian understanding of Hollywood cinema on to Canadian feature-film production, where a different meaning of the western and road film is produced by their detour through a Canadian other" (166). Y Monk agrega: "where the classic romantic road movie show us men or women finding a sense of newfound freedom, the Canadian road movie show us men or women learning all about the impossibility of escape" (Taylor 208).

De modo casi opuesto, *Hide* (2007), de K.C. Bascombe,⁴ es un singular producto transnacional⁵ que parece querer borrar su procedencia canadiense y fagocita al cine *mainstream* hollywoodense para simular ser un producto de esa industria, cuyas peculiaridades, como la estilización visual y su rebuscada intertextualidad, la alejan de la simple fórmula comercial.⁶ Al igual que *Highway 61*, es una película independiente rodada con bajo presupuesto, actores poco conocidos; también es un híbrido que combina una historia romántica, pero con dosis de horror y *thriller* de suspense; y pertenece al subgénero de "Bonnie and Clyde," según la categoría propuesta por Leong, Sell y Thomas,⁷ o sea, a la de los amantes criminales en fuga, que en este caso son atracadores de bancos y asesinos. Coproducida por Canadá y Argentina, se filmó en Salta -provincia de la región noroeste argentina-, en zonas rurales como la del Cafayate, si bien en la ficción ocurre en algún lugar del sur de los Estados Unidos. Se menciona por medio de un diálogo que Billy, el protagonista, es trasladado desde Angola, la Prisión Estatal de Louisiana, a la cárcel del estado de Kentucky -el auto que con-

En los tres filmes la música popular es un elemento fundamental de la narración: rock, pop, folk, jazz, etcetera.

Hide es el cuarto largometraje del director y el más ambicioso. Todas sus películas son producciones canadienses de tipo "B" filmadas en locaciones de Canadá, y sin mayores pretensiones que el entretenimiento popular. Dos de ellas son *thrillers* de acción, *The Contract* (1999) y *The Swindle* (2002), y la otra es de horror, *Fear of the Dark* (*El sótano*, 2003).

Como Ezra y Rowden señalan, la transnacionalidad es una característica fundamental de los nuevos modos de producción, distribución y exhibición, así como de los intercambios creativos que traspasan las fronteras entre las diferentes industrias filmicas, y de las temáticas que incluyen elementos multiculturales.

Según A. Appadurai, la circulación transnacional de productos culturales locales provocó una hibridación que rompió los límites nacionales en varios campos, entre ellos, los étnicos, religiosos y lingüísticos

Los autores analizan tres películas a profundidad: *Gun Crazy* (Joseph H. Lewis, Estados Unidos, 1949), a la que señalan como precursora; la fundacional y canónica *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, Estados Unidos, 1967), considerada como una de las iniciadoras del género, y *Natural Born Killers* (*Asesinos por naturaleza*, Oliver Stone, Estados Unidos, 1994), ejemplo posmoderno que satiriza a la sociedad de consumo capitalista.

duce tiene placas del estado de Texas-, y tanto el como Betty, su pareja sentimental, hablan con marcado acento sureño.

Al contrario de *Highway 61*, en *Hide* no existe un contexto histórico, pero todo apunta a los años ochenta por el vestuario y algunos diálogos de los personajes. Así mismo, los espacios geográficos en los que se mueven los personajes son imprecisos,⁸ aunque persiguen el sueño de escapar, cruzar fronteras y llegar a Bolivia, como los mi-ticos forajidos del oeste *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, representados en la popular película del mismo nombre (George Roy Hill, Estados Unidos, 1969).⁹

En *Shooting Hide* (2007), Bascombe explica que la elección de filmar en Argentina fue "por sus paisajes espectaculares y porque los actores sintieran que eran las únicas personas en el mundo." Además, "por el equipo técnico, que tiene una cultura diferente," y porque el cine argentino es "mas artístico y mas de personajes"¹⁰ y "eso ayudó a la película inmensamente." A diferencia de *Highway 61*, que conto con un equipo de trabajo en su mayoría canadiense, en *Hide* solo Bascombe, el guionista debutante Gregory D. Rosati y dos actores secundarios son de esa nacionalidad. Los dos protagonistas, una actriz secundaria y la directora de *casting* son estadounidenses, el productor es inglés, otro de los actores secundarios es brasileño y todos los demás participantes en la producción son argentinos. El realizador también menciona que tuvo mayor libertad creativa para hacer una propuesta "menos comercial."¹¹ Cabe agregar que todas las canciones del *soundtrack* -que para Laderman es una característica esencial del *road movie* (16)- son cantadas en ingles, pertenecen a ritmos como el country y el *gospel*, entre otros, y fueron compuestas por músicos argentinos.¹²

En la carretera no hay señalamientos viales y el otro escenario principal, el pueblo abandonado, no tiene nombre, ni tampoco las calles o comercios.

Según Correa: "El *western* suele ser considerado como el principal precursor del *road movie*, debido al carácter nómada de sus personajes, la majestuosidad de sus decorados y el conflicto constante entre espacio salvaje (*Wilderness*) y espacio civilizado (*Civilization*) que pone en escena" (275).

Bascombe habla del cine menos comercial o de autor, cuya condición actual explica Jorge Ruffinelli cuando afirma que, en el nuevo milenio, uno de los rumbos del cine latinoamericano en general, y del argentino, en particular, es el de una estética minimalista que resalta la individualidad, en oposición al cine épico del pasado: "En el terreno del cine de ficción, el de estas ultimas dos décadas asume un compromiso con la cotidianidad, y muchas veces con un estilo *minimalista*, alejado de los gestos totalizadores del cine de los 60s. Probable-mente la tendencia se inicia en Argentina, con las películas de Martín Rejtman, ante todo *Rapado* (1992) y *Silvia Prieto* (1998), cuyos personajes carecen de 'cualidades drama-ticas'" (128).

El resultado final fue así, *Hide* solo se exhibió en el Canada International Film Festival de Vancouver de 2008 y no llegó a las salas cinematográficas, sino que se distribuyó en el mercado de video. Bascombe no ha vuelto a filmar ninguna película hasta el momento.

La música fue compuesta por Juan Ignacio Buscayrol y el grupo Los Álamos. Dicha banda (2011) afirma tener influencias de: Leonard Cohen, Neil Young, Robert Johnson, John

Esas particularidades indican que *Hide* busca una audiencia masiva, pero no cae en el mimetismo absoluto del cine hegemónico. Y que su propuesta está inserta en el mundo actual, global e interconectado, por lo cual podría estudiarse de acuerdo a la idea de la glocalización,¹³ que considera al mundo como un todo, mas allá de las distinciones tradicionales entre lo global y local, y entre lo universal y lo particular. Es una concepción que Pohl y Turschmann aplican a la producción cinematográfica con relación a un "cine global," es decir, "el producto de la relación entre estrategias cinematográficas hegemónicas en expansión, y las (re-)construcciones de lo local, regional y nacional, por parte tanto de los mismos actores globales, como de los actores locales, regionales y nacionales, en competencia por la supremacía económica y cultural" (19). No obstante, esta cuestión se torna problemática porque *Hide* intenta borrar cualquier huella canadiense y también la de procedencia argentina -aunque los escenarios del pueblo fantasma al que llegan los protagonistas parecen más latinoamericanos que estadounidenses con excepción de un letrero que dice en español "baños," en una gasolinera.

1. De Tarantino a Lynch, y los otros

Hide se comercializó en DVD utilizando dos frases publicitarias: "Love is Hell" y "Tarantino meets Bonnie and Clyde," aunque la influencia de Tarantino es mucho más profunda que la de *Bonnie and Clyde*. Habría que añadir también el influjo de David Lynch, porque *Hide* adopta como referente a varias *road movies* hollywoodenses de los noventa, pastiches posmodernos con protagonistas fugitivos heterosexuales, jóvenes y marginales, algunos de ellos pertenecientes al *white trash* estadounidense: *Wild at Heart* (Salvaje de corazón, David Lynch, 1990), *Delusion* (Carl Corpaet, 1991), *Guncrazy* (Tamra Davis, 1992), *Kalifornia* (Dominic Sena, 1993), *Love and a .45* (C. M. Talkington, 1994), *True Romance* (La fuga, Tony Scott, 1993) y la ya citada *Natural Born Killers*. Sin embargo, sus fuentes principales son la obra de Lynch y las que tienen la marca de Quentin Tarantino. *True Romance* fue escrita por Tarantino y *Natural Born Killers* partió de un argumento suyo. Del mismo modo, *Hide* comienza con un prólogo que remite al inicio y cierre de otra obra de Tarantino, *Pulp Fiction* (Tiempos violentos, 1994), en los que la pareja de atracadores de un *diner*, Pumpkin y Honey Bunny, platican de sus tropelías y de la conveniencia de robar restaurantes en lugar de licorerías mientras toman café, para después intentar asaltar el lugar. Los ingeniosos y agudos monólogos y diálogos de Tarantino son una marca de autoría y estilo que en *Hide*, parece ser emulada en varias ocasiones.

Fahey, Bob Dylan, Velvet Underground, Love Spacemen 3, Spiritualized, Tindersticks, The Cramps, Johnny Cash y Hank Williams.

Idea concebida por Roland Robertson.

A la entrada ondea una bandera de los Estados Unidos, pero no hay más señalamientos iconográficos que refuerzan la idea de que se trate de una población estadounidense.

Billy en el *diner*

El filme es muy dialogado, con muy pocos personajes, y la mayor parte del tiempo con los dos protagonistas en pantalla -Billy y Betty- interactuando entre sí. Cohan y Rae Hark (8) afirman que la pareja es la representación dominante en la narrativa del cine hollywoodense en general, y *del road movie* en particular, ya que dos personajes dentro de un carro facilitan un encuadre clásico y el diálogo continuo. Por otra parte, el espacio cerrado de un automóvil, compartir la habitación de un motel y una mesa de *diner* (restaurante típico americano), así como situaciones extremas, favorecen la relación íntima y ayudan a provocar que el conflicto se desencadene pronto.

La película presenta una estructura narrativa muy fragmentada por frecuentes saltos de tiempo, uso de montaje paralelo, marcados y constantes cambios de escenas y secuencias con fundidos en negro. Según Laderman: "the road movie may not possess a clear-cut beginning, middle, or end; likewise, the genre often shifts gears regarding mode and plot with a certain disorienting, open-air free will. Generally it distances itself from the Aristotelian dramatic unities, in favor of the episodic style of Cervantes and Brecht" (17). Por otra parte, el ritmo de la cinta es inestable, y las acciones de los personajes, determinada por el uso de una edición rápida, de repente se vuelve más lenta para dar paso a escenas muy dialogadas, o se utiliza en varias ocasiones la cámara lenta e imágenes congeladas.

El prólogo, que dura siete minutos y tiene una fotografía luminosa de tonalidades cálidas amarillas y anaranjadas, inicia con tres planos fijos del "Sweet Candy's Diner": una mesa sin comensales con un desayuno servido y a medio consumir; una barra con vasos, una botella de catsup y sobres de azúcar, y una charola de donas. Mediante corte directo se pasa a un primer plano de Billy, quien termina su comida sentado en una mesa y platica con Betty, ambos son agraciados en su aspecto físico y provienen del *white trash*. Billy afirma que la diferencia entre desayunar en un pueblo pequeño o en una ciudad es el amor, porque las personas de la ciudad no aman su trabajo. Luego opina sobre las meseras y Betty comenta que ella trabajó en un café y renunció porque los clientes la manoseaban. Billy dice que la clase trabajadora es la que va a salvar el

país. Fuera de cuadro el teléfono suena y se escucha que afuera del lugar llega la policía, se oyen ruidos de autos y de un helicóptero, por un altavoz se les informa que no hay escape y están rodeados. Billy cambia el tema de la conversación:

Billy: ¿Qué crees mamá? ¿Crees que vamos a encontrar un sitio como este en México? Tú y yo.

Betty: Creo que podemos hacer lo que nos de la gana. Se que nadie nos va a parar.

Billy: Tienes razón.

Betty: Amor. ¿México?

Billy: Sí, México, creí que te gustaba México.¹⁵

Betty: Yo se, sé que me gustaba, pero...

Billy: ¿Pero que?

Betty: Tenemos la oportunidad de empezar de nuevo e ir a cualquier sitio en el mundo, solos tú y yo. México es... Amor. ¿A dónde fueron Butch and Sundance?

Billy: Esa es fácil, fueron a Bolivia. En Suramérica.

Betty: ¿Tienen océano en Bolivia?

Billy: Sí lo tienen.

Betty: Babe, eso suena tan exótico. Tan lejos. Babe, podemos desaparecer.

Billy: Sí. Lo que tú quieras. Suramérica es a donde vamos!

Betty: ¡esto es tan excitante!

Billy: Te digo algo, voy a extrañar ese carro.¹⁶

Mientras sucede la conversación se insertan cinco *flashbacks* de muy corta duración: dos de las imágenes de la pareja a bordo de un convertible rojo que rueda velozmente por la carretera, y tres de cuando van llegando al *diner*, se estacionan y, en cámara lenta, entran al lugar. A mitad de la plática antes descrita, Betty coloca una moneda en una mini rockola que esta pegada a un lado de la mesa y se empieza a escuchar una balada romántica con acordes de guitarra. Billy mira por la ventana y hace el comentario sobre su auto, saca de un bolso un fajo de billetes -producto del robo de un banco- y deja una cuantiosa propina, luego toman algunas armas y caminan hacia la salida. El encuadre se abre y un lento movimiento de cámara muestra los cadáveres en-sangrentados de los comensales y empleados asesinados por la pareja. Antes de salir a enfrentar a la policía Betty pregunta a Billy: "Butch y Sundance vivieron felices por siempre?" Billy contesta: "Seguro lo hicieron." Y Betty concluye: "Este es el primer día del resto de nuestras vidas." Salen disparando, y la imagen se congela imitando la

14 México es el lugar al que viajan los protagonistas de la novela de culto de la generación *beat*, *On the Road* (Jack Kerouac, 1957), texto fundador de la narrativa de este tipo, literaria y cinematográfica, de acuerdo a varios autores como Laderman (9-11) y Cohan y Rae Hark (6-8). También es el país que se busca como destino de otras *road movies*, por ejemplo, ahí quieren llegar la pareja de fugitivas de *Thelma & Louise* (Ridley Scott, Estados Unidos, 1991), y es a donde huyen los hermanos asalta bancos de *From Dusk Till Dawn* (*De! crepusculo al amanecer*, Robert Rodríguez, Estados Unidos, 1996), cuyo guion es de Tarantino.

Timothy Corrigan apunta: "Cars and motorcycles represent a mechanized extension of the body, through which that body could move farther and faster than ever before and quite literally evade the trajectory of classical narrative and twentieth-century history" (146).

Escena final de *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.¹¹ Las alusiones al género *western* son frecuentes. En una secuencia posterior, Billy es perseguido en un cementerio por la policía -que de nuevo solo se escucha y esta fuera de cuadro-, y comenta para sí: "No hay compasión para Billy the Kid," nombre de otro famoso forajido del oeste. Además, Billy es el nombre de uno de los dos personajes principales de otra obra fundacional del *road movie*, *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, Estados Unidos, 1969), película llena de referencias al *western*. El Billy de *Easy Rider* evoca precisamente a Billy the Kid, y el otro protagonista principal se llama Wyatt, en homenaje a Wyatt Earp, otra figura icónica del oeste que ha sido representada varias veces en el cine hollywood-ense.



Jenny huye por el bosque

Después de que termina la secuencia del *diner* con la mencionada imagen congelada, un fundido en negro da paso a los créditos y la cinta cambia de tono. La fotografía es granulosa, oscura y verdosa, la música cambia a un ritmo lento con un coro de voces distorsionadas electrónicamente. Por medio de una fotografía de claros oscuros se ven imágenes de un pedazos de cadena; la espalda tatuada de Billy con dos pequeñas alas representadas con plumas de ave y el cuello con un collar de perlas; el tatuaje de un corazón sangrante con espinas; pies colgando goteando sangre; el tatuaje de un rostro de Jesucristo con una corona de espinas y en una cruz; la cabeza y el brazo del cadáver de una mujer tirado en el piso; una mano esposada a una cadena; una máscara de plástico blanca que sangra, etcetera. Terminan los créditos y sobre otro fundido en negro aparece un letrero que indica "7 años después," se oyen los sonidos del motor de un auto y la *voiceover* de Billy que cuenta que estuvo "en una jaula por siete años." Lo

¹¹ Según Shari Roberts "violence and death, also associated with the masculine, permeate both the western and the road film" (54).

vemos encadenado con un atuendo carcelario dentro de una camioneta policiaca que de pronto se vuelca, pero nunca vemos el impacto ni la carretera, todo ocurre fuera de cuadro. Solo se ve el interior del vehículo y en cámara lenta vemos como Billy vuela y se golpea con el techo. Fundido en negro. Desde un plano interior vemos a dos policías moribundos en el asiento delantero, alguien toma una escopeta y remata a uno de ellos con un disparo, luego abren la puerta trasera y Billy, golpeado, ve a Betty sonriente con una aureola blanca que parece coronar su cabeza, y un haz de luz que forma unas alas como si fuera un ángel, en *voiceover* comenta: "Yo creí que estaba en el cielo." La imagen de Betty remite al final de *Wild at Heart*, cuando después de una golpiza Sailor abre los ojos y ve flotando en el aire una burbuja luminosa con la bruja buena, en alusión a *The Wizard of Oz* (El mago de Oz, Víctor Fleming, Estados Unidos, 1939), vínculo fundamental de la película de Lynch.

Fundido en negro. Se escucha de fondo una música coral de *gospel* y por medio del uso de cámara en mano el espectador ve las imágenes de una joven ensangrentada y en ropa interior que huye por un bosque hasta que sale a una carretera, avista un carro y pide ayuda. El auto se detiene, ella sube al asiento trasero y el conductor voltea a verla, lleva la cabeza tapada con la capucha de una chamarra y cubre su cara con una máscara blanca de plástico. El filme entra al terreno del cine de horror y suspenso -al subgénero de los asesinos en serie- y, a la vez, al de la representación de la mujer violentada y en peligro que huye aterrada por parajes solitarios, la cual se ha vuelto un cliché de este género desde la canónica *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Masacre en Texas, Tobe Hooper, Estados Unidos, 1974). Un corte directo pasa a un plano en picado de Billy que se despierta en la cama del cuarto de un motel al que lo llevó Betty, voltea a ver sus pies y "choca" dos veces sus botas emulando el movimiento que hacía Dorothy con sus mágicas zapatillas rojas en *The Wizard of Oz*.

Desde ese momento la trama adquiere un tono "irreal" y no queda claro si lo que pasó con la chica del bosque Billy lo soñó. A este nuevo elemento dramático se agregarán dos más que definirán el rumbo de la narración hasta el final. Primero, en la secuencia del motel, que es bastante dialogada, Billy comienza a arrepentirse de sus crímenes, reprocha a Betty por los asesinatos que han cometido y porque lo rescató. Betty no lo lamenta. Al mismo tiempo Billy empieza a revelar su lado "oculto," duda de su identidad y enfrenta una especie de desdoblamiento de la personalidad, observa su imagen en el espejo y la confronta diciéndole: "Te molesta ahora, maldito. Mi maldito palo grande. El duro para amar. Grande en su camino, maldito fracaso. Nadie va salir lastimado ... excepto tú." Mientras tanto, en montaje paralelo, Betty revisa algunas pertenencias de Billy y aparecen una serie de fotos polaroid con imágenes de un

Por otra parte, cuando la pareja emprende el viaje hacia el sur por la carretera, Billy lleva puesta una camisa con figuras de piel de leopardo, el mismo tipo de figura de la chaqueta de piel de Sailor. Además, en *Wild at Heart* la referencia al ídolo de la música popular Elvis Presley, "El Rey," es una constante en la narración que sirve sobre todo para configurar precisamente el personaje de Sailor, y en *Hide*, Billy lo menciona como uno de sus cantantes favoritos.

hombre ensangrentado en una silla de tortura y de una chica martirizada. Un movimiento de cámara abre el encuadre sobre Billy y se posa sobre su espalda para ver los tatuajes de su espalda que de alguna forma definen parte de su personalidad, en especial, los escritos: "Forsaken," "The one who is and who was and who is to come," "The Almighty." Antes de terminar la escena en el baño, Billy, de repente, mueve la cortina de la bañera y ve en la pared la frase escrita en rojo "Tú me hiciste y ahora yo te haré." Cree que Betty escribió la frase, discuten y luego se contentan. Billy le dice que escondió el dinero del robo al banco y un *flashback* muestra la ya mencionada escena del cementerio en la que Billy, teniendo una música country extradiegética de fondo, es perseguido por la policía y oculta el botín en una cripta. Termina el *flashback*. De regreso en el motel la pareja acuerda ir por lo robado. Fundido en negro. Suena la misma música de tipo *gospel*. Se abre la puerta de un oscuro y sucio sótano lleno de cadenas, un hombre de piel morena¹⁹ baja y toma fotos con una cámara polaroid a la joven del bosque que se encuentra encadenada y ha sido visiblemente golpeada. La sala de tortura recuerda los espacios de cintas de horror *gore* y *slasher* como las de la serie *Saw* (Juego macabro, Estados Unidos/Australia, 2004), iniciada por James Wan, y de *Hostel* (Hostal, Eli Roth, Estados Unidos, 2005).²¹

En el planteamiento de la atmósfera de pesadilla, de los constantes giros de la trama y del desdoblamiento del personaje de Billy, resuenan más ecos de Lynch, ahora relacionados con la bizarra *Lost Highway* (Por el lado oscuro del camino, Estados Unidos/Francia, 1994), aunque es evidente que *Hide* carece de su poderosa belleza visual. Los lazos con *Lost Highway* se refuerzan en el último tramo de la película, cuando se descubre que Billy es el asesino enmascarado, que la joven torturada que intenta huir es su hermana Jenny -a quien dice adorar- y que Betty se convierte en otra de sus víctimas para redimir sus pecados. Además, en un final sorpresivo y anticlimático, se repite la escena de Billy volando dentro del camión de la prisión, quien en *voiceover* confiesa: "El diablo quiso quitarme ese día a Betty. Como Butch y Sun-dance, ella no tenía oportunidad, muchas balas. Yo daría todo porque hubiera sido yo. No era mi destino." La siguiente imagen, la última del filme, también se duplica y es la de Billy cuando despierta en la cama del motel, pero en esta ocasión, comenta en *voiceover*. "El infierno es el único poder que el diablo tiene contra mí. Es para causar sufrimiento a los que amo." Para Palacios:

¹⁹ El mismo actor interpreta el personaje del guardia de la prisión en donde está preso Billy.

" David Edelstein, critic del *New York Times*, acuñó el término *torture porn* para clasificar a *Hostel*, y señalar el surgimiento de un inédito subgénero del horror, dentro de la cultura *mainstream*, en el que los personajes de las representaciones cinematográficas son sometidos a tormentos explícitos y reiterados.

²¹ El mismo año que se rodó *Hide*, en Argentina también se filmó *Aparecidos* (Paco Cabezas, España/Argentina/Suecia, 2007), *road movie* y cinta de fantasmas en las que también aparecía una cámara de tortura y la figura del torturador, pero ligada al contexto histórico de los desaparecidos por la dictadura argentina de los setenta.

Las autopistas son puentes artificiales que se han convertido en puentes naturales entre un mundo y el otro. Entre la realidad y otras realidades... Nadie lo ha entendido y expresado tan perfectamente como David Lynch en sus filmes de carretera ... Donde nuestro mundo y el Otro, o, mejor dicho, los Otros, se cruzan y entrecruzan en perfecta solución de continuidad, haciendo posible lo imposible y solapando los miles de universos paralelos que contiene el nuestro, en sus ilimitados límites.

Como bien señala Morris: "in *Lost Highway* (1997), phantasmagorical and circular action results only in the repeated delivery of an ambiguous message" (27). Una estrategia narrativa que también se hace evidente en *Hide*, situándola en un camino similar, es decir, en un viaje hacia el interior, aunque la mayor parte del tiempo se hace creer al espectador que está ante una *road movie* que sigue las convenciones genéricas por medio de una estética de realismo "sucio," y de un relato en el que un misterio se va revelando poco a poco.



Betty y Billy en la carretera

2. Viaje al purgatorio

Para Roberts (53), en el género del *road movie*, la carretera se transforma en una metáfora que funciona para permitir un doble viaje, el físico y el espiritual, interdependientes entre sí. Laderman la interpreta como un símbolo universal del camino de la vida, de movimiento, deseo, búsqueda de la libertad y de un destino para los viajeros, que pueden tener un propósito y dirección determinadas, aunque encierra tanto connotaciones positivas como negativas, además de poder ocultar peligros y transformarse en un espacio alucinatorio:

the road also can provoke anxiety: We take the road, but it also takes us. Will we survive the upcoming hairpin turn? Are we on an extended detour, full of delusions? Do we need to turn onto a new road? Often the road provides an outlet for our excesses, enticing our desire for thrill and mystery. The horizon beckons both auspiciously and ominously. (2)

En *Hide*, Betty y Billy emprenden el viaje por la carretera para regresar a buscar el botín en el cementerio del pueblo donde cometieron la masacre del *diner*. Sin embargo, para Billy, aunque en varias ocasiones afirma que quiere cambiar y ser bueno, el trayecto representa huir de un pasado que lo enfrenta a sus demonios personales, a su otro yo, al remordimiento y a la expiación mediante la tortura y el asesinato: "aunque exista una causa definida para el viaje, ésta suele diluirse pronto. Los personajes evolucionan hacia la anulación o la nada, se identifican con el devenir sin destino" (García Ochoa 191-92).

Billy es el centro de la trama. Billy es el conductor del auto y del destino de Betty, a quien llama "mama." Su voz marca el ritmo del relato mediante la *voiceover*, y también se apodera de las conversaciones. Billy no solo dirige la plática sino que a lo largo del itinerario da respuesta a las dudas de Betty, e impone su voluntad por medio de la fuerza física y de actos violentos. La conducta de Billy -quien lleva tatuado en el brazo la imagen de un Jesucristo con una corona de espinas sangrante-, se explica hacia el final del filme, cuando en el pueblo fantasma retorna a la casa materna y en un juego de escena hacia el pasado se ve como un niño y atestigua el momento en que juega con su hermana para después ser castigado de manera brutal por una madre abusadora, que además lo condiciona a ser "bueno" de acuerdo a los preceptos de la religión judeocristiana y de pasajes de *La Biblia*, libro que Billy mencionará a Betty en varias ocasiones. Por otra parte, los dos otros personajes masculinos que aparecen de forma breve también muestran un alto grado de machismo, tanto el cómplice de Billy que toma las fotos a Jenny en la sala de tortura y es castigado por martirizarla, como el camionero gordo y grasoso que acosa a Betty en el baño de la gasolinera. Del mismo modo, durante la plática en el *diner*, Betty relata cómo varios hombres la hostigaban cuando trabajó de mesera hasta que a uno de ellos le arrojó café hirviente. En ese sentido, *Hide* sigue los cánones históricos del género y su punto de vista es patriarcal -visión predominante del *road movie* de acuerdo a Corrigan (146) y otros autores²³-, e incluso llega a ser una tradicional exaltación del machismo, según Kinder (1974).²⁴

Las primeras imágenes del citado viaje, que comienza hasta el minuto veintiocho del filme, son varios planos generales de un idílico paisaje montañoso y semidesértico que sirven para situar al convertible rojo en la inmensidad de un espacio geográfico impreciso y desolado, el cual, al igual que la carretera, parecen habitar solo Betty y Billy; nunca se ve ningún otro carro, persona o animal hasta que llegan a una gaso-

22. Para Giampero Frasca, el comienzo del viaje puede ser de tres tipos: deliberado y voluntario; para huir de algo o alguien, y existencial como respuesta a un entorno opresivo (142-45).

²³~Cohan y Rae Hark (2), y Carmen Indurain Eraso (2001).

²⁴ Kinder centra su ensayo en el estudio de *Badlands* (Malas tierras, Terrence Malick, 1973), *Thieves Like Us* (Robert Altman, 1974) y *The Sugarland Express* (Loca evasión, Steven Spielberg, 1974), a partir de la influencia de Bonnie y Clyde y del análisis de su configuración patriarcal.

linera.²⁵ Durante el itinerario hay varias tomas con *camera-car*²⁶ y, mientras Billy conduce, Betty termina de leer un libro y lo arroja molesta al asiento trasero porque la pareja de la historia no tiene un final feliz, al igual que Romeo y Julieta o Bonnie y Clyde. Billy le explica que el romance viene de la tragedia y es "belleza mezclada con tristeza." En esta escena, Betty muestra de nuevo su carácter ambiguo: es una joven agresiva al manifestar sus deseos sexuales, rebelde y salvaje como Mallory en *Natural Born Killers*, y a la vez es una mujer romántica y cursi, en sintonía con Lula de *Wild at Heart*. Apoda a Billy "Babe" y "Babycakes," y en el último tercio de la película pudiera interpretarse que su ideal es lograr tener una tradicional y patriarcal familia blanca. Mientras Billy repara el carro y ella está acostada sobre la cajuela mirando la noche estrellada pregunta: "¿Cómo crees qué es el cielo?"

Billy: Una cosa en la que los carros no se dañan, la cerveza nunca está caliente y hay una banda con Oid Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, William Jennings y El Rey todas las noches. Y *Magnum* está en la TV 24 horas al día.²⁷

Betty: Yo creo que el cielo es una playa, tú y yo. Nuestros bebés, niño y niña. Llamados Bonnie y Clyde.

Para Indurain, el rol de las mujeres en los *road movies* basados sobre parejas en fuga, cambió de manera importante a partir de *Bonnie and Clyde*, otorgándole una función más activa, pero no de manera profunda y en equidad con el varón. Como excepción a la regla, dicho autor señala a *Thelma & Louise*. Cabe añadir que la imagen de las otras mujeres que aparecen en la película es todavía menos favorable: o son víctimas, como Jenny, Candy, la mesera del *diner*, y las comensales de ese mismo lugar; o abusadoras, como la mamá de Billy.

Frasca plantea cuatro características definitorias de la estructura narrativa del *road movie*, la tercera de ellas se refiere a cómo los personajes conocen lugares y per-

25."Espacios característicos de la Road Movie, son, además de la propia carretera y el interior de los vehículos, todos los que han sido codificados por la generalización del uso del coche ("sistema de automóvil"): moteles, gasolineras, campings, bares y restaurantes ... La ciudad puede aparecer como punto de partida, paso o llegada" (García Ochoa 192).

26."Sí el *thriller* hace de la cámara un arma y el melodrama hace de ella un miembro de la familia, en el *road movie* la cámara adopta la perspectiva encuadrada del vehículo mismo" (Corrigan 146). Citado por (Correa 284).

27.Williams, Cash, y Jennings son cantantes de country, los dos primeros muy famosos. *Magnum, P. I.* (Estados Unidos 1980-1988), fue una exitosa serie de TV cuyo protagonista era un macho y seductor detective privado.

28. Indurain señala como antecedentes de esta transformación a dos ejemplos, el *film noir Detour* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1945) y la ya mencionada *Gun Crazy*. Por su parte, Cohan y Rae Hark (12) también destacan la relevancia de *Thelma & Louise* una película de ruptura que abrió camino a *road movies* con parejas de gays, lesbianas y afroamericanos. Vale la pena añadir que en el *road movie* de parejas heterosexuales pertenecientes al *white trash* se han dado ejemplos destacables del cambio del rol femenino, tal es el caso de *Free-way* (Encuentro con el lobo, Matthew Bright, 1996), comedia negra que deconstruye el cuento de *Little Red Riding Hood* (Caperucita roja).

sonas extrañas y ajenas a su habitat de origen. En *Hide* esta particularidad genérica no se cumple del todo, dado que no visitan ningún sitio inédito y regresan al mismo lugar del inicio del filme, y en cuanto a encuentros con "otros," se dan solamente dos cuando llegan a la gasolinera a las afueras del pueblo. El primero ocurre entre Billy y un simbólico perro de raza *rottweiler* que está enfrente de ese espacio y puede representar al diablo o su mensajero, o simplemente señalar la locura del protagonista. Billy lo ve y, como hipnotizado, se aleja del carro, se sienta al lado del animal, lo acaricia y le platica algo que ni Betty ni el espectador escucha. Mientras esto sucede, llega el ya mencionado camionero que acosa a Betty cuando la ve con minifalda y la persigue a un baño sucio y plagado de graffitis. Betty lo engaña mostrándose seductora para después jugar con él. Ella le dice "cowboy" y él "cowgirl." Primero le pinta los labios y luego, pese a ser pequeña y delgada, le propina una paliza hasta que aparece Billy, quien se la quita de encima y la regaña. La secuencia es peculiar porque su duración es corta y el realizador la resuelve con un montaje paralelo, cuatro *flashforwards* e imágenes congeladas. Asimismo, muestra los deseos sexuales de Betty porque la violencia la excita y quiere tener sexo, sin embargo, no es correspondida por Billy, quien quiere cambiar, busca el arrepentimiento y le dice: "Yo tengo muchos fantasmas y demonios en mi cabeza. Al matar inocentes en el *diner*, convertimos el cielo en infierno ese día. Y él viene. El diablo se está acercando y no va a parar hasta que consiga lo que quiere."

Los últimos cuarenta y tres minutos de la película (la duración total es de noventa y seis minutos) se desarrollan a partir de su llegada al pueblo, descubren que está abandonado y Billy se revela como el asesino, como se había comentado antes. La narración aumenta el tono de misterio y horror. En tanto Betty se mete a una tienda a probarse ropa, Billy recorre el lugar, llega al desolado *diner* y un *flashback* regresa la acción hasta la primera escena del filme. Billy se da cuenta que la mesera Candy³⁰ los reconoce como fugitivos de la ley y llama a la policía. Candy le dice a Billy que "La Biblia enseña el perdón" y pide que recapacite. Billy la asesina de un escopetazo y junto con Betty comienzan la matanza de los comensales, pero nada más se muestran algunas víctimas asesinadas u lo demás ocurre fuera de cuadro. De pronto, la cámara adopta la visión subjetiva de una de las víctimas, Betty dispara su pistola hacia ella, la imagen se congela y termina el *flashback*. El encuadre remite al famoso plano del forajido que descarga su revólver hacia el espectador en la pionera cinta del oeste *The Great Train Robbery* (Asalto y robo al tren, Edwin S. Porter, Estados Unidos, 1903).

29. Frasca (54-58). Las otras tres características señaladas por Frasca son: 1) Breve presentación del entorno del protagonista(s) que aparenta estar en equilibrio, pero que en realidad es opresivo; 2) El protagonista(s) inicia un viaje en busca de nuevas perspectivas, y 4) El protagonista(s) adquiere una renovada conciencia y contempla el mundo de otra manera, pero el resultado puede ser positivo (obtiene lo que buscaba y concluye el viaje); negativo, no obtiene lo que busca y continúa el viaje, o incluso nulo, descubre que es imposible conseguir su objetivo.

30. De forma significativa la actriz que hace este papel también interpreta a la madre de Billy.

Betty entra al *diner* y hace el amor con Billy encima de la barra del lugar. Un fundido en negro enlaza las acciones del asesino enmascarado quien "cose" con hilo y aguja una herida en el costado de Jenny en primer plano. El manejo del tiempo y el espacio se vuelven un tanto confusos y aumenta el uso del montaje paralelo. Betty se despierta en el *diner* y Billy ya no está. Camina en la noche sin rumbo y encuentra una extraña feria con juegos mecánicos que de repente se encienden y apagan. Billy repara su auto. En el sótano el "asesino" tiene sujetado a su cómplice en la silla de tortura, le introduce un cuchillo por la boca y luego solo se escucha su grito. Betty se siente perseguida, toma una escopeta y va al cementerio por el botín, pero no lo recupera porque ve una sombra y la sigue maldiciéndola para dispararle hasta que llega a una pequeña iglesia alumbrada con veladoras. Billy reaparece en ese lugar con el botín. Betty le cuenta lo ocurrido y van juntos al auto, donde tienen la conversación ya expuesta en páginas anteriores sobre "el cielo." Después de esa escena, que se narra de forma lineal, ocurre un tercer "encuentro" de los protagonistas porque se presenta Jenny recién escapada de la sala de tortura e intenta convencer a Betty de que Billy es su torturador. Ni Betty ni Billy le creen y Billy sale en busca del supuesto culpable armado con la escopeta, entra a la iglesia y un cuarto lo comunica a la casa de su infancia en donde ve el ya citado recuerdo del juego con su hermana y el posterior castigo que le inflige su madre.

Disfrazado con el atuendo del asesino Billy regresa al carro, golpea y deja inconsciente a Jenny, se lleva a Betty al sótano en donde la encadena y se desenmascara. La juzga y condena porque hay que "cortar lo malo," como su madre le enseñó. Cuando va a iniciar la tortura hay un nuevo fundido en negro, se escuchan los gritos de Betty, y un *flashback* retorna al espectador a las ya señaladas escenas del camión policiaco y del motel donde despierta Billy y explica en *voiceover* lo sucedido luego del asalto al *diner*.

Hide es pues un *road movie* peculiar, diseñado como un producto de bajo presupuesto para el consumo masivo, pero cuyas estrategias narrativas y visuales lo vuelven atípico. Es un híbrido, transnacional y globalizado, que ofrece una visión distópica³¹ del mundo, pero carece de un contexto histórico que dé peso a su desdibujado comentario social vinculado sobre todo al origen y vida marginal de los protagonistas, a la religión y a la familia. Dicho comentario es desplazado por una propuesta estética ligada al pastiche posmoderno y reflexivo, por los juegos intertextuales y las mezclas de fórmulas genéricas. El *western*, en especial *Buten Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*; el horror al estilo *Saw* y *Hostel*, la fundacional *Bonnie and Clyde*, y algunas obras de Tarantino y Lynch, sobresalen como sus influencias más notables. También es una ficción que combina el hiperrealismo con lo fantástico e intenta alejarse de las reglas del *mainstream* hollywoodense, pese a que éste es su principal fuente de inspiración. Puede considerarse una película "glocal" por su modo de producción, sin embargo, no presenta rasgos identitarios ni canadienses ni argentinos. En suma, debido a su com-

31. "road films are characterized by an absence of civilization, law, and domesticity, marked instead by primitivism or post-apocalyptic space" Roberts (52).

plejidad; naturaleza híbrida; profusión de temas y subgéneros que maneja; propensión por la auto-reflexividad e intertextualidad, y a la indefinición de referencias concretas, tanto geográficas como históricas de los Estados Unidos -lugar de la trama-, *Hide* confirma el carácter inestable del *roadmovie* como género cinematográfico.

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**"Miles to go before I sleep":
Narrative Reconfigurations and Generic Border-Crossings
in the Films of Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodríguez**

CAROLINE BEM

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
-Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a
Snowy Evening" (1922)

Resumen

La dimensión transnacional surge de películas que dramatizan directamente los cruces de frontera. No todo el mundo busca a América en los Estados Unidos y muchos personajes viajan rumbo al sur. En "'Miles to go before I sleep': Narrative Reconfigurations and Generic Border-Crossings in the Films of Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodríguez," Caroline Bem estudia la relación formal entre *From Dusk Till Dawn* y la función doble del pastiche *Grindhouse*. Ambos proyectos descansan en una estructura narrativa que se divide en dos partes y que oscilan entre varios subgéneros de películas menores, como el de vampiros, el de zombies y el de persecuciones en auto. Sin embargo, como Bem señala, es el *road movie* el que provee el trasfondo formal de los dos proyectos. Así, en el caso de *From Dusk Till Dawn*, la transición del *thriller* a la película de horror film se significa, de manera literal, en el cruce de la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México. Bem señala que existe algo inherente en el *road movie* que lo hace resistente al canibalismo transgenérico, poniéndolo en un sitio aparte de otros géneros y subgéneros más débiles. Además, subyace en este artículo la constante referencia a la función simbólica de los cruces fronterizos, en especial de los Estados Unidos de América a México para la exploración genérica que los proyectos se plantean.

1. Introduction

The term *grindhouse* presents a direct reference to the defunct burlesque theatres on New York City's 42nd Street which featured "bump n' grind" dancing and striptease. More generally, it has come to designate the run-down cinemas of U.S. urban centers specialized in the multi-feature presentation of B-Movies. Built largely during the

cinema-boom of the 1930s, these single-screen theatres were conceived to accommodate the double and triple bill screenings of the vertically integrated Hollywood studio era. Typically, screenings consisted of a main feature followed by one or two B-movies, often produced purposely in relation to the main film. Following the advent, in the 1950s, of television and the white middle-class's generalized move to the suburbs, these cinemas, now located in gritty, derelict urban areas, re-invented themselves as screening venues for exploitation films. Thus, by the 1960s and 1970s, they would function as the principal outlets for double, triple, or all-night bills of sex and horror exploitation, blaxploitation, car chase movies, or Hong Kong martial arts movies, to name but a few of the most common low genres of the time.¹

In 2007, directors Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino released the double-bill pastiche *Grindhouse*, a project which sought to re-construct the viewing experience of precisely such a 1970s double-bill. The first film, *Planet Terror*, directed by Rodriguez, is a horror movie which revolves around a zombie attack on the city of Austin, Texas, while *Death Proof*, Tarantino's contribution to the project, offers an interesting take on both the slasher and car chase subgenres. Both films were designed to be watched in sequence, complete with fake intermission trailers for further exploitation films.² However, with the exception of the double-feature's U.S. release, the films were shown in discrete extended versions in most countries before being released separately on DVD.

Grindhouse can be seen as a follow-up to the directors' previous collaboration on *From Dusk Till Dawn*, a 1996 film scripted by Tarantino and directed by Rodriguez, which offered a similar exploration of subgenres. In *From Dusk Till Dawn*, the first part of the film takes the shape of a classical thriller/road movie narrative beginning in medias res with the killing rampage of the two outlaw brothers Seth and Richie Gecko (George Clooney and Quentin Tarantino), which has taken them all the way from Wichita, Kansas into Texas. In a motel in El Paso, the Geckos take ex-pastor Jacob (Harvey Keitel) and his two teenage children Kate and Scott (Juliette Lewis and Ernest Liu) hostage. After the five of them successfully cross the border into Mexico aboard the pastor's motorhome, the film's tone changes dramatically when the group stops at a roadside bar, the memorable Titty Twister, where a few Mexican truckers shot to death by the Geckos in the course of a bar fight instantly return to life as vampires. This turning point initiates the second half of the film, which takes place entirely within the closed space of the Titty Twister and follows the conventions of contagion horror/

This information is taken from the Grindhouse Cinema Database and the "Grindhouse" page on Wikipedia.

Some of these trailers gave rise to spin-offs, such as, most notably, *Machete*, a mexploitation movie co-directed by Rodriguez.

For a brief discussion of contagion horror, cf., for instance, Clover (66, 79-80).

The first part of this essay examines the structural relationship between *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Grindhouse*. As I will argue, both of these projects present two complementary facets—or alternative, and equally valuable, possible realizations—of what is, in fact, essentially the same project. Firstly, and most obviously, they create a pastiche version of a grindhouse double-bill screening. Secondly, and much more interestingly, in their respective totalities, but also within their isolated parts, these two projects and the three films they comprise bring to the fore a number of formal questionings pertaining to narrative organization, on the one hand, and on-going generic reconfigurations on the other. Both *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Grindhouse* rely on a narrative structure which is divided into two parts and draw from a variety of B-Movie subgenres such as, most prominently, the zombie or vampire movie and the car chase movie. As I will argue, those subgenres find themselves grouped and linked under the overarching framework of the road movie genre which, in turn, might be viewed as the formal backdrop to both projects.

Consequently, this article outlines a number of ways in which these three films integrate, and significantly reconfigure, traditional elements of the road movie. By making reference to Tarantino's largest project to date, *Kill Bill Vols. 1&2* (2003 and 2004, U.S.), and drawing on texts ranging from John Cawelti's influential 1978 article on generic transformation to more recent writings in videogames studies, I suggest that there is something inherent to the road movie which renders it resistant to transgeneric cannibalism and thus sets it apart from other, arguably weaker, film genres and sub-genres. Furthermore, an important undercurrent of this article revolves around the symbolic function of border crossings—particularly from the U.S. into Mexico—for the generic exploration at work in the films here under discussion. Finally, while I concern myself, in the larger part of this article, with the structural similarities which exist between *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Grindhouse*, in the concluding section I turn to a more in-depth discussion of Tarantino's *Death Proof*, a work which, as I argue, transcends the status of mere pastiche to present one of the most compelling (and underrated) explorations of film genre of the past decade.

2. **Horror and the Road Movie: Generic Transgression in *From Dusk Till Dawn*, *Kill Bill*, and *Planet Terror***

For Robert Rodriguez, *From Dusk Till Dawn* followed the success of *El Mariachi*, a so-called "no-budget" film shot for \$7,000 in Mexico and released in 1992, and *Desperado* (1995), a sequel or remake of *El Mariachi*, which had been shot with a \$7m budget for Columbia in the U.S., thus marking Rodriguez's entry into Hollywood. In the case of Quentin Tarantino, the film followed *Reservoir Dogs* (\$1.2m, Miramax, 1992) and *Pulp Fiction* (\$8m, Miramax), the 1994 movie which first put Tarantino on the international scene. With a budget of \$18m, *From Dusk Till Dawn* (Dimension Films, then Miramax) more than doubled the budget of *Pulp Fiction* while, ten years

later, *Grindhouse*, at \$53m (Dimension Films, now The Weinstein Company), would be rivaled only by the budget of *Kill Bill* \$55m (Miramax, 2003 & 2004).⁴

Throughout the first half of *From Dusk Till Dawn*, the Gecko brothers argue repeatedly over Richie's amoral practices. At the motel in El Paso, their on-going bickering culminates in a serious family fight which revolves around Richie's sex murder of a female hostage who had been with them since Wichita. "This is not me," declares a very angry George Clooney, "I am a professional fucking thief, I don't kill people." However, Seth soon forgives his brother and, as they embrace, he speaks the coded, soothing words which have long functioned as a staple of the U.S. road movie genre: "We'll get to Mexico, and it's gonna be sweet rosemary and one hundred proof liquor and rice and beans, and none of this shit's gonna matter." In these words, we hear echoes all the way from Kerouac to Louise's attempt to cheer up Thelma in the second half of *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott 1991, U.S.): "We'll be drinking margaritas by the sea, mamacita."

Within the framework of the U.S. road movie, the primary function of such dialogue is to reinforce "Mexico's status as a fetishized fantasy [which] is underlined by the fact that most American movie outlaws never get there" (Laderman 88). Thus, while the characters of *From Dusk Till Dawn* do indeed cross the border, we also observe that, with their arrival in Mexico, the road movie segment of the film comes to an abrupt halt. In fact, the shots of Jacob's RV driving into the sunset and pulling into the Titty Twister's parking lot present the last true road movie moment of the film. In other words, even though Mexico has been reached, the promise of "one hundred proof liquor and rice and beans" remains elusive—instead, from this point onward, it will be vampire slaying all the way until the bitter end.

In the film's final moments, however, the road movie genre makes a surprise reappearance. Beginning with the tense border crossing aboard the pastor's motorhome, Kate, the Juliette Lewis character, had been put forward as a possible Final Girl.⁵ With

All figures are from "The Internet Movie Database." These figures are relevant insofar that they show the mirrored proportionality between both directors' rise to fame and the growth of their respective film budgets. Furthermore, in the case of Rodriguez, the director's rise to fame in Hollywood must be viewed as directly dependent on a prior passage through Mexico. Undoubtedly, *El Mariachi* could not have been shot in the U.S. at equal cost. Thus, we might consider that Mexico—as an idea but also as a physical location—is deeply engrained in the work of Rodriguez and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in that of Taran-tino as well.

Even though Clover's notion of the Final Girl is specifically tied to the subgenre of the slasher film, it is applicable to Kate in a number of ways: "The Final Girl of the slasher film is presented from the outset as the main character. ... Unlike her girlfriends ... she is not sexually active ... [and] declines male attention. Finally, although she is always smaller and weaker than the killer, she grapples with him energetically and convincingly" (Clover 39-40). As the teenage daughter of a pastor, Kate is rather chaste indeed. She is also uncomfortably aware of Richie's sexual interest in her which, before the crossing of the border, could have been an indication of a classical slasher narrative to come. Later, in

the turn to horror, her function within the narrative solidifies and, at the end of the film, only she and Seth Gecko are saved by the arrival of Seth's Mexican contact at the Titty Twister in the early morning hours. The narrative ends when Seth gives Kate a bundle of money and advises her to "go home." Over the opening chords to The Blasters' 1985 song *Dark Night*, the camera pans out showing the RV (with, as we are led to assume, Kate at the wheel) pulling out of the parking lot. As the camera retreats further into a wide-angle aerial shot of the site around the Titty Twister, the bar is revealed as having been built on the edge of a cliff. More strikingly still, its backside is, in fact, a full-fledged Aztec temple extending deep into the abyss below. In a final touch which acts to pull together the horror and road movie halves of the film, the precipice is revealed, in turn, to be full of the debris and carcasses of rusty trucks and cars. To be sure, these are all that remains of generations of the bar's customers, all fallen prey to the vampires' nightly sacrifices as is further underlined by the blood stains which run down the pyramid's walls and stairs.

Considering the following quote from Peter Wollen's introduction to the edited volume *Autopia: Cars and Culture*, I am particularly interested in his description of the road movie's "doomed car" as the "victim of a kind of ritual sacrifice":

Classic road movies feature a couple on the run, driving desperately across America, in a crazy attempt to make it to somewhere far down the road ... and end with disaster and the couple torn apart. The car is often doomed as well—spinning out of control, driven into the sea or over a cliff, crashed, shot up, the victim of a kind of ritual sacrifice. (14)

Steeped within the epic tradition, the road or travel narrative at its most fundamental might be seen to function as a metaphor for the cycle of life. Within this logic, it is only coherent that the classical road movie almost always ends in death. Thereby, it rejoins certain traits of the horror genre without, at first sight at least, placing quite the same emphasis on the body.⁶ Building on Wollen's proposition, one might argue that, within the road movie genre, horror's obsession with the abject body⁷ is displaced onto the body of the car, as is made visible in the detailed depictions of the car's final destruction which are a staple of the genre. As I have been suggesting, *From Dusk Till Dawn*'s dramatic final shot acts to connect the film's horror segment with the narrative's starting point, rooted in the conventions of the road movie. Going further still, I want to argue that even if the characters themselves have died at the hands of vampires, the larger generic structure of the film consistently remains that of the road movie throughout. Thus, within the film's overarching framework, the Titty Twister stands for that final place where cars and trucks come to crash.

the united battle against the vampires, she proves to be extremely resourceful, fearless, and a good shot.

6. "Carol Clover, speaking primarily of horror films and pornography, has called films which privilege the sensational 'body' genres. ... The body is featured more sensationally in pornography's portrayal of orgasm, in horror's portrayal of violence and terror, and in melodrama's portrayal of weeping" (Williams 10).

⁷ Cf. Creed.

In *From Dusk Till Dawn*, then, the horror segment's stereotypical gore and slaughter could be considered to serve the primary purpose of drawing attention to that often-overlooked aspect of the road movie—its concern with death, encapsulated in the double-sacrifice, not only of the characters, but of their vehicles as well. The two genres' morbid and sacrificial elements are brought to the fore most powerfully in the reference which is made to Pre-Columbian culture in the film's final sequence. In addition, through its obviously excessive character, the simulacrum-like presence of the Aztec pyramid directly echoes the camp and kitsch of the Titty Twister's interior. In other words, an equation is made, not only between Mexico and the horror genre at large as the loci of transgression and death, but also between the excess and violence stereotypically assigned to the precolonial world, on the one hand, and pastiche and kitsch as the manifest signifiers of the exhaustion of fundamental narrative tropes on the other.⁸

From this perspective, the sudden shift to vampire movie might well be read as a form of punishment for the successful border crossing. Since they have succeeded to escape death or interception by the U.S. police—two likely outcomes within the classical conventions of the road movie genre—the characters' punishment must come from elsewhere. The response to a transgression of genre conventions, it follows, takes the form of the transgression of generic boundaries. In other words, as a first genre is exhausted (the road movie in this case), it must give way to a second genre. Thereby, the shift to horror comes to function both as a form of internal punishment within the film's narrative structure, and as a direct manifestation of genre exhaustion.

Genre exhaustion is a common phenomenon in the history of culture. One can almost make out a life-cycle characteristic of genres as they move from an initial period of articulation and discovery, through a phase of conscious self-awareness on the part of both creators and audiences, to a time when the generic patterns have become so well-known that people become tired of their predictability. It is at this point that parodic and satiric treatments proliferate and new genres gradually arise. ... I think we will begin to see emerging out of this period of generic transformation a new set of *generic constructs* more directly related to the imaginative landscape of the second half of the twentieth century. Thus, *the present period of American filmmaking* will seem in retrospect an important time of artistic and cultural transition. Like many transition periods, it may also turn out to be a time of the highest artistic accomplishment. (Cawelti 519-20, emphases mine)

I am thinking, in particular, of Fredric Jameson's definition of pastiche in relation to what he has termed the nostalgia film: "Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared with which what is being imitated is rather comic. Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humour: pastiche is to parody what that curious thing, the modern practice of blank irony, is to what Wayne Booth calls the stable and comic ironies of the eighteenth century" (5).

In "*Chinatown* and Generic Transformation in Recent American Films," John Cawelti discusses Polanski's *Chinatown* and other 1970s films which rework well-established genres. Towards the end of the article, as he contemplates Robert Altman's filmography, Cawelti observes that it "looks almost as if [Altman] had planned a systematic voyage through the major traditional film genres" (519). Similarly, Rodriguez and Tarantino might be said to have set themselves the larger project—at first sight at least—to systematically work through the subgenres of the 1960s and 1970s. Much has been made of their use of pastiche and comedy, which converges with Cawelti's definition of genre exhaustion as a moment characterized primarily by pastiche.⁹ More interestingly, however, their practice might be equated with what Cawelti terms "generic constructs" (520), a concept which, in its evocation of the notion of composites, reflects well what is at work in projects like *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Grind-house*. Furthermore, Cawelti suggests that there might be something particularly important and creative about films made in the specific era of the 1970s. Thus, it is interesting to note that it is primarily this era, itself rich in reworkings of genres into sub-genres, on the one hand, and in generic constructs on the other, which Tarantino and Rodriguez are most set on investigating.

Tarantino's *Kill Bill Vols. 1&2*, a film in two parts which explores features of both the double-bill and the sequel film,¹⁰ provides a further example of an instance where the road movie genre is used as an overarching framework to tie several B-movie subgenres together. Incidentally, even though it does not point to a generic shift per se, here also the border acts as a signifier of sorts with the films' climax taking place in a hacienda in Mexico. Both films, and *Kill Bill Vol. 2* in particular, are framed by the main character's (Beatrix Kiddo played by Uma Thurman) voice-over narration which updates viewers on her "rampage of revenge" against the five members of the assassin squad she formerly belonged to and who have attempted to kill her and her

Polanski's *Chinatown* is, indeed, one of the titles cited in Jameson's discussion of the nostalgia film. While not of immediate interest to my argument, Jameson's definition of the nostalgia film outlines several traits which are directly applicable to the films of Tarantino and Rodriguez here under discussion: "One begins to realize after a while that the small town setting [*of Body Heat*] has a crucial strategic function: it allows the film to do without most of the signals and references which we might associate with the contemporary world, with consumer society—the appliances and artefacts, the high rises, the object world of late capitalism. Technically, then, its objects (its cars, for instance) are 1980s products, but everything in the film conspires to blur that immediate contemporary reference and to make it possible to receive this too as nostalgia work—as a narrative set in some indefinable nostalgic past, an eternal 1930s, say, beyond history. It seems to me exceedingly symptomatic to find the very style of nostalgia films invading and colonizing even those movies today which have contemporary settings, as though, for some reason, we were unable today to focus our own present, as though we had become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our current experience" (Jameson 9).

Following the release of *Kill Bill 2* a year after the first installment, many theatres showed both films back-to-back in special screenings.

unborn child in what is referred to as the "El Paso-Texas-Wedding-Chapel-Massacre." While *Kill Bill Vol. 1* shows Kiddo using modes of transportation ranging from a yellow Kawasaki motorcycle and the "PussyWagon" truck, which she liberated from a male nurse who sexually abused her, to international flights, *Kill Bill Vol. 2* focuses almost exclusively on cars. Beginning with the opening and closing credit sequences," the film uses footage of Kiddo driving a light-blue Karmann Ghia to link its different chapters together. Thus, just as in the case of *From Dusk Till Dawn*, driving is used to move the narrative forward, both spatially and in terms of genre—different chapters are usually rooted in different genres, such as the Spaghetti western or the kung fu movie.

However, moving beyond the use of the road as both a narrative device and a way to spatialize generic recombinations, as in *From Dusk Till Dawn*, the *Kill Bill* films also introduce a further motive. By referring in a purposely loose way to the films' transportation sequences in general, I want to put forward the notion of *kin-aesthetic pleasure*, derived from videogame studies.

In an article entitled "The Myth of the Ergodic Videogame," James Newman draws attention to an important, and frequently overlooked, aspect of videogame play:

The pleasures of videogames are frequently enjoyed by those that commonsense might encourage us to consider as non-players—"onlookers" that exert no direct control via the game controls. In this article, I want to suggest that videogame players need not actually touch a joypad, mouse or keyboard and that our definition needs to accommodate these non-controlling roles. The pleasure of videogame play does not simply flow through the lead of a joystick. (1)

On a first level, Newman posits that gamers derive different but equal satisfactions from active play on the one hand, and from the fact of watching so-called cinematics or cut-scenes,¹² or even images generated by another gamer playing, on the other. Soon, however, he attempts to bring the two together through the notion of a division of roles between primary and secondary players: "the pleasures of videogame *play* are not principally visual, but rather ... kinaesthetic. In this way, the appearance of Lara [Croft] or Vibri is not crucial to the primary-player during play" (2). Leaving aside debates surrounding the relevance of Lara Croft's appearance to gamers' enjoyment of *Tomb Raider* (Core/Eidos 1996), one might note the fluidity which characterizes the distribution of visual and kinaesthetic pleasure amongst primary players and secondary ones within Newman's definition.

The secondary-player role is frequently taken by players who like the idea of games but find them too hard and is just one example of the ways players appropriate video-

11. Both feature Beatrix Kiddo in close-up at the wheel and are partially in black and white, complete with rear projection effects which directly reference the credit sequences of the classical Hollywood era.

12. Both of these terms designate the narrative, and usually non-interactive, sequences in a videogame. Typically, these appear in the introduction to game chapters as well as upon completion of the game (end cinematic).

game experience in manners often not intended by producers (or observed by researchers). A number of players I have worked with love the idea of the *Legend of Zelda* series but get frustrated as their attempts lead to a few minutes of joystick mashing and then death. So they play together. Furthermore, adopting a "co-pilot" role allows one to notice aspects of the game that are missed in the role of primary player. (5)

Tarantino has remarked that with *Kill Bill* he aspired to the creation of a "ride" or "complete sensory experience."¹³ Applying the notion of kinaesthetic pleasure to the *Kill Bill* films, an argument could be made that, throughout both films, the spectator is, in fact, put in the position of the secondary player in a videogame. Alternating between lavish cut-scenes and fast-paced action sequences, the range of pleasures offered by *Kill Bill Vols. I&2* might well equal, or even surpass, those offered by *The Legend of Zelda* (Nintendo).¹⁴ In the case of the transportation sequences, in particular, the spectator is drawn in by the seductiveness of the pure action of traveling or moving through space resulting in a state akin to that of immersion into game play, on the one hand, and of contemplation of the game world's details, on the other—a state, then, which highly resembles that of the secondary player described by Newman. While this aspect is greatly emphasized in the *Kill Bill* films, it is by no means a novel feature in the cinema. Much to the contrary, I would argue that the road or car chase movie elicits a very specific sort of spectatorial pleasure. The deep-set connection between kinaesthetic pleasure and the car chase genre will resurface in my discussion of *Death Proof*. For now, suffice it to say that my present use of the concept of the secondary

"Avatar didn't invent 3D; my buddy Robert Rodriguez started this whole goddamn 3D thing when he made *Spy Kids 3D*. But what is great about Avatar is that it's not just a movie, it's a ride. There's a case to be made that it's an even better ride than it is a movie. It's a complete sensory experience. That was something I aspired to with *Kill Bill*. And I think I achieved it in some places" (Tarantino, qtd. quoted in Secher).

In seeking to adapt the second player role to a discussion of feature films, I wish to take up and further other discussions of kinaesthetic, or kinetic, pleasure and its relation to the cinema. These discussions are usually steeped in the rather simplistic dichotomy between active (videogame play) and passive (cinema) viewing, and almost always understand kin-aesthetic pleasure in terms of a body-centric form of identification between spectators, gamers, and characters. Cf, for instance, Margit Grieb's analysis of *Lola rennt* (Tom Tykwer, 1998, Germany) in relation to videogames at large, and *Tomb Raider* in particular: "Viewers are 'passive,' as the traditional film medium demands, but at the same time engaged in the experiencing of a kinetic extravaganza styled like an interactive videogame. Tom Tykwer explains the film's effect fittingly when he remarks: '*Run Lola Run* is supposed to exert a thrill, it should have the effect of a roller coaster on the viewers who will be made to quake and quiver' (Tykwer 2001)" (Grieb 158-59). And: "The viewer's identification with both [Lola and Lara Croft] is not so much embedded in an emotional response as it is kinetic. After watching *Run Lola Run* one can almost physically feel the exhaustion of the main character. In *Tomb Raider*, running is Lara's default propelling action, as is Lola's in the film. In order to make Lara *walk* instead of run the player must use a special keyboard command or game pad combination" (162).

player gestures toward the variety of ways in which videogame studies might prove instrumental in (re)thinking some of the cinema's most ancient and well-established genres.

As I have outlined thus far, one of the defining features of *From Dusk Till Dawn* lies in the way in which it seeks to integrate generic exploration—which takes the shape of a transition from one exploitation genre to another—within its narrative framework. In the case of *Grindhouse*, however, the need for narrative justification is eclipsed by the device of inserting both films within the larger structure of the double-bill recreation. Yet, as I will now proceed to argue, within this project also the road movie genre functions as the overarching structure under which subgenres are explored.

Planet Terror, the first segment of *Grindhouse*, follows the conventions of the zombie movie. These include the focus on a small community which is confined both spatially (the city of Austin, Texas) and temporally (events happen in almost-real time for most of the film), as well as certain basic traits of contagion horror; i.e. the zombies infect humans with a slimy substance which, in turn, transforms victims into zombies. It is only in the film's very last sequence—which takes the form of a postscript of sorts—that the road movie genre makes a brief appearance. Echoing Juliette Lewis's character in *From Dusk Till Dawn*, the Final Girl of *Planet Terror* is Cherry Darling (Rose McGowan), a former go-go dancer who, as a result of losing a leg early in the zombie attack on Austin, replaced it with a prosthetic leg in the form of an assault rifle. Following her heroic conduct throughout the film, the final sequence shows Cherry on a white horse, leading a group of survivors, on foot, into what is referred to as "The Land by the Sea" where they are to establish a peaceful community. In an open reference to the last shots of *From Dusk Till Dawn*, the camera pans out to reveal the Maya pyramid at Tulum, Quintana Roo, Mexico, while Cherry, in voice-over narration, announces the final twist to the film's plot. She has had a daughter by her lover, El Wray (Freddy Rodriguez), who died in the final moments of their escape from Austin.¹⁵ This echoes the position of Beatrix Kiddo and her young daughter BB at the end of *Kill Bill Vol. 2*. In both endings, mother and daughter are portrayed as the sole, heroic survivors of the narrative, with the child carrying the symbolic promise of a better future to come.

Of course, the re-emergence of the pyramid trope is the most striking resemblance between *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Planet Terror*. However, while *From Dusk Till Dawn* played on clichéd representations of the ritualistic or sacrificial elements of pre-Columbian cultures in a way which, as I argued, ultimately sought to problematize genre exhaustion in the cinema, *Planet Terror* appears to invert this image. At the end of this film, the temple is not a simulacrum but, indeed, a very real and easily identi-

The name "El Wray" presents a further reference to the ending of *From Dusk Till Dawn* where, in answer to Kate's offer to keep him company, Seth discourages her by saying: "Do you know what El Ray is? Go home, Kate. I may be a bastard, but I'm not a flicking bastard."

erable site. While striving to re-create, or remediate, the special effects, stock quality, acting, and other fixtures of 1970s splatter films, the inclusion of a genuine historical site in the film's final moments is, in fact, rather jarring. Furthermore, where the pyramid of *From Dusk Till Dawn* was breathtaking because of its sheer excess, the depiction of Tulum is equally awe-inspiring, but this time on account of its historical and cultural significance. Furthermore, the revelation of the pyramid functions as a final twist in the film's narrative. However, while the ending of *From Dusk Till Dawn* suggested a long history (and, as a result, an equally long future) of human sacrifice at the site of this particular trucker bar, *Planet Terror* takes the opposite stance. In spite of the generalized zombie epidemic which has been unleashed upon the planet, Cherry, like an Amazon, will lead her community and protect her subjects from future attacks. In a certain sense, then, and notwithstanding the absence of the travel narrative topos from the film's opening and development, *Planet Terror* presents us with a road movie ending. Moreover, in opposition to *From Dusk Till Dawn*, which was self-punishing and doubtful of its generic transgressions, *Planet Terror* references the road movie genre in an attempt, quite possibly, to elevate itself over the mere condition of pastiche. Thereby, the film's ending, whilst remaining rooted within the possibilities of the horror genre, also acts to idealize the classical road movie. By offering a literal translation of the promise of "drinking margaritas by the sea" which features in *Thelma and Louise* and so many other U.S. road movies, *Planet Terror* ends on the representation of what might happen when Mexico is, indeed, reached.

So far, I have proposed that the *Grindhouse* project functions as a mirror-image, and indeed a continuation, of *From Dusk Till Dawn*. This point is further underscored by a brief comparative analysis between two posters for these respective projects. On a cursory level, both posters can be said to share an aesthetic (that of the comic book or retro pulp cover), a color scheme (red and black with some variations) and an obsession with symmetry. Anecdotally, the idea for *Grindhouse* is reported to have been born from a vintage poster for the double-feature of *Dragstrip Girl* (Edward L. Cahn, 1957, U.S.), a car flick, and *Rock All Night* (Roger Gorman, 1957, U.S.), a rock'n'roll movie.¹⁶ Indeed, it is unquestionable that the retro aesthetic of original double-bill posters played a role in the design of certain versions of the *Grindhouse* poster. As in vintage double-feature posters, the individual posters for the two halves of *Grindhouse* face each other symmetrically in the lay-out of the project's most circulated promotional poster.¹⁷ In the case of historical double-bills, however, the two posters were usually simply juxtaposed or, at most, surrounded by a range of comic-style graphics

16. "The idea for *Grindhouse* came when Rodriguez was at Tarantino's house and saw a poster for a 1957 double bill of *Dragstrip Girl* and *Rock All Night*. He mentioned that he had always wanted to do a double feature. Tarantino instantly came up with the name *Grind-house*, and a movie was born" (Hiscock). For a reproduction of this poster, cf. <<http://www.tarantino.info/wiki/index.php/File:Double.jpg>> (Haselbeck).

17. For a reproduction of this poster, cf. <<http://www.tarantino.info/wiki/index.php/File:Ghposter.jpg>> (Haselbeck).

and captions. Yet, in the case of *Grindhouse*, the title *Grindhouse*, spelled out in large, dripping, blood-red captions, provides a visual equivalent to the project's overarching formal structure—the two posters are brought together under the umbrella of a large single caption in the same way in which the two films are united through the very concept of the double-bill format.

More interesting still, the wording of the *Grindhouse* poster makes direct reference to one of the posters for *From Dusk Till Dawn* in particular. Under a black, red, and yellow painting of Salma Hayek as a vampire (she is the first to "turn" during the initial vampire attack which ushers in the second half of the film), feature the four words of the film's title, in yellow block letters, with Rodriguez's and Tarantino's names in smaller white lettering distributed symmetrically above either half of the title.¹⁸ In the *Grindhouse* poster, this is echoed by the following caption, featured in alternating red and white under the large red title which fills up the entire width of the placard: "Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez are back, but this time they're back to back!"

In terms of composition, both posters are divided into two equal halves, both visually (the posters of the two halves of *Grindhouse* mirroring each other, or Tarantino and Clooney facing each other diagonally on the poster for *From Dusk Till Dawn*) and semantically (most words come in pairs, while the title *Grindhouse* itself can be read as two discrete words of equal length). On one level, this reflects the collaborative aspect of the projects, as well as it semantically represents or echoes the double-bill structure. Furthermore, in the case of Tarantino, the graphic symmetry at play in both posters points to a duality which is engrained at the deepest level of most of his work. Thus, we might note in passing that there exists at present no feature-length film by Tarantino whose title contains more than two words (two words which sometimes echo each other in both visual and aural terms such as, most blatantly, in the case of

Consequently, where *From Dusk Till Dawn* toyed with the idea of the double-feature presentation without, however, allowing itself to transcend the boundaries of its own narrative structure, *Grindhouse* takes the project further by tying two separate films together conceptually. This formal shift finds itself reflected in the altered nature of the collaboration between the two directors. Where the first project saw them divide amongst themselves the making of a single film (writing/acting on the one hand, and directing on the other, though Tarantino's influence as a director can be felt in the

18. For a reproduction of the poster, cf. http://www.tarantino.info/wiki/index.php/File:From_dusk_till_dawn_ver3.jpg (Haselbeck).

19. Main filmography: *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Jackie Brown* (1997), *Kill Bill Vol. 1* (2003), *Kill Bill Vol. 2* (2004), *Death Proof* (2007) and *Inglorious Basterds* (2009). The phenomenon extends to films beyond the ones directed by Tarantino alone such as, for instance: co-director: *Four Rooms* (1995). Guest Director: *Sin City* (2005). Script: *True Romance* (1993). This information is taken from "The Internet Movie Database."

actors' timing and delivery throughout the film), *Grindhouse* allows them to direct a full feature each. They are now "back to back" in double-bill poster parlance: spectators can now have "more" for the price of a single ticket, but in terms of film form, a significant shift has occurred. It is this shift which I now propose to further investigate by turning to an analysis of Tarantino's *Death Proof*.

3. Conclusion: *Death Proof* and the Notion of Pure Road

During a night out in Austin, Texas, three girls encounter the psychopathic killer Stuntman Mike (Kurt Russell) who crashes his "deathproof" stunt-car into theirs at the end of the evening, killing the three of them as well as their fourth friend and another girl he had picked up earlier in a bar. Fourteen months later, in Lebanon, Tennessee, three girls borrow a white 1970 Dodge Challenger in order to perform a stunt for fun—during the stunt, Stuntman Mike catches up with them and attempts to crash their car, but they crash his instead and beat him to death.

In an article which discusses the road movie *Vanishing Point* (Richard Sarafian, 1971, U.S.) in relation to the opening section of Baudrillard's *America* essay, also titled "Vanishing Point," David Pascoe comments on a brief moment at the very beginning of the film which acts as an opening or prelude to the plot's unfolding. This moment, in fact, presents us with the last segment of the plot. Thereafter, *Vanishing Point's* narrative will unfold in flashback before reconnecting with that first sequence at the end of the film:

As [the hero—Kowalski's] Challenger heads towards the bulldozers, the black car is travelling in the opposite direction, and, as the camera swings to follow it [Pascoe forgets to mention the striking freeze-frame which splits the screen into two halves, one holding the black car, immobilized in mid-motion, while the white Challenger in the other half of the screen is slowly faded out until it has disappeared entirely, leaving only the black car to resume its trajectory once the image "restarts"], it becomes clear that it is the very same machine that Kowalski had delivered to Denver two days earlier. He seems trapped within an infinite loop. (77-78)

In many ways, *Death Proof* appears to have been constructed entirely around this single, isolated moment in Sarafian's film: the freeze frame of two cars impossibly crossing each other on the highway, one the ghost of the other, one literally eclipsing the other. I want to argue that all of *Death Proof* takes place within that split second—the image of the two cars held in mid-motion and its resolution in the respective disappearance of both cars, one instantiated at the level of the image (the fade-out), the other at that of the diegesis (driving away). Thus, in spite of remaining squarely within the conventions of the car chase movie, *Death Proof* transcends the exploration of cinematic genres at work in *From Dusk Till Dawn* or *Planet Terror*?®

20. At the time when this book is going into print, a first draft for an article by Peter Szendy has come to my attention which remarks, similarly, on the kinship between *Vanishing Point* and *Death Proof*. In "L'archi-roa^ movie, ou le routage des sens" (forthcoming in

Throughout the first half of *Death Proof*, Robert Frost's 1922 poem *Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening* is taken up by several characters as a *leitmotiv* of sorts: "The woods are lovely dark and deep/And I have promises to keep/And miles to go before I sleep." On a primary level, the lines hold the narrative function of announcing the plot's unfolding in a premonitory or oracular fashion. They are used by the girls to frighten each other, to some extent, and by Stuntman Mike to reveal something of his intentions. On a second, deeper level, *Death Proof*'s entire plot, just like that of *Vanishing Point*, can be elegantly contained within that single line: "miles to go before I sleep." Indeed, while there is no doubt that kinaesthetic pleasure continues to play a central role in the spectatorial experience of *Death Proof*, the road and driving no longer serve as vehicles for narrative advancement or as spatialized representations of generic experimentation. Instead, as suggested by the use of Frost's poem, all that remains is the bare-bone structure of travel as a "moving-through-space" or, in other words, the notion of *puré* road.

In my comparative analysis of *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Grindhouse*, I have shown how the road movie is used as an overarching structure or paradigm wherein lower genres, such as the zombie or vampire movie, are reworked. Drawing on genre theory, on the one hand, and writings in game theory on the other, I have argued that there is something unique about the road movie which allows it to integrate and reconfigure other "weaker" genres. Finally, I have suggested some ways in which *Death Proof* effectively transcends postmodern reworkings of genre in order to revitalize the road or car chase movie aesthetic.

To conclude, I want to emphasize that in the examples I have examined, the road movie is more than simply a genre amongst others. It is, in fact, an archetypal genre and, through its ability to connect spatial, temporal, structural, and narrative realms within a single film, as well as through its emphasis on the kinaesthetic pleasure of film spectatorship, it carries the potential for numerous experimental approaches reaching beyond the stage of the generic construct described by Cawelti. What the films discussed in this article underline, then, is that perhaps the road movie and, beyond that, the car movie in general, remains one of the cinema's most *alive* genres to date.

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Intermediantes vol. 19, Spring 2012), Szendy also briefly touches on the connections which exist between *Death Proof*, generic exploration and the road movie at large.

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Homeless in the Borderlands: (Re)defining the Concept of 'Home' in *The Three Burláis of Melquiádes Estrada*

MIRIAM BRANDEL

Resumen

En su proyecto de orientación transnacional, "Homeless in the Borderlands: (Re)de-fining the Concept of 'Home' in *The Three Burláis of Melquiádes Estrada*" Miriam Brandel explora el concepto de hogar en relación con las experiencias fronterizas y la representación cinematográfica. Con base en discursos fronterizos México-estadounidenses la autora renegocia la relación entre el motivo del viaje, la experiencia de la frontera como cargada de conflictos, y un sentimiento de nostalgia por el hogar ambivalente en la bien recibida cinta de Tommy Lee Jones, cruce entre *road movie* y *western*. Determinadas afirmaciones, tales como "No hay lugar como el hogar" o "No se puede regresar al hogar," enmarcan la discusión general y son el hilo conductor de la exploración de la autora respecto a las implicaciones que plantea sobre las ideas ambivalentes en relación con el proceso de formación de la identidad. Brandel intenta (re)definir el concepto de hogar como aparece en esta clase de *road movie*, dando una nueva perspectiva del hogar como un tropo de política de la identidad, así como cuestionando que sea un concepto estático.

1. Introduction: *The Three Burláis of Melquiádes Estrada*

According to Janis P. Stout, American national history "begins with voyages, of exploration or escape or migration" (qtd. in Laderman 7) and it is along these lines that we may begin to define the road movie as a distinct genre; in short, these films center around the idea of traveling, of embarking on a journey. There are, of course, many distinctive features of the road movie—the importance of the car, or other motorized vehicles; the symbol of the road; specific film aesthetics such as the traveling shot or the music soundtrack—that would need to be mentioned if this were an extensive description of the genre as such, but this is not the case.

The Three Burláis of Melquiádes Estrada does not represent the typical road movie. The car does not play a vital role in the film and neither does any other motorized vehicle. The journey that the protagonists undertake does not move along high-ways, or any roads for that matter. Instead, the protagonists ride through the desert on horseback, thus invoking one of the typical images of the preindustrial Western rather than the iconic image of motorized motion which generally constitutes the road movie. Rather than the typical traveling shot of a car speeding down the highway we en-

counter tracking shots of horses trotting in the sand; however, both images function alike in the sense that the image of the restless 'traveler' stands in the foreground. In any case, it seems as though some of the most common features that we usually associate with the genre are missing or distorted. What, then, makes this a road movie?

In order to draw a connection between *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* and the road movie genre we need to distance ourselves from, or rather venture beyond, many of the fundamental characteristics that define the modern road movie. Instead, we need to consider the most central feature of all—the importance of embarking on a journey and the act of traveling outside familiar terrain. After all, the genre can trace its origins all the way back to Homer's *Odyssey*. In other words, "road movies generally aim beyond the borders of cultural familiarity, seeking the unfamiliar for revelation, or at least for the thrill of the unknown" (Laderman 1-2). Extending this statement, Lopez defines the subject matter of the road movie as follows: "the protagonists in this type of film are either ragged individualists who make the road their home and use it for some ... purpose or challenge, or they are solitary individuals who embrace the road as a way of life" (qtd. in Laderman 17). Whereas both of these are rather limited definitions, they do contain some important keywords and phrases, such as *borders*, *the unfamiliar*, *revelation*, *the unknown*, *home*, *purpose*, *solitary individuals* and *way of life* which play a pivotal role in relation to the following analysis.

The movie *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (2005), directed by and starring Tommy Lee Jones, tells the story of an extraordinary, quite peculiar journey of three men who could not be more different from one another. I have chosen to regard the corpse of Melquiades as a third member of the group as he is always present and, even though he is dead, part of various interactions with Pete Perkins (Tommy Lee Jones), both on the journey as well as in the flashbacks. Thus, the typical road movie character structure which favors the couple is significantly altered. Whereas the movie shows a chronological structure, which is underlined by its subdivisions into different chapters ('The First Burial of Melquiades Estrada,' 'The Second Burial of Melquiades Estrada,' 'The Journey' and 'The Third Burial of Melquiades Estrada'), there are no clear-cut boundaries between these sections; instead, the film derives a lot of its tension through its entanglements of characters and events. In addition, by means of various intersecting flashbacks, the viewer is able to experience specific events through the eyes of different characters. Besides these metaphorical border crossings we also encounter the actual, physical crossing of the border. Contrary to the common road movie, which tends to take place in confined national frameworks, the Mexican-American border is actually crossed by the traveling group, thus transforming the film's national context into a transnational one. It is this fact, among others, that I want to stress in my following discussion of the concept of 'home' as it gains new momentum in the film's borderland aesthetics.

In the film, Melquiades Estrada is accidentally murdered by Mike Norton, a ruthless Border Patrol officer who has just been re-located to the Texan United States-Mexico Border. Appalled by the dismissive behavior of the police force, Pete Perkins,

Melquiades's best friend and employer, sets out to grant his friend the peace and quiet that any decent man deserves. Having promised Melquiades a burial in Jimenez, Mexico, if anything should ever happen to him, Perkins kidnaps Mike Norton, makes him dig up Melquiades's grave and the two men along with Melquiades's corpse embark on a journey towards Mexico. On this journey, the trio is faced with several seemingly surreal encounters, for example an old, blind, American man, living alone in the desert, listening to a Mexican radio station; a group of illegal immigrants, one of whom actually takes Pete, Mike, and Melquiades across the border to Mexico, thus saving Mike Norton's life; and a group of Mexican cowboys, watching an American soap opera in the middle of the Mexican desert. Ultimately, the three men reach Jimenez, an imaginary place which represents 'home' for Melquiades Estrada.

Laderman states, "the driving force propelling most road movies ... is an embrace of the journey as a means of cultural critique" (1) and it is in this vein that I will carry out my evaluation of the concept of 'home.' Here I shall argue that 'home' denotes not only a place; it may also represent a state of mind. However, a sense of 'homelessness' seems to be an inevitable consequence of living in a world in which borders are constantly shifting and being re-defined. Home is not necessarily a fixed place to which we can easily return in a globalized world; it should rather be understood as a space that is constantly in flux. In the face of an increasingly mobile society, home appears to be everywhere and nowhere at once and thus one might ask: Are all of us inevitably becoming citizens of the world? Where is home, when we are caught between the assertions that "there's no place like home" and "you can't go home again" (qtd. in Cohan/Hark 271) and, finally, what are the implications of these seemingly ambivalent ideas in relation to the process of identity formation?

In the following, I aim to shed light on these seemingly contradictory views as I look at the main protagonists of *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* and the ways in which they do or do not find a place to call 'home' in the Mexican-American borderlands. After discussing the general idea that one is, in one way or another, homeless in the borderlands, I will consider the journey that the traveling trio undertakes—a journey of self-discovery, revenge, redemption, friendship, and loyalty. By relating selected events and encounters to the concept of home and the underlying process of forming an identity under less than stable circumstances, I hope to (re)define the concept of home as it appears in this particular kind of road movie, hence yielding a new perspective on home as a trope for identitarian politics as well as furthering the conception of home in the road movie.

2. Homeless in the Borderlands

The truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started to make up our lives, armed only with what we have and are, we understand that the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that "there's no place like home," but rather there is no longer any such place as home: except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us ...

—Rushdie 57

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines "home," *inter alia*, as "one's place of residence," "the social unit formed by a family living together," "a familiar or usual setting: congenial environment," "a place of origin" and "one's own country" ("home"). Additionally, 'home' may be described as a place of refuge or residence and the house or apartment that we live in may also be called our home. Looking at these different descriptions, we get an understanding of what is commonly meant when we speak about home. However, as we will see in the following, the concept of home is more complex than it seems, especially when we think of it in relation to present-day theoretical constructs of identity, mobility, and borderland discourses.

Urry observes that philosopher Gaston Bachelard "specifically considers the nature of the 'house' and argues that it is not to be seen as a purely physical object. In particular, it is the site within which one's imagination and daydreaming can take place and be given free rein" (11). In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard states: "On whatever theoretical horizon we examine it, the house image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being" (xxxvi). Thus, by describing the house as a meaningful, memory-imbued space, Bachelard "develops a conception of space that is qualitative and heterogeneous, rather than abstract, empty and static" (Urry 11). Contrasting these assertions with the definitions of home listed above, we see that home is not merely a place of residence, one's country of origin, nor is it necessarily bound to family. Instead, home may also be considered in terms of a state of mind or "a metaphor for intimacy [or familiarity]" (Urry 11); as Bachelard states, "if we look at it intimately, the humblest dwelling has beauty" (4).

As the quote at the beginning of this chapter claims, "there is no longer any such place as home: except ... for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us" (Rushdie 57). This argument has quite prominently been taken up by Homi K. Bhabha, who, keeping in tone with the quote by Salman Rushdie, asserts that "our construction of identity is necessarily fluid and imaginary" (Huddart 70). We find this argument in many of Bhabha's writings, especially in relation to his theory of the so-called Third Space in which new, hybrid identities are formed. As Bhabha states, "it is that Third Space, though unrepresentable itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture [and identity] have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized and read anew" (37).

In my opinion, the concepts of identity and home are inextricably linked because while our identity marks who we are, home portrays where we come from and where we (supposedly) belong and thus I believe that many theories that relate to the various processes of identity formation can also be applied to theories about home and vice versa. Therefore, I would argue that if we speak of fluid or hybrid identities in a highly mobilized world, we may also consider the concept of home under this premise and consider it as a space in flux where boundaries and the feeling of being able to dwell in one place are constantly put into question. As Cohan and Hark tellingly point out: "disassociation is an intriguing starting point for analysis not only because it suggests the necessity of an imbalance between internal and external space but also because, in the context of the road movie, it highlights a juxtaposition between place-based sedentarism and disengaged mobility" (351).

According to Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry, one of the most important predispositions underlying the cosmopolitan way of life is extensive mobility; a practice that they further subdivide into three kinds of 'travel,' namely physical, imaginative, and virtual travel (114). Throughout the following analysis, we will encounter all three forms of mobilization and these findings will yield an interesting aspect to my (re)definition of home as they will further add to Szerszynski and Urry's assertion that "humans are increasingly seeing and experiencing the world from afar, 'at home' only within the multiple mobilities of late modernity" (127).

In the film *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, two men embark on a journey to return the corpse of Melquiades Estrada to a place called Jimenez on Mexican soil. However, as will become clear in the following analysis, the act of traveling in the Mexican-American borderlands transcends the physical and should also be viewed as a mirror of the protagonists' states of mind as they are on the move; "important here is not so much the crossing of [material] borders as the traversal of space" (Laderman 14). In the following chapters, I will delineate the protagonists' journey through the borderlands while explicitly focusing on the ways in which this journey articulates the characters' search for 'home.' After all, "if the road movie is in some deep sense about the road itself, and the journey taken, more than any particular destination, it still is a genre obsessed with home" (Cohan/Hark 271).

3. The Journey

The act of returning Melquiades's corpse to Jimenez turns out to be a journey full of grotesque and often fantastic episodes and, as in most road movies, "these periodic episodes usually serve to enhance the main narrative and thematic thrust: the journey itself (Laderman 15). The group is faced with strange characters, such as an old blind man who asks them to kill him, as well as many other encounters with the 'other' which, in the context of the Mexican-American borderlands, is represented most readily by the Mexican illegal immigrant. Every detour, or encounter with the unfamiliar, can be read as a forward motion in the characters' search for home. Drawing on

Laderman, "the journey narrative can gain dramatic intrigue from unexpected plot twists resulting from such intermissions (meeting some new characters, committing a crime), or from simply developing the travelers' relationship" (15).

After finding out who killed his friend, Melquiades Estrada, Pete Perkins sets out to seek revenge and grant his friend a dignified burial in his country of origin. He hides out in front of Mike Norton's house, waits until it is dark and then violently kidnaps him. Mike is bound with his own handcuffs, dragged out into the night and forced to dig up Melquiades's carelessly built grave. Along with the corpse, the men drive to Pete's cottage, drag the slowly rotting body inside and lay it on the bed that Melquiades had occupied when working for Pete. Pete tells Mike: "Melquiades lived here. That was his bed. Kept his clothes right over there. And that was his plate. And that was his cup. ... These was his work clothes." He makes Mike drink out of Melquiades's cup and change from his border patrol uniform into Melquiades's work clothes. In symbolic terms, it is at this point that Mike is first put into the position of Melquiades, or any other illegal immigrant for that matter—a symbolic transformation that will be delineated at several other points throughout my analysis. Furthermore, the passage above very clearly evokes the typical image of what we consider home in terms of its definitions in the dictionary; in many ways, Pete's cottage constituted home for Melquiades in the United States.

In line with this idea, Pete remembers the lazy afternoon when Melquiades first showed him a picture of his family back in Mexico: "The oldest is Elizabeth ... she must be fourteen. And Yesenia is probably twelve. And this little guy is Aaron. He's going to be a damn good cowboy. And this ... this is Evelia. Evelia Camargo, my wife. Promise me one thing, Pete. If I die over here, carry me back to my family and bury me in my village. I don't want to be buried on this side among all the fucking billboards." Again, we encounter the typical illustration of home, namely that 'home' is your family and your village in your country of origin. Moreover, he explains the route to Jimenez and hands Pete a little piece of paper with a little map, thus illustrating home in geographical terms: "We're here, right? Go down to Ojinaga and head south. Then turn east and follow the sierra until you come to Coahuila. Then you'll come to a town called El Toston. Between El Toston and El Nacimiento, there's a little place called Jimenez. My house is there." These scenes juxtapose Melquiades's two 'homes'—the one with Pete in Texas and the one in Jimenez, Mexico with his wife Evelia and their children. Home, in both cases, is a physical location housing those closest to Melquiades, yet whereas Pete's cottage appears as Melquiades's home away from home, Melquiades apparently views his real home as being in Jimenez; an idea which is emphasized by the mention of the town El Nacimiento as this name literally translates into 'nativity' or 'birth' and thus leads us back to the dictionary's definition of home as one's "place of origin."

In the next scene, we see the trio leaving the cottage to embark on their journey towards Mexico and immediately following this we are transported to the next morning and encounter the police force trying to set up a plan for how they want to

search for Pete and his hostage. This appears as a type of role reversal because whereas we usually suspect illegal immigrants traveling through the borderlands, trying to make their way across the border into the U.S., we now encounter two Americans trying to make it across the border to Mexico. One of the rangers says: "We're going to start with the Llano Largo, the Sierra del Diablo and the Arruyo Negro." Again, we might consider the English translations of these places—the "vast lowlands" (the Llano Largo), the "mountains of the devil" (the Sierra del Diablo) and the "black creek" (the Arruyo Negro)—and relate them to the meaningful open space of the desert; an idea that is underlined by panoramic shots of the desert landscape which present it as a space of uncertainty. On the one hand, it appears as a place of danger and exile; an idea that is emphasized by the mention of the Sierra del Diablo and the Arruyo Negro. At the same time, however, it may be considered in terms of a type of space representing the promise of a new homeland where identities may be (re)created; an image that correlates with the reference to the Llano Largo. The feeling of uncertainty is further underlined by Mike's constant exclamations as they are riding through the vast landscape of the borderlands: "Where are we going? There's nowhere to go, man." As we will see in the following, the path to Jimenez is not an easy one; Pete and Mike are constantly threatened with starvation and dependent on the hospitality and kindness of strangers, whereas Melquiades is in desperate need to be buried as his body is rotting away. Furthermore, we will come to find that all the typical, dictionary-based occurrences of home, or homely atmospheres that will be and have been hitherto discussed are of an ephemeral nature.

4. The Blind American

The first surreal encounter occurs in the deserted borderlands as the traveling trio comes across a little cottage of an old, blind American; a scene that seems both comic and disturbing at once. In the film, we hear the sound of a Mexican radio announcer and then see the group making its approach to the cottage. Assuming that whoever lives in this place speaks Spanish, as he is listening to a Mexican radio station, Pete approaches the stranger with "Hola" instead of "Hello." The old man answers: "I don't speak Spanish. What do you want?" And he continues: "I like listening to this Mexican radio station. I can't understand anything, but I like the way Spanish sounds, don't you?" After Pete devotedly takes care of his friend Melquiades by filling his corpse with anti-freeze to keep it from rotting—an act that looks a lot like an intravenous injection commonly administered in hospitals—the old man yells "Ya'll come and eat" and the three men sit down together for prayer and dinner as if they were a family. During dinner, Pete inquires about the blind man's life and finds out that the man has a son who comes to visit and bring him food every month. However, as the men are getting ready to leave in order to continue their journey, the old man asks them for a favor: "I wanted to ask you ... if you can shoot me. My son ain't coming back. ... He told me he had cancer. He told me to go back to town with him. But I don't want to go

because I've always lived here. ... I don't want to offend God by killing myself. It's a problem. ... You're good people. You need to go ahead and shoot me" whereas Pete replies: "We don't want to offend God either." This scene of departure is quite emotional. Pete and Mike leave the old, lonely man standing in front of his house and one may actually feel sad that they do not grant the old man his wish. In any case, this brief encounter yields interesting insights in regard to the concept of home.

The fact that the old man chooses to listen to a Mexican radio station instead of an American one because he likes "the way Spanish sounds" may be linked to the idea of imaginative travel that Szerszynski and Urry put forth. To borrow from them, imaginative travel means "to be transported elsewhere through the images of places and peoples encountered in the media" (115-16). Whereas this concept is typically discussed in relation to the medium of television, I believe that it can be applied to this instance as well. The old man denies American culture; he chooses to listen to a Mexican radio station even though he does not understand Spanish and he vehemently refuses to listen to his son and move back to town which shows that apparently he would rather die alone than live in modern mainstream society. Still, it would be false to claim that he has left all cultural values behind because religion—exemplified in the pre-dinner prayer and the fear to offend God by committing suicide—apparently plays an important role in his life. Whereas this fact shows that no matter where we go or choose to make a home for ourselves, we may retain some (cultural) values or customs from our previous home(s), the character of the old man also shows that these values are not necessarily sufficient to bind us to that culture.

In any case, the old man has chosen to (physically) escape the American way of life to seek refuge in the deserted landscape of the borderlands; yet his lonely existence and his wish to die show that his imaginative act of traveling does not lead him home. Instead it expresses his desire for a transcendent sense of belonging after death. This in turn leads me to conclude that he rather feels homeless than at home in the world and that neither mobility in form of imaginative travel nor sedentarism is able to constitute a sense of home for him.

5. Of Rattlesnakes and Illegal Immigrants

As the traveling trio gets closer to the Mexico-United States border, we encounter more and more images that are related to the issues surrounding illegal border crossings and these images occur in many different forms; everyone seems to be under the watch of some form of La Migra. The character of Mike Norton, for example, has been put into the position of the illegal immigrant. Not only is he wearing Melquiades's clothes; he is also barefoot as Pete has taken away his shoes so that he is less likely to try to escape. This image is taken to extremes when Pete's horse spooks, thus trapping him under it, and Mike tries to escape. He fashions a pair of provisional shoes out of his torn up jeans and runs away but it is not long that Pete, now back on his horse and thus in a far more privileged position, tracks him down. What follows are several shots

that show Pete in a superior, powerful position—he functions as La Migra and Mike embodies the refugee. Considering that Mike is a Border Patrol officer, this illustration of role reversal is quite convincing. Thus, the desert landscape surrounding the border is portrayed as a "void in which long-established meanings vanish, the insane heat drives images to haze and nothing is as it once seemed" (qtd. in Laderman 14); an idea that is also emphasized by shots of Mike in the desert, getting weaker and becoming delirious. Yet Mike is not the only character who is pictured in the position of the fugitive. Whereas Pete apparently patrols Mike, he himself is under the watch of a higher power, namely the police force. We are reminded of this when Mike says "I promise, if you let me go, I will not press charges." Even though this seems rather comical, considering that Mike is at the mercy of Pete and not in any position to make any demands, his comment reminds us that Pete, by kidnapping Mike, has become a criminal who is running from the law.

These perceptions are even more clearly articulated when the men come upon actual Mexican illegal immigrants who are trying to make their way across the Mexico-United States border. When Mike, in the course of his attempted escape, hides out in a cave, he is bitten by a rattlesnake. A group of illegal immigrants finds him and tries to identify him. Looking at his torn up appearance, they conclude: "He looks too fucked up to be a gringo" which further underlines my assumption that Mike has slowly been transformed, both mentally and physically, into another person. Realizing that Mike has been bitten and might die, Pete asks the group of Mexicans where he can get some help. One of the men replies: "I know a girl who is good with herbs. Maybe she can cure him. But she lives across the border. ... The border is not far. But La Migra is all around." One of the men agrees to make his way back across the border to Mexico to help Pete and Mike cross. As they sit on top of a mountain looking down at the border crossing, the Mexican notes: "I've never crossed people from this side to that side, much less on horses"; a comment which underlines the fact that this scenario is a rather uncommon occurrence. At this moment, we see a shot of La Migra as they catch a group of illegal immigrants trying to make it across the border into the United States. This image aptly juxtaposes the different directions of possible border crossings because, as we come to see in the next scene, the nameless Mexican, Pete, and, of course Melquiades's corpse, cross the border quite effortlessly. That Mike's process of transformation is not complete shows in his vehement resistance to cross. He ends up being dragged through the Rio Grande by a rope around his neck.

Therefore, the trio has successfully made it to Mexico and two of the three men have officially left what we would refer to as their homeland and as we will come to find, this border crossing and resulting change of scenery propels the main narrative of the search for home in several ways. As Laderman states, "The ability to cross borders ... becomes the central feature of the genre's *mise en scene*. To cross a state or country line is to leave the familiar behind, to venture into the new and unknown" (14).

6. On the Other Side

Once in Mexico, Mike is taken to Mariana, the girl who is supposed to cure him with herbs. Referring back to the previously mentioned entanglements of characters, it turns out that Mariana is the same girl whose nose was broken by Mike in a ruthless act of violence committed in the name of his job as a Border Patrol officer. Of course, she initially refuses to help the man who beat her up so terribly but after Pete begs her to reconsider, stating that he needs Mike alive, she agrees and begins the treatment. This unexpected clash of characters may represent the increasingly interconnected world that we currently inhabit and whereas we often speak of the media and how it is through technological advances that we have become inextricably linked to one another, this scene shows that one should not overlook the fact that personal interactions, be they ones of kindness or malevolence, continue to be vital and, in fact, most influential.

While Mike is recovering at Mariana's house, Pete goes out for drinks at a Mexican bar. The atmosphere in this scene is rather tense but at the same time it appears as though Pete is relieved to finally have arrived in Mexico; to be somewhere far away from his old life. This feeling is intensified when Pete calls Rachel, the married woman with whom he has an affair back in Texas. He tells her: "Rachel. I want you to come to Mexico. Marry me. Be my wife." She refuses because she is married to Bob but one can clearly sense her unhappiness. Rachel appears to be stuck in her little world which consists of pouring coffee and cheating on her husband. It is a monotonous, unhappy existence but she is not able to leave this life behind as she is bound to it by the bond of marriage. Still, I argue that Rachel does not feel at 'home' in her life; she merely endures her existence and experiences intimacy only by sleeping around. Yet, what is even more striking in this scene is the fact that Pete has this idea of marrying Rachel now that he is on Mexican turf. The idea of marriage is obviously one that is closely connected to the concept of home and thus one may derive from this scene that Pete, now that his best friend Melquiades is dead, sees a greater possibility to make a home for himself in Mexico than in America. However, the fact that Rachel declines his proposal quickly shatters Pete's attempt to build a home with her.

At this point, I want to refer back to Szerszynski and Urry's predisposition of extensive mobility as this scene embodies yet another type of 'travel,' namely virtual travel, which is defined as "transcending geographical and often social distance through information and communication technology" (116). Yet again, we have to accept that virtual travel does not succeed in transcending geographical distance. In the case of Pete and Rachel, personal interaction is vital but absent and the attempt of traveling virtually via telecommunication fails as it does not bring the persons involved closer together. Whereas the old, blind man whom the group encounters in the beginning of their journey exemplifies the act of traveling elsewhere imaginatively, yet only in an attempt to escape his actual existence, Pete uses the telephone to communicate with Rachel but does not manage to transcend geographical or social distance.

Thus, both instances of traveling do not lead to a feeling of being at home in the world but rather emphasize a sense of homelessness.

After Rachel hangs up the phone, a drunk and frustrated Pete stumbles into the shed where Melquiades's corpse is leaning against a wall. He uncovers the dead man's face and starts speaking to him affectionately: "We'll get you home pretty soon, Melquiades. Any day now. You look like hell, son." At this point, Pete starts to brush Melquiades's hair but as he does, all the hair comes out. This devastates Pete and he breaks down next to his best friend's corpse. This is an emotional scene in which the relationship between Pete and Melquiades is nicely portrayed. They share a special bond and it appears as though, back when Melquiades was still alive, Pete constituted the intimacy of home for Melquiades and vice versa. All throughout the film, we see how much Pete cares for Melquiades, not only in the numerous flashbacks which show the close and friendly relationship of the two men back when Melquiades was still alive and working for Pete but especially in the way that Pete takes care of Melquiades's rotting body throughout the journey—from fighting off the ants feasting on the corpse to filling the dead body with anti-freeze to brushing Melquiades's hair. And whereas the act of returning Melquiades home takes on a whole new meaning when we find out that the place where he wants to be buried does not actually exist, it appears as though the journey to Jimenez has a tremendous effect on the perceptions of 'home' and identity of all the parties involved.

After Mike feels better and Mariana has poured hot coffee over his wound to take revenge, we encounter yet another brief scene that portrays the idea of family. Pete and Mike sit together with Mariana and her family and help with the preparation of corn and just as we saw in the dinner scene with the old man, the image of family and harmony is evoked. Yet, just as before, the men have to keep moving which renders this image of home as merely transitory.

7. "There Will Always Be a River Valley For Us"

As they continue their journey through the wilderness of Mexico, following along the route that Melquiades drew for Pete when he asked to be buried in Jimenez, the narrative gains more thematic thrust as the men come across a group of Mexican cowboys. These cowboys are sitting on chairs, watching an American soap opera on a television that they have put on the back of their pick-up truck and this image appears like a small living room out in the desert. Just like the old man who did not speak any Spanish but still chose to listen to a Mexican radio station, these men are watching a program in English—a language they do not speak. Pete and Mike are welcomed in a very friendly manner; the cowboys invite them to have coffee, share their alcohol, give Pete directions how to get to El Toston and also give them some meat so that they will not starve. As Pete is talking to one of the cowboys, Mike sits down with the other cowboys and watches the American soap opera with them. Coincidentally, it is the same episode and the exact same dialogue that was playing in the background of a

rather unromantic sexual encounter between Mike and his wife, Lou Ann, when they first moved to Texas. In the scene, a married couple is reminiscing about River Valley:

Woman: "We used to be so happy. Don't you remember when we were living in River Valley?"

Man: "Yes, darling. I remember River Valley. We were happy then and we'll be happy again. There will always be a River Valley for us."

Woman: "I hope so, Johnny. I hope so."

When Mike recognizes the dialogue, he happily exclaims: "I've seen that. I know this one"; he seems quite joyous to see and hear something that reminds him of his home back in the United States; first and foremost it reminds him of Lou Ann who used to be a constant in his life before the accident occurred and he was kidnapped. Yet, realizing that he is far away from home and that things between him and Lou Ann will never be as they were before, he starts to cry.

The cowboys watch an American television program in a language that they do not understand and this instance may again be related to the concept of imaginative travel which Szerszynski and Uny discuss most prominently in relation to the medium of television, asserting that "the billion or so of TVs de-sever local, national and global worlds through the forms of 'imaginative travel' that they afford" (116). In this case, the national border between Mexico and the U.S. is crossed in the sense that by watching this American soap, these cowboys are actively, though only imaginatively, taking part in American culture and we may assume that they watch it to momentarily escape their existence in Mexico and envision a different life across the border. After all, through television, the outside world is reflected into people's homes and vice versa. It should be mentioned here that we also see this reflection, or mirroring in relation to Lou Ann's character. When Lou Ann and Mike see the above-mentioned soap opera scene in their own home, it appears almost as though the dialogue on TV could just as fittingly be uttered between them; the soap opera seems to reflect their new life in Texas and vice versa. However, in both of these instances of imaginative traveling the characters do not encounter a feeling of belonging. All of their futures are uncertain; the cowboys may or may not cross the Mexico-United States border some day and at this point in the film it is quite clear that there will be no River Valley for Lou Ann and Mike.

All in all, this intermission enhances the journey of the traveling trio and enriches the main narrative in its portrayal of being homeless in the borderlands. As was also the case in the delineation of the previous encounters with new characters, this scene, too, fleetingly evokes the image of finding a temporary 'home' because for just a short moment, the travelers are invited into the living room of the Mexican cowboys.

8. Jimenez: A Place "Filled with Beauty"

In one way, to imagine a homeland is actually to imagine something very solid that will ground and guarantee your identity. Feeling like your home is elsewhere can lead you to imagine a homeland that is a pure, untainted place to start again.

—Huddart 70

Traveling through Mexico, following the directions that Melquiades gave Pete, Pete is sure that they are moving along the right track and getting closer to Jimenez. Though it seems that no matter whom he asks for further directions, no one seems to know a place called Jimenez. After unsuccessfully asking several inhabitants about Jimenez, Pete starts to ask people about Evelia. As nobody is familiar with this name, either, he shows people the picture that Melquiades gave to him of his wife Evelia and his children. To his surprise, Pete is told that the name of the woman in the photo is actually Rosa and not Evelia but even this revelation does not discourage Pete. He goes to Rosa's home and tells her that her husband, Melquiades, has passed away but she apparently does not know the person about whom he is talking. Pete keeps saying "He was a good friend" and as Rosa sees his desperation, she eventually tells him to go see a man by the name of Don Casimiro as he is renowned for knowing everyone in the village. Yet, as we might expect at this point in the story, Casimiro has never heard of Melquiades Estrada either, nor does he know a place called Jimenez: "No. It doesn't exist around here. I know for sure. It doesn't exist." Hence, it is clear that Jimenez does not actually exist and neither was Rosa Melquiades's wife. Still, Pete is determined to bring Melquiades to Jimenez; there appears to be no doubt in his mind that he will succeed in returning his friend 'home,' whatever and wherever that may be. No matter how much Mike tries to discourage Pete by exclaiming "There's no fucking Jimenez, man! Don't you see? There's no Jimenez. ... Your friend lied to you," Pete persists: "It exists. ... No he didn't."

"Jimenez is one hell of a beautiful place. It's a little ranch between two hills. The air is so clear there ... you can almost hug the mountains with your arms. A stream of clear, clean, fresh water bubbles up right out of the rocks. If you go to Jimenez ... I swear your heart will break with so much beauty." This description of Jimenez by Melquiades is presented in the form of another flashback which both reinforces and makes us sympathize with Pete's conviction that Jimenez does indeed exist. Continuing their voyage through the Mexican countryside, Pete suddenly stops, looks at Melquiades's drawing and, convinced that he has found Jimenez, leads the way towards a ruined little cottage. Certain that this is the place that Melquiades was talking about, he holds the map up for Mike to see and says: "This is Jimenez. It's just like Mel said it was. That good water. ... And that's the house. The store is right over there. The graveyard. The garden's right there. See? Just like that, right there." Almost immediately, Mike and Pete start to rebuild the ruined house by putting a roof on it

and fixing its broken-down walls. When they are done, Pete hangs up a sign that reads "Jimenez, Coahuila" and with this final, very symbolic act, they have erected a physical home for Melquiades. As the men sit side by side, looking at their creation, we get the sense that the relationship between Pete and Mike has changed from a purely hateful one into one of mutual acceptance; after all, they have been traveling together for quite some time at this point and both seem to have changed to a degree over the course of the journey. This moment of harmony is disrupted, however, when Pete commands Mike to dig a grave for Melquiades. It is at this point that the narrative seems to come full circle; the journey began with Mike digging up Melquiades's grave in Texas and now ends with him digging a new grave in Coahuila, Mexico. After Melquiades is buried (for the third time in the film) Pete drags Mike to a tree near the cottage, makes him kneel down in front of it, puts up the picture of Melquiades's family and orders him to ask Melquiades for forgiveness. After some initial reluctance, Mike starts to cry and eventually succumbs: "I'm sorry! I swear to God I'm sorry. I swear to God. I swear to God. I actually did not mean to kill him. It was a mistake. I didn't want it to happen. It hurts me and I regret it. Every single day. Forgive me. Forgive me ... Melquiades ... for taking your life. Forgive me." In the next shot, we see Mike sleeping peacefully, leaning against one of the brick walls of Melquiades's house, which can be seen as a symbol of Mike's redemption; the redemption that Lou Ann claimed he would never come to know.

After this intense episode which clearly shows the transformation that Mike Norton has undergone from the beginning of the journey until this point of the narrative, we encounter a beautiful night shot of Pete, standing off, illuminated only by a small bonfire; an image that clearly evokes the typical image of the lonesome, pensive cowboy. The characters have reached the end of their journey; Melquiades has been returned to his 'home,' Pete has taken revenge on Mike and the latter has found redemption. But have any of the characters really found their way 'home'? This question is one that the protagonists themselves address directly at the end of the film. When Pete tells Mike that he is free to go, the latter seems confused and lost and hence he asks: "Where?," seemingly suspecting that no one will be waiting for him back in Texas. Pete replies: "To your wife. Wherever," not knowing that Lou Ann has left Mike and moved back to Cincinnati. The fact that he says "Wherever" clearly shows that Pete, just like Mike, does not know where to go from here. Mike adds: "I always ... I always thought you'd end up killing me." Pete, however, ignores this and simply says: "You can keep the horse ... son." As Pete is leaving, Mike stays on the ground, stranded in frozen uncertainty, not knowing what to do next. Eventually he shouts "You gonna be all right?" in Pete's direction but he receives no reply.

It appears as though the only figure who experiences some sort of homecoming is the corpse of Melquiades Estrada, although we must remember that this is an imaginary home; it is a 'home' that he has dreamed up in his mind and which his best friend has accordingly created for him. Referring back to Rushdie, 'home' can no longer be considered in terms of a place that we can easily return to. In the modern world.

'home' is a personal space that we create for ourselves and that other people make up for us and this idea is most clearly exemplified in the way that Pete creates the 'home' that Melquiades has previously *created* for himself. Melquiades's imaginary homecoming is thus juxtaposed with the homelessness of Pete and Mike, who are left wandering in the middle of Mexico. This type of open-ended narrative is quite typical for the road movie genre and it particularly strengthens the notion that the borderlands represent a territory of uncertainty in which one is constantly faced with re-defining one's sense of home and identity. To borrow from Cohan and Hark, in most road movies, we do not encounter a true homecoming; "the 'hero' [is left] on the road, wandering" (49).

9. Conclusion: (Re)defining the Concept of 'Home'

... home is no longer just one place. It is locations.
—bell hooks (148)

Cohan and Hark claim that in many road movies "homecoming does not resolve the search that structures the film" (49) and this assertion certainly holds true for the protagonists in the film *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*. In fact, it appears that only one of the characters in the film actually experiences a type of homecoming, namely the corpse of Melquiades Estrada. All of the other characters in the film who depend on their own capacity to act remain in one way or another homeless in the borderlands and this "homelessness is real as well as metaphorical" (Huddart 79). Having encountered several temporary homes in the borderland which constitutes the space between the United States and Mexico, Pete and Mike are left forlorn with nowhere and no one to return to. To borrow from Laderman, what the protagonists are faced with is "the difficulty—shared by the Prodigal Son and, more recently, Thomas Wolfe's George Webber—of ever being able to 'go home again'" (6)—or, as I argue, of ever being able to go home at all.

Throughout my analysis, I have repeatedly drawn on the three kinds of travel proposed by Szerszynski and Urry, yet it appears as though only one of the types, namely physical/bodily travel has succeeded in truly transcending geographical as well as social distance. Mike Norton has been physically put in the position of an illegal immigrant and made his way across the border and it is only through this experience that he was able to find his redemption. Pete Perkins sought revenge and he got it by undertaking a journey through the borderlands. And, finally, Melquiades's corpse was physically taken and buried in Jimenez and in this way his body made it 'home'. What these findings suggest, then, is that the only successful way of traveling is bodily travel and it is in the genre of the road movie that this form of travel is most vividly portrayed. As characters embark on journeys propelled by motives such as rebellion or self-discovery, among other things, these films are not only concerned with the act of traveling but also with the act of arriving or returning home. Therefore, we can con-

elude that whereas *The Three Burláís of Melquiades Estrada* diverges from the typical modern road movie in many respects, it nevertheless embodies three of its most central themes: the journey, the quest for home, and the search for identity.

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El *road movie* en México: hacia el cronotopo del viaje

ÁLVARO A. FERNÁNDEZ

Abstract

Álvaro A. Fernández, in his essay "El *road movie* en México: hacia el cronotopo del viaje," explores two particular cases of Mexican road movies: Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* and Carlos Bolado's *Bajo California. El límite del tiempo*. As a theo-retical-methodological basis he resorts to the concept of "chronotope" introduced by Bakhtin in his studies of the novel and expands its use to analyze other types of narratives such as the road movie. Fernández tests how different narrative instances can expose a series of spatial and temporary relations of the story and how small chronotopes are articulated and tied to the vertebral column of the journey's chronotope; finally, he pursues the question of how micro-histories relate to each other and are narrated to construct a space-and-time correlation that might affect more the reality or the historical world of the spectator than the story that is viewed on the screen.

Con este trabajo pretendo aprovechar el camino andado por M. Bajtín al introducir el concepto "cronotopo" aplicado a la novela, y ahora al *road movie*, para dar cuenta en casos particulares de "la conexión intrínseca de las relaciones temporales y espaciales que se expresan artísticamente" en la obra (Bajtín 84); lo que nos sugiere ciertos nexos entre esa relación espacio-temporal que se va fraguando en el mundo representado en pantalla, dicho sea de paso, en diálogo continuo con el espectador.

El cronotopo es una categoría de la forma y el contenido, es el centro organizador de los acontecimientos. Percibe el tiempo como cuarta dimensión del espacio, por lo que se convierte en una herramienta útil para deconstruir las categorías del *road movie* y mostrar sus arbitrariedades -como lo mencionan Alexandra Gancer et al.

Se insiste en que los cronotopos de cada género definen el tipo de eventos que se narran, la forma y la naturaleza de los personajes y el tipo de transformaciones que experimentan. Al cronotopo pertenece el sentido que moldea la narración. Dice M. Bajtín:

Es el lugar donde se atan y desatan los nudos argumentales... Puede decirse sin problema que a ellos pertenece el sentido que da forma a la narración. El tiempo se vuelve efectivamente palpable y visible; el cronotopo hace que los eventos narrativos se concreticen, los encarna... Un evento puede ser comunicado, se convierte en información, permite que uno pueda proporcionar datos precisos respecto al lugar y tiempo de su acontecer... Pero el evento no se convierte en una figura. Es precisamente el cronotopo el que proporciona el ámbito esencial para la manifestación, la representatividad de los eventos. (250)

Así, con el fin de poner a prueba y ver la pertinencia de esta categoría, hago referencia a cintas paradigmáticas del *road movie* mexicano y a determinados componentes de estas películas que toman el camino como elemento central de la narrativa. El camino también se convierte -según David Laderman- en "un símbolo del curso de la vida, del movimiento del deseo, y la atracción tanto de la libertad como del destino" (2).

El cronotopo, en tanto herramienta teórica ayuda a definir los códigos propios del género en aras de un concepto cinematográfico, ya que como lo entiende Gilies Deleuze, "una teoría del cine no es una teoría 'sobre' el cine, sino sobre los conceptos que el cine suscita y que a su vez guardan relación con otros conceptos que corresponden a otras prácticas" (370). De tal manera el *roadmovie* puede considerarse un tipo de concepto cinematográfico, es decir, "un tipo específico de itinerario narrativo (la carretera) y un tipo específico de producción de la imagen (el cine)" (Correa 294),¹ que implica una distinción entre *trayecto* (orientado hacia su punto de llegada), *itinerario* (trayecto previamente trazado) y *recorrido*.² En todo caso, las dimensiones de los grandes cronotopos que consolidan al *road movie* materializan la experiencia y comprensión de un tipo de películas que construyen determinados significados para el espectador, un sujeto sobre todo forjado en prácticas posmodernas.

El *road movie* ha tenido un intenso cultivo en los perímetros del *videohome*, siendo a veces proyectado en cines de *segunda* y para "público fácil," pero sobre todo distribuido en formato DVD tanto en México como en Estados Unidos. Por el contrario son mucho menos las cintas de este género que circulan en los circuitos de festivales o en los grandes corporativos de salas cinematográficas, sea Cinépolis, Cinemex o, pensando en la exportación transoceánica, en cines de Asia o Europa.

Ciertamente las tendencias temáticas, iconográficas, decorados, recursos expresivos, sistemas de estrellas, de producción, de distribución y de exhibición, dan luz para delinear el género mexicanizado, sobre todo a finales de los setenta y en los ochenta con sus propios cronotopos del viaje y carretera, época en que incluso surgieron cintas que nutren la mitología nacional tales como *Lola la frailer* (1983), de donde surge la heroína mexicana por antonomasia, seguidas por un cúmulo de títulos y sagas donde aparecen por igual los hermanos Almada que todo tipo de vengadores, narcotraficantes, *outsiders* y demás fugitivos o perseguidores.

Ya fuera de la condición del *videohome* -más que nada fronterizo (véase Iglesias)-, pocos directores de renombre han puesto su grano de arena para la construcción de este concepto, aunque cabe decir que sería difícil hablar de un género de tradición, puesto que hablar de *road movie* mexicano, es referir a un género poco explotado por sus cineastas y escasamente asimilado como tal por el espectador que no acude a los circuitos cinematográficos de segunda.

Podrían contarse sólo una veintena de películas, sobre todo producidas en las últimas dos décadas, aunque es posible rastrear elementos del *road movie* nacional desde

1. La idea, como podemos ver, está basada en los presupuestos de Gilies Deleuze.

2. Concepción de André Gardies que es citado por Gérard Imbert (294).

que Luis Buñuel realizó *Subida al cielo* hace sesenta años. De esta manera, resaltan títulos que deliberadamente apuestan por el género basados en sus tópicos pero aterrizados en el cliché caricaturizado, como es el caso de *40 días* (2008); otros menos desafortunados pero con poca trascendencia estética o comercial como *El camino largo a Tijuana* (1991), *Bienvenido paisano* (2006), *Euforia* (2010); o los de mediano éxito: *Por si no te vuelvo a ver* (1997), *Por la libre* (2000), *Sin dejar huella* (2001), *Sin nombre* (2009) -aunque ésta tienda más a quedarse en el relato de persecución que en el de *road movie* con todos sus componentes semánticos y sintácticos. También se cuentan ensayos personales como *Segundo siglo* (1999); o finalmente las triunfantes en terrenos del público o de festivales: *Voy a explotar* (2008), *Bajo California. El límite del tiempo* -en adelante escribiré *Bajo California*- (1998), *Y tu mamá también* (2001), las cuales gozan de un particular punto de vista anclado a condiciones culturales específicas, y que rinden tributo al género pero a la vez -pensando en la última- llenaron en su momento las salas cinematográficas como pocas películas, incluso hasta la fecha continúan siendo transmitidas por televisión.

No obstante, pese a que *Bajo California* se ha llevado una decena de premios en festivales nacionales e internacionales, y que *Y tu mamá también* ha ganado una treintena de premios y se ha instalado contundentemente en el imaginario del público; no dejan de ser casos minoritarios que aún no permiten hablar -como mencionaba, fuera del *videohome*- de la consolidación de un género.

Con todo, evidentemente existen rasgos en común entre estos films, ciertas temáticas y figuras, por ejemplo las peripecias de *Por si no te vuelvo a ver* y de *Por la libre* están determinadas por el deseo de cumplir el traslado de las cenizas de un difunto a un paraje particular. Aquí hacen referencia a la responsabilidad moral, pero también a la crisis de la edad y a la crisis familiar. Éste último tema es sumamente peculiar en el *road movie*, de hecho, estudiosos -como Robin Wood- indican que ese tipo de cintas nacieron en parte por "la desintegración del concepto de hogar" en la sociedad estadounidense (citado en Laderman 19); lo que se manifestó pronto en otras sociedades que hasta la fecha no dejan de hacer referencia a esta crisis -pensemos nuevamente en nuestra sociedad y en películas como *Y tu mamá también* o en *Bajo California*. Y en ese sentido, habría que ver cómo los caprichos del espacio y del tiempo en la *ficción del traslado*, definen el tratamiento de los temas y los eventos de la historia.

Más específicamente, podemos hablar de algunos otros films que marcan la frontera como cronotopo central. Espacios geográficos con fuerte carga simbólica, sea punto de partida o punto final: huir a la frontera, huir de la frontera, o simplemente pasar la frontera. El *road movie* mexicano -como el de Estados Unidos o Canadá, por mencionar algunos- que acude a este cronotopo, mantiene ciertos rasgos temáticos y figurativos con determinados motivos argumentales de perseguido-perseguidor y eventos que desencadenan la transformación de los personajes que van en sentido y contrasentido: de Norte a Sur viajan las protagonistas de *Sin dejar huella*, cuya influencia directa de *Thelma y Louise* (1991) es innegable -por el tratamiento del género con mujeres que huyen y se enfrentan a la condición machista del orden patriarcal

mexicano, más que por sus logros estéticos-; o los de *Sin nombre* que van de Sur a Norte y donde el tren -pues el movimiento está determinado por el medio de transporte que constituye una prolongación del cuerpo de los personajes- es el vehículo o contenedor que, a través las peripecias de los protagonistas, expone una condición de , vida en la modernidad latinoamericana y sus innegables contradicciones.

De cualquier manera, este tipo de películas con sus diversas temáticas y puntos de vista pueden regirse por lo que se ha dado en llamar el "triángulo cronotópico"; triángulo en cuanto a la construcción del tiempo y espacio con las tres dimensiones que atribuye Giampiero Frasca al *road movie*: la *dimensión denotativa*, espacio tal como es mostrado, la carretera y la actitud contemplativa de ésta; la *dimensión arque-típica*, segundo nivel de lectura del espacio, que tiene que ver con la construcción cultural del espacio como "sueño quimérico" y lo que puede significar para el espectador; y finalmente, la *dimensión simbólica*, suma de las dos que tiene implicaciones más profundas derivadas de la puesta en relación de los espacios mediados por el imaginario cinematográfico (Correa 281), con su propia iconografía y retórica del género.

En los perímetros de este triángulo resaltamos justamente tres relaciones básicas del espacio-tiempo -que implica cronotopos del pasado y del futuro-, determinadas en principio por el *Cronotopo del camino*, que implica el traslado y la búsqueda o la ruta hacia la identidad y es el cronotopo central que define los temas y las figuras (imágenes arquetípicas del género). La cuestión de la identidad es fundamental en el *road movie*. Gérard Imbert, en parte, concibe al género como "un relato discontinuo, basado en lo imprevisto, marcado por accidentes de recorrido, una metáfora del recorrido identitario, que procede mediante una huida hacia adelante" (292). En segundo lugar está la relación que podríamos denominar el *Cronotopo de los eventos paralelos*, donde incluso las microhistorias que podrían ser diegéticas o extradiegéticas se articulan con el tiempo y espacio en el entramado central, pero también al tiempo y espacio del espectador, ya que como se presenta un cronotopo del autor, se presenta otro cronotopo del espectador (tiempo y espacio social donde se da la lectura del film). Finalmente, la relación que cierra el perímetro del triángulo: el *Cronotopo del encuentro* que implica el *sueño quimérico*, *el espacio final*, donde acaba el camino y aguarda un paraje de purificación, pero también de dolor, que lleva a los personajes a alcanzar cierto grado de autodescubrimiento y madurez existencial.

Los casos de *Y tu mamá también* y *Bajo California* -aunque heterogéneos, desde mi perspectiva son los *road movies* nacionales más originales- pueden ayudarnos a visualizar este triángulo y sus relaciones básicas, pues ambas películas mantienen las leyes del género y lo reinventan como concepto cinematográfico, a la vez que ofrecen una variedad de significados y valores estéticos y culturales.

Y tu mamá también cuenta la historia de Tenoch (Diego Luna) y Julio (Gael García), dos adolescentes regidos por el tirano del deseo sexual y la libido exacerbada, así como por su código de amistad sintetizado en el decálogo del "charolaste." Cuando conocen a Luisa (Maribel Verdú) en una fiesta familiar -una mujer española casada con el primo de Tenoch- la invitan a pasar unos días a un paraíso tropical inexistente

que llaman Boca del cielo. Al final sabremos que la crisis matrimonial y de salud de Luisa la lleva a involucrarse con los adolescentes, desequilibrando la amistad y la sexualidad de ambos.

Bajo California, por su parte, cuenta la historia de Damián Ojeda (Damián Alcázar), artista plástico que viaja por las costas de Baja California en busca de sus antepasados y de las pinturas rupestres de San Francisco de la Sierra. En el camino, mientras hace instalaciones artísticas en los distintos paisajes, va recordando a su esposa embarazada y una mujer que atropello y que le llena de remordimiento. Luego de prender fuego a su camioneta, Damián camina por días y encuentra a Arce (Jesús Ochoa) que lo guía hacia San Francisco de la Sierra. Mientras expía su culpa en el viaje, es mordido por una serpiente. Tras enfrentarse a la muerte y salir adelante, Damián decide que ha cumplido con su ritual de purificación y que es tiempo de volver.

I

En ambas cintas, se perciben estos cronotopos estables donde el espacio arquetípico está determinado principalmente -siguiendo las leyes del género o concepto cinematográfico- por el *Cronotopo del camino*, que nos habla de la dimensión denotativa y a la vez arquetípica; es el escape y traslado de un espacio-punto de partida sea como referencia directa: la capital con sus sitios urbanos que marcan la estructura social de los charolastras, o referencia indirecta: el artista chicano que, aunque se presenta en la carretera desde el inicio del argumento, sabemos que además de venir cargando un peso en la conciencia, deja atrás Laguna Beach, California y el seno familiar, con el fin de alcanzar un encuentro consigo mismo.

En el *Cronotopo del camino*, lo elemental es el trayecto o el traslado, que constituye la matriz principal, y por supuesto está ligado al *Cronotopo del encuentro* y a la noción de búsqueda identitaria: un trayecto hacia la identidad en el México profundo para el artista chicano de *Bajo California*, donde va a purificar su sentimiento de culpa; y para los capitalinos adolescentes de clase media y alta de *Y tu mamá también*, un trayecto hacia el lugar idílico donde redefinirán su identidad y encontrarán justamente la culpa.

El recorrido por las carreteras de Baja California y de Oaxaca cobran dimensión simbólica más allá del mero acto denotativo y referencial, del acto de contemplar el paisaje. En ambos trayectos impera -mencionábamos- la retórica del género con su "estética de la repetición, con su ritual de parada, su continuo andar y desandar" (Correa 293) así como también la iconografía propia del *road movie* tradicional: gasolineras, mapas, señales de tránsito, paisajes, pueblos, moteles, cruces, -hasta retenes para el caso mexicano-; en *Y tu mamá también* se incluye el folclor de carretera con carros alegóricos y reinas de pueblo. Laderman indica que las técnicas constituyen el estilo y el *look* del género. Dentro de éstas, una de las utilizadas con cierto vigor es el *traveling*, pero también se puede mencionar otras técnicas empleadas, tales como las cámaras en estabilizadores laterales o frontales en el auto, planos del espejo retrovisor

y lateral que se convierten en puntos de vista, cuya composición también tiene una función de reflexión, exageración, y de realce de la presencia de la cámara, pues proyecta al personaje dentro del auto y al espacio en el que se viaja (Laderman 15); estos planos son un tópico y metáfora visual que los convierten en un contenedor del pasado que va quedando con cada línea punteada de la carretera que se refleja; recursos técnicos-expresivos que construyen significados y determinan las expectativas formales del espectador.

No obstante, en *Bajo California* el protagonista "quema las naves" -literal y metafóricamente- para emprender un viaje donde los vínculos tradicionales del género no tienen cabida. Y en la primera cuarta parte del relato comienza su andar en un cronotopo ya no de carretera sino de sendero. El auto en tanto extensión de su cuerpo -pues "autos y motocicletas representan una mecanizada extensión del cuerpo, por el cual el cuerpo podría mover más lejos y más rápido de lo que nunca antes" (Laderman 13)- rompe con el género tradicional del *road movie* para volver al movimiento natural del ser humano, a su recorrido paso a paso. Entonces, el director primero relati-viza las leyes del género y después las olvida para finalmente reinventarlas.³

En el *Cronotopo del camino*, el tiempo se vierte sobre el espacio, el cronotopo del tiempo es esencial para los géneros, el género y sus variantes se determinan por el cronotopo (Bajtín). Podemos ver que los días se alargan para Damián como los mismos caminos que parecen no llevar a ningún sitio. En la tradición del *road movie*, el tiempo es siempre un elemento central en las metaforizaciones del camino (Correa), un pasajero más que se traslada y modifica el espacio dando lugar al "camino de la vida" que define los destinos humanos.

II

Y no es sólo que las horas del día y la noche se fundan en un mismo trayecto con las imágenes de carretera, sino que el tiempo sutura los eventos o da energía a los motores que impulsan a los personajes más allá de la concepción lineal, en un espacio y tiempo múltiple. Es aquí donde entra lo que llamamos el *Cronotopo de los eventos paralelos*, que hablan tanto del *futuro* como del *pasado*, que abarca aquellos eventos que nos llevan a entender el presente de los protagonistas.

Claramente, los films explotan esos cronotopos de menor tamaño, pequeñas unidades semánticas de particular interés expresivo. Cronotopos que encierran otros cronotopos menores en una suerte de *mise en abyme*: "Si hubieran pasado por este mismo lugar 10 años antes, se hubieran topado con un par de jaulas tiradas sobre el pavimento... Cinco metros después una pila de jaulas destrozadas con gallinas sangrantes... Y más adelante un camión volteado... Al rebasarlo habrían visto dos

3. Como la propia teoría de la relatividad, M. Bajtín indica que el término cronotopo fue utilizado en las matemáticas e introducido por Einstein, de donde éste lo retoma casi como una metáfora para aplicarla a la literatura (casi, pero no del todo —dice—) (2).

cuerpos tirados inertes " relata el narrador omnisciente de *Y tu mamá también* antes de que la cámara capte las cruces en el camino que ocultan la historia de esa familia muerta años atrás. Pero también acude a eventos del futuro que, como sugiere M. Bajtín respecto a las posibilidades dialécticas de esta categoría, se trasladan de la trama textual a la dimensión sociodiscursiva y afectan directamente el mundo del espectador, en este caso más que al mundo de los personajes y a la diégesis en sí misma. Y -mientras desaparecen los distintos planos del sonido (del mar, de la lancha, etc.) haciendo ruptura semántica con la imagen- el narrador cuenta que aquél pescador que guía y da asilo a los personajes, tendrá el futuro que muchas comunidades de pescadores han tenido, fenómeno manifestado más aceleradamente en los últimos 20 años: "Para fines de año Chuy y su familia tendrán que abandonar su hogar, cuando comience la construcción de un hotel exclusivo sobre terrenos ejidales de San Bernabé ... Chuy intentará dar servicio de lancha para turistas, pero será bloqueado por el grupo de lancheros agremiados recién llegados de Acapulco ... Dos años después terminará como empleado de limpieza del hotel. Jamás volverá a pescar."

Y esa dimensión sociodiscursiva que afecta directamente al mundo del espectador, la podemos encontrar en un acontecimiento ocurrido pocos años después de la producción de la película. Dado que mencionamos un caso de apropiación de terrenos ejidales, nos referiremos al conflicto generado a raíz de la bahía del Tamarindillo, ubicada en los límites de Michoacán y Colima.

En un capítulo más de impunidad que involucra a los gobiernos panistas, y con la omisión o complacencia de las autoridades del estado de Michoacán, un tribunal agrario ha fallado en tres ocasiones consecutivas en favor de Cosme Mares, el presunto prestanombres del expresidente Vicente Fox que está a punto de apropiarse de los terrenos de la bahía del Tamarindillo para construir ahí residencias de lujo. Sobre los ejidatarios renuentes a venderle a Mares pesa el abandono de la justicia, mientras son víctimas de acoso y hasta amenazas de muerte, pero están dispuestos a defenderse hasta con la violencia." (Castellanos/Vera 19)

Los terrenos fueron apropiados por los funcionarios y el tiempo dio la razón al narrador de *Y tu mamá también*.

Volviendo a la trama textual, algunos eventos paralelos en *Bajo California* tienden más hacia la dimensión simbólica; incluso los "paisajes exteriores dejan paso a los paisajes interiores" (Imbert 295). sobre todo en las mediaciones del espacio baja-californiano que hace Damián con sus instalaciones o intervenciones artísticas y sus acciones de *happening* que participan en el espacio con imágenes surgidas de los cro-notopos del desierto y del arte posmoderno que sale de los museos y se integra al paisaje.

Recordemos que por sí mismo el acontecimiento no se convierte en imagen, el cronotopo ofrece el caldo de cultivo para la representación en imágenes de los acontecimientos (Bajtín). Hablamos de eventos o cronotopos pequeños que cobran sentido en la búsqueda y expresión del personaje, y que fusionan el tiempo del pasado y el presente en un mismo espacio, llevando mucho más allá de una simple contemplación postal del escenario, a una serie de sensaciones surgidas de las imágenes y los sonidos

así como a cierta complicidad e identificación con el espectador: engranes apilados a unos metros de la camioneta con cierta simetría; metonimia visual procedente de la más profunda expresión estética y conceptual del protagonista que -en plena intervención artística del espacio y tiempo-, podrían remitir a la negación funcional de los artefactos de la modernidad que permiten pasar al terreno ancestral de manera natural; se trata de partes de una maquinaria deconstruida y reconstruida en el espacio desértico y salvaje para generar un choque semántico en los confines del *road movie*. La misma acción de prender fuego al vehículo es un acto purificador/mutilador de esa extensión de su cuerpo -fundamental para el género-, artefacto que pudo dar muerte a una mujer tiempo atrás. O la reconstrucción de estructuras óseas de ballenas -cual pasaje de Joñas que es devorado por un monstruo marino y vomitado a su destino- dentro de la cual pasa una tarde el protagonista quedando en un tiempo y espacio suspendido, que habla tanto de un estado natural o del pasado arcano y mítico como de ese encuentro del presente con el espacio y sus habitantes del México profundo.

Asimismo recurre a cronotopos pequeños que sí funcionan para la cadencia narrativa y que afectan el trayecto de los personajes en la macroestructura -ya decía M. Bajtín que lo importante no son los puntos, sino el transcurso entre ellos. Además de los *flash backs* del accidente que va perturbando en distintas partes del relato, se cuentan los insertos de su esposa embarazada frente a lo que parecería una cámara colocada en ángulos insólitos, pero cuya aparición sugiere más un sueño intermitente durante toda la narración.

De peculiar interés resulta el recurso expresivo de la grabación en la cinta con la que arranca la historia y que acompaña el trayecto *delfree way* previo al cruce fronterizo. La voz de su esposa grabada en un *cassette* funciona como otra instancia narrativa -a través de soportes tecnológicos particulares del *road movie*, muchas veces explotados para el *sound track* con ritmos y sonidos que marcan el camino. Se trata de una grabación que, en este caso, informa al espectador y le reitera al personaje sobre el pasado que arrastra, reafirmando la culpa y la necesaria purificación que deberá encontrar al final del camino.

III

Finalmente hablamos del *Cronotopo del encuentro*, regido por la dimensión arquétípica y que deriva -como mencionamos- del *Cronotopo del camino* y del *de los eventos paralelos*, donde en previo itinerario, ya se ha propuesto el punto de llegada, una ruta definida por la dimensión denotativa y por el tiempo empleado para alcanzar el espacio arquetípico: San Francisco de la Sierra, que acuna las pinturas rupestres y la tumba de la abuela; o la playa virgen llamada Boca del cielo, donde se cortarán los frutos del hedonismo.

El *Cronotopo del encuentro* es una unidad movable entre los cronotopos del pasado y del futuro que -reitero- se presenta en distintos momentos de la estructura dramática, aunque evidentemente se concretice al final de la trama. En *Bajo California*

el encuentro se va anunciando desde el inicio a través de pequeños eventos derivados del pasado lleno de la culpa, pero mirando siempre hacia el futuro, hacia un camino de purificación donde se confirmará la identidad de Damián Ojeda, luego del encuentro y el enfrentamiento con la muerte.

Aunque el narrador omnisciente haga constantes reminiscencias del pasado, a su crisis familiar y condición social en aras de construir e informar sobre los personajes, con Tenoch y Julio mantenemos la mirada hacia el futuro, hacia atisbos inciertos de un juego sexual. En el camino hacia el hedonismo -inmersos en la movilidad y distinción social, racial y de género- está el encuentro con la aventura, pero estos personajes lo alcanzan una vez avanzada la trama; y al final de la carretera, justamente donde sorpresivamente se ubica -la que pensaban inexistente- Boca del cielo, llegan al encuentro con la culpa por poner a prueba su masculinidad.

El *road movie* -como algunos estudiosos han sugerido, al encontrar una actual proliferación de estas películas en las principales industrias- se convierte en un síntoma de la ansiedad y el descontento posmoderno. De ahí que, si Damián Ojeda en su aventura hacia el interior confirma su identidad, Tenoch y Julio la descubren desde el exterior. Damián busca en el pasado un tiempo mítico, en el que encuentra la muerte: la muerte paulatina de las pinturas rupestres que irán desapareciendo como sus mismos creadores, y metafóricamente la muerte de él mismo durante el trance por la mordedura de serpiente. Por tanto enfrenta la muerte para así reafirmar la vida, como la vida de su hija que nace, y en consecuencia la familia que renace. Tenoch y Julio, sin intención de esa recuperación familiar, con distinta escala de valores, buscan la vida a través del *Eros*, pero encuentran metafóricamente al *Tanatos*, la muerte de la amistad, del "otro yo" que coincidía con su propia identidad, al madurar repentina y vertiginosamente, como se madura sobre todo con eventos cruciales tan determinantes en la vida adolescente.

IV

Hasta aquí hemos presentado esbozos que plantean la utilidad del cronotopo para analizar el *road movie*. Un instrumento que define los eventos, los personajes y sus transformaciones a partir de la lógica del espacio-tiempo, el tiempo definido como la cuarta dimensión del espacio. Y que funciona para examinar la flexibilidad e hibridez que caracteriza las leyes del género y lo define como concepto cinematográfico al materializar las ideas y los significados del camino, que en el fondo simbolizan los avalares del destino o simplemente los caminos de la vida.

Entendemos el cronotopo como una herramienta teórico metodológica de la que se desprenden tres categorías; en principio el *cronotopo del camino* que es la columna vertebral de las imágenes y los acontecimientos del trayecto, mientras amalgama otros cronotopos esenciales que labran el género.

Entre ellos, acudimos al *cronotopo de los eventos paralelos*, constructor de sub-tramas que permiten desplazar los acontecimientos a otros espacios y momentos de la

trama; a veces al tiempo muerto del relato que apela a la exploración de las subjetividades del personaje; pero también forman parte del proceso de los acontecimientos que saltan del pasado al presente, siempre proyectados hacia el futuro. Este cronotopo cobra en buena medida relevancia simbólica tanto en el mundo de la diégesis como en el mundo del sujeto social.

En tercera instancia hablamos de los *cronotopos del encuentro*, decíamos, el espacio arquetípico que surge del primer itinerario y conjuga en el argumento el tiempo de la historia y el tiempo del mito que se va gestando desde un inicio de la trama y en toda interacción del espacio con los personajes, con sus deseos o temores. Es el cronotopo que se insinúa y parte de la proyección de acontecimientos futuros detenidos en el tiempo de cada día y de cada noche, nace de cada paraje, de cada tramo de carretera perdida, de cada sendero que lleva a lo desconocido y al choque identitario; en consecuencia al temor y a la fascinación, a la muerte de algo en el protagonista que da pie al renacimiento de otra cosa en él, justamente en aras de reconstruir su identidad.

Si bien el triángulo cronotópico y sus relaciones básicas fueron aplicadas a dos casos particulares del cine nacional, como decíamos, bien puede funcionar en un grupo de cintas más amplias como el *videohome*, donde realmente se han cultivado las narrativas del camino e incluso ha generado su propio *star system*, sus propios modos de producción y de consumo, por tanto, su propio espectador. De cualquier manera las coordenadas del triángulo cronotópico podría dar luz sobre las relaciones intrínsecas de la obra, a saber, sus temas, su iconografía, su narrativa, su retórica, sus formas estructurantes, sus cambios sintácticos y semánticos; pero sobre todo de la posible articulación entre la trama textual y la dimensión sociodiscursiva de la cual se desprende.

En conclusión sólo quedan preguntas o planteamientos de algunas coordenadas teóricas que ayuden a conocer, entre otros aspectos, cómo las distintas instancias narrativas construyen la multiplicidad del espacio-tiempo del *road movie* rigiendo sus eventos, figuras y temas; cómo pequeños cronotopos se articulan y se ligan a la columna vertebral de la historia; cómo determinan la transformación externa e interna de los personajes, el autodescubrimiento del "yo" más profundo, mientras apelan tanto al viaje que transcurre en la pantalla como al viaje del espectador en el mundo histórico.

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Apuntes sobre la familia mexicana y el viaje hacia la madurez: una revisión de las películas *¡Ay Jalisco ... no te rajes!*, *Los hijos de Sánchez*, *Y tu mamá también*

DIEGO ZAVALA SCHERER Y ALIVSI HERNÁNDEZ

En esta gran casa de mi tierra natal, yo soy simplemente como cualquier otra mujer en cualquiera de las innumerables casas de mi pueblo. Como cualquiera de ellas, me levanto temprano pensando en mi esposo y en mis hijos ... y todo el día ando pensando en ellos, así como gran parte de la noche ... Cuando me voy a la cama, agotada, en vez de soñar se me ocurren maravillosos proyectos y trato de dormir para no estallar ... Y eso se debe a que me siento verdaderamente como la madre de mi pueblo.

-Eva Perón

Abstract

Diego Zavala Scherer and Alivsi Hernández in their joint article "Apuntes sobre la familia mexicana y el viaje hacia la madurez: una revisión de las películas *¡Ay Jalisco ... no te rajes!*, *Los hijos de Sánchez*, *Y tu mamá también*" complete a hermeneutical analysis that addresses the notion of "voyage" as part of well established narratives in Mexican cinema. The approach moves from the stereotypical representation of the family to more complex relations between family members. Moreover it pursues questions of how the genre of melodrama evolves, fuses with narratives of the road and seeks to depict social change. The mythical figures of the protective mother and the paternal authority are puzzled and questioned by the stories of the new generation narrated in these movies. The authors focus on generational shifts temporally and spatially reflected in the voyage motif to point out how these narratives reflect the need to dissolve the mystification of the family as a fundamental social structure and how they lay the matrix to establish complex and functioning ways of human interaction.

1. En el origen, fue la familia

"La madre de mi pueblo," dice Eva Perón, la madre de un pueblo... Esta figura arquetípica de la madre bondadosa, entregada, santa, es la representación sistemática y reiterativa de la figura materna también en el melodrama mexicano; se aleja de cualquier

posible realismo, de cualquier complejidad y dimensión humana. Personaje propio de los relatos fabulados más que de la realidad social de nuestro país.

La madre, guardiana del museo familiar, de la memoria y las buenas costumbres, del espacio privado; puede también ser vista -como en la cita de Eva Perón- como la madre de la patria, un componente fundamental de la vida pública de un país. Igual que la figura patriarcal ha sido asociada con el proyecto moderno nacionalista mexicano, la madre participa como complemento de esta estructura social trasladada sinecdóquica y simbólicamente al relato melodramático. Los teóricos e historiadores recurren una y otra vez a esta identificación de la institución familiar con el proyecto de nación. Por citar un ejemplo, Rafael Aviña, en su libro "Una mirada insólita," escribe:

Si un género define el cine nacional, casi en su totalidad, es precisamente el melodrama: los hay rancheros, de suspenso, de terror psicológico, infantiles, familiares, revolucionarios, eróticos, de lucha libre, urbanos, arrabaleros y más; una extensa gama que habla de la permanencia del melodrama en la producción nacional. Baste decir, por ejemplo, que el cine de prostitutas, uno de los temas por excelencia del cine nacional, comienza y permanece hasta la fecha en el mayor tono melodramático.

Melodrama y familia es el eje que mueve y sigue moviendo la producción fílmica mexicana, un tema inagotable convertido en el pañuelo desechable de nuestras emociones y aspiraciones nacionales. (133-37)

Los relatos que encontramos en los análisis, en el Corpus previo a este trabajo, refieren a esta consolidación del arquetipo o a las variaciones de esta estructura familiar. Pero, ¿qué es lo que sucede cuando desplazamos la pregunta hacia los herederos, es decir los hijos de estas familias? ¿Resultan tan ejemplares y modélicos como las fábulas de sus padres y sus madres?

El cuestionamiento inicial es simple, ¿qué pasa cuando nos enfrentamos a relatos donde la familia se disuelve o se representa como fracturada? Aquí inicia el "viaje", la búsqueda de la restitución del esquema familiar, o la caída en desgracia por la imposibilidad del regreso al origen, a la seguridad. Estamos entonces ante una de las formas melodramáticas más interesantes, la cual podríamos definir, al menos de forma tentativa, como el *cine de las consecuencias*. La resolución que se dé a las historias muestra las voluntades integradoras, pacificadoras, reflexivas y/o evolutivas de los cineastas y de las sociedades en momentos específicos de su propio devenir. En este sentido podríamos decir que nos enfrentamos a una derivación cinematográfica del *bildungsroman*. El viaje no es físico, forzosamente, como sucede en el género de la *road movie*, en el caso del melodrama familiar puede pensarse en el viaje como metáfora, como el viaje a la madurez. El aprendizaje une a estos dos géneros, se vuelve en el objetivo común; la diferencia es que el tropo del viaje se explora, se explota, se sofisticada de maneras distintas. Mientras la *road movie* suele ser "un viaje a ningún lado," donde se utiliza la historia como cuestionamiento del orden establecido, el melodrama familiar es "un viaje a la restitución," al reencuentro de los valores. Visto desde esta perspectiva, podríamos pensar que son dos caras de la misma moneda.

Las películas que analizamos son historias de hijos, quienes conocen su origen y deben enfrentar su circunstancia. Son la continuación de la historia de sus padres, son

ios encargados de saldar las cuentas pendientes de sus predecesores. Asistimos a su propio drama, que completa el destino familiar, cual ejercicio sinecdótico de reproducción o liberación social.

No es una prole anónima. Por ser parte de una cierta historia inconclusa, no pierden su identidad, como sí le sucede a la mujer violada -la chingada, según Paz-; o como la madre de Pedro en *Los olvidados* de Bufluel, madre sin nombre que evade sus deberes de crianza para entregarse a los brazos del Jaibo, lo que la convierte en una pérdida. En el caso de nuestros personajes: Salvador, Consuelo, Tenoch y Julio, conocemos sus nombres; la disputa es por los apellidos, por afirmar o negar la tradición, la herencia cultural y familiar.

El paso que relatan estas historias es el de ser "hijo de la chingada" a "no tener madre." Mientras el texto de Octavio Paz del *Laberinto de la soledad* refiere al origen de la identidad mexicana, la expresión "no tener madre," por el contrario, refiere al ser abandonado, al huérfano, al desvinculado del origen y la tradición.

Es importante confrontar entonces cada uno de los relatos con el arquetipo femenino. La madre está ausente o, al menos, puesta en duda, lo que conlleva duelo, venganza, disolución social o promiscuidad sexual, como sucede en el caso de las películas que en este trabajo abordamos.

Resulta crucial analizar las consecuencias, los resultados que cada una de estas películas arroja (la respuesta que da sobre la tradición familiar-social). El inicio del análisis, por lo tanto, es simple. Debemos remitirnos a los esquemas de familia propuestos como punto de partida, como contexto socio-familiar del personaje principal de cada historia.

2. Tipos de familias

En términos del viaje de nuestros "héroes," el tipo de familia es el "mundo ordinario" -si hablamos en clave épica-, el contexto de su vida y que los propulsa a la aventura, a la resolución del conflicto. En este sentido podríamos decir que la selección fílmica va de la familia modélica a la familia disfuncional, y termina en la familia ausente.

La familia modelo (bíblica incluso), es la representada por Salvador Pérez Gómez y sus padres en *¡Ay Jalisco... no te rajes!* (1941). La desgracia acaece y los progenitores de Salvador son asesinados. El padrino y el caporal (el fabuloso Chaflán) funcionarán como familia sustitua del joven. Lo convertirán en "todo un hombre" y le aconsejarán evitar al "animal más ponzoñoso: la mujer."

El destino se presenta en la vida de Salvador de dos maneras distintas. La primera, cuando conoce a Carmela y se enamora de ella, contraviniendo el consejo de su padrino. La segunda, cuando aparece Malasuerte, uno de los cómplices del asesinato de sus padres que le promete entregarle uno a uno a los perpetradores para luego ponerse en sus manos. La única condición es que le pague por cada bandido, para dejar bien acomodada a su familia.

Aquí empieza el viaje a la madurez de Salvador, quien ha de decidir qué hacer. El personaje expone brevemente el dilema moral en el que se encuentra mientras conversa con Carmela en el parque; después, el dispositivo de acciones se pone en marcha y la película *avanza* entre números musicales promocionales de Jalisco y los encuentros con los asesinos.

El segundo modelo es el de la familia disfuncional representado por Jesús Sánchez y sus hijos en la película titulada *Los hijos de Sánchez*. Tanto la familia como la historia son disfuncionales. Esta pretenciosa cinta estadounidense es un excelente contrapunto en el análisis porque permite revelar los mitos de una cultura, como dijera Eugene Youngblood, y ver cómo se desmoronan. Hay, desde el título, un especial énfasis en la figura del hijo, lo que sugiere esta búsqueda de las consecuencias. Desafortunadamente, la historia no se resuelve a abandonar al padre como personaje, lo que la vuelve confusa y caótica.

La familia funciona como una especie de personaje coral e intenta guardar la complejidad del retrato socio-antropológico del libro de Oscar Lewis en el que está basada. La profundidad que puede lograr con una estructura de familia a tantos niveles y tan complicada se pierde ante la unidimensionalidad de los personajes. Es el cliché del mexicano en un proyecto dirigido por un estadounidense como si aún, en 1978, estuviéramos en la época de oro de nuestro cine.

La cultura de la pobreza, centro teórico de Lewis, termina siendo un telón de fondo, una visión más que simplista. La película fue pensada para un público americano e intenta reflejar nuestra idiosincrasia mexicana, ambientada en la época de la modernización nacional, pero que deriva en el conflicto padre-hija que son incapaces de mostrarse cariño. El melodrama exacerbado en una trama inconexa. Consuelo, la hija más independiente de Jesús Sánchez, emprenderá su camino a tientas, sola, sin referentes familiares, lo que la hará desempeñar profesiones "inmorales," con tal de acercarse a sus sueños.

El último esquema familiar es el presentado en la película *Y tu mamá también*, en el que la historia ya está casi totalmente centrada en los hijos. Los padres aparecen, si acaso, de forma secundaria, o en el discurso de Tenoch y Julio, protagonistas de la cinta. Las familias que si aparecen completas son las de las novias de los dos jóvenes. Estas familias son implicadas directas de las consecuencias de los actos emprendidos por el par de amigos.

La madre es uno de los elementos centrales del discurso y aparece en el propio título del film. La película problematiza la figura de la madre al sexualizarla, pero en este caso no es el objeto de placer de un extraño en el sentido estricto, lo que la volvería una mujer violada. Se vuelve pareja sexual de un conocido. La figura sacrosanta, la madre de Tenoch, se vuelve objeto de placer de su mejor amigo Julio, más por circunstancia, que por deseo.

El modelo familiar y el arquetipo femenino están trastocados. Estamos en presencia ya de una historia de las consecuencias, en la cual no se ejerce un juicio moral respecto de la familia, no hay reacomodo del modelo familiar, no hay reconciliación.

Por haber, ya no hay ni amistad, lo que deja claro el nivel de disolución social. Se ha dejado de fabular en busca de la ejemplaridad y se ha comenzado a cuestionar el modelo.

3. El discurrir narrativo o la lucha por los apellidos: mujeres y madurez

Damos paso a un breve recorrido por las tres películas que sirven a este análisis comparado de la familia, y lo hacemos a partir de dos componentes fundamentales para la representación de esta institución: el viaje hacia la madurez de los protagonistas, así como el rol que juegan las mujeres como activadoras del deseo, motor de la acción o personaje de alguna de las cintas.

El camino de Salvador en *¡Ay Jalisco... no te rajes!* –tal vez el más clásico de los tres casos- es honrar la memoria familiar. Hará justicia a sus padres y demostrará su valía. Se trata de un joven nacido en buena familia que demuestra en toda la historia su buena cuna, a pesar del abrupto giro en los acontecimientos, que lo harán huérfano.

La ausencia de una figura femenina materna le permitirá adiestrarse en las artes del engaño al jugar naipes, y el manejo de las armas, pero en el momento de la decisión final, estas pruebas de su virilidad a la mexicana serán puestas en duda por otro reto distinto y prohibido por su padrino: amar a una mujer. El ingreso de Carmela a la historia balancea la transformación de Salvador, aunque queda claro que las motivaciones del personaje están puestas en saldar las cuentas del pasado. Sólo después de eso será capaz de comenzar a vivir en presente y refundar una familia a medida.

El conflicto final se da cuando Salvador casi ha perdido a Carmela, quien, para ayudar a su padre, se va a casar con el hijo del general. Oportunamente, nuestro héroe descubre que es precisamente el general el culpable de la muerte de sus padres. La consumación de la venganza, además, libera a Carmela de la carga de su promesa de matrimonio y ambos huyen, con Chachita, rumbo al horizonte.

El apellido es portado con dignidad por Salvador, es un Pérez Gómez que ha dignificado su pasado y su memoria. Ahora está listo para vivir una vida nueva, para enfrentar las consecuencias.

Por su parte, el viaje de Consuelo, protagonista de *Los hijos de Sánchez*, es el más sufrido. Es un personaje femenino que discurre de la niñez a la vida adulta siendo huérfana de madre y, aunque tiene modelos femeninos sustitutos (la abuela y la nana), es la relación con el padre (con *papá Estado*, siguiendo la metáfora de Eva Perón) la que genera el conflicto y detona el viaje. Siendo la hija no reconocida de Jesús, busca incansablemente la reconciliación a través de la conquista de su sueño de salir de la pobreza y superarse. Encontramos aquí dicha conciencia burguesa instalada en un personaje al que tal claridad no le corresponde.

La búsqueda de su independencia del yugo paterno la llevará a trabajar de cabaretera y a fugarse con un hombre que dice amarla –"regalo divino," según su abuela. Consuelo aborta a su hijo en Monterrey, lejos de su padre, cuando se entera que su

pareja es un hombre casado y que la engañó. Evita así repetir el ciclo del hijo sin apellido que ella tanto padece.

El círculo vicioso de la pobreza y la falta de oportunidades la hace volver al lado de su padre sólo para seguirle reclamando la forma en que los trata. La película cierra con Consuelo diciéndole a Jesús que las familias se deben comunicar y él responde que no sabe cómo demostrarles su cariño. El giro al "happy ending" americano es inverosímil; justamente ahí un texto anuncia el cambio de actitud del padre para con sus hijos.

Consuelo termina casada, con dos hijos y manteniendo a Mariquita, su sobrina, en Nueva York, mientras estudia psicología. Todos los apellidos son dignificados y salvaguardados, aquí no ha pasado nada.

El último caso, el de la película *Y tu mamá también*, es uno curioso. El tono cómico agrega matices interesantes. El primero: la cinta está plagada de apellidos conocidos. Todos los personajes llevan los apellidos de los próceres de la patria: Zapata, Madero, Allende; también de los déspotas como Huerta y, cómo no, Luisa, la española, se apellida Cortés.

La alegoría es evidente. La aventura sexual de los dos jóvenes con una mujer mayor que ellos, y española, derivará en un encuentro homosexual después de todas las confesiones de relaciones con las respectivas novias del otro y, de Julio, con la mamá de Tenoch. Huertas fornican con Allendes, Morelos con Zapatas; es un festín nacional.

El apellido ha dejado de ser importante en términos de aspiración, lo único que hace es determinar tu sitio en la sociedad. La familia acomodada de Tenoch le asegurará un futuro promisorio en el ITAM. Julio y su modesta familia lo pondrán en la UAM a estudiar biología.

El viaje a la playa, "road movie" en toda regla, es un falso viaje de descubrimiento personal para los dos adolescentes. La única que lo logra, y en situaciones extremas debido a su enfermedad terminal, es Luisa. Aunque la enseñanza adquirida en el viaje dura nada por su propia muerte.

En el caso de Tenoch y Julio, todo lo descubierto es encubierto tras abrir la caja de pandora de su relación homosexual. Las decisiones de ambos se vuelven absolutamente individuales, se rompe la fabulación, no se logra la ejemplaridad y, mucho menos, un modelo familiar. La vida sigue, discurre por el camino de las consecuencias que no terminan.

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1. ITAM, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México es una de las universidades privadas más prestigiosas de México. Mientras que la UAM, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana es una universidad pública asociada a las clases bajas o no tan favorecidas económicamente.

4. Restitución y redención. Sobre la conciencia del personaje y el viaje a la madurez

En *¡Ay Jalisco... no te rajes!*, el viaje de Salvador es por los pueblos del estado de Jalisco para matar uno a uno a los asesinos de sus padres, lo que podría ser un acto reprochable moralmente, pero que la película nunca cuestiona. La venganza es el motor, la publicidad turística uno de los resultados. Se trata de la imagen nacional enarbolada en una trama de vendetta a la mexicana. El cuestionamiento moral es poco significativo y no se retoma en ningún punto del trayecto, lo que vuelve a la película una representación estereotípica en el que se filtra el musical y la comedia, y deja al melodrama de lado.

No puede ser considerada una "road movie" por varios motivos; por ejemplo, el viaje es a caballo y, por lo tanto, es un viaje introspectivo pre-moderno. Asimismo, la duda existencial del personaje pronto se diluye para convertirse en una historia de amor exitosa entre Salvador y Carmela. El retorno del personaje es evidente, no hay profundidad emocional o exploración del problema moral. Más parece una película de Douglas Fairbanks -héroe atlético prototípico- que un melodrama familiar.

Es justo en este matiz del género donde se vuelven interesantes las decisiones de Salvador. A pesar de las enseñanzas de su padrino sobre las mujeres, él decide querer a Carmela "como se quiere en Jalisco," lo que significa la fundación de una nueva familia (sugerida por el plano final con Chachita, sobrina de Carmela) y que restituye el orden social roto por el asesinato de sus padres, por motivos económicos, a manos del general.

El viaje es sólo para liberar el lastre y dejar la carga moral con la familia atrás, un horizonte prometedor le espera.

En cambio, en *Los hijos de Sánchez*, la motivación del viaje de Consuelo es la imposibilidad de entenderse con las formas de ser de su padre Jesús. Es un caso de cultura y tradición negadas. Hay un intento de superación del personaje femenino, esfuerzo loable que termina volcado de forma inexplicable en el cariño y protección que Consuelo brinda a su sobrina Mariquita. Todo el melodrama y el exceso histriónico no explican las motivaciones y las decisiones de los personajes y, al final, en lugar de resolver las historias de los familiares, se intenta dar a entender la ruptura del círculo de pobreza en el que vivían inmersos.

La conciencia es de clase más que reflexión sobre la familia. En términos de las ideas de Consuelo sobre la familia, no hay cambio en la historia, lo único que se revela es la inadecuación del estilo de educación y de vida que Jesús les dio con respecto al "México moderno," al que Consuelo ahora pertenece.

El último viaje que relatamos, la verdadera "road movie" emprendida por Luisa, i-Tenoch y Julio en *Y tu mamá también*, niega la conciencia del cambio en la familia por el encuentro homosexual. Este evento redirige la atención y la envía lejos del problema planteado por la relación de Julio con la madre de Tenoch. La película abandona a los personajes justo antes de su siguiente prueba de madurez: el ingreso a la Universidad. La historia acaba antes de llegar a sus últimas consecuencias. No hay redención, ni

expiación de las culpas, sólo se deja, se olvida. Ya con romper el tabú de la homosexualidad la película abre nuevas formas de entender la evolución de la institución familiar. La suspensión narrativa nos entrega, a nosotros como espectadores, la necesidad de reflexionar sobre este conflicto.

5. Abuelas, Madres e Hijas; Un viaje de vuelta al estereotipo femenino

La revisión de estas películas se convierte en un viaje simbólico a través de los estereotipos femeninos en el cine mexicano; recorrido que, en semejanza con el viaje emprendido por los protagonistas, parece presentar un crecimiento, una evolución que busca la madurez en el proceso de construcción de identidad de las mujeres que viven y cuentan estas historias. Las mujeres ejemplares, para bien y para mal, han servido a teóricos y estudiosos del cine para tender el lazo entre las películas y la sociedad de la que provienen. Revisar este vínculo en las tres películas que analizamos, junto a otros casos relevantes, permite integrar una visión más general del uso del estereotipo femenino como reflejo social. Es, de alguna forma, emprender el camino de regreso, desde las películas, hacia la teoría.

Blanco y negro: al igual que las primeras imágenes cinematográficas, los estereotipos femeninos se colocaron, al principio, en extremos opuestos. El esquema dicotómico (buena madre-mala madre, virgen-prostituta) descrito por Patricia Torres es representado, en un extremo, por Carmela, mujer pura y abnegada, quien además de ser virgen, toma el rol de madre al cuidar de su sobrina Chachita; "Ésta es buena" dice Radilla a su ahijado. Sin evidencia alguna de contar con intenciones propias, la identidad y acciones de Carmela son definidas únicamente por su relación con los hombres que hay en su vida: su padre, y Salvador.

Al otro extremo del espectro encontraríamos, por ejemplo, a la madre de Pedro en *Los olvidados*, su personificación del arquetipo de maldad femenina se refuerza: "mala madre," que priva a su hijo de cariño, y "mala mujer," mujer sexual que decide entregarse al Jaibo.

Entre las figuras de la "buena mujer" de nuestro cine, la de la abuela es intocable, casi sagrada. En *Los Hijos de Sánchez* el estereotipo de la "madrecita santa" (al cual hacen referencia autores como Julia Tuñón, Óscar Fernando Robles-Cereceres y Carmen Elisa Gómez) es encarnado por Dolores del Río como la abuela Paquita, quien enseña a Consuelo lo que significa ser madre y mujer en México: "el amor de un hombre es la máxima aspiración posible, su deber es ser el corazón del hogar y prodigar el amor que mantiene a la familia unida, pero sobre todo, soportar todos los machismos del hombre; y aún así mantener su dignidad." Cuando la abuela amorosa y abnegada muere, la solemnidad de la ceremonia luctuosa y el respeto y cariño demostrados por los asistentes, dejan en claro la santidad de su figura.

El recorrido se desvía hacia "Mecánica nacional" (1972), donde encontramos a Doña Lolita, abuela santa y buena, pero cuyo fallecimiento conlleva un significado distinto. La abuela muere de indignación, en medio de decenas de coches estacionados

-la modernidad estancada- poco antes del esperado final de la carrera Veracruz-México-Acapulco. Ante la imposibilidad de traslado, se improvisa una ceremonia luctuosa; cuando la carrera termina, Eufemio convierte su automóvil en carroza fúnebre para su madre, a quien los espectadores de la carrera acompañan en medio de un embotellamiento de regreso a la Ciudad de México. Óscar Fernando Robles-Cereceres habla de la interpretación de este evento:

Charles Ramírez-Berg apunta que la madre abnegada muere durante la década de los setenta y hace referencia a la narrativa familiar de *Mecánica nacional* (Luis Alcoriza, 1972), bajo la producción de Producciones Escorpión en medio de un sexenio de un cine estatista, el de Luis Echeverría (1970-1976). La muerte de Doña Lolita (Sara García) representa la muerte de la madrecita santa. (43)

Con la muerte de la madre abnegada, parece abrirse un espacio para la nueva generación de mujeres. Espacio donde se introduce un tercer estereotipo femenino, descrito por Carmen Elisa Gómez como la mujer moderna, "emancipada de la cultura paternalista en la esfera pública y en la privada" (43) indispuerta a aceptar el rol madre y limitarse a la esfera del hogar.

Consuelo, con deseo de independencia y superación, y la convicción de que las mujeres deben reclamar su derecho a hablar, a tomar sus propias decisiones, es un ejemplo de la "mujer moderna." El equivalente de Consuelo es Charito, hija de Eufemio, universitaria que se dice amante de la libertad y sin intenciones de casarse. Pero la desgracia se interpone y los ímpetus de liberación se verán frustrados, para Consuelo, por la falta de recursos que la lleva a desempeñarse en un trabajo "indigno," a la enfermedad y finalmente a la dependencia; para Charito, por el matrimonio arbitrario que su padre acuerda para salvar el honor de la familia, manchado por ella al tener relaciones con Lalo, su novio.

Al final de este viaje encontramos a Luisa, mujer que con dificultad podría ser encasillada en algún estereotipo. La narración omnisciente y las historias contadas por Luisa durante su viaje muestran un personaje femenino multidimensional, con un pasado que le otorga identidad propia, y deseos que la mueven hacia la independencia. A pesar de ser -como las otras mujeres en estas historias- objeto de deseo, toma sus propias decisiones; abandona a su esposo infiel, crea su "propio manifiesto" y al llegar a su destino deja que Tenoch y Julio regresen a casa sin ella. Sin embargo, la libertad es breve, Luisa muere de cáncer poco después de alcanzarla.

6. A modo de conclusión: la familia más allá de la convención del género melodramático

Nos resulta fértil esta aproximación desde las consecuencias, desde los cambios en la estructura familiar en el cine, pues evita el encasillamiento en el melodrama familiar y le permite deambular por otros géneros, como la comedia, el musical o, incluso como hemos hecho en este caso, vincularlo al género de las *road movies*. La codificación se vuelve menos rígida y permite dimensionar la complejidad de la representación de las

familias en las películas, al tiempo que la música, la acción, el humor o los viajes (metafóricos y físicos) matizan estos cambios de la institución.

Asimismo, permite crear una gama mucho más rica de personajes femeninos y, a través de sus cambios, nos muestra la evolución de una institución tan importante para los mexicanos, como lo es la familia.

Al ingresar desde esta perspectiva al análisis del cine, se da una explosión; de pronto se tiene la sensación de que cada personaje en la pantalla es el padre, el hermano o el hijo de alguien. Todos hijos de la chingada, al fin y al cabo, por compartir el mismo origen mestizo. La imposibilidad de evitar el cambio social, cultural y familiar nos hace pensar, por ponerlo en términos históricos que lo que la conquista no se llevó o cambió, la globalización se encargará de hacerlo. Ése es el resumen del "viaje" que brevemente tratamos de relatar.

7. Anexos

A continuación presentamos la ficha técnica y una sinopsis de cada una de las tres películas que analizamos.

Título: *¡Ay Jalisco ... no te rajes!*

La familia del joven Salvador Pérez Gómez se desintegra cuando Don Pancho y su esposa son asesinados. Salvador crece sin sus padres, bajo el cuidado de su padrino Ra-dilla y Chaflán el caporal. Nuestro héroe se enamora de Carmela, y logra conquistarla con la ayuda de Chachita, su sobrina. Poco después aparece Malasuerte, cómplice del crimen, quien le ofrece la vida de cada uno de los asesinos, incluso la suya, a cambio de dinero para cuidar de su familia; Salvador acepta el trato y emprende un viaje con Chaflán y Malasuerte a través de los pueblos de Jalisco, donde logra vengar a sus padres y consigue su apodo: *El Ametralladora*. Al volver encuentra que Carmela, para ayudar a su padre, se ha comprometido con Felipe, el hijo del General. Después de un duelo musical y otro a golpes, los contrincantes se retan en una carrera a caballo. Salvador gana la carrera y descubre que el General estuvo detrás de la muerte de sus padres; después de matarlo, nuestro héroe huye con Carmela y Chachita a Guadalajara, donde formará una nueva familia.

Título: *Los hijos de Sánchez*

Consuelo pide ayuda divina para mantener a su familia unida después de la muerte de su madre. Ante la crisis familiar y la dureza de su padre, Jesús Sánchez, los hijos se van. Consuelo se escapa con Mario, pero al enterarse de que es un hombre casado, aborta a su hijo y regresa a casa. La vida familiar cambia una vez más cuando Jesús gana la lotería y la abuela Paquita, en su lecho de muerte, le dice que busque a sus hijos y les demuestre su amor. Jesús compra su propia tierra y emprende el viaje para traer a sus hijos de regreso. Cuando su padre trae a casa a Toña, hija de otra mujer, Consuelo se va otra vez y, para buscar su independencia y su sueño de ser aeromoza, comienza a trabajar como cabaretera. Después de caer enferma, es rescatada por otro

hombre y realizar su sueño, Consuelo llega a la nueva casa de Jesús, con la intención de adoptar a Mariquita, su sobrina; le dice a su padre que las familias deben hablar y demostrarse cariño. Repentinamente, se presenta con textos un final feliz para cada miembro de la familia.

Título: *Y tu mamá también*

Tenoch y Julio son mejores amigos; sus novias, Ana y Ceci pasarán el verano en Europa. Poco después de su partida, ellos conocen a Luisa, española casada con Jano, primo de Tenoch; en tono de broma, la invitan a la playa. Cuando Luisa se entera de que Jano la ha engañado una vez más; decide dejar su hogar y aceptar la propuesta de los adolescentes. Con el viaje comienza el descubrimiento de la relación entre Tenoch y Julio, así como del pasado y los deseos de Luisa. La tensión sexual se desata, y con ella, la verdad. Tenoch, y luego Julio, tienen relaciones con Luisa, los celos llevan a los amigos a revelar que ambos han tenido sexo con la novia del otro. Luisa toma el control y detiene la pelea. La llegada a la playa neutraliza el conflicto, el viaje termina en una alegre borrachera y en la confesión más grande: Julio se ha acostado también con la madre de Tenoch. A la mañana siguiente, después de una posible relación homosexual, Julio y Tenoch comienzan el retorno, Luisa se queda a disfrutar de la playa. Meses después, Julio se entera de la muerte de Luisa, cuando él y Tenoch tienen un incómodo reencuentro y platican por última vez.

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One Hell of a Trip: polisemias del viaje en Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna)

CÉSAR OTHÓN HERNÁNDEZ

Abstract

In "*One Hell of a Trip: polisemias del viaje en Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna)*" César Hernández discusses a journey narrative by José Agustín that takes us from México City to Acapulco, and from there to Laguna de Coyuca. Whereas there are neither transnational trips, nor cross-country journeys in *Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna)*, Rafael, the protagonist of the novel, travels to large abysmal regions. Inside a tropical paradise, he looks for a metaphysical one. His psychic journeys are triggered off by his use of marijuana and psilocybin. Hernández inquires into the axes that motivate and articulate this journey and he focuses on the mono-myth as narrative pattern, particularly the *katabatic* subgenre or descent to the underworld mytheme. According to Hernández, Agustín's novel reworks *katabasis* from a countercultural point of view, while rock music converges with the use of drugs to set the pace for the initiation journey.

1. Introducción

Acapulco no es una ciudad cualquiera. Múltiples circunstancias históricas han moldeado su geografía cultural, de manera que el puerto se ha convertido en espacio para todo tipo de representaciones. Fue un sitio estratégico para la exploración marítima entre los siglos XVI y XVIII, así como el punto de comercio internacional más importante del Pacífico mexicano. Cuando la Nao de China dejó de recorrer los mares alrededor de 1813, el puerto entró en letargo por más de un siglo. No fue sino hasta 1924, con la construcción del primer hotel en la zona (el *Mirador*), que Acapulco mostró su nueva piel como destino turístico. A lo largo de las tres décadas siguientes la ciudad vio llegar un amplio espectro de visitantes: mexicanos adinerados, estrellas hol-lywoodenses, playboys europeos y escritores gringos. Acapulco fue sinónimo de glamour y de divertimientos al estilo jet set (Del Ángel 47-48).¹

Hacia mediados de los 60, un sector turístico distinto volteó su mirada hacia el puerto. Grupos de *stoners*, macizos y hippies/jipis de todas las latitudes llegaron atraídos

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1. Al cobijo de sus playas Elizabeth Taylor contrajo matrimonio. Por su parte, John F. Kennedy y Jacqueline Bouvier disfrutaron allí de su luna de miel. Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland y Truman Capote también fueron visitantes regulares (Del Ángel 48).

por los paisajes paradisíacos de Acapulco y por su vida nocturna (rebotante en drogas psicoactivas). Muchos acudían con fines recreacionales y algunos iban en busca de una experiencia enteógena. *Se está haciendo tarde ...* (novela de José Agustín) pone en relieve los contornos de Acapulco como territorio esotérico-sicodélico. El puerto surge como una especie de inframundo que los personajes deben recorrer para hacerse merecedores de un encuentro con el Absoluto. En este sentido, recorrer las calles de Acapulco supone la inmersión en un universo mítico. Lo físico y lo espiritual confluyen en el viaje.

2. *"A change of scene": Iniciación en el rito psicodélico*

Desde pequeño, Rafael tuvo visiones del futuro. Estudió Ciencias Ocultas y allí aprendió a leer el tarot y el café. Halló trabajo en un salón de té, donde pasaba el día leyendo las cartas a mujeres clase medieras de la ciudad de México. Rafael interpretaba los símbolos arbitraria y subjetivamente para impresionar a su clientela. Cada vez que terminaba una lectura, al pobre se le revolvía el estómago. Transitaba por una etapa extraña en la que no podía encontrar una compañera. Su consuelo era aspirar al perfeccionamiento espiritual. El maestro de Rafael sentenció con sabiduría: con el tarot no se juega. Las cartas deben interpretarse bien porque si no se acumula karma negativo. Lo mejor para el chico era ser honrado. A través de lo que las cartas revelaban a los demás, él encontraría el camino para descubrirse. Rafael consideró que Virgilio, su *dealer* acapulqueño, era el único a quien podía leer el tarot a conciencia. Casi no se conocían, pero el mundo que relataba Virgilio era fascinante. Rafael *debía* ir a Acapulco (José Agustín 11-14).

Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna) se deja ver desde su inicio como actualización contracultural del mito heroico. El universo de Rafael se encuentra en crisis debido a las malas decisiones que él ha tomado con respecto a la lectura del tarot. La solución se encuentra en la honestidad y él piensa buscarla en los terrenos desconocidos, pero seductores, de Acapulco. Esta instancia de la narración corresponde a la "llamada de la aventura" en la estructura del monomito. El error en las prácticas esotéricas del protagonista se abre como una posibilidad para cumplir un destino diferente. Mediante su sugerencia, el maestro aparece como el mensajero de la llamada. Rafael interpreta su deseo de honestidad como una oportunidad para la aventura. El centro de gravedad del chico se desplazará del seno de su sociedad hacia una zona de fluidos extraños y seres polimorfos, tormentos inimaginables y deleites imposibles (Campbell 54-60). El hecho de que el *dealer* se llame Virgilio indica ya la naturaleza del territorio por donde transitará el héroe.

Así pues, Rafael "desciende" hasta Acapulco desde las alturas de la ciudad de México. Las características topográficas del puerto lo convierten en un infierno excelente: una planicie rodeada por terreno montañoso y situada en el límite con el mar. Lo anterior concuerda con las concepciones clásicas del inframundo, que lo conciben como parte de la geografía cotidiana pero oculto en los confines de la tierra y/o en al-

gún lugar abismal (Brioso Sánchez 16-24). Una vez en Acapulco, Rafael toma un taxi hasta el hogar de Virgilio, ubicado en la comunidad suburbana de Mozimba. El vehículo transita una y otra vez por un cerro en busca de la dirección. Desde esa posición elevada, Rafael observa la playa de Pie de la Cuesta y la laguna de Coyuca. En una especie de visión premonitoria, el chico mira el final de su recorrido cuando aún no ha empezado a andar por el camino iniciático. En este sentido, la ubicación de Mozimba con respecto a la laguna señala el inicio del verdadero descenso de Rafael. El taxi arriba a la calle indicada y el protagonista sale a buscar el número:

¿Y la casa de Virgilio? La veredita había terminado y frente a ella solo había dos paredes improvisadas con ladrillos y otras dos atestiguaban la presencia de una vieja construcción. Techo de palma. A la derecha un cubículo de ramas. ¡Ese es el baño¹!. Ésta no es casa, es la construcción de la decadencia, oh Dios, por qué, por qué, no es posible. En el aire diversos pájaros cantaban pero también se oía música. Un disco. Traffic. *Seems I have to make a change of scene cause evety night I have the strangest dream, imprisoned by the way it could have been, left here on my own or so it seems, I've got to leave be/ore I start to scream but someone 's locked the door and took the key.* Rafael se sintió terriblemente cansado.

¡Virgilio!

No hubo respuesta. *You feelin alright?* Rafael volvió a llamar. *I'm not feelin' too good myself.* Virgilio apareció, con media dona sostenida en su boca, con aire de extrañeza, casi con temor. Abrió los ojos al máximo al ver a Rafael.

¡Rfl qbno quvniste!, exclamó Virgilio tratando de tragar el pan seco que llenaba su boca. Se acercó a Rafael y lo abrazó con efusividad. Creí que nunca me harías el honor.² (José Agustín 18)

De "la llamada de la aventura," la narración se ha trasladado al "cruce del primer umbral." Rafael se encuentra con su guía en una situación de clara índole intertextual con los tres primeros cantos del *Infierno* de Dante. Ambos héroes atraviesan una puerta y se horrorizan de lo que encuentran. Virgilio aparece y recibe con afecto a su guiado (Alighieri 80-91). Finalmente, en el texto de Agustín se escucha el inicio de la canción de Traffic: "Feelin' Alright." Las estrofas citadas en el texto tienen un contenido similar al inicio del canto I en Dante:

A mitad del camino de la vida, en una
selva oscura me encontraba porque mi
ruta había extraviado.

¡Cuan dura cosa es decir cuál era esta
salvaje selva, áspera y fuerte que me vuelve
el temor al pensamiento!

Es tan amarga casi cual la muerte; mas por
tratar del bien que allí encontré, de otras cosas
diré que me ocurrieron. ., Yo no sé repetir cómo
entré en ella pues tan dormido me hallaba en el
punto que abandoné la senda verdadera.

(Alighieri 77)

De aquí en adelante, las partes en cursiva son mías.

En ambos textos, el yo poético se encuentra en un lugar terrible: Dante en una selva oscura, salvaje y áspera; el sujeto en "Feelin' Alright" abandonado a su suerte dentro de una habitación cerrada con llave. Los dos admiten que han extraviado su camino. El protagonista del *Infierno* abandonó la ruta y se internó en la selva porque estaba dormido. Por su parte, la canción de Traffic recurre a imágenes similares de re-currencia y alienación. La voz poética tiene un sueño que se repite todas las noches; ella está atrapada en la contemplación de posibilidades no realizadas. Las dos situaciones provocan malestar en los personajes. Dante compara la experiencia de transitar por la selva con la misma muerte. En el estribillo de "Feelin' Alright," el sujeto lírico cuestiona a los escuchas (¿Te sientes bien?) lo mismo para reafirmar su estado doliente que para poner en duda la condición anímico-mental de sus interlocutores.

Todas estas características se encuentran también en la descripción del estado de Rafael antes de que él iniciara su viaje. El ejemplo es importantísimo porque señala el papel mediador que la música desempeña entre la realidad diegética y el mito. La situación de Rafael resuena en la canción de Traffic (producto de consumo masivo e internacional). Esto inserta la búsqueda del chico en un esquema compartido universalmente. Sus raíces se encuentran en narrativas antiquísimas, es decir, en los territorios del mito.

Tras desayunar y fumar un poco de mariguana, Rafael y Virgilio toman el autobús hacia las playas de Caleta y Cajetilla. Allí encuentran a un par de turistas canadienses: Francine y Gladys. Ellas bebían en el fondo de un restorán, alejadas de la playa donde los turistas gringos se asoleaban, jugaban al frisbee, etc. Francine es una señora esbelta que, a pesar de sus años, aún conserva sus curvas. Por su parte, Gladys tiene sobrepeso. Nunca se quita su vestido negro ni su chai, vaya adonde vaya. Las ancianas invitan a los chicos al departamento de Francine en la Costera. A falta de vehículo para transportarse, ella va con McMathers (posiblemente el esposo de Gladys). Este le consigue las llaves de un Dodge Charger (José Agustín 19-50). Ya en el departamento, Rafael entra en una habitación y descubre a un hombre dormido:

Paulhan bocabajo, cubierto por unos shorts muy pequeños, adheridos a unas nalgas casi femeninas. Durante sanos segundos Rafael dudó de que se tratara de un hombre, ya que el pelo cubría el cuello y una parte de la espalda, y se acomodaba con naturalidad en cada ondulación. Y porque el cuerpo, perfectamente bronceado, carecía de vello y tenía una capa aterciopelada que brillaba con la luminosidad del mediodía reflejada en la piel a través de una ventana abierta, amplia (la terraza: la vegetación exhuberante: el mar con filos plateados en el fondo). Qué *calor*. En la mente de Rafael se fijó extraña, indeleblemente esa figura dormida. Una emoción del más puro carácter estético haciéndolo vibrar. Ésa era una de las figuras más perfectas (la más) que Rafael hubiera visto. Sin duda no era una mujer, a pesar de que las proporciones, aunque masculinas, eran tan precisas, que parecían insólitas en un hombre. ¿Qué es eso? ¿Qué es? (José Agustín 55-56)

Aquí aparece otra etapa del monomito: "el encuentro con la diosa." El belga Paulhan es presentado bajo el patrón narrativo de la mujer bella y dormida, muy común en los cuentos de hadas europeos. La diosa encarna la promesa de perfección porque, psicológicamente, representa la superación del idilio con el pecho materno. Esta figura se contraponen a la de la mujer "mala" quien obstaculiza, prohíbe, está ausente, es deseada

pero está prohibida, etc. Ella representa el deseo infértil hacia la madre y el horror a la naturaleza orgánica desde la cultura: carnívora, maloliente, lasciva (Campbell 105-115). Francine expresa el arquetipo de la mujer "mala" en *Se está haciendo tarde* ... En el siguiente apartado me extenderé sobre esta dimensión del personaje. De regreso a Paulhan, él simboliza a un dios bisexuado; es la madre-diosa y al mismo tiempo el sacerdote-padre (Campbell 127-28). El belga representa la acción adulta especializada en lo relativo a la praxis del viaje psicodélico. A través del ejemplo, inicia a Rafael en el mundo de la espiritualidad mediada por drogas psicoactivas. Paulhan infunde respeto y admiración en el protagonista, pero también atracción erótica. Valga como ejemplo de lo anterior el momento en que Paulhan oficia un rito iniciático para Rafael:

[Paulhan] Introdujo el cigarro, con la punta encendida dentro de su boca, de forma que la otra punta surgía, un par de centímetros, al exterior. En silencio se acercó a Virgilio y lo invitó a fumar. Cara a cara, casi besándose, rozando los labios. Virgilio parpadeó varias veces y aspiró profundamente, a la vez que Paulhan también lo hacía, con un brillo juguetón en la mirada.

¡Puuuuuutos!, gritó Francine, nuevamente regocijada. ¡A mí a mí!

Paulhan fue a ella, sin extraer el cigarro de la boca, y le ofreció la colilla (los labios). Ambos fumaron, mirándose, en tres ocasiones. Paulhan fue después con Gladys, pero ella no quiso. ... Paulhan extrajo la colilla de su boca y una nube de humo salió de su interior, cortinándolo. Tiró la ceniza y se volvió a Rafael, quien no lo había perdido de vista. Rafael cerró los ojos, apretándolos con fuerza, salvajemente. Sus manos sudaban. ... Paulhan miró a Rafael prolongadamente, sin ninguna expresión determinada, tan sólo muy tranquilo, con una sombra de sonrisa. Se le acercó y en ese momento la punta que emergía de sus labios era más pequeña. El corazón de Rafael latió con tal violencia que iba a hacer erupción de alguna forma. Paulhan lo advirtió y guiño un ojo, tranquilizándolo, con suavidad. Alzó las manos y las colocó en las mejillas de Rafael, cubriéndole las sienes con las yemas de los dedos. Inclino la cabeza ligeramente y ofreció la punta del cigarro (sus labios) a Rafael y lo atrajo, hasta que Rafael sintió el cigarro (los labios) y lo acomodó bien. Aspiró el humo en el mismo instante en que Paulhan lo hacía. Y trató de desprenderse, pero Paulhan lo atrajo aún más, con una presión suave, imperiosa. Los labios ya no rozaban, estaban en contacto perfecto. Una tibia carnosidad. Volvieron a fumar y Paulhan no soltó a Rafael ... Rafael cerró los ojos, con una dulce lasitud, sintiendo los labios y las yemas de los dedos de Paulhan como algo suave, tierno, desfallecedor, que le pertenecía, como si fumar así fuera lo más solemne del mundo, la ceremonia más íntima, la comunión perfecta. (José Agustín 82-83)

Este pasaje contiene el germen de lo que deparará el camino: lazos de complicidad entre el guía Virgilio y el sacerdote Paulhan, intentos de Francine por romper la conexión entre los hombres a través de insultos (y/o avances sexuales), temor inicial de Rafael ante las experiencias de viaje, superación del miedo gracias a la actitud consoladora-apremiante de Paulhan. Asimismo, el rito instaaura una comunidad espiritual a partir de la fusión de los cuerpos. Los participantes unen sus bocas y sincronizan las funciones de su organismo de modo que cuando fuman juntos actúan como un solo ser. Esta experiencia de contacto extremo puede parecer insoportable en un principio (como sucede con Rafael) pero deviene en el convencimiento de que el sujeto y su otro son una sola carne (Campbell 103-04).

3. "Your outside is in/Your inside is out." En el camino ... iniciático

Una vez "bautizado" en los misterios de la psicodelia, Rafael entra de lleno en el viaje milico. Isela Chiu-Olivares ha descrito el recorrido de *Se está haciendo tarde* ... como una continúa alternancia entre estados paradisiacos e infernales. Ella identifica estas etapas con estilos de escritura particulares. Los momentos infernales corresponden al lenguaje vulgar con que los personajes se comunican entre sí. El Paraíso se encuentra en la lengua casi poética utilizada por el narrador para describir paisajes o situaciones que guardan relación con la experiencia alucinógena (Chiu-Olivares 65). Quisiera matizar lo anterior con ideas a la Aldous Huxley.³ Considero que el viaje psicodélico no es enteramente paradisiaco frente a la realidad decadente, llena de excesos, donde habitan los personajes. Infierno y Paraíso confluyen en la búsqueda psicotrópica, además no están necesariamente supeditados a un estilo determinado. La primera experiencia infernal de Rafael sucede justo después de haber fumado marihuana con Paulhan y no se expresa de manera vulgar ni poética:

sostenido en el aire, la tierra abajo, y se iba, se iba, se estaba yendo, y no quería ir. Adiviné que había palidecido, ¡me voy me voy no me quiero ir! Fuma ándale, instó Francine y él negó con la cabeza y con el movimiento se iba—en verdad aterrado, la boca y la garganta completamente secas, ásperas; en su cabeza un remolino agitándose a velocidades cada vez más vertiginosas todo se borró frente a él—el remolino se iniciaba con amplios círculos concéntricos: se iba estrechando (¡un embudo, me pierdo en un embudo!) hasta formar paredes circulares, perfectamente verticales: giraban y giraban descendiendo imperceptiblemente hacia ¡un pozo! sin fin, ¡me voy me voy!, ¡no me quiero ir! En el vacío, cuerpo gelatinoso, sin articulaciones. ¡Se desploma! Todo se nubló y Rafael cayó al suelo ... (José Agustín 85)

Aquí aparece nuevamente una triangulación intertextual entre el fragmento, la obra de Dante y el hexagrama 48 del / *Ching*, que es un paratexto de la novela:

EL POZO. El pueblo puede cambiar
pero el pozo no puede ser cambiado.
Ni disminuye ni aumenta.
Vienen y van y extraen del pozo. Si uno desciende
casi hasta el agua y la cuerda no recorre todo el camino
o el balde se rompe, trae infortunio. (José Agustín 10)

Rafael se precipita hacia las profundidades de un abismo sin fondo. Este lugar tiene la forma de un embudo que describe círculos concéntricos. Lo anterior concuerda con la geografía metafísica de Dante, quien describe el infierno a partir del impacto de la

Huxley propone el término "antípoda" para designar aquellas regiones de la mente que relacionan al sujeto con el universo (el microcosmos con el macrocosmos). Se trata de zonas de difícil acceso para los individuos debido a que carecen de utilidad biológica o instrumental, pero se puede llegar a ellas mediante prácticas como la autoflagelación, el ayuno, la meditación y el uso de ciertas sustancias químicas. En este sentido, el Cielo y el Infierno corresponderían a los dos extremos de la experiencia mística. Consúltense los ensayos *Las puertas de la percepción* (de Hernani).

caída de Lucifer en la Tierra: una fosa cónica en forma de un gigantesco anfiteatro (Alighieri 25). "El pozo" se agrega a la significación de la caída en la medida en que le imprime un sentido. No se puede descender a medias; la cuerda debe recorrer todo el camino con el balde en una sola pieza para recoger el agua de las profundidades. De esta manera, el viaje catabático se abre hacia una experiencia más amplia. Al igual que en Dante, el final de la travesía de Rafael por el inframundo presupone la inmersión en otro plano espiritual. Llegar al centro del Infierno y enfrentarse a Satán significará la entrada al Purgatorio y, en última instancia, el acceso al Paraíso.

Por otro lado, el fragmento de la novela también brinda algunas coordenadas del "camino de las pruebas"; siguiente estadio de la narración heroica. Rafael "siente que se va." La dirección es incierta y él, temeroso, opone resistencia. Esta especie de fuerza centrípeta representa la disolución del yo, o el aniquilamiento de la identidad (Fal-koner 3). Las pruebas del héroe simbolizan las distintas etapas de degradación que él debe alcanzar en el intento por descomponerse en sus partes constitutivas. Una vez que el sujeto ha muerto, podrá renacer en la realización de la verdad y logrará la reunificación con el Absoluto (Campbell 217). Rafael se opone a la pérdida de su individualidad y, como resultado, se abisma en el embudo sin fin. Así pues, la superación de la travesía psicodélica reside en dejarse llevar por el deseo de aniquilación. De otro modo se cae en el "mal viaje," como sucede en el caso de Francine:

No hay nada que deteste más que perder la onda, no entender qué sucede, no poder pensar qué estoy haciendo porque simplemente no puedo. Algo, o más bien, algo como alguien, que no soy *yo*, independientemente de mí, me domina y me obliga a gritar, golpear, herir. Me sucede en muy raras ocasiones pero igualmente me parece *mal*. O quizá me suceda más a menudo de lo que creo pero ese algo como alguien me hace creer que soy yo quien está actuando, conscientemente, y en realidad no es así. ¡No poder controlar que tomen posesión de mi cuerpo para abalanzarme y hundir mis uñas o para darme de topes contra la pared o para estrangular a Sonrisas Colchondas! ¡Sonrisas Colchondas!

risita,
pero sucede que abomino ver a Repugladys depositando su mirada-bovina-quiéran-mestoy-muy-sola-metánmelestoy-muy-seca (what a lie!) en los ojos de El Que Sí Sabe the Amazing Wizard of the Occult the Grinning Prick que ni siquiera se fija en ella (*muy normal*) porque me ve a mí, me desea a mí. Me tiene que ver a *mi* y jamás a Gladys por razones obvias: yo no me descuido, soy muy puuuuuta, cómo no, pero elegante, eso sí, muy acá; no *babeo* a cada rato nada más porque me bebí a whole bottle of coñac o de tequila (repugnante), doscientas pastas y quinientas onzas de marihuana y otro tanto de nieve en una sesión. Dear Gladys, si tus piernas flaquean y los párpados se te caen llégale a un buen perico, gee whiz, up again—up up and awaaaay! Brand *new*. Pero Gladys prefiere andar dando bandazos ojiabsorta y sonrisaperdida. ¿Quién eres, dónde estás, qué te dieron? (José Agustín 101-02)

En el fragmento pueden identificarse dos posturas bien delimitadas. Al inicio, Francine habla justamente sobre la degradación del yo propiciada por el camino iniciático. Ella describe una experiencia semejante a la posesión. Con base en las actitudes que adopta cuando ese "otro yo" se apodera de ella, se podría decir que el viaje debilita el aparato psíquico de Francine. Yo y Súperyo dejan libre el paso para que el Ello dé rienda

suelta a sus pulsiones y deseos. Francine se rehusa rotundamente a enfrentar esta prueba. En consecuencia su visión acerca del uso de drogas se limita. El segundo párrafo da testimonio de esto. Para ella, el asunto se convierte en una competencia por status. Quien soporta de mejor manera el abuso de sustancias ocupa la cima. La más mínima muestra de ebriedad, de contemplación o complicidad es símbolo de flaqueza. Por otro lado, Francine contrarresta el sentimiento de fragmentación que la invade al reafirmar su sentido de individualidad de manera egoísta ("porque me ve a mí, me desea a mí. Me tiene que ver a mí").

Dejarse llevar por el viaje no es la única forma en la que los personajes transitan por el "camino de las pruebas." Margo Glantz propone una relación intrínseca entre la experiencia iniciática y las sensaciones corporales en *Se está haciendo tarde ...* De acuerdo con ella, los estadios en el camino pueden delimitarse a partir del estímulo corporal al que se someten los personajes: "del vodka al tequila, de la mariguana a la silocibina, de la homosexualidad a la heterosexualidad, ... de la vejez a la juventud" (Glantz 255). Si bien algunas de estas categorías difícilmente señalan algún escalón en el descenso catabático, considero que el rock y el uso de drogas sí contribuyen a marcar pautas en la transformación de Rafael y sus compañeros. Mencionaré dos ejemplos breves.

Tras superar su primer "mal viaje," Rafael se relaja. Fuma un poco más de mariguana. Siente placidez y una especie de melancolía voluptuosa. El chico está lánguido; en reposo. Piensa que si fuma un poco más, sólo se hará más feliz:

Cashbox Hits by Stanley Black terminó y alguien puso *With a Little Help From My Friends: Joe Cocker. Un organito gentil*. La música parecía muy diáfana, una vez más como si saliera de su cabeza y no de la porquería de pilas con forma de librito que asesinaba los discos. / *sha!! be released. I shall be released*. Las voces de todos parecían salir de la música, a tal grado se hallaban integrados en la belleza, franjas de sol, pero, ¿qué están diciendo? (José Agustín 90)

El texto de Agustín es sumamente preciso en cuanto a la obra que cita. Señala el álbum, el intérprete, el título de la canción e, incluso, en qué parte de ésta se encuentra el fragmento citado. Se trata de un *cover* de la canción escrita por Bob Dylan "I Shall Be Released." El esfuerzo del narrador por precisar tantos detalles incita al lector para que acuda a la fuente del intertexto (en la memoria, si la conoce; de otro modo, en su fuente original). De acuerdo con la información del fragmento, el contexto de la referencia roquera es el estribillo de la canción; contiene la frase citada y es allí donde se hace escuchar el "organito gentil":

I see my light come shining
From the west unto the east.
Any day now, any day now,
I shall be released. (Cocker)

Bob Dylan escribió la obra como una canción carcelaria. La voz poética representa un reo que reflexiona sobre la reclusión: sus causas y consecuencias. El estribillo expresa la fe del prisionero en que pronto encontrará la libertad. Transpuesto en la novela de Agustín, esta parte de la composición adquiere un carácter metafórico. La prisión de

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Rafael es su propio cuerpo y la voz que habla desde el exilio es su alma o su mente. Inmersa en el rito iniciático, ella ve la luz que llegará pronto a liberarla. Cabe señalar que en *Se está haciendo tarde* ... el narrador repite dos veces la frase "I shall be released." Una de ellas tiene valor diegético y corresponde a la canción escuchada por los personajes. La otra señala la reapropiación de la fuente musical por parte del narrador o por el mismo Rafael. El chico se contagia de la fe de Joe Cocker y él también repite que será liberado. Por supuesto, éste es uno de los momentos paradisiacos en la narración.

El siguiente ejemplo aparece mucho más adelante en el texto. Los personajes dejaron el departamento de Francine y se dirigieron hacia playa Condesa para comer algo. Allí, Virgilio intercambió unas mescalinas "piñatísimas" por seis silocibinas de calidad. Gladys tuvo un "mal viaje" terrible pero logró calmarse y se reincorporó al grupo. Después de alimentarse, todos subieron al Charger. Circularon por la Costera, encendieron otro cigarro de marihuana y se detuvieron en una tienda de licores para que Gladys comprara una botella de vodka. La anciana regresó de la tienda. Tiró por la ventana el vaso de donde había estado bebiendo tequila. Este se estrelló contra el pavimento. Virgilio, por su lado, hizo zigzaguar el auto en varias ocasiones mientras daba fumadas al porro. Unos minutos después, un volkswagen de la Dirección de Tránsito hizo señales al Charger para que se orillara. Virgilio decide darse a la fuga y los personajes terminan protagonizando una persecución policiaca (José Agustín 128-80) Mientras huyen, Rafael y sus compañeros continúan bebiendo, fumando marihuana, escuchando rock. Cito un fragmento de sus conversaciones:

Francine tendió otra cinta a Gladys: On Tour: Delaney & Bonnie with Eric Clapton & Friends. ... Things get better baby when I'm with you. Ya vas. Qué música tan *violenta*, comentó Paulhan. ... Rafael sacudió la cabeza y observó si alguien lo estaba mirando. ... Ya no voy a fumar más morita, Paulhan, susurró Rafael en voz muy baja. Paulhan lo miró (sonriendo). Te juro que es muy *mala* Es que te has excedido, nada es bueno en exceso. La voz muy baja, muy cerca el uno del otro y al parecer nadie les prestaba atención: la música estaba muy fuerte, llena de energía. ¿Qué tiene de bueno la marihuana aun en pequeñas cantidades? ... Es un cotorreio, terció Virgilio, lo que pasa es que ahorita te estás azotando. Estoy hablando con *Paulhan*, oídos de tísico, pensó Rafael Se suponía que nadie nos estaba oyendo, ¿o no? ... El efecto de la marihuana depende de la condición moral, de la posición social, de la clase económica, de la cultura y de la sensibilidad y de las inclinaciones de quien la consume ..., concluyó Paulhan. Es una planta que no es buena ni mala en sí. ... Ya ti, ¿qué efecto te hace?, preguntó Rafael. A mí me parece un cotorreio también Yo pienso dejar de fumar en estos días. ... Meditando se obtienen estados muy *daros*, muy altos. Mejor le sigo llegando a la medita9ao para seguir adelante, porque uno ya no puede echarse para atrás. ... Eres muy bueno, Paulhan, musitó Rafael. ... ¿Tú crees que yo no deba de fumar morita? ... Yo qué sé, ése es problema tuyo, respondió Paulhan. Pero tú me has invitado a que fume — ¿Ah sí?, pues también te podría invitar ... a que nos *acostemos* juntos, ¿te gustaría? ... Responde Rafael: ¿te gustaría acostarte conmigo? ... *Only you know and I know*, cantaron Delaney, Bonnie, Eric Clapton y Dave Masón en el autoestéreo. ¿Nunca te has acostado con hombres Rafael?, preguntó Paulhan (sonriendo). ... Pues yo sí, admitió Virgilio ...; wasn't so bad as matter o'fact. ... Paulhan colocó su mano en el muslo de Rafael Las relaciones sexuales entre individuos del mismo sexo son esencialmente inarmónicas, lo sé, pero nadie puede negar que tienen un atractivo muy

especial ... El orgasmo es de otro tipo, prosiguió Paulhan con cierto rubor y moviendo la mano sobre el muslo de Rafael; muy *efectivo*. (José Agustín 186-89)

Nuevamente la novela de Agustín señala la procedencia de sus citas musicales. En esta ocasión, se trata de los títulos "Things Get Better" y "Only You Know and I Know," correspondientes a la pista uno y tres del álbum *On Tour with Eric Clapton*. Dado que el propio narrador señala la naturaleza diegética de las canciones (el texto mismo se extiende por varias páginas antes de que aparezca la siguiente cita), resulta relevante cuáles son los fragmentos que se llevan a la textualidad. La segunda pista en el disco ("Poor Elijah—Tribute to Johnson Medley") no recibe referencia alguna. Esta es un homenaje al músico de blues Robert Johnson, por lo que se aleja temáticamente de las dos canciones citadas en la novela. Tanto "Things Get Better" como "Only You Know and I Know" son composiciones amorosas cuya estructura semeja un diálogo entre los miembros de la pareja. Delaney y Bonnie (un matrimonio de músicos) toman turnos para cantar(se) los versos. Ambos unen sus voces durante el estribillo. Las referencias provienen, precisamente, de esa sección de las obras musicales.

En este caso, el contexto musical que rodea las citas no es tan importante como las apreciaciones del narrador con respecto a las canciones. A lo largo del fragmento el Charger corre a toda velocidad por una autopista sumamente sinuosa. En efecto, la música de Delaney & Bonnie & Friends es dinámica, violenta; está llena de energía. El ritmo se suma a lo vertiginoso del recorrido en carretera. Con todo, el narrador construye un remanso apacible alrededor de Rafael y Paulhan: "al parecer nadie les prestaba atención." Desde esta perspectiva, la canción se fracciona en su dimensiones musical y literaria. Los sonidos se insertan en la dinámica caótica, acentuándola. Esto busca alejar a los escuchas/lectores de los significados vertidos en la letra. Sólo Paulhan y Rafael (Virgilio también) acceden a la dinámica de los amantes: "Things get bet-ter baby when I'm with you." De pronto, la persecución en carretera (el "pasón" de mariguana, la angustia frente a la disolución del yo durante el viaje iniciático, etc.) dejan de pesarle a Rafael cuando se pone en las manos de Paulhan. "Tú eres muy bueno," dice el iniciado a su mistagogo.

En este fragmento se asiste a un estadio importantísimo del monomito: el "matrimonio místico" entre el héroe y la diosa (Campbell 105). Paulhan invita a Rafael a que se acueste con él. Virgilio escucha todo desde el asiento del conductor. La pista tres llega a su final: Delaney y Bonnie repiten "only you know and I know" por última vez. El narrador recurre a la hipérbole y hace cantar a los guitarristas Eric Clapton y Dave Masón (también vocalistas en otros proyectos). Este último además compuso la canción. El verso por sí mismo señala el carácter hermético del rito que se está llevando a cabo. Francine y Gladys intervienen únicamente para insultar a Rafael y a Paulhan: "Tú eres muy bueno, Paulhan, musitó Rafael. Muy bueno para mamar, puto feo, declaró Francine;" "¿Tú crees que yo no deba de fumar morita?, insistió Rafael. Ay sí: morita, pareces puto, dijo Francine." (José Agustín 187-88). Ellas quedaron muy atrás en el camino. Se entretienen en asuntos como provocar a los policías a través de las ventanillas del Charger, competir con Paulhan por el cuerpo de Rafael, etc.

One Hell of a Trip

Que la cita musical sea interpretada por un grupo más numeroso que la pareja de amantes, indica la participación de Virgilio en el "matrimonio místico." El acapulqueño admite que ha tenido relaciones sexuales con otros hombres justo después de la propuesta de Paulhan. Por su parte, Rafael sintió atracción erótica por Paulhan desde la primera vez que lo vio. Considero que el deseo homosexual por parte de los tres personajes simboliza el ingreso a un modo de sociabilidad del que Francine y Gladys están totalmente excluidas. En este punto de la narración ambos grupos atraviesan el horizonte de eventos y su destino queda sellado.

4. "The higher you fly/The deeper you go." Final en laguna

Los agentes de Tránsito no dan respiro al Charger, así que Virgilio decide tomar la desviación hacia la Barra de Coyuca. El camino es de arena y el volkswagen pronto queda atascado. No bien dejan atrás a sus perseguidores, los chicos terminan con el combustible de su propio vehículo. Al rock lo silencia la falta de aparatos reproductores, pero la silocibina entra en escena para suplantarlos. Los cinco personajes ingieren su cápsula en preparación para lo que les espera. Desde donde se encuentran, únicamente le resta un destino (la laguna de Coyuca) y una manera de alcanzarlo (caminando) (José Agustín 197-237). Esta especie de peregrinaje representa el último tramo del inframundo psicodélico. Corresponde a la estructura discursiva denominada el "vientre de la ballena" en el monomito y es la prueba definitiva del héroe.

Tanto Rafael como Francine comienzan su viaje de silocibina con una mala nota. Él se descubre mudo y avasallado por la nueva realidad que adquieren la arena, el cielo, hasta el mismo Charger inmóvil sobre la playa. Observa que desde el mar se alzan cavernas, construcciones derruidas, engranajes y partes de objetos mecánicos. El tiempo deja de tener sentido para él. Cuando por fin puede hablar, su propia voz le parece extraña. Por su parte, Francine ve demonios de colmillos sanguinolentos en el océano. Se da cuenta que sus sentimientos cambian repentinamente sin que ella pueda controlarlos. En un momento siente un amor inmenso hacia Gladys, y al siguiente, la repudia. Tiene la sensación terrible de que alguien merodea por las cercanías con la intención de jugarle alguna broma macabra. Ella piensa en McMathers y el Diablo se le aparece en las aguas (238-48)

"El vientre de la ballena" es la vía más contundente para lograr el desvanecimiento del yo. Consiste en la aniquilación o el sacrificio físico del protagonista. En las mitologías, este argumento suele presentarse en la imagen del héroe devorado. Dentro del espacio indeterminado que es el estómago de la bestia, él sufre un proceso de transformación. Al final emerge de ese lugar como un individuo renacido (Campbell 89). Por supuesto, exponerse a la piedra de sacrificios presupone doblegar la individualidad en Dios. Las alucinaciones de Rafael apelan justamente a un sentido de comunidad y también de inmolación. Él observa engranajes y componentes mecánicos que simbolizan el papel mínimo, pero valioso, que el sujeto desempeña en una construcción mayor. Del mismo modo, las ruinas y las cavernas eran espacios habituales de adora-

ción religiosa durante la antigüedad. En ocasiones estos lugares eran el escenario de rituales de sacrificio.

En contraposición con Rafael, las visiones de Francine ilustran el destino de quien se aferra con furia a su individualidad. Lo mismo que Lucifer, ella continuamente se antepone a sí misma frente a los demás; vive preocupada porque la miren e imiten su conducta; es tan vanidosa que termina por abismarse hasta el centro mismo del Infierno (Campbell 62). Francine ve figuras demoníacas. También siente que su Ello la acecha malignamente. Sus miedos y resentimientos se manifiestan en la forma de Satanás. Conforme ambos personajes continúan caminando hacia la laguna estas reflexiones se corroboran.

Rafael se acostumbra al viaje. Comienza a darse cuenta de la futilidad de sus comportamientos presuntuosos. Poco a poco llega al convencimiento de que Paulhan y Virgilio habían visto a través de sus poses; de que ellos dos sabían exactamente cómo era Rafael en realidad. Por el contrario, el nerviosismo de Francine aumenta. Ella busca "mal viajar" a los demás, diciéndoles que todo lo que ven es una alucinación y que en realidad ellos están en su departamento de la Costera. También exige que se encienda otro cigarro de mariguana, porque a ella esas drogas escolares le hacen los mandados. Las trayectorias de ambos personajes se conectan en el siguiente fragmento:

Rafael no entendía lo que Francine vociferaba, pero presentía algo terrible, percibía mucho odio, le daban ganas de llorar ... Estoy en Acapulco, logró recordar Rafael, y ella se llama Francine y yo estoy aquí porque tengo que leerle las cartas, *ella me lo está pidiendo* porque quiere que la ayude. ...

Francine, yo te puedo ayudar, dijo Rafael, alarmándose porque no reconocía su voz, no creía ser él quien hablaba; yo te puedo enseñar lo que crees ser y lo que eres en realidad, ¿quieres que te lea las cartas? Te las voy a interpretar como a nadie. Rafael palideció: su voz salía sola, sin que él se lo propusiera; y resultaba lejana, llena de ecos; un arroyo de color y los ecos eran sombras, otra manifestación de luz. Me da una felicidad inmensa que tú me pidas que te lea las cartas porque yo te lo puedo hacer muy bien, aunque no lo he hecho por egoísta. Pero contigo será diferente, verás qué bien te voy a ayudar.

... Francine se encongió, se sintió arder y tuvo que luchar contra sí misma por que la penetró una emoción oscura, que la hacía tenderse, irse ...

¿Tú me vas a ayudar *a mí*? ¿Tú! ¿Me vas a echar las *cartas*? ¿Yo te lo *pedí*? ¡Estúpido! ¡Me cagó en tus cartas y en tí! ¿Quién te crees, para *ayudarme*? ¡A mí nadie me puede ayudar porque no lo necesito!

... ¡ayúdame a ti mismo!, ¡si es que puedes saber *quién* eres! ¡Eres un pobre pendejo! ¡Un hijo de puta! ¡Hijo de puta!,

... ¡yo soy la que puede enseñarte algunas cosas, cómo puedes evitar quedarte *petrificado* en el peor de los infiernos, luchando por no azotarte, fingiendo que estás en el gran *éxtasis* cuando te estás *revolcando* en tu sufrimiento, en tu mente asquerosa y sucia! ¡Sucia!,

... ¡te la has pasado luchando contra ti mismo, tratando de controlarte!, gritó Francine, fuera de sí; ¡pero no puedes! ¡Alguien te *maneja*! ¡No puedes evitar ver tus *porquerías*!. ¡Y me quieres echar las cartas a mí! ¡Yo estoy *perfecta*! Perfecta, perfecta, como nunca. ¿No lo ves? ¿Acaso me he *ido*? ¿Me he *perdido*? ¿Petrificado? ¡Nunca me vas a leer tus cartas porque a ti y a tu tarot los mando al *infierno*! (José Agustín 258-59)

One Hell of a Trip

La inmersión de Rafael en el viaje es total. Así como Paulhan y Virgilio, el chico adquiere la habilidad de ver a las personas más allá de sus actitudes inmediatas. Para él, Francine es transparente y necesita ayuda con desesperación. Rafael se considera la persona indicada para ayudarla porque, en efecto, su cuerpo ha dejado de pertenecerle. A través de él habla una divinidad luminosa. Por su parte, Francine queda impactada de que se descubriera su verdadero sentir a lo largo del recorrido. Ella reacciona desde su orgullo. Apela a su posición privilegiada como la que menos demuestra su ebriedad, pero su propio discurso evidencia que eso es una estrategia evasiva. Por último, Francine proyecta en Rafael su propia actitud con respecto al viaje. La anciana ha llegado a un punto donde ya no puede huir del aspecto negativo de su persona (las "porquerías," como ella las llama), sin embargo, persiste en su intento de escapar cuando afirma que ella está "perfecta."

El fragmento es importante porque señala la progresión de ambos personajes en su desarrollo espiritual. Mientras Rafael ha dejado el egoísmo a un lado (se ha prestado en cuerpo y alma a la experiencia metafísica), el orgullo de Francine la hunde cada vez más en los infiernos de su mente. En este sentido, el peregrinaje por la Barra de Coyuca simboliza cosas diferentes para cada personaje. Francine transita por allí en el penúltimo estadio antes de su llegada al centro del infierno. Por lo que respecta a Rafael, la experiencia es un camino de expiación destinada a prepararlo para su encuentro con el Absoluto. El cambio en la novela del predominio del rock a la representación de estados alucinatorios producto de la ingesta de silocibina, marca el arribo de Rafael a su Purgatorio personal. La conclusión de este "vientre de la ballena" aparece en seguida:

Sin darse cuenta Rafael caminó hasta unos matorrales, bajo una pequeña pared de arena. Allí advirtió que su estómago se agitaba. Aflojó el lazo de su traje de baño y lo dejó caer sobre sus pies (grotescos). ... El vientre de Rafael retumbó. Las piernas bien abiertas, el ano distendido, expulsando, mediante contracciones del vientre, un líquido verdeviscoso, donde varias personas pequeñísimas, y ¡todas con su cara!, se estaban ahogando y braceando desesperadamente, y a Rafael le daba mucha risa, pues oía con claridad que gritaban y maldecían y eres un hijo de puta ¡sucio! ¡sucio! ... Y si alzaba la vista, frente a él encontraba a cuatro ancianos vestidos de blanco y deliberando. ... Por supuesto, los ancianos deliberaban acerca de esa cosa que cagaba entre los matorrales. ... Rafael se puso de pie pero en el acto sintió, entre sus muslos, la humedad viscosa. Volvió a agacharse. Buscó a su alrededor y después llevó su mano a la bolsa de la camisa. Tomó los billetes, todo el dinero que había llevado, y con ellos se limpió cuidadosamente el ano y las nalgas y los muslos, desechando los billetes sucios tras los matorrales. Ya se había limpiado bien pero continuó sacando billetes y llevándolos a su ano, hasta que se terminaron. Volvió a ponerse de pie y se colocó el traje de baño. Se hallaba más tranquilo, pero con una corriente de sonidos rodeándolo; voces casi celestiales lo envolvían. (José Agustín 261 -62)

Aquí se da una muerte simbólica. Rafael expulsa aspectos abyectos de sí mismo y en el propio acto también los aniquila. Los seres vulgares que han salido de su ano mueren ahogados por el líquido verdeviscoso que los acompañaba. Una vez que se ha consumado el sacrificio, aparecen cuatro ancianos vestidos de blanco. Éstos pueden ser representaciones alegóricas de las cuatro virtudes cardinales (prudencia, justicia, tem-

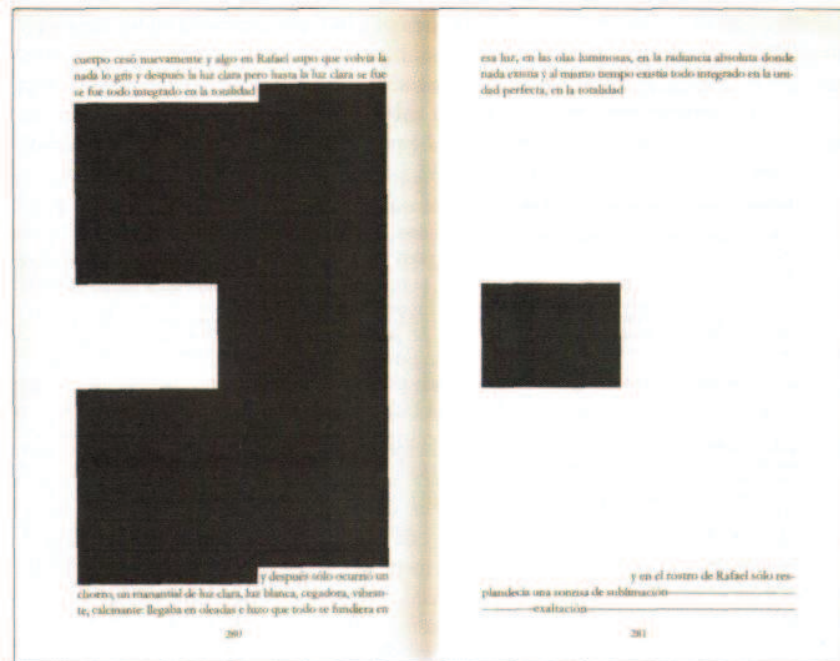
planza y fortaleza) o bien, desde una perspectiva cristiana, de los cuatro padres de la iglesia (Ambrosio de Milán, Agustín de Hipona, Jerónimo de Estridón y Gregorio Magno).⁴ De cualquier modo, la escena expresa la aprobación del examen último de pureza. Estos cuatro personajes aparecen para dar fe de que Rafael merece una entrevista con la divinidad. De acuerdo con esto, el chico se despoja de sus lazos con el mundo. El dinero funciona como metonimia de la sociedad, en tanto que es un objeto sin valor propio que, a través de un pacto, articula muchas de las relaciones humanas. En la antesala del Absoluto, el contrato social que le da valor al dinero desaparece, por lo que todos los billetes de Rafael quedan como simples pedazos de papel. El los utiliza para poder acudir al encuentro totalmente limpio, física y mentalmente.

Virgilio contacta a un lanchero para que les dé a todos un paseo por la laguna. Su plan es pasar la noche en un hotel del lado de Coyuca para tomar un taxi a Acapulco la mañana siguiente. A mitad de la laguna, Francine se desespera. No puede soportar las caras desdentadas y las manos huesudas que emergen del agua para llevársela. Exige a Paulhan que se encienda un cigarro de mariguana. Todos fuman. El ambiente se tensa. Una oscuridad profunda invade a Gladys, Virgilio, Paulhan y Rafael. Francine queda inmóvil con los puños cerrados. Virgilio siente que no debe hablar ni moverse o sobrevendrá una catástrofe. Paulhan se recuesta y fija su mirada en las estrellas del firmamento. Rafael respira acompasadamente, con la espalda muy rígida. Francine había sentido un alivio inicial con la mariguana, pero casi de inmediato se llenó de mayor inquietud. El hecho de que todos se mantuvieran callados la sacaba aún más de quicio (José Agustín 265-76).

La anciana comienza a molestar a todos para que hablen, pero en especial a Gladys. Ella rompe su silencio para decirle a Francine que se calle. Ésta, regocijada, comienza a insultar a su amiga. Gladys no soporta más. Se lleva las manos a la cabeza, y emite un chillido gutural que se prolonga por algunos segundos y culmina en un matiz agudo, alterando a todos. De un salto sale de la lancha y se pierde en la oscuridad. Aterrorizada, Francine salta detrás de ella. La lancha las sigue hasta la orilla pero ninguno de los chicos se da cuenta. Paulhan y Virgilio se encuentran en el umbral de algo desconocido. Temen llegar al otro lado para que después no puedan regresar. Se quedan muy quietecitos esperando a que el viaje pase. Por su parte, Rafael ya no piensa nada (276-279). Ha sido aniquilado y la otra identidad que lo habita tiene la siguiente experiencia:

Rafael se había vaciado se había convertido en oscuridad respirando acompasadamente con el vientre como fuelle y silencio total y dónde estaba quizás había muerto al fin las tinieblas se fueron despejando hasta volverse algo gris y luego una luz clarísima calcinante y Rafael volvió a sentir su cuerpo apenas sacudido por algo que podía considerarse regocijo pero su. (José Agustín 279-81)

Santo Tomás de Aquino discute a profundidad sobre las virtudes cardinales en la cuestión 61 de su *Suma de teología* (véase De Aquino 464).



El cruce de la laguna tiene marcas intertextuales con dos lugares en la obra de Dante. Es atractivo asociar la figura del lanchero acapulqueño con el mitológico Carente (lo que convertiría a Coyuca en una especie de río Aqueronte o Estigia) sin embargo, considero que la fuente simbólica de la laguna reside en otro lugar. En el caso de Francine, Coyuca representa el lago congelado Cocito. Está ubicado en el último círculo del infierno y en su centro reside Satanás, aprisionado por el hielo de la cintura para abajo (Alighieri 268-84). Es justo a la mitad de la laguna cuando Francine, desesperada, pide que se fume marihuana. Esta sustancia es el objeto ominoso con el que se enfrentan los personajes en la última parada del viaje catabático (Tovilla Martínez 168). Aquí, el cruce adquiere un valor polisémico. En un primer momento, se relata el "cruce" de la marihuana con la silocibina, es decir, los efectos de mezclar ambas sustancias en la experiencia de los personajes. En todos los casos, la combinación desata una experiencia negativa y constituye la última prueba que el héroe debe superar. Para Francine, sin embargo, es el final del camino.

Instalada en su "mal viaje," ella busca sentirse mejor a toda costa. Incita a los demás para que hablen, de modo que Francine pueda expresar su superioridad. Gladys interviene con la intención de que deje a los otros lidiar en paz con sus propios recorridos, pero Francine aprovecha la situación para humillarla; de este modo busca retomar el control de su entorno. Hasta este punto todos los personajes se encontraban en una situación límite. Transitaban entre el Paraíso y un abismo. Francine sabe que se

despeña, así que decide arrastrar a Gladys con ella. La oscuridad se desploma sobre su amiga. El grito de Gladys es un grito de traición e impotencia. Cabe recordar que es precisamente en el Cocito donde los traidores son castigados. Después de ir tras Gladys, Francine se descubre rodeada de árboles y palmeras. No encuentra rastros de realidad por ningún lado. Siente que su estómago se descompone. Vomita recargada en un árbol:

del caos de su mente emergió la idea de que todo eso ocurría porque ya no comprendía nada; no sabía quién era, dónde se hallaba, qué le habían dado, qué significaban esas alucinaciones promovidas por todos sus sentidos. Hasta el momento en que saltó de la lancha aún podía coordinar, sabía qué sucedía, pero después ya no. Sin poderlo evitar, movida por una orden extraña, cayó en el suelo y se revolcó, tragó tierra húmeda y yerbas frescas. Tenía que saber qué estaba sucediendo. Empezó a contorsionarse hasta que la sensación fue tan terrible que tuvo que morderse un brazo con todas sus fuerzas, hincando sus dientes (postizos) con todo su vigor. No sintió nada y sólo descubrió que estaba gritando.

¡Qué sucedió! ¡Qué sucedió! ¡Yo sabía y ahora ya no sé! ¡Ya no sé! ¡Alguien tiene que decirme qué está sucediendo! (José Agustín 282)

El destino final de Francine resulta sumamente irónico. A lo largo de la narración su principal objetivo con respecto al viaje era mantener el sentido de sí misma, o al menos aparentarlo. La anciana termina en un estado agudo de despersonalización. Su soberbia y arrogancia desaparecen. Ella queda humillada, suplicando por la ayuda de Virgilio, Paulhan y de Rafael. Ninguno le responde. Ellos sobrepasaron el "cruce" de drogas y están a la mitad de otro tipo de cruce. Para Rafael, la laguna de Coyuca puede ser a un tiempo el río Leteo y el Eunoé. Ambos nacen de una misma fuente ubicada en los límites del Paraíso Terrenal con el Cielo, sobre la cima del monte Purgatorio de acuerdo con la *Divina comedia*. Quien cruza y bebe de sus aguas borrará, en primer lugar, toda memoria de sus pecados; en seguida, se fijará en la mente cada una de las buenas acciones cometidas durante la vida (Alighieri 494-514). La visión extática de Rafael hace eco de esto: el protagonista de la narración realiza un cruce a través de dos zonas lumínicas opuestas que, sin embargo, convergen en la totalidad.

Alternativamente, la forma que adopta el texto durante este fragmento puede entenderse como una interpretación del emblema chino *taijitu*: ☯ (la luz dentro de la oscuridad y la oscuridad dentro de la luz). El símbolo expresa la misma idea de opuestos fusionados en la unidad (Tovilla Martínez 170). La diferencia reside en que la imagen perfila la descomposición del principio generador en dos fuerzas contradictorias; no la unión o mezcla. En cualquier caso, la escena desarrolla el episodio de "la gracia última" en el esquema del monomito. Aquí, las representaciones simbólicas del héroe y el dios son trascendidas. Se revelan como máscaras personales sobre lo que no tiene nombre (Campbell 174-75).

5. Conclusiones

Es norma del monomito que el héroe traiga al mundo cotidiano la sabiduría adquirida durante el estado de gracia. *Se está haciendo tarde* ... termina con una frase del lan- chero, quien fuma tranquilamente el cigarro de mariguana dejado por los muchachos:

"Yo creo que mejor nos regresamos. Se está haciendo tarde." Queda abierta a los lectores la tarea de imaginar el regreso del protagonista a las estructuras sociales. De otro modo, el inmenso rito de paso que representa la novela no surte ningún efecto.

¿Qué conclusiones generales pueden extraerse de un texto tan específico en su lenguaje, en las prácticas que representa y hasta en su gusto musical? Puedo decir que la novela de José Agustín, en su carácter de reapropiación, reflexiona sobre las maneras en que algunos individuos de las sociedades actuales se relacionan con el mito y la religiosidad. Sin duda, el pensamiento mítico es esencial para el desarrollo de la humanidad, pero el foco para la expresión de estas narrativas se ha desplazado.

En este sentido, *Se está haciendo tarde...* propone la escucha musical como un espacio de educación emocional y psicológica. Los mitemas siguen presentes con toda su carga simbólica en las canciones de Traffic o Bob Dylan, pero las historias ya no se transmiten desde la oralidad. Ahora son difundidas masivamente a través de medios tecnológicos como la radio y la industria discográfica.

Por otro lado, el texto presenta modos de espiritualidad que no pasan por instituciones burocráticas tan rígidas como la iglesia. Abrevan de religiones indígenas de América y de algunos puntos del Lejano Oriente. En estos sistemas de creencias la experiencia mística es más asequible y, por lo tanto, tiene mayor atractivo para algunos sujetos occidentales.

Con base en lo que he dicho hasta ahora, podría pensarse en la novela como una apología del estilo de vida hippie. A mi parecer, el texto no es tan ingenuo. Conoce los peligros de las sociedades neoliberales, particularmente la tendencia de su mercado por convertir a las expresiones culturales en mercancía. La propia música popular es una industria, por lo que sus obras son productos comerciables desde su nacimiento.

Al plantear un viaje con dos desenlaces, el texto escenifica dos modos de entender la contracultura. Rafael representa el extremo de aquellos informados sobre la esotérica, lo psicodélico, etc., quienes además manifiestan un deseo de aprender y de crecer espiritualmente a través de las prácticas disidentes. Francine es el polo contrario de lo anterior. Ella busca las drogas alucinógenas como un modo de entretenimiento; también como una oportunidad para ensanchar su ego a partir de la humillación de los demás. Puede caracterizarse como una turista incauta de la contracultura.

Los otros tres personajes (Gladys, Paulhan y Virgilio) ocupan distintos lugares entre los dos polos. Considero que todos ellos comparten la voluntad de abrirse a la experiencia del viaje. Gladys tiene varios momentos de contemplación, pero Francine constantemente la arranca de estos estados. Por el contrario, Paulhan, Virgilio y Rafael se brindan apoyo durante todo el camino. Son una pequeña tribu de iniciados. En este sentido, ostentar la actitud adecuada y tener las amistades correctas son características fundamentales para acceder al conocimiento contracultural.

¿Qué hora es, que ya se hizo tarde? La novela fue escrita en 1973; un año después de Avándaro⁵ pero ya en plena comercialización de la contracultura. La pregunta del

Avándaro es un pueblo localizado a 5 km de Valle de Bravo, en el estado de México. El 11 de septiembre de 1972, se celebró en ese lugar el primer Festival de Rock y Ruedas. Se

lancharo reflexiona precisamente sobre el estado de la escena contracultural. El mercado se ha encargado de difundir y degradar la categoría identitaria. Como Francine, se puede ir de paseo hacia lo hippie para después regresar a tiempo para enjaibolarse en los clubs nocturnos de playa Condesa. El texto propone una solución a partir del regreso a la idea de tribu. Desde las figuras fetichizadas de lo contracultural, la oralidad al interior de los grupos puede restaurar la dimensión simbólica de los productos.

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llamó "de Ruedas," porque el concierto debía acompañar el rally que allí se celebraba cada año. Al evento acudieron decenas de miles de jóvenes, por lo que el rally nunca se llevó a cabo. Avándaro es considerado el Woodstock mexicano (Zolov 202-03).

De Pachuca a Toronto: un *Ciclo* vital

VÍCTOR MANUEL GRANADOS GARNICA¹

Abstract

The circle of this compilation closes with a critical analysis of the aesthetic rendering of a journey on the road northbound from México to Canadá in "De Pachuca a Toronto: un *Ciclo* vital." Perhaps one of the most important experiences for a human being is the crossing of borders, writes Víctor Manuel Granados Garnica in his article on Andrea Martínez Crowther's documentary film *Ciclo*. The film recaptures the journey by bike that Arturo and Gustavo Martínez undertook in 1953 from México to Canadá. In his article the author addresses both the reenactment of the original journey in 2006 and the learning experience that is aesthetically embodied in the transgression of disciplinary and genre boundaries in Andrea Martínez Crowther's film. The essay highlights the film's special attention to the self-reflective role played by the production crew in the creation of the documentary. The analysis of Martínez Crowther's film shows that the documentary is part of a school of thought that distances itself from objectivity, openly acknowledging the process of creation and self-reflection. As both the film and the author's reflections manifest, physical voyages are not the only way for human beings to overcome boundaries that appear to be naturally as well as socially constructed. There are always psychological, cognitive, and emotional processes involved that also shape the aesthetic rendering of the journey motif in film and narrative.

1. El viaje y el cruce de fronteras

En la novela corta *The Fly*, el escritor francés George Langelaan inicia la aventura a partir de una invención sorprendente: el profesor Andre Delambre ha construido un artefacto capaz de teletransportar objetos o seres vivos desintegrándolos y reintegrándolos en un aparato receptor. Muchos recordamos por la vía del cine los fatales resultados²; pero no menciono esta historia por el monstruo que ahí surge, sino por la monstruosa mutilación a la experiencia humana que este aparato supone. Delambre se ufana frente a su esposa de que su creación cambiará al mundo tanto como lo hizo la

El autor agradece el apoyo del Seminario de Investigación Fronteras de Tinta: intertextos, intergénero, intermedialidades (FES Acallan, PAPIIT UNAM IN402711-3). Baste recordar las adaptaciones realizadas por Kurt Newmann (1958) y por David Cronenberg (1986), además de las diversas secuelas que se han filmado.

rueda u otros inventos fundamentales. Imagina que las mercancías y los pasajeros viajarán con un mínimo costo y en un tiempo insignificante. Pensado de manera económica y práctica, sin duda la razón le asiste. No obstante, no advierte la inmensidad de experiencias que su invento cerraría a los hombres; me refiero por supuesto a las experiencias del viaje. ¿Qué lecciones de vida y sobrevivencia tendríamos viajando como átomos a través de un cable o simplemente por el aire? ¿De qué nuevas odiseas, travesías de descubrimiento y conquista, rutas comerciales, oficios errantes, escapes dignos de contar, etcétera, quedaríamos privados? ¿No habremos perdido ya buena parte de esa experiencia del viaje al abordar un avión que nos deja en unas horas en otro país o en otro continente casi sin que nos demos cuenta de ello?

Pero volvamos al asunto del viaje que nos atañe. El cruce de fronteras es sin duda un ejercicio enriquecedor en muchos sentidos, ya sean estas barreras geográficas, políticas, naturales, sociales, personales, culturales o genéricas: en cualquier caso, el crecimiento está prácticamente garantizado. La cineasta Andrea Martínez Crowther emprende —con el rodaje de su filme *Ciclo*— una travesía que realizaron dos hombres en bicicleta, hace más de medio siglo, de México a Canadá; y lo hace acompañada de los mismos ciclistas. Al mismo tiempo, la cinta de Martínez Crowther cruza la frontera entre dos géneros cinematográficos aparentemente distantes por su naturaleza, el documental y el *roadmovie*.³

Debemos empezar indicando que, en realidad, la distancia entre el documental y las historias de viajeros es relativa. Carlos Mendoza señala, por ejemplo, que una "película de viajes" —*Nanook of the North* de Robert Flaherty (1922)— está considerada como el primer largometraje documental de la historia del cine (Mendoza 19). Citando al documentalista Richard Meran Barsam, Mendoza agrega que en cintas como ésta los directores dejaban ver el atractivo esencial de los lugares y además su propio interés por presentar diferentes formas de vida. No obstante, podemos afirmar que ello no constituye las venas principales de *Ciclo*.

Volviendo al asunto del viaje, lo cierto es que percibir nuevos aires implica combinar cierta experiencia cotidiana con una realidad diferente. Para el viajero los patrones de vida se trastocan y se enriquecen frente a la situación de cambio. En estas líneas hablaré no sólo de la anécdota de la travesía iniciática que emprendieron aquellos jóvenes mexicanos hacia Toronto en 1953, sino también del tránsito emprendido por la directora entre los géneros cinematográficos referidos.

A principios del 2011 *Ciclo* se encontraba en la etapa de posproducción, por lo que agradezco a su directora que facilitara una copia prácticamente terminada de la cinta para la realización de este ensayo. La fecha de estreno está aún pendiente.

2. La aventura de Arturo, Gustavo ... y Andrea

Desde la Ciudad de México un viajero debe recorrer 95 kilómetros para llegar a Pachuca. Casi en la misma dirección pero un poco más adelante -*apenas* unos 3,260 kilómetros y dos fronteras internacionales más allá- está Toronto. Quizá sean pocas las relaciones que se podría establecer entre la capital hidalguense y esa urbe canadiense, ambas tan distintas en diversos aspectos y tan separadas por montañas, climas y latitudes. Pero las distancias en la vida de las personas no se miden en kilómetros, sino en intenciones que se convierten en acciones, en relaciones personales, en sueños que a la vuelta de los años y de las aventuras se convierten en recuerdos.

Mucho antes de que cualquier ciclista tuviera noción de la existencia de la fibra de carbono, Arturo y Gustavo Martínez abordaron sus bicicletas para cubrir esos más de tres mil kilómetros que los separaban de su meta. En 2006, Martínez Crowhther organizó un equipo de producción para enfrentar a sus personajes (que son también sus familiares, el padre y el tío de ella misma) a la memoria de la aventura más significativa de su pasado. A lo largo de las semanas de filmación, Arturo y Gustavo vuelven a un mundo que ya no es el que cruzaron, de hecho saben que no podían esperar otra cosa cuando ellos también son ya otras personas. Los años transcurridos se materializan en carreteras abandonadas, pueblos y hasta ciudades fantasmas, edificios que les dieron albergue ahora en ruinas o definitivamente demolidos, en rascacielos que cambiaron el horizonte de las urbes de mejor suerte.

En *Ciclo*, las formas de hurgar en los recuerdos de los viajeros son varias. Aparecen recortes de periódicos de la época donde ellos son la nota por su llegada o partida a las ciudades de su itinerario, en ocasiones es la misma directora quien los cuestiona, en otras los enfrenta a objetos clave, como las fotografías y los suéteres de ciclista del lejano 53. Por supuesto también los lugares los hacen volver en la memoria, su propia conversación es muchas veces el hilo conductor de los recuerdos; en ocasiones, la gente a su paso se convierte en espectadora y calificadora de la hazaña ... y del paso del tiempo, especialmente cuando les son mostradas las fotografías de periódicos que la producción lleva consigo.

Resulta muy interesante constatar cómo el contacto con el rodaje de esta historia y con sus personajes, permiten a la gente que incidentalmente los encuentra hacer sus aportaciones de sabiduría popular. Surgen consejos y reflexiones como la que les soltará un policía en San Luis Potosí: "Uno dice que no cambia, pero las fotos dicen lo contrario," o como lo dice un panadero que los atiende más adelante, "Dicen que Dios perdona, el hombre a veces perdona, pero el tiempo no perdona ..."

Naturalmente, también la experiencia del viaje que se repite constituye un detonador de las reflexiones de los protagonistas de la travesía, quienes, paso a paso, dejan caer las frases de su experiencia.

Gustavo dirá:

Estoy tratando de acordarme, cómo estaba esto cuando pase por aquí. Lo que quisiera sentir es cómo me sentí cuando pasamos por aquí, porque indudablemente era yo otro hombre. Es como tratar de salir de la tumba para verte como eras, y aunque no se puede.

es un experimento mental interesante, porque lo físico, bueno, aquí están los cambios físicos, pero los cambios de dentro de uno, esos son los más difíciles de comparar.

Con el diario de viaje de aquel año en mano, Arturo leerá sus propias líneas,

que insignificante parece la mano del hombre al contemplar la obra del todopoderoso ... [pero en 2006 enmendará] ... era cuando iba yo derecho al monasterio ... de un tiempo para acá siento que no soy la persona que está más cerca o más lejos de El ... digo, sé que está allá arriba, pero yo no me pongo ahora nunca en sus manos para hacer cualquier cosa que tenga que hacer. Suena tal vez contradictorio con lo que escribí entonces, pero después de 53 años, han pasado varios cambios ...

Ambos concluirán al alimón que "Todavía faltan cosas por vivir, sí, montañas que escalar, vinos que probar, buena música que escuchar y, con un poco de suerte... mujeres que besar... ¡Qué no me oiga mi Hilary!" dice Gustavo, pero corrige: "No, oye... siempre falta, claro que falta."

Al tiempo que avanza la nueva aventura en la carretera surgen las anécdotas de la vida propiciada por aquel viaje original: ambos hermanos vivieron grandes amores y grandes dolores derivados de ese viaje. Ahí pasaron momentos idílicos con sus primeras parejas canadienses, Margaret y Estela. Casado con la primera a los seis meses de noviazgo, Arturo la trajo a México como viaje de bodas. Pero a la altura de Tama-zunchale, en San Luis Potosí, su auto tuvo un accidente que a él le dejó una pierna fracturada y a ella le costó la vida, a lo que siguió una crisis personal que lo hizo rondar el alcoholismo. A Gustavo, la fama de aventurero -además de un auto deportivo MG rojo que trae a México- le convierte en un playboy de primera. De ambos trances, de la tragedia y de los excesos, los hermanos encontraron la salida por la vía del Canadá, pero más bien por la vía de las canadienses Jan y Hilary, con quienes se relacionan por aquellos lejanos años y formaron sólidas familias; ambas mujeres son quienes los esperan en Toronto al final del rodaje de Martínez Crowther.

3. Las fronteras del documental

Por el lado del cruce genérico emprendido en *Ciclo*, es posible decir que la ganancia es doble. La cinta evita algunas de las convenciones del documental tradicional, aquel que reúne información para presentarla de manera organizada y precisa. De entrada, Martínez Crowther renuncia por completo a una herramienta fundamental del viejo formato⁴: en ningún momento participa una voz en *off* o un personaje que tome la palabra para narrar los acontecimientos. Incluso la voz de la entrevistadora prácticamente desaparece, dando una sensación de mayor intimidad del espectador con los entrevistados.

François Niny señala que la crisis del documental noticioso fue evidente a través de filmes como *Zelig* (1983) de Woody Allen, un falso documental en el que el director neoyorquino da cuenta de la vida de Leonard Zelig, un camaleónico personaje capaz de mime-tizarse con la gente que le rodea, sean nazis, religioso del vaticano o políticos norteamericanos, entre muchos otros (Niny 58-59).

Así, *Ciclo* se suma a la comente que está haciendo del documental un género en auge. Precisamente esa superación de la estructura rígida del documental tradicional ha despertado un ávido interés por las historias reales llevadas a la pantalla. Sobre este auge, Sergio Duran asegura que hay una gran efervescencia por lo real en estos tiempos, y esto se puede comprobar con los innumerables espacios en televisión reservados para mostrar *reality shows*; además, en internet la presencia de todo lo que lleve la seña de lo verdadero es bien recibida (Dufuur 313).

Si bien es cierto que el cine de ficción conserva el mayor interés de los espectadores, sucede que, además de siempre haber un punto seductor para la atención de los espectadores el decir que una cinta está basada en hechos reales, actualmente han cobrado interés también esas historias que son presentadas no como un filme narrativo convencional o incluso de un estilo más experimental; sino también aquellas que son presentadas propiamente como documentales.

Luego de hacer esta breve semblanza temática y formal del filme, y regresando a las teorías sobre el cine documental, es necesario notar las peculiaridades del filme de Martínez Crowther. Partiendo de diversos manuales y estudios sobre este género, sería fácil distinguir tres formas particulares en las que los documentales se allegan de información (aquí cabe decir que estas variantes se presentan comúnmente de manera intercalada en un mismo filme):

La primera sería aquella que se acerca al periodismo; en esta forma, las imágenes y la información se tienen de primera mano porque parte del rodaje se hace en el momento en el que se dan los hechos que son parte temática del filme; es decir, la producción no actúa de manera muy distinta a como lo haría el equipo de un noticiero televisivo.

Otros filmes privilegian la investigación documental tradicional (así sea en video) para obtener los textos escritos y audiovisuales que se emplearán de diversas maneras en el filme. En este caso los documentalistas son absolutamente ajenos a los acontecimientos documentados.

Una tercera forma de obtener contenidos es mediante su propia generación por parte del equipo de producción del filme, es decir, sin ser sólo un mero testigo de los hechos y sin acudir directamente a los registros de la información generados en el pasado; quizá el ejemplo más común de esta forma es la entrevista, pues aunque puede pensarse que la información ya existe en el protagonista de la historia, ésta no se organiza ni tiene existencia como documento sino hasta que el protagonista es sujeto a las preguntas del entrevistado!". Por supuesto, aquí la generación de información tampoco es completamente independiente, pero es innegable la importancia del papel de la producción del filme en el proceso.

Un caso extremo aún más extremo sería aquel en el que el documentalista es el generador no sólo de una entrevista, sino de los eventos que vemos en la pantalla. En ese sentido, el caso de *Ciclo* puede ser ejemplar. La directora parte de un acontecimiento sobre el cual tiene el conocimiento previo, se trata del hecho que sin duda marcó la vida de su familia y la suya misma durante el siglo pasado. No obstante, la

directora no se queda con la información que tiene de primera mano en recortes de periódico, fotografías, documentos y recuerdos o en la charla que podría darse en casa sin ningún problema. Al reproducir la travesía México-Toronto logra una exploración más profunda en el ánimo de sus protagonistas, consiguiendo generar información imposible de obtener desde el salón o el jardín de la casa familiar.

Respecto a la entrevista, vale la pena hacer algunas acotaciones. Según la cineasta e investigadora Carmen Guarini, se trata de una particular forma de relación social basada en el intercambio discursivo entrevistador-entrevistado que, desde una perspectiva clásica, corresponde no sólo a una realidad fáctica, sino también a una realidad emocional, afirmando que "desde una perspectiva constructivista, la entrevista es considerada una relación social en donde los datos que da el entrevistado son una realidad que se construye 'en el encuentro'" (Guarini 5).

Al respecto, Guarini señala que el objetivo de la entrevista no es sólo obtener la información del discurso del otro, sino también la información que proporciona su cuerpo, por supuesto a través de posturas, gestualidad, su propio físico, las cuestiones de proxémica, etc. Guarini agrega:

En una entrevista filmada generalmente la cámara suscita ciertas conductas en las personas, que son producidas por su sola presencia. Sin embargo lejos de pensarlos como elementos de falsificación de sus roles o personalidades, la mayoría de las veces revelan elementos que ponen en evidencia aspectos que muestran a los sujetos de una manera más auténtica ... Entre los elementos novedosos están el registro directo de lo que el informante dice, de cómo lo dice y del contexto en el que lo dice (el tono, las inflexiones, las pausas, los silencios, las repeticiones). (5)

Así pues, debido principalmente al uso de la entrevista en situaciones creadas exprofeso, el ejercicio que marca el filme de Martínez Crowther es la participación de la producción del filme en la creación de la mayor parte de los contenidos empleados; de hecho, como se dijo, el nuevo viaje es el hilo conductor de la vuelta al pasado de los ciclistas. Naturalmente tampoco se trata de crear a partir de cero, pero sin duda la decisión de rehacer el viaje con sus protagonistas es el hecho que distingue el trabajo de la directora. Es posible afirmar que dicho trabajo es fundamental para la existencia de los contenidos, un papel mucho más activo que el ya de por sí determinante trabajo de recopilar, ordenar y presentar en el discurso filmico los sucesos del pasado.

4. La mítica objetividad

Notoriamente, en *Ciclo* el muy apreciable -por lo común- mito de la objetividad no es cuestión total para la directora, no existe preocupación por la omisión de aspectos que puedan resultar controversiales o negativos sobre los protagonistas. Vale la pena comentar, sin embargo, que esa no pretensión de ser objetivo dota al documental de una postura objetiva frente a sí mismo. François Niney, siguiendo a Teodoro Adorno, señala que todos aquellos documentos que se presentan como una visión neutral "objetiva" de los acontecimientos, paradójicamente al asumir que son la visión definitiva de

la realidad, lo hacen desde una posición subjetiva debido a que niegan o descalifican otras perspectivas posibles; en este caso tendríamos, por supuesto, al común de los documentales tradicionales. En caso contrario, los textos documentales que asumen explícita o implícitamente -como la película de Martínez Crowther- que su visión es subjetiva, adquieren una postura totalmente objetiva debido a la aceptación de que su visión de los hechos documentados es sólo una de muchas posible (Niney 36).

Por otro lado, en este caso la realidad no sólo es ese fenómeno a documentar, registrar, reproducir, representar e interpretar por el cineasta, es más bien ese mundo que se interpela y, más aún, se genera con las propias acciones que son parte del rodaje. En ese sentido, quizá podría *Ciclo* ser afín a trabajos como los de Michael Moore, dado que ambos construyen un texto fílmico que incide en los hechos documentados. Como ejemplo, baste recordar la iniciativa que toma Moore en la cinta *Masacre en Columbine* (*Bowlingfor Columbine*, 2002), en la que conduce a adolescentes heridos de bala hasta la tienda donde venden armas para obligar al negocio a que deje de distribuir las a través del hostigamiento con las cámaras. Por supuesto, no se critica aquí las acciones de directores como Moore o Martínez Crowther al incidir directamente en el desarrollo de los hechos que documentan (que, en todo caso, no carecen de legitimidad), únicamente se hace notar la importancia de esa intervención en el resultado final del filme.

Vale señalar que, en este sentido, el caso de *Ciclo* es aún más extremo en cuanto a la generación de los hechos incluidos en la cinta (aunque, por supuesto, la trascendencia del documental de Moore en diversas acciones y percepciones del público en general sobre la posesión de armas fue de alcances nacionales e internacionales). A pesar de que la directora prácticamente no aparece a cuadro, y su voz apenas se puede escuchar en dos o tres ocasiones (a diferencia del notorio protagonismo de Moore que dirige el documental con un estilo más bien cercano al de los reporteros televisivos de noticieros sensacionalistas), es bien sabido que el proyecto del viaje de 2006 es una iniciativa absolutamente decidida por el proyecto fílmico.

Aunque el sustento narrativo está en el viaje de 1953, la aventura central de *Ciclo*, como lo dice Gustavo Martínez en algún momento ya citado del viaje, es el reencuentro que permite enfrentar el mundo actual, el estado físico, pero sobre todo anímico actual de los protagonistas, con los recuerdos que tienen de ese mundo ya desaparecido.

Quizá la mejor manera de contar la aventura en bicicleta de 1953 no habría sido el documental -como lo es *Ciclo*- sino una película que ficcionalizara los hechos basándose en los acontecimientos referidos por los protagonistas, pero sujetándolos al proceso que incluye las licencias narrativas que permitieran manejarlos de forma premeditada en vistas de obtener un efecto dramático que elevara la tensión y la hiciera una historia emotiva para el público. Sin embargo, el manejo del género documental con las particularidades que emplea Martínez Crowther resulta más eficaz para presentar el reencuentro de Arturo y Gustavo con su pasado.

En este contexto, el documental ha encontrado un espacio propicio para poder difundir aspectos de la realidad y así convertirse en un vehículo expositor de ideas, experiencias personales o familiares, oposiciones, militancias y desencantos del mundo, pues para este género cinematográfico, a diferencia de lo que sucede con otros medios como la televisión o la radio, prácticamente no existe la censura o prohibición; incluso ningún tema es demasiado particular o privado, cualquier asunto de corte político, social, cultural o ambientalista es presentado para su análisis, reflexión o simple exposición, con la consigna de apegarse a la veracidad de lo que se muestra.

No obstante, en *Ciclo* la veracidad no representa mayor problema, puesto que se aborda una historia que no implica ninguna postura conflictiva por tratarse de un relato básicamente familiar y personal, humano al fin. Por ello, la espontaneidad es quizá la mejor arma de Martínez Crowther; el guión de *Ciclo* es prácticamente el itinerario del viaje previo. Ese es el sentido de las primeras escenas, en las que Gustavo y Arturo revisan y trazan su ruta en los mapas sobre la mesa de la cocina.

Así pues, la película además deja de lado el prurito de la objetividad que se procuró en el documental tradicional que abordaba temas sociales, porque en esta cinta, finalmente, se trata de las impresiones de los viajeros, cuya única falta a la verdad puede radicar sólo en el olvido, en las trampas de la memoria.

En ese sentido vale la pena mencionar la opinión de Clara Kriger, quien afirma que estrictamente el documental no muestra la realidad, sino distintos caminos para conocerla a partir de la reflexión de los hechos presentados (Kriger 24), y que el espectador le da sentido a la visión que expone el autor a partir de la relación que se establece con las imágenes y las ideas. Y es eso precisamente lo que busca el discurso de *Ciclo*: no es casual que a las ideas fundamentales de los protagonistas sigan largos planos en los que la naturaleza, las ciudades, la carretera por supuesto, son acompañados por el piano o un huapango como una invitación a la reflexión sobre esos asuntos fundamentales, tales como el paso del tiempo, Dios, los diferentes amores, las enfermedades o la muerte.

5. El *road movie*

De su otra vena, el *road movie*, *Ciclo* obviamente no mantiene el cien por ciento de las características del género; de hecho, no era su pretensión convertir la historia en un modelo de éste. No obstante, a todas luces se trata de un filme doblemente de carretera, por el viaje que se emprende en el rodaje y por el viaje del que se hace memoria. Como todas las del género, eso sí, la cinta tiene una estructura episódica en la que nos enteraremos de accidentes, de los cambios antes comentados y de otras partes de la vida de los protagonistas.

Quizá lo aleje del canon del *road movie* el hecho de que no existe una persecución, básica en cintas como *Bonnie and Clyde* o en *Thelma and Louise*, sin embargo, sí está el escape de una vida sedentaria en el terruño de origen. Aquí los autos o las motocicletas son sustituidos por las bicicletas en el viaje primigenio, pero aparecen en

el viaje de filmación. Quizá con menos estrépito que impresione a las chicas -como lo hacen Wyatt y Billy (Peter Fonda y Dennis Hoper) con sus motocicletas en *Easy Rider*- pero evidentemente el viaje ciclista del 53 rodeó a los protagonistas de un encanto que no los dejó solos a lo largo de su vida.

El sentido iniciático de la aventura está absolutamente presente en la travesía originaria. No podía ser de otra manera para dos jóvenes adultos de 25 y 22 años, que tendrán sus duchas intensivas de madurez al enfrentar situaciones como los accidentes carreteros, quedarse sin dinero en una ciudad lejana, el ser recibidos como héroes, etcétera. El recorrido del rodaje, a pesar del medio siglo pasado, y de -por supuesto-no ser un viaje de iniciación o de crecimiento, constituye el momento para mirar atrás y prepararse a disfrutar de lo que viene todavía después. Como lo dice Gustavo, "Ya de aquí en adelante es pura ganancia, yo así lo veo, mi padre se murió de 52 años, yo ando esquiando a los 75, ¿cómo me voy a quejar? Hay que vivir la vida..."

Y, efectivamente, quizá para vivirla no deberíamos descartar el viaje lento y con escalas, aunque sin duda deberíamos pensar también en otras formas de travesía que no necesariamente son por la carretera, sino por las ideas, por nuestras disciplinas o por sus límites genéricos.

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Contributors

Caroline Bern is a doctoral student in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. Her PhD thesis is titled *The Cinematic Diptych: From Writing Tablets to System Reboots* and focuses on Quentin Tarantino's 2007 film *Death Proof*. She is co-founder and co-editor of SEACHANGE Art Communication & Technology, an interdisciplinary journal based at McGill University (<www.seachangejournal.ca>). Her research interests include narrative theory in film and literature, as well as contemporary art ranging from painting to performance and new media installations.

Miriam Brandel is enrolled in the M.A. program British and American Studies at Bielefeld University. Her interests of study include sociolinguistics and 20th- and 21st-century American literature and culture. More specifically, her fields of research comprise literary and cultural theory, urban culture, postcolonial literatures, and mobility studies. She is currently planning a PhD project on travel narratives, life writing, and cosmopolitan identities.

Martin Butler is Junior Professor of American literature and culture at the University of Oldenburg. His main areas of research include the study of popular culture, particularly focusing on the history of political music, as well as literary and cultural theory. Apart from a number of articles in the field of popular culture studies, he has published a monograph on Woody Guthrie (*Voices of the Down and Out*) and an essay collection about protest songs (*Da habt Ihr es, das Argument der Strafe: Kulturwissenschaftliche Studien zum politischen Lied*). He is co-editor of *Sound Fabrics: Studies on the Intermedial and Institutional Dimensions of Popular Music* as well as *Hybrid Americas: Contacts, Contrasts, and Confluences in New World Literatures and Cultures*.

Alvaro A. Fernandez holds a PhD in Humanities from El Colegio de Michoacan. From 2010 until January 2012 he was academic coordinator of the Film Research Network (REDIC). He is currently working as Research Professor (Research Center and Film Studies) at the University of Guadalajara (CIEC). His scholarly focus is on the history and analysis of movements and film genres. He teaches undergraduate courses in History and M.A. classes on the History of Mexico. Moreover, he has written several articles related to film and one about wrestling. Fernandez is the author of two books: *Santo el Enmascarado de Plata: mi to y realidad de un heroe mexicano moderno*, published by CONACULTA and *Crimen y suspenso en el cine mexicano, 1946-1955*, published by El Colegio de Michoacan.

Ana Paulina Gil Vargas is Professor of English and Writing at the UAM-Cuajimalpa (Metropolitan Autonomous University, Cuajimalpa Unit). She completed her undergraduate studies in English Language and Literature at the UNAM (The National Autonomous University of Mexico); she also received an M.A. degree in literary studies upon completion of her thesis *La transformation del Diario de abordo y la*

figura de Cristobal Colon en The Accidental Indies de Robert Finley. She worked with the Academic Group of Territorial Development and Planning at the UAM-Cuajimalpa. Her research interests include postmodern and postcolonial literature, particularly from India and Canada.

Victor Manuel Granados Garnica is Professor of Analysis of Literary Text and Cinematic Language at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. His main areas of research include the study of Latin American literature of the 20th century with a particular focus on the relationship between mass media and postmodernism. With an interest in narratology and rhetoric, he explores issues of cinematic language from the perspective of a literary studies scholar. He has published essays in collections about Mario Vargas Llosa (*Peru en el espejo de Vargas Llosa*) and about the representation of violence in mass media (*Aprehendiendo al delincuente: crimen y medios en América del Norte*). Moreover he has published articles on Mexican and Canadian cinema ("La representación de los géneros en la decadencia del imperio americano y sexo pudor y lágrimas"; "Del Monte Calvario al Mont-real de fin de siglo: la mirada de Denys Arcand a la pasión de Cristo"). He is co-editor of *Fronteras de Tinta: literatura y medios de comunicación en las Américas, una bibliografía comentada*.

Cesar Othon Hernandez is Research Assistant at the Center for Research on North America (CISAN) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). His main areas of interest are the study of popular culture, focusing on literature, music, and films produced by subcultures, as well as gender and sexuality studies. For completing his bachelor thesis he received a scholarship from the research project *Ink Borders: Intertexts, Intergenres, Intermedialities*. His publications include essays in the *Mexican Review of Canadian Studies*, *Voices of Mexico*, and *Itinerario de las miradas*.

Alivsi Hernandez Gonzalez received her B.A. in Communication. She graduated with honors from the Tecnológico de Monterrey in Guadalajara. During her stay at this institution's Research Chair in Communication, Globalization, and Cultural Studies, she completed an essay on women's cinema and counterculture within the road movie genre. She was awarded an "Emerging Leaders of the Americas Program Scholarship" to participate in a student exchange with Carleton University in Ottawa.

Graciela Martinez-Zalce studied Hispanic Literatures at ENEP Acatlán, UNAM, and earned her M.A. and her PhD in Modern Literatures at the Universidad Iberoamericana. Since 1992 she has worked as researcher in Canadian Cultural Studies, where she mainly studies film in North America and theory of adaptation at the Center for Research on North America at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. There she currently coordinates the Globalization Studies Area. She is member of the National System of Researchers CONACYT and of the Mexican Academy of Sciences. She is founding member of the *Taller de Teoría y Crítica Literarias Diana Mordn*, a pioneer workshop on gender studies in Mexico. She has directed the *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Canadienses*. As author she has published *El ABC de la investigación literaria*; *Emily Carr y Frida Kahlo: lazos artísticos y una poética de lo subterráneo*, and *Pornografía del alma: ensayos sobre la narrativa de Juan García*.

Ponce. Her most recent works as co-editor are *Aprehendiendo al delincuente: crimen y medios en America del Norte*, *Fronteras de tinta, la literatura y los medios de comunicacion en las Americas: una bibhogrpfia comentada*, and *Norteamerica: construction de espacios regionales*.

Wilfried Raussert is Chair and Professor of North American Literary and Cultural Studies at Bielefeld University, Germany. He is founder and general editor of *far: forum for inter-american research* (www.interamerica.de), the e-journal of the International Association of Inter-American Studies. Since July 2009, he has been executive director of the International Association of Inter-American Studies. He is also Fulbright representative and director of the International Postgraduate Forum (IPF) at Bielefeld University. Since 2009 he has been a member of the film studies research group REDIC Investigadores de Cine at the Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico. Among his recent publications are the co-edited volumes *Cityscapes in the Americas: Representations of Urban Complexity in Literature and Film* and *Cornbread and Cuchifritos: Ethnic Identity Politics, Transnationalization, and Transmigration in American Urban Popular Music*. He is currently working on a book project titled *Cultural Mobility and the New American Studies*.

Paulina Sanchez is a Mexican filmmaker and photographer. She holds an MFA in Science Communication and Culture from ITESO (Technological and Superiors Institute from Occidente) University in Guadalajara. Since 2009 she has been an active member of REDIC (Guadalajara Film Researchers Network). She is currently professor at the UABC (Baja California Autonomous University) in Mexicali, Baja California. For her first documentary, *Hotel de Paso* (Martfilms), she received the FONCA, DOCSDF/IMCINE and BORDOCS Foro Documental Tijuana Awards. The World Bank selected Sanchez's photographic anthology for an exhibition in Paris and Washington, D.C. in the summer of 2012.

Johanne Sloan is Associate Professor in the Department of Art History at Concordia University in Montreal. Her teaching and research encompass aspects of contemporary art and visual culture. She is the author of a book about Joyce Wieland's 1976 feature film *The Far Shore*, editor of *Urban Enigmas: Montreal, Toronto, and the Problem of Comparing Cities*, and co-editor of *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir*, a book of essays about the World's Fair held in Montreal during the summer of 1967.

Will Straw is Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada. He is also a Professor in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. He is the author of *Cyanide and Sin: Visualizing Crime in 50s America*, and co-editor of *Circulation and the City: Essays on Urban Culture*, *Aprehendiendo al delincuente: crimen y medios en America del norte*, and *The Cambridge Companion Jo Pop and Rock* (2001). Professor Straw has authored over 100 articles on urban culture, cinema, music, and media.

Niamh Thornton has been Senior Lecturer in Hispanic Studies and Film at the University of Ulster since 2004. She is currently head of Film Studies. Before joining the

University of Ulster, she worked as lecturer in Spanish at Waterford Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, and University of Dublin, Trinity College. She is co-founding editor of the journal *Film and Film Culture*. Moreover, she is president of Women in Spanish, Latin American, and Portuguese Studies and the conference secretary of the Association of Hispanic Studies of Great Britain and Ireland. Her primary area of research is contemporary Latin American and Mexican narrative and film, and she is currently completing a monograph on the war story in Mexican film entitled *Revolution and Rebellion in Mexican Film*, to be published with Continuum in 2012. She has published the monograph *Women and the Novela de la Revolution in Mexico*, and co-edited *Transcultural Encounters: Film, Literature, Art and Revolutionaries: Gender and Revolution in Latin America*. In addition, she has previously co-edited a special issue for the *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. She has also published several essays on film, literature, and cyberculture, as well as articles in journals such as *BLAR*, *BHS*, *FFC*, and *Transnational Cinemas*.

Juan Carlos Vargas is Professor of cinema at the University of Guadalajara. His main areas of research include Iberoamerican cinema and questions of genre, history, aesthetics, and literature. He is the co-author of *Tierra en trance: el cine latinoamericano en 100 películas*, *Historia de la producción cinematográfica mexicana 1977-1980* (two volumes), *Relaciones cinematográficas entre Cuba y México 1897-2005*, and *Abismos de pasión: relaciones cinematográficas hispano-mexicanas*. His single-authored books are *Los mundos virtuales: el cine fantástico de los 90* and *Ana Ofelia Murguía, actriz*. He edited *Tendencias del cine iberoamericano en el nuevo milenio: Argentina, Brasil, España y México* and directs the online journal *El ojo que piensa*.

Diego Zavala Scherer holds a PhD in Social Communications and Media (Universidad Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona). He is full-time professor at ITESM, Campus Guadalajara. His publications include the book chapters "Videoactivism and Counterinformation in Mexico: The Case of the Production Company Canal 6 de Julio," and "Communication as a Problem: Ethnography, Poetics, and Pain." His main research areas comprise documentary theory, representation of war, film analysis (especially confessional genres subjectivity in documentary film), television studies (related to documentary genres), Mexican cinema, film, and television production.

Ger Zielinski is currently Assistant Professor (LTA) in the Department of Cultural Studies at Trent University (Canada). He holds a PhD from McGill University and was recently a postdoctoral research fellow in the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. His primary areas of research include the culture of film exhibition and festivals, film institutions, LGBT and queer cinemas, cultural geography, urban studies, and post-1968 underground cinema. His three main book research projects are: "Festivity and the Production of Community" on socially-oriented film festivals, "Canadian Cinema and Cinematic Cities" on the question of Canadian cinematic cities, and thirdly "Screens and Scenes in the Shifting Underground" on underground scenes in New York City, West Berlin, and Köln in the 1970s and 80s.

(Re)Discovering 'America' (Re)Descubriendo 'América'

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This collection of essays in English and in Spanish is concerned with the travels of a genre and related issues of artistic, national, and transnational identities. In recent decades there has been a reemergence of road movies on a global scale. This volume is especially interested in the expansion of the genre in the Americas – with a particular focus on what we like to label new and alternative road movies that have come out of Mexico, the United States, and Canada. As scholars and critics we intend to rediscover 'America' through the lens of a transnational, inter-American approach. While, cinematically speaking, we certainly can and have to trace the filmic origins of road movies to the U.S. and Hollywood, we want to emphasize the importance of revisiting the genre within a North-South perspective and to explore how the genre has changed through the cultural flows of globalization in recent decades.

"The conventional road narrative travels from the United States to some fantastic, utopian, foreign destination, but Rausser and Martínez-Zalce's collection *(Re)Discovering 'America': Road Movies and Other Travel Narratives in North America* examines critically this trajectory from Mexican, German, Irish, and Canadian scholarly perspectives. Their contributors discover the other Americas so often forgotten in the conventional account of the road narrative. They open the road and make it move, as it should, in two directions. A 'Pan-American Highway' of the mind."

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