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## New Cinemas in Latin America

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IN the late 1950s, a new cinema began to appear in Latin America, carving out spaces for itself wherever it found the slightest chance, growing up even in the most inimical circumstances, indeed thriving upon them, for this was a cinema largely devoted to the denunciation of misery and the celebration of protest. In the space of ten or fifteen years, a movement developed which not only reached from one end of the continent to the other, but brought the cinema in Latin America to worldwide attention for the first time. It began with discrete and diverse initiatives in different countries, ranging from the Documentary Film School of Santa Fe in Argentina and the emergence of *Cinema Novo* in Brazil, to the creation of a new Film Institute in Havana. The dates and places are those of the recent history of Latin America. In Argentina and Brazil, growth and retrenchment has corresponded to the wax and wane of democracy. Cuban cinema is synonymous with the Cuban Revolution, Chilean cinema is another name for Popular Unity movement which elected Salvador Allende at the start of the 70s. Ten years later came Nicaragua and El Salvador and the reflorescence of the idea of militant cinema which first developed in the 60s, the decade of Che Guevara.

Some of earliest initiatives occurred in outoftheway places, like Cuzco in Peru, where a film club was set up in 1955 and Manuel Chambi and others started making short documentaries on ethnographic and sociocultural themes the French film historian Sadoul called them the Cuzco School. They were not unique. The 1950s saw the spread of film societies throughout the continent, the proliferation of filmmaking courses and contests, and the publication of magazines. It was in the pages of titles like *Hablemos de cine* in Peru and *Cine al dia* in Venezuela that in the 60s and 70s the movement debated its values and sense of identity.

Many of these groups were linked to social movements, like the cultural club *Nuestro Tiempo* run by the Young Communists in Havana in the early 50s, which harboured several future Cuban directors. The first international meeting place for the young filmmakers was a film festival in Montevideo set up in 1954 by the SODRE, Uruguay's national radio station and a progressive cultural promoter. Among the film makers attending in 1958, when John Grierson was the guest of honour, were Chambi from Peru, Nelson Pereira dos Santos from Brazil, and Fernando Birri from Santa Fe. A film by Pereira dos Santos, Rio zona norte (1957), established a new paradigm of fictional narrative, in the form of a neorealist tale of the *favelas* (shanty towns) of Rio Janeiro; in the years that followed, Pereira dos Santos became the presiding spirit and 'conscience', as Glauber Rocha put it, of Brazil's *cinema novo*. The film exhibited by Birri and his students, Tire Die ('Throw us a dime'), a collaborative social inquiry into the shanty towns around the city of Santa Fe, later came to be celebrated as the founding social documentary of the new film movement. Known simply as the New Latin American Cinema (*el nuevo cine latinoamericano*), the term dates from a meeting in 1967 of filmmakers from across the continent hosted by a film club in the

Chilean seaside town of Viña del Mar, which had been running a festival of 8 and 16mm since 1963.

#### BRAZIL AND CINEMA NOVO

SEVERAL pioneers of the new Latin American cinema had studied film in Rome in the early 50s, and returning home, adopted the neorealist principles of documentary style location shooting with nonprofessional actors as the only practical solution for their situation. But they and others also took up neorealism because they saw it as a critical aesthetic. As Birri explained, in Italy neorealism was the cinema that discovered, amidst the rhetoric and outward show of development, another Italy, the Italy of underdevelopment. It was a cinema of the humble and the offended which Latin America cried out for (Birri, 1983).

In 1963, with Vidas Secas ('Barren Lives'), Pereira dos Santos carried the spirit of neorealism deeper into new territory with a stark adaptation of a novel by Graciliano Ramos about the appalling conditions of rural NorthEast Brazil, a zone of underdevelopment within underdevelopment. The same aesthetic and the same locale served Ruy Guerra for Os fuzis ('The Guns'), a drama of hunger in the sertão and violent confrontation between soldiers and peasants, while Carlos Diegues made Ganga Zumba, the story of the seventeenth century maroon community of Palmares and thus the first film of *cinema novo* to tackle a historical theme.

These films, highly accomplished in themselves, were only a prelude. Wherever it was able to gain a niche, the new cinema quickly took off in new directions, creating new genres and exploring film language in radically new directions. Ganga Zumba, for example, initiates a genre of historical films about slavery in both Brazil and Cuba, where filmmakers also explored the AfroBrazilian and AfroCuban heritage in both the historical genre and in modern garb. Twentieth century subjects included films like Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's Macunaima (1969), an anarchic and picaresque comedy starring one of Brazil's most popular comedians, Grande Otelo, who also starred in Rio Zona Norte ('Rio, North Zone', 1957) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, where he plays an illiterate samba composer facing the corruption of the music business. Historical films included Como era gostoso o meu francês ('How Tasty Was My Frenchman', 1971) by Pereira dos Santos, a dark satire on the idyll of the noble savage, and T.G.Alea's dramatic Una pelea cubana contra los demonios ('A Cuban Struggle Against the Demons', 1971). Both films explore the early centuries of the Conquest and adopt an experimental approach to the problem of historical truth. Alea also collaborated on the screenplay of El otro Francisco ('The Other Francisco' dir. Sergio Giral, 1973) and then made a black comedy, La última cena ('The Last Supper', 1976); these two are slavery films set in the nineteenth century, the former an impressive piece of deconstruction of a nineteenth century literary source.

All these films, whether comedy or tragedy, achieve an allegorical quality which becomes a distinctive trait of the entire movement: the ability to speak of subjects on more than one level at the same time, of the present while talking of the past, for example, or of politics while talking of religion. At the same time, the exploration of these themes quickly left the aesthetic of neorealism behind, as directors and cinematographers sought to create a visual style which matched the

legendary qualities of the subject matter. Diegues himself made two more slavery films, Xica de Silva in 1976 and Quilombo in 1984, which show a striking progression from the sober blackandwhite narrative of Ganga Zumba to the vivid colour, visual pyrotechnics and powerful music of the style known as tropicalism, or at least one of its variants, which borrows directly from the carnivalesque at the heart of Brazilian popular culture. The first of these films recounts the rise and fall of an 18th century slave possessed of magical and erotic powers who marries a colonial official, the second revisits the Palmares story, incorporating the results of new historical research. But Diegues is less concerned with objective narrative than transposing to the screen the ritualistic forms through which AfroBrazilian culture itself recounts its history, and the narrative form of these films is first cousin to the performances of the samba schools. Meanwhile Nelson Pereira dos Santos pursued his own highly original brand of allegory in films like O Amuleto de Ogum ('The Amulet of Ogum', 1974), where the invocation of AfroBrazilian mythology effects a parody of the thriller; though he retains a realist approach for other subjects, like the masterful Memorias do carcere ('Memories of Prison'), which won the Critics Prize at Cannes in 1984, an adaptation of the autobiographical novel by Craciliano Ramos about political repression.

While Diegues was the most popular of the *cinema novo* directors, the most notorious exponent of the tropicalist style was Glauber Rocha (who died young in 1981). Playing the equivalent role of *enfant terrible* to Godard in France, Rocha argued for a politics of authorship that allowed the filmmaker to probe historical contradictions and placed the author at the centre of an oppositional practice the politicisation, so to speak, of the *politique des auteurs*. In a manifesto widely reprinted throughout Latin America and known by two titles, 'The Aesthetics of Hunger' and 'The Aesthetics of Violence', he protested that people for whom hunger is a normal condition are suffering violence the violence of the social system that makes them go hungry. We know, he said, this hunger will not be cured by moderate reforms, and its tumours are not hidden, but only aggravated, by the cloak of technicolor.

His masterpiece Antonio das Mortes, 'The Dragon of Evil Against the Warrior Saint' (1969), is set in NorthEast Brazil, with emblematic characters performing stylised actions, in a peculiarly Brazilian amalgamation of fact and legend, epic and lyric. For Rocha the mysticism of popular religion, a syncretistic fusion of Catholicism and the motifs of African religion transplanted with the slave trade, constituted a double paradigm. He took it as both the expression of a permanent spirit of rebellion against unceasing oppression, a rejection and refusal of the condition in which the common people had been condemned to live for centuries, and as a model for the syncretism of his own film language. In Rocha, as one writer puts it, the exuberant torrent of images and the mix of mysticism and legend, cult and ritual, were married to surrealist symbolism and achieved a visionary force (Schumann 1987).

#### THE CUBAN EXAMPLE

CUBA was the first country in Latin America where it became possible to envisage a new film culture, both popular and critical, of the kind imagined by Birri, on a

national scale. Cinema was second only to music as the country's most popular form of entertainment when the revolutionary government of 1959 decreed the creation of a film institute (ICAIC, the Cuban Institute of Film Art and Industry), to take control of the movie business and become responsible for production and distribution. Under the leadership of Alfredo Guevara (no relation to Che but a close political comrade of Fidel Castro) ICAIC would become the most successful venture of its kind, bar one, anywhere in the continent, a model of state intervention in the film industry. The exception, by historical irony, was Embrafilme, the bureau set up by the Brazilian generals in the 1960s, which went bankrupt after the return to democracy in the 80s and was disbanded in 1990.

Embrafilme was a political contradiction: created to advertise the Brazilian military miracle abroad, it ended up funding filmmakers who, as Pereira dos Santos expressed it, were 'viscerally opposed to such regimes' (Burton, 1986). The Cuban regime, however, enjoyed widespread support amongst artists and intellectuals, to whom, with the creation of institutions like ICAIC, it offered conditions which the country had never before enjoyed. ICAIC succeeded first of all in economic terms: a studio with control over distribution and a staff of 1000, producing each year (until the country's economic collapse at the end of the 1980s) up to half a dozen features, a regular newsreel, and as many as four dozen documentaries, all for an annual production budget of around \$10m or less than half the price of a single Hollywood blockbuster. Communist egalitarianism and the absence of market competition combined to hold the costs of production down, enabling a cinema of poverty to flourish.

ICAIC also succeeded in artistic terms. The huge popularity of cinema in Cuba (television had been introduced in 1951 but reached only a limited audience until the 70s) meant that ICAIC was rapidly catapulted to the very centre of Cuban cultural politics. As the Revolution took the road of Communism, Alfredo Guevara led the filmmakers in arguing passionately against the narrow and restrictive orthodox ideology of socialist realism, and in favour of stylistic pluralism and artistic freedom. A few individuals, alienated from the national fervour, nevertheless called foul and departed, but they left behind a growing community of filmmakers who began to feed off each other's enthusiasms. Aesthetically the most audacious was Santiago Alvarez, who headed ICAIC's newsreel unit, which he turned into a school for militant documentary. Progressing from short films like Now (1965), Hanoi Martes 13 (shot in Vietnam in 1967), and LBJ (1968), to long documentaries like Piedra sobre piedra and De America soy hijo... (shot in Peru, 1970 and Chile, 1972 respectively), he commandeered every different documentary genre, from the pamphlet to satire, by way of the reportage of war and peace. Employing every kind of visual imagery, from newsreel footage to stills, archive film to cuttings from magazines, combined with animated texts and emblematic musicalisation, Alvarez amalgamated creative kleptomania with the skills of a *bricoleur* to reinvent Soviet montage in a Caribbean setting.

By the late 60s, the experimental ethos had spread to fiction and produced an astonishing series of films which boldly transgressed the divisions between genres. Julio García Espinosa scored a great success with Las Aventuras de Juan Quin Quin ('The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin', 1967) which gives anarchic comedy a whole new dimension, while Humberto Solás reinvented the historical epic with Lucia of

1968, a portrait of three women in different historical periods and different styles: Viscontiesque for 'Lucia 1895', the Hollywood of Kazan for 'Lucia 1933', and *nouvelle vague* for 'Lucia 196'; or rather, all of these crossed with *cinema novo* in a highly original synthesis.

In the same astonishing year, when international revolutionary fervour was at its height, Alea made Memorias de subdesarrollo ('Memories of Underdevelopment'), a subtle and complex study in the alienation of a bourgeois intellectual within the Revolution. The next year Manuel Octavio Gómez made La primera carga al machete ('The First Machete Charge'), and Manuel Herrera followed in 1972 with Giron ('Bay of Pigs'); the former reports an episode in Cuban revolutionary history dating from 1868 as if it were a contemporary documentary, the latter is a widescreen postBrechtian dramatisation of the defeat of the US invasion of 1961, with participants enacting their stories as they recount them in front of the camera. Then came De cierta manera ('One Way or Another'), a story of contemporary Havana by Sara Gomez (the release of the film in 1974 was delayed by her tragically early death) intermingling fictional characters with real people. All four films bring drama and documentary into powerful new relationships.

Julio García Espinosa summed up the trend which gave rise to these and other experiments in a polemic entitled 'For and imperfect cinema', widely reprinted and much misunderstood. Warning of the dangers of the technical accomplishment which after ten years now lay within the grasp of the Cuban filmmakers, he argues that in the underdeveloped world technical and artistic perfection are false objectives. Not only is the attempt to match the production values of the big commercial movie a waste of resources, he says, but there is more to be gained by engaging the audience directly and with a sense of urgency, roughness included. The aim is what Umberto Eco, in another context, calls the open work, which refuses to fix its meanings and thus invites the active participation of the audience.

#### ACROSS THE CONTINENT

CUBAN cinema was a major influence throughout the continent, although because of the monopoly of the major distributors, less so with audiences than with filmmakers, who were able to travel and encounter the films and each other at festivals and meetings. Cuban documentary, for example, animated a stream of films which attested to the conditions of life from Chihuahua to Tierra del Fuego. New paradigms of political documentary cinema appeared, combining the techniques of French *cinéma vérité* and North American direct cinema, from the Brazilian Geraldo Sarno's Viramundo of 1964 to Chircales by the Colombian documentarists Marta Rodríguez and Jorge Silva in 1972, Paul Leduc's Etnocidio, notas sobre Mezquital of 1976, or Ciro Durán's Gamin two years later. The first, an investigation into the migration of peasants from the droughtstricken NorthEast of Brazil to São Paulo, set a new standard for socially engaged reportage; the second is an analysis of the life of bricklayers on the outskirts of Bogotá, which achieves the fusion of politics, poetry and visual anthropology; the film by Leduc, 'an A to Z of indictments against the modernising state' (King, 1990), confirmed its director as the foremost experimental filmmaker in Mexico, while Gamin explores the world of the Bogotá street urchin in a

provocative and interventionist version of direct cinema. At the same time, documentary realism also inspired films of fiction like Leon Hirschman's Sao Bernardo (1972), an allegory on the Brazilian miracle (and another adaptation of a novel by Ramos). Held back by the censorship board just long enough to bankrupt the production company, it must stand in here for the numerous films which have been banned for political offence in every country of the continent at one time or another.

In Argentina, where cinema in the 60s was in retreat against political repression, the sense of political urgency was expressed with particular fervour by Grupo Cine Liberación, radical in both politics and film poetics, who in 1968 completed a mammoth threepart documentary running almost fourandahalf hours entitled La hora de los hornos ('The Hour of the Furnaces'). Constrained by the conditions of military rule after the coup of 1966, but bolstered by the growth of organised resistance, the film was shot clandestinely in conjunction with cadres of the Peronist movement. As one commentator puts it, it was made 'in the interstices of the system and against the system...independent in production, militant in politics, and experimental in language' (Stam, 1990).

Two of the filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, followed up with a manifesto entitled *Towards a Third Cinema*, which they defined as a cinema of liberation 'whose moving force is to be found in the Third World countries'. In this scheme, however, First and Second Cinema correspond not to the First and Second Worlds but constitute a virtual geography of their own. First Cinema is the model imposed by the American film industry, the Hollywood movie, wherever it is found, Los Angeles, Mexico City or Bombay; Second Cinema they identify with *auteur* cinema, which in turn is not just a European phenomenon, but is also found in places like Buenos Aires. Second Cinema is politically reformist but incapable of achieving any profound change. It is especially impotent in the face of the kind of repression unleashed by neofascist forces like the Latin American military. The only alternative, they said, is a Third Cinema, films the system cannot assimilate, which 'directly and explicitly set out to fight the system' (Solanas & Getino, 1969).

Several varieties of militant cinema appeared across the continent in the late 60s, ironically, in some cases, as a result of support for film production on the part of reformist governments. In Bolivia, where Spanish was a minority language, Jorge Sanjinés and the Ukamau group were able to make a number of indigenous language films with nonprofessional actors. The group took their name, the Aymara word for 'the way it is', from the first of these in 1966, about the revenge of a man for the rape of his wife; they then went on to produce Yawar Mallku ('Blood of the Condor', 1969), which recounts the response of a Quechua community to the sterilisation of its women by an American Peace Corps maternity clinic. Hugely successful, the film forced the expulsion of the Peace Corps by the Bolivian government two years later. Nevertheless, the experience of exhibiting the film to peasant audiences prompted Sanjinés to question the efficacy of the style they were working in. Ukamau and Yawar Mallku still portrayed the protagonists as individuals. In El coraje del pueblo ('The Courage of the People', 1971), the reconstruction of a massacre of miners in the town of Siglo XX in 1967, the protagonist is collective. The complex narrative built around flashbacks employed in Yawar Mallku is abandoned in favour of a linear structure and a tendency towards sequence shots. The style is thus adapted to the traditions of oral narrative: the players on the screen are the historical actors of the

events portrayed, they are dramatising their own experience; the use of long takes allows them the greatest space to express their collective memory, and a new kind of popular cinema is born. A military coup while the film was being finished forced Sanjinés into exile, and his next productions along these lines were made in Peru and Ecuador.

In Chile, the new filmmakers came together during the 60s to support the coalition of left wing parties known as Popular Unity. The years leading up to the electoral victory of Salvador Allende in 1970 saw a new wave in both fiction and documentary. The essays of the Experimental Film Group of the 50s turned into a cinema of urgency, which combined political campaign films with innovation in filmic technique and language to denounce the marginalism inherent in underdevelopment. The same spirit fed a crop of features which appeared in the late 60s, including Tres tristes tigres ('Three Sad Tigers', 1968) by Raúl Ruiz, an experimental sociopolitical comedy; Valparaiso mi amor (1969) by Aldo Francia (the moving spirit behind the festival in Viña del Mar in 1967), a lyrical neorealist drama of deprived children; and El chacal de Nahueltoro ('The Jackal of Nahueltoro', 1969) by Miguel Littin, an agitated deconstruction of criminality; the last two are based on real incidents and characters.

Attempts to place this activity on a more secure footing were cut short by the infamous coup of 1973. The most extraordinary film to emerge from the latter part of this period is Patricio Guzmán's threepart documentary La batalla de Chile ('The Battle of Chile'), a record of the months leading up to the coup. A fertile mixture of direct cinema observation and investigative reportage, the footage was smuggled out immediately after Allende's fall and edited in Cuba at ICAIC. The result is a poignant work of historical testimony unique in the annals of cinema.

As in other countries which fell to the right, filmmakers were among those who were forced into exile, or if they didn't escape, disappeared. Thanks to international solidarity, Chileans became the leading practitioners of a cinema of exile which grew up in the 70s (according to one count, they made 176 films in the ten years 1973-83, 56 of them features). Some remained in Latin America, like Littin, who found a new base in Mexico. Here, amongst other films, he made Actas de Marusia (Letters from Marusia, 1975), with the Italian actor Gian Maria Volonte and music by Mikis Theodorakis, in which the coup of 1973 is allegorised in the story of a massacre of miners in Chile in 1907. Nevertheless, the political imperatives of the Popular Unity period underwent a gradual transformation, as the overtly militant gave way to a more personal and ironic stance especially in the impish work of Raúl Ruiz, now based in France, who became by the 80s one of the leading figures of European avantgarde cinema. At the same time, the Chilean experience has contributed a new genre to the history of world cinema, as a number of films took the experience of exile as their subject matter. The first of them, Ruiz's semidocumentary Dialogo de exilados (Dialogue of Exiles, 1974), was badly received in the exile community for its ironic, disrespectful portrait of life in exile. But later films, like Marilu Mallet's highly personal documentary Journal inachevé ('Unfinished Diary', 1982) and Jorge Durán's dramatic feature A cor de seu destino ('The Colour of his Destiny', 1986), made in Canada and Brazil respectively, are remarkable expositions of the struggle to understand the exile's sense of identity. But perhaps the most extraordinary film of exile is Tangos, el exilio de Gardel ('Tangos, The Exile of Gardel', 1985) by the

Argentinian Fernando Solanas, an experimental musical set among the Argentine exile community in Paris.

#### INTO THE 1980s

THE transformation of political thematics was not limited to the cinema of exile. Cuban directors during the 70s developed a new brand of genre cinema, in films like El hombre de Maisinicú and Rio Negro (Manuel Pérez, 1973 and 1977): macho adventure movies in which the good guys are revolutionaries and the bad guys counterrevolutionaries. A growing trend in the 80s towards social comedy, marked by two films of 1984, Los pájaros tirándole a la escopeta ('Tables Turned') by Rolando Díaz and Se permuta ('House Swap') by Juan Carlos Tabío, represented a far more original development. Meanwhile the new cinema took root in several countries where state intervention for the first time created conditions for regular if limited levels of production, including Venezuela and Colombia.

In Venezuela, for example, Roman Chalbaud evolved new politically edged forms of old Latin American genres in films like El pez que fuma ('The Smoking Fish', 1977), which turns the world of the Mexican brothel film into a metaphor for power relations and corruption, or Cangrejo (1982), which turns the thriller into a denunciation of police corruption. Not always artistically successful, they nevertheless achieved top box office ratings in their own countries, outgrossing all but the biggest Hollywood hits. Only US monopolisation of international distribution prevented them reaching a wider audience. Nevertheless, by the time ICAIC launched the Havana Film Festival in 1979, it seemed at last as if a critical, national popular cinema was more than a dream in several countries.

The 80s saw an assortment of developments including the renaissance of Argentinian cinema, the emergence of a women's cinema in a number of different countries (especially Mexico and Brazil), the revival of the Mexican film industry, and alternatives like the Super8 movement in Venezuela. With the expanding variety of all these films, both aesthetically and politically, the idea of a movement generated in the 60s, even one that was unified in its diversity, began to recede. But if the distinction between commercial cinema and committed cinema became blurred, it was mainly because of the recognition of different political realities. The tradition of a committed experimental cinema remained alive with directors like Mexico's Paul Leduc, in films like Frida (1984) and Dollar Mambo (1993). Discarding linear narrative in favour of mobile imagery, the former portrays the life and loves, painting and politics of Frida Kahlo as a series of interlocking and visually intoxicating *tableaux vivants*, while the latter tells the story of the US invasion of Panama in 1989 in the form of a wordless dance drama. Frida was produced by Manuel Barbachano Ponce, the producer of two of Buñuel's finest Mexican films (Los Olvidados and El ángel exterminador), and Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, better known as a director, and Mexico's leading exponent of gay cinema, with films like the banned Las apariencias engañan (1977) and Doña Herlinda y su hijo (1984).

Signs of a growing women's presence in Latin American cinema first appeared in Brazilian cinema in the late 70s, with Ana Carolina's Mar de rosas ('Sea of Roses',



1977), a carnivalesque deconstruction of the institution of marriage, and Tisuka Yamasaka's Gaijin, a story of Japanese immigration to Brazil which places gender into relation to ethnicity and class. While the early 80s saw the appearance of women's documentary groups in Brazil and Mexico, another strand is found in the feature work of the Argentinian María Luisa Bemberg (Camila, 1984) and the Venezuelan Fina Torres (Oriana, 1985), who both use feminist melodrama to tell the stories of individual women in different historical periods. The most extraordinary feature debut of the time was A hora da estrela ('The Hour of the Star') by the 64-year-old Brazilian director Suzana Amaral, the gentle and penetrating portrait, moving and humourous, of a young woman from the NorthEast trying to survive in São Paulo.

In Argentina, as the grip of the military began to slacken, filmmakers there too saw the opportunity for revitalising the genre movie. In 1981 Adolfo Aristarain came out with Tiempo de revancha ('Time For Revenge'), which brilliantly adopts the format of a suspenseful thriller to tell a parable of power through the story of a worker taking revenge against his boss, or the exploiter exploited; a year later he made Ultimos días del victima ('Last Days of the Victim'), a *policial* and a parable of the death squads. When the military lost the War of the Malvinas and fell, and cinema began to breathe the air of freedom, there followed films like No habrá más penas ni olvido ('A Funny, Dirty Little War', 1983), Héctor Olivera's black comedy of Peronist militants in the early 70s, and Luis Puenzo's powerful and harrowing 1986 Oscar winner, La historia oficial ('The Official Version'), a character drama about the fate of the children of the Disappeared. That democracy did not bring economic recovery, however, is revealed in another film of the same year, Carlos Sorín's wonderfully bathetic La película del rey ('A King and His Movie'), which recounts a young filmmaker's desperate attempt to make a costume drama while struggling against an inhospitable location, the desertion of the cast, and no money: despite winning an award at the Venice Film Festival, the film failed to cover its costs. An ironic reminder of the truth of the comment by the Brazilian film critic Salles Gomes (1980) that while the cinemas of North America, Europe or Japan have never been underdeveloped, those of the Third World have never ceased being so'. This is not a question of volume or quality of production the Indian and Egyptian film industries are among the largest in any continent, and Latin America since the 50s has been pretty constantly in the vanguard of world cinema. But in cinema as in other regards, says Salles Gomes, underdevelopment is not a stage or a step, but a state, a condition, and the films of the developed countries never went through this condition, while the others have a tendency to remain stuck there. Hence the constant wonderment that in Latin America, cinema refuses to die.

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