

Glauber Rocha: „Aesthetic of Hunger“

Leaving aside the type of informative introduction which characterizes discussions about Latin America, I prefer to situate the relation between our culture and civilized culture in terms less reduced than those which characterize the European observer's analysis. While Latin America bemoans its general wretchedness, the foreign interlocutor cultivates a taste for this wretchedness not as a tragic symptom, but rather as simple formal information for his field of interest. Neither does the Latin convey his true wretchedness to civilized man nor does civilized man truly comprehend the Latin's wretchedness.

Here lies, basically, the situation of the arts in Brazil before the world: until now, only lies drawn up as truths (formal exoticisms that vulgarize social problems) have been conveyed in quantity, producing a series of errors not limited to Art, but that contaminate, above all, the terrain of politics. The European observer is only interested in artistic creation from the underdeveloped world to the extent that it satisfies his nostalgia for primitivism; and this primitivism is hybrid, dressed up as late legacies from the civilized world, misunderstood because imposed by colonialist conditioning.

Latin America is still a colony, and the only thing that differentiates yesterday's colonialism from today's is the colonizer's more perfect form as well as the subtle forms of those who assemble future blows on us.

The international problem of Latin America is still a case of a change of colonizers, given that any possible liberation will be a function of a new dependence for a long time to come.

This economic and political conditioning led us to philosophical emaciation and impotence which, sometimes consciously and sometimes not, produce first sterility and then hysteria.

Sterility: this is seen in the abundant work in our art where the author castrates himself through formal exercises that are still not in full possession of their forms, and in the frustrated dream of universalization. Artists who have not awoken from the adolescent aesthetic ideal. So, especially in San Pablo, we see hundreds of dusty and forgotten paintings in galleries, books of stories and poems, plays and films that have even caused bankruptcy. The official world in charge of the arts generated carnivalesque exhibitions in festivals and biennials, contrived conferences, easy formulas for success, cocktail parties around the world, in addition to monstrous cultural officials, academics of Arts and Letters, juries for painting and cultural delegations that travel abroad.

University monstrosities: the famous literary magazines, the contests, the titles.

Hysteria: a more complex chapter. Social indignation leads to impetuous discourses. The first symptom is the anarchism that characterizes young poetry and painting, even today. The second is the political reaction of art that is bad politics due to an excessive sectarianism. The third and most efficacious is the search for a systematization of the people's art. But what's misunderstood in all of this is that our

possible balance is not the result of an organic body, but rather a titanic and self-consuming force trying to overcome impotence. We are frustrated, confined to only the lower limits of the colonizer as a result of that use of forceps. And if he understands us, it is not, then, due to the clarity of our dialogue but rather the humanitarianism that our information inspires.

Once again, a language of tears and mute suffering is understood through paternalism. Latin hunger is not, then, just an alarming symptom: it is the very nerve of its own society. Here lies the tragic originality of Cinema Novo for the world cinema: our originality is our hunger, and our greatest woe is that, because it is felt, this hunger is not understood.

From *Amanda* to *Vidas Secas*, Cinema Novo narrated, described, poeticized, discoursed, analyzed. It aroused the themes of hunger: characters eating dirt, characters eating roots, characters stealing to eat, characters killing to eat, characters fleeing to eat, dirty ugly and starving characters living in dirty ugly dark houses. It was this gallery of the hungry that identified Cinema Novo with the miserabilism so condemned by the government, by criticism at the service of anti-national interests, by producers and by the audience, who can not bear images of its own wretchedness

Cinema Novo's miserabilism is opposed to the digestive cinema championed by the oldest critic from Guanabara, Carlos Lacerda: films about rich people, in their houses, in luxury cars, happy funny fast films without messages, films with purely industrial aims. These are the films that stand in contrast to hunger, as if in luxury apartments, filmmakers could hide the moral wretchedness of an nebulous and fragile bourgeoisie, or as if the technical materials and sets themselves could hide the hunger that is taking root in this very uncivilization. Above all, as if through this tropical landscape apparatus, the mental indigence of the filmmakers who make, this type of film could be dissimulated. What made Cinema Novo into an internationally important phenomenon was the degree of its commitment to the truth; once written by the literature of the thirties, this very miserabilism was now photographed by the cinema the sixties. If it was once written as a social condemnation, today it is discussed as a political problem.

The stages of miserabilism in our cinema evolve according to an internal logic. Thus, as Gustavo Dhal observes, these stages go from the phenomenological (*Porto das Caixas*), to the social (*Vidas Secas*), to the political (*Deus e o Diabo*), to the poetic (*Ganga Zumba*), to the demagogic (*Cinco Vezes Favela*), to the experimental (*Sol sobre a Lama*), to the documental (*Os Mendigos*). These are experiences in various senses; some them frustrated, others fruitful, but, after three years, all of them compose a historical scene that, not by chance, will characterize the Jânio-Jango period: the period the great crises of conscience and of rebellion, of uprising and revolution, which culminated in the April coup. And it was after April that the thesis of digestive cinema became weightier in Brazil, systematically threatening Cinema Novo.

We understand this hunger that the European and most Brazilians do not understand. For the Europeans it is a strange tropical surrealism. For the Brazilians, it is a national disgrace. The Brazilian does not eat, but he is ashamed to say so. And, mostly, he does not understand where this hunger comes from.

We, makers of those ugly and sad films, those shouted and desperate films where reason does not always speak in the loudest voice, we know that hunger will not be cured by the cabinet's formulations and that Technicolor patches do not hide, but only worsen, hunger's tumors. Thus, only a culture of hunger, drenched in its own structures, can take a qualitative leap. And the noblest cultural manifestation of hunger is violence. The act of begging, a tradition set up along with redeeming; colonialist pity, has been one of the causes of political mystification and of a haughty cultural lie: official tales of hunger ask the colonizing countries for money in order to build schools without creating teachers, to build houses without giving work, to teach a trade without teaching the alphabet. Diplomats solicit, economists solicit, politicians solicits. On the international front, Cinema Novo did not solicit anything, but rather imposed the violence of its images and sounds at twenty two international festivals.

For Cinema Novo, the precise behavior of the hungry is violence, and his violence is not primitivism. Is Corisco primitive? Is the woman in Porto das Caixas primitive? Cinema Novo: more than primitive and revolutionary, it is an aesthetic of violence. Here lies the starting point for the colonizer to understand the existence of the colonized. Only by becoming conscious of the colonized's one possibility, violence, that's the only way the colonizer can understand, to his horror, the power of the culture that he exploits. As long as he does not rise up, the colonized is a slave: there had to be a first dead policeman for the French to see an Algerian.

Despite it all, that violence is not part of the ear, as it is not bound to the old colonizing humanism. The love that this violence contains is as brutal as the violence itself, because it is not a complacent or contemplative love, but rather a love of action and transformation.

That's why Cinema Novo did not make any melodrama. The women in Cinema Novo were always searching for a possible opening for love. Given the impossibility of loving when hungry, the prototypical woman, the one from Porto das Caixas, kills her husband. Dandara from Ganga Zumba flees the war for a romantic love. Sinh Vitoria dreams of new times for her children. Rosa turns to crime to save Manuel and love him in other circumstances. The priest's girl needs to tear her habit to get a new man. The woman in O Desafio breaks up with her lover because she prefers to be faithful to her bourgeois husband. The woman in São Paulo S. A. wants the security of a petty bourgeois love and so she tries to reduce her husband's life to a mediocre system.

The time when Cinema Novo had to explain itself to exist has passed. Cinema Novo needs to be processed to be explained, and this is possible to the degree that our reality is more intelligible in light of thoughts that are not weakened and delirious from hunger. Cinema Novo can not be effectively developed while at the margin of the economic and cultural process of the Latin American continent, especially because Cinema Novo is a phenomenon of colonized peoples and not a privileged Brazilian entity. Wherever there is a filmmaker willing to film the truth and to confront the hypocritical police model of censorship, Cinema Novo will have a living cell. Wherever there is a filmmaker willing to confront commercialism, exploitation, pornography, technicalism, Cinema Novo will have a living cell. Wherever there is a filmmaker of any age or origin ready to put his films and his profession at the service of the crucial causes of his times, Cinema Novo will have a living cell. That is the

definition, and because of it, Cinema Novo is at the margin of the film industry because the film industry is committed to lies and exploitation. Cinema Novo's integration into the economy and the film industry depends on freedom in Latin America. Cinema Novo swears on its name, on the name of its closest and its most distant members, on the name of its crudest and its most talented, on the name of its weakest and its strongest for that freedom. It is a moral question that is reflected in the films at the moment of filming a man or a house, in the detailed observation, in this philosophy: it is not a film, but rather an evolving set of films that will give the public, finally, consciousness of its own existence.

This is why we do not have more in common with cinema from around the world. Cinema Novo is a project carried out in the politics of hunger and, for that very reason, it suffers all of the resulting weaknesses in its existence.