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Young Outlaws and Marginal Lives in Latin American Cinema

The Landmark of Buñuel's *Los olvidados*

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Introduction

In the relatively new field of Latin American cinema studies, theorists and critics often find themselves confronted with the problematic need to borrow concepts and perspectives that originated in reflections on European and US cinema. It is for this reason that hegemonic theoretical perspectives are applied to a Latin American corpus that uses original techniques, languages, and specific cultural foci in order to represent its own realities and conflicts.

The theorists of Latin American cinema in the 1960s and 1970s boasted of their ability to create an alternative space of ideological and formal production that discussed and responded to particular Continental needs. These tendencies translated into expressions such as Third Cinema and Imperfect Cinema. The Brazilian equivalent was the Cinema Novo, which resulted in Glauber Rocha's 1965 manifesto *Uma estética da fome* (An Aesthetic of Hunger). All of these schools of thought were grouped under the heading of "New Latin American Cinema," as Ana López reminds us in her study (1997). Several directors produced important manifestos during this time. Among them are the Cubans Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Julio García Espinosa, the Argentinians Fernando Birri, Fernando Solanas, and Octavio Getino, the Brazilian Glauber Rocha as stated above, and the Bolivian Jorge Sanjinés, among others – members of experimental groups, *cinematecas*, *cine clubes*, publications, and schools that were supported itinerantly by private institutes and public agencies. Their ideas translated into films such as *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do*

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Sol (Black God, White Devil, by Glauber Rocha, Brazil, 1964), *Yawar Mallku* (The Blood of the Condor, by Jorge Sanjinés and Grupo Ukamau, Bolivia, 1969), and *La hora de los hornos* (The Hour of the Furnaces, by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Argentina, 1970), among many others. López explains the meaning of the New Latin American Cinema movement:

> In all Latin American nations, the 1960s were years of cultural and political effervescence, and the cinema – conceived of as an aesthetic, cultural, and political/ideological phenomenon – was self-consciously immersed in the maelstrom of popular and intellectual debates … marginal, politicized, often clandestine cinematic practice that has managed to give expression to new forms and contents; to create alternative modes of production, consumption, and reception; to produce great box office hits as well as utterly clandestine films, and, in short, to change the social function of the cinema in Latin America. (López, 1997: 136–137)

What is certain is that these theorists and filmmakers made an abundance of declarations, manifestos, and definitions that analyzed and promoted what would become a new militant cinema, in which artistic expression was nearly inseparable from political affiliations and agendas. They did not produce, nonetheless, a theoretical-formal system that might serve as a tool for subsequent analysis of Latin American cinematic production in its own terms, nor did the respective academic institutions support the development of this kind of perspective. One of the reasons for this lack was the destruction of many of these theoretical groups and creative centers by authoritarian Latin American governments that emerged during those decades in many of the countries that were producing cinema at that time. These governments frequently made it necessary to whitewash the political messages behind both the production and the promotion of Latin American films. This is also why it is interesting that Buñuel, this Spanish Surrealist, by education a Catholic and in behavior an anarchist, produced the movie that would be a landmark in the Latin American cinema to come and would open a theoretical space in which to rethink not only this artistic form, but also the whole of Latin American reality.

Finally, at the turn of the millennium much of the Latin American film industry has abandoned the proud banner of peculiarity that those revolutionary theorists carried – technical imperfection and simplicity as cinematographic identity and the inclusion of a central political message – and adopted more conventional forms. Today the industry has resorted to productions for a more globalized Latin American viewer that is accustomed to Hollywood-style cinematic language. On the other hand, there is a minority among the European and US audience that these Latin American productions wish to reach (aiming for prizes and future productions with larger budgets).[1] These new films satisfy hegemonic standards (a not very disturbing political message; an aesthetics that does not offend the sensibility of the audience; the survival of the star system) through their narratological and cinematographic strategies, their cultural references, and their efforts to interpellate global and globalized publics. Through these films, some Latin

American directors, technicians, and actors have succeeded in gaining access to First World movie productions. Examples of this phenomenon are *Babel*, directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu (France, Mexico, United States, 2006) and the recent Oscar winner for best foreign language film from Argentina, Juan José Campanella's *El secreto de sus ojos* (The Secret in Their Eyes, 2009), as well as the success of *Cidade de Deus* (City of God, by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, Brazil, 2002). These films also demonstrate technical maturity, creative efficacy, and excellent acting.

But not all filmmakers have made concessions. The Latin American cinema of the past 20 years also has produced films that resist the kind of negotiations that a Hollywood-type language engages in, including *Bolivia* (Israel Adrián Caetano, Argentina, 2001) and *Mundo grúa* (Crane World, Pablo Trapero, Argentina, 1999), the work of the Argentinian Lucrecia Martel, the Chilean Patricio Guzmán, the Peruvian Francisco Lombardi, or the Colombian Víctor Gaviria, to cite just a few examples. These films are innovative for their themes and cinematic language, the absence of emotional or formal clichés, the occasional use of black and white (in the case of Caetano and Trapero, among others), and a consistent formal dialogue between cinematic fiction and documentary. These characteristics reflect the persistence of a Latin American identity that aims to create from and for particularity and does not necessarily aspire toward box-office success (although many films do end up being box-office successes). In an era during which the manipulation (technologically speaking) of the cinematic image is central to Hollywood box-office success, the use of an imagery that is free of clichés by such directors as Caetano and Trapero suggests a return to the models of the New Latin American Cinema and a reaffirmation of an alternative Latin American aesthetic. I find that, at this point in the history of Latin American cinema and considering its abundance and quality, it is time to reconstitute, compare, and categorize a growing corpus, with the aim of both organizing and proposing new theoretical agendas, and with an eye to reinforcing the multiple contributions of Latin American cinema.

It is in light of these reflections that I wish to examine Luis Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and The Damned, 1950) in order to discuss two fundamental aspects of the film. First, I am interested in its ideological and formal peculiarity as a foundational production, which situates it among the most important films in the history of cinema (beyond its national context). Second, I would like to highlight its position as a precursor to the cinema of violence and urban marginalization, a formal category that has been abundantly popular in nearly every Latin American country in recent decades. It is noteworthy that, in current scholarship on Buñuel and especially on *Los olvidados*, criticism on this theme is varied and abundant, but a reordering and revision that confronts it with other Latin American productions helps to shed new light on the work of Buñuel.

The preferred genres among Latin American producers, directors, and screenwriters differ greatly from those of Hollywood and the European film industry.

Documentary and drama are the stars, with comedy in a secondary status even though comedies are made in Latin American countries.[2] Melodrama carries a great, though not exclusive, weight in Mexican and Argentinian cinema. In spite of the popularity and importance of music to the Latin American continent, the musical is less popular than would be expected. Furthermore, Latin America seems to only consume, not produce, genres like science fiction, children's films. and horror (although the films of "El Santo," a Mexican wrestler-superhero, had great success in the 1960s). The thriller, on the other hand, tends to refer to social and political realities in its countries of origin. It is worth noting that Latin American cinema at the turn of the millennium has expanded its areas of interest, and the genres it cultivates (many of the films by Guillermo del Toro) are examples.

The political or social drama seems to be one of the genres that Latin America has preferred, which suggests that this cinema has grown from the scars of political and social abuses. Also, given the power of the cinematic image (due to the power of the image in general in today's culture), it is clear that audiences have assigned cinema the task of generating answers and reflecting upon themes of national identity. In this chapter, then, I focus on the foundational and modeling influence of Buñuel's film on the cinema of urban violence and marginalized youth in Latin America. One risk for research on this assiduously examined topic in literature and the media is that it could become a facile representation of Latin American realities when read in a foreign context. In fact, this issue has reached the point where we are facing the birth of a new stereotype about Latin America that depicts it as the locus of urban violence and the social neglect of future generations, especially the children and adolescents of marginalized classes who are thus considered both victims and agents of social disintegration.[3] The inauguration of this new and more honest analytical perspective was anticipated by a Spanish Surrealist in the mid-twentieth century in Mexico City.

The Lesson of the Master

It should be admitted that Buñuel is an unexpected source of precedents for Latin American cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, given that the surrealist work that preceded and followed *Los olvidados* falls under the category of auteur cinema. They are films that carry the unmistakable stylistic, thematic, and cinematographic signature of their director, specially the films that he produced in France in the late 1960s and 1970s. They are associated with what is called "Second Cinema," which is generally, but not exclusively, European. This type of production was criticized by the Latin American directors mentioned above because it represented the petty bourgeoisie and generated an art for and by a cultural elite.[4] Today, *Los olvidados* is a film that audiences, filmmakers, and researchers identify as a landmark

and as amongst the author's most important work. With regard to this, Julián Gutiérrez-Albilla, paraphrasing King (1990), asserts:

> La película también se opone a la retórica dogmática nacionalista y las convenciones visuales del cine clásico mexicano, el cual evolucionó a partir de la tradición visual revolucionaria. Funcionando a la vez como un documental social … como una revisión de la mitología revolucionaria propagada por las películas melodramáticas durante la época dorada del cine mexicano, como las películas de Emilio Fernández, *Los olvidados* ha sido considerada como un precedente oblícuo de un nuevo cine en América Latina que se pudiera definir como de *auteur*, abiertamente militante, de orientación izquierdista y formalmente experimental, ejemplificado por la generación posclásica de directores mexicanos, cubanos, argentinos y brasileiros. (Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2005: 31)[5]

It is also important to remember the influence on Buñuel of the Italian neorealist Vittorio De Sica, neorealism being a form born of the ruins of European fascism, when the Left was in search of a voice that was more authentic than realist (Evans, 1995: 78).[6] With *Los olvidados* Buñuel obliges Latin American cinema to confront new forms and theories that would become key years later (non-professional or natural actors, real settings, discussion of social themes, and formal similarity to the documentary) and films that touch on the themes of urban violence and youth.

Buñuel always filmed according to schedule and adapted to the film's budget. In his memoir, *Mon dernier soupir* (My Last Sigh, 1984), he frequently complains of not having earned enough money, but he respected his profession and criticized actors who did not behave professionally (for example, Simone Signoret and Josephine Baker). Buñuel filmed quickly because he understood the time demands of the film industry, though he was also capable of understanding the nature of the medium he was using to express himself and how its connection to the growing consumer market worked. He interpreted the codes of Latin American modernity correctly and also understood (better than the Mexican audience who initially criticized him) the traumatic impact of modernity in the urban context as well as the traditions and challenges of the Mexican Revolution. He knew how to read the social implications and consequences of these events, and the result of this interaction was *Los olvidados*.

Buñuel succeeded in scandalizing Mexican intellectuals with a film that was not made by a "spoiled rich kid" or a Surrealist (though there are surrealist elements in it). The film was neither about his own country (Spain) nor about a social reality that historically pertained to him. It did not even follow, save for certain episodes, the parameters of his earlier productions. Buñuel was living in exile, which reduced the possibilities of being aided by his family, and was left without the patronage of the de Noailles family (who supported his earlier French productions).

As underlined before, Buñuel founded not only a new aesthetic, but also a genre that would be particular to future Latin American cinema. In the films that followed *Los olvidados* we can find common characteristics. For example, they use both

natural and professional actors. They intertwine the themes of marginalized youth and violence, and it is typical that they connect with the issues of crime (drug use and trafficking, rape, theft) that are endemic to an urban context. They are filmed in original locations (very often at the outskirts of the city) and they always deal with poor, demolished, and dirty environments, "basurales, casas destartaladas, depósitos de chatarras, recintos abandonados, casas miserables," *lugares de precariedad*[7] (Aguilar, 2006: 44). These films are also characterized by the absence of the father and a weak or non-existent maternal figure. They depict transient and uprooted subjects, a fact that flows into the presentation of multiple forms of otherness (racial, physical, and sexual). The presence of injured bodies is common, reflecting their physical surroundings and acting as metaphors for the disintegration of the social system. In general, they reveal the ineffectiveness or threatening nature of the police or the state. As Gonzalo Aguilar shows in his analysis of the Argentinian film *Pizza, birra, faso* (Pizza, Beer and Cigarettes, by Adrián Caetano and Bruno Stagnaro, 1998), among others, the films that fall in this category show the downfall of the impoverished middle class, and represent, as Aguilar suggests, "qué sucede cuando nos quedamos sin hogar" (Aguilar, 2006: 43).[8] Finally, some Latin American films that follow *Los olvidados* make use of real language or even slang (such as *parlache* in *Rodrigo D: no futuro* [1990] and certain uses of *lunfardo* in *Pizza, birra, faso*). It is common that in this type of film the line between fictional social drama and documentary is crossed, with the use of techniques from both genres.[9] Gustavo Remedi sees in some of the films the presence of the uncanny in connection with characters, scenes, and plots, which produces a counterpoint between the center and the (urban, cultural, economic) margin, where the characters represent for the viewer a distortion of the habitual and an alteration of the hegemonic society (1998).

This is a trend in cinema that takes off under the inspiration of *Los olvidados*, then evolves and gains strength in the majority of Latin American countries where film is produced up to the present day. Surveying this Latin American cinematographic genre, we find different instances of modernity and postmodernity, as well as a variety of national approaches. It is a genre that requires the Latin American urban margin as setting and inspiration, given that it provides an increasingly prevalent twentieth-century reality in which modernity and postmodernity are read according to new codes. Directors like Víctor Gaviria, Héctor Babenco, Adrián Caetano, Bruno Stagnaro, and Walter Salles, among others, have followed Buñuel's tradition, separated themselves from it, and reformulated it. As they have done so, they have examined new realities with new theoretical approaches and confronted the unique challenges of a "global aesthetic" (Cisneros, 2007: 103) without discarding the foundation that the Spanish director put in place in Mexico in the 1950s. Jorge Ruffinelli, in his book on Víctor Gaviria, asserts that "*Rodrigo D: no futuro* is also a 'child' of *Los olvidados*" (Ruffinelli, 2004: 137). Other directors attempted, through fiction, to confront audiences with these realities and the result was films like *La virgen de los sicarios* (Our Lady of the Assassins, by Barbet Shroeder, Colombia, 2000), *Central do Brasil* (Central

Station, by Walter Salles, Brazil, 1998), and *Amores perros* (Love's a Bitch, by Alejandro González Iñárritu, Mexico, 2000), among other examples.

The Mexican public and critics reacted to the premiere of *Los olvidados* with harsh language and anger. The Colombian director Gaviria experienced a similar rejection when he presented some of his films, which were called "pornomiseria" ("poverty porn") and were considered the product of the camera's morbid pleasure in depicting the social margins of the city of Medellín.[10] In both cases, there was a clash with a public that resented the international projection of an image in which corruption and poverty were paramount. Today, that image has become so representative of a part of Latin American reality that we have run the risk of forging a new transcontinental stereotype.

An example of the transition from *Los olvidados* to the turn-of-the-millennium film on youth and urban marginality would be *Pixote* (1981). Carrying the theories of the cinematic hard line of the 1960s and 1970s, the Argentinian Héctor Babenco creates in Brazil (illustrating the importance of the network of filmmakers in Latin America) a film that contains every element of the genre discussed here. It portrays multiple forms of violence (the extreme loneliness of the youth, sexual violence, and poverty, to name just a few), a corrupt governmental system, and absent parents. It also adds the problematic of gender (as it introduces the issue of the marginalization of the homosexual) that other films on this theme have surprisingly avoided. Making no concessions, *Pixote* subjects the viewer to a descent into the urban hell of Rio de Janeiro, with indigent characters imprisoned in the *favelas* (there are also non-professional actors, as is common, and some of them, like the protagonist, are extremely young). The poetics of *Los olvidados* and its complex interweaving of themes is not what Babenco is aiming for in *Pixote*. Everything in the film is desolation and neglect. It is a film that has elevated this genre to another level. Babenco picked up this aesthetic where Buñuel left it, developing and solidifying it into a genre of Latin American cinema.

Los olvidados: A Classic

As a film made up of intersections, *Los olvidados* falls aesthetically between documentary and fiction, between neorealism and Surrealism, although a flatly realist tendency in the portrayal of events predominates. It provides, though marginally, an analysis of the function of the state in one of its most critical moments: the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946–1952), which coincides in part with the Golden Age of Mexican cinema (1947–1959).[11] With the government of Alemán, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) is reformulated as a governing party and Mexico's process of modernization is accelerated, with an increasingly authoritarian state. Not only does Mexico City grow, but also urban life in general becomes more predominant and defines a new national profile.

It is at this moment that the Buñuelian vision of Mexico City and its marginalized citizens is introduced. Buñuel begins the film associating Mexico City and its problems with the other metropolises of the world; by way of introduction, a voice-over speaks to the spectator of life in the great European cities and New York. He insists that the events in the ensuing film are real and the characters authentic, although the story is fictional and the plot has been carefully elaborated. The film was shot in the marginal neighborhoods of the great Mexican capital when it was striving to project the image of a nation that was competitive on a grand scale. The film challenged this political propaganda, as well as the great national icons of maternity, childhood innocence, and the state as protector, which earned it a virulent initial reaction from its audience, as Buñuel recalls in his memoir. It is interesting to see the reaction of so many intellectuals, including Vittorio De Sica himself, who were unable to process the film in all its breadth.

In the plot Buñuel negotiates dramatic lines delicately, creates protagonists and antagonists, and produces moments of tension and release that are calibrated to a well-told story. In the process, the Spanish director expanded the Latin American imaginary by portraying the greatest villain of our cinema: Jaibo (played by the young non-professional actor Roberto Cobo). Julia Tuñón asserts: "El filme no ofrece conclusiones, no redime a nadie. Los personajes no son la encarnación de almas dulces o de santos laicos: la madre es sexuada a conciencia y no quiere al hijo producto de la violación" (Tuñón, 2003: 76).[12]

Setting and characters are found, recreated, and made to correspond with one another, while cinema serves to inform the viewer about urban reality, resulting in novel reflections for Latin America in the mid-twentieth century. Later, Tuñón asserts:

> La metrópoli moderna, limpia y ordenada sólo será real, si acaso, para un grupo social y se acomoda en tensión constante en el avasallante proceso de crecimiento urbano. Sin embargo, es la que se querría y se presume durante el alemanismo, destacando las luces de los centros nocturnos, los multifamiliares, los ríos entubados, los servicios de luz, agua y drenaje, los teléfonos públicos, las anchas avenidas. En 1950, la ciudad tiene 3,480,000 habitantes. Es la época del auge del cine y del radio en el que se escuchan ritmos tropicales y románticos boleros: hay una gama de sonidos que no escuchamos en *Los olvidados*, pues la música que ellos escuchan se reduce a las canciones del ciego en el mercado … la ciudad que representa Buñuel más parece una ciudad rota, enferma y supurante, como los cuerpos de varios de los personajes del filme. (Tuñón, 2003: 79–80)[13]

The filmmaker chooses one among the many Latin American metropolises. On the symbolic meanings of cities and urban spaces, Michel Foucault says, in his definition of heterotopias:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the

> other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. (Foucault, 1986: 24)

Foucault, in his list of possible heterotopias, does not include slums, but we could include, following his definition, the *lost cities* of Mexico. Governments often propose to connect the concept of the slum to the adjective "transitory," even though they possess little of that quality. Marc Augé's definition of the *non-place* is not completely applicable, either, though it shares many isolated elements of the slum (2008). In these places very frequently the individual experiences a partial loss of identity; the subject shares a spatial impersonality that does not reflect nationalities, ethnicities, or cultures. The slums are not, according to Augé, "anthropological places"; the non-place is their opposite. Airports, shopping malls, and highways are globalized spaces, and therefore negate the local. There are neither local narratives nor the production of utopias there, but rather the anonymity of a transitory equality in the space of supermodernity.

Neither the heterotopia nor the idea of the non-place (not to mention the utopia) explains the slum, although they approach the slum without including it. They are the failure of utopia; they do not condense the heterotopia's atemporal national essence, which is concrete and abstract at the same time. Nor do they possess its solemnity of signification, since they are too concrete, improvised and impelled by necessity. Instead, though the slums are spaces visited by the local in terms of tradition, they create their own traditions and often their own laws (frequently in ignorance of federal laws), as we see in *Rodrigo D: no futuro* or *Cidade de Deus*. Sometimes, in the interest of continuity the slums have developed a sense of community that sometimes revamps them and, at others, pushes them to the limits of the law, as occurs with the loyalty that entire areas of Medellín have shown to the drug cartel, and specially to Pablo Escobar, as Gabriel García Márquez relates in *Noticia de un secuestro* (News of a Kidnapping, 1996). But the general rule is that the residents of slums live in conditions of poverty as second-class citizens. At times, areas of the traditional city are reduced (according to the fluctuations of progress) to slums, and the turn-of-the-century colonial residence or large, rundown house becomes a tenement or abandoned building inhabited by transient residents, where the remnants of wrought-iron bars or the large art nouveau window reign. As Kees Koonings and Dirk Krujit point out:

> Between 1950 and 1980, the share of Latin America's informal economy grew steadily, only to accelerate in the 1980s and 1990 …. Latin America has thus become the continent in which in most of its countries a significant segment of the population is, at once, poor, informal and excluded. … This development is reflected in persistent and often increasing inequality in the distribution of urban income and wealth and in the geographic layout of Latin America's metropolis, in which the expansion of slums and the deterioration of popular neighbourhoods have become clearly visible over the past two or three decades. (Koonings and Krujit, 2007: 9)

Extreme poverty and the slum were born during the twentieth century with the acceleration of areas of modernity in Latin American economies. Buñuel, who had already sharpened his vision of poverty (though in a rural context) in the film *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1933), cast a different gaze toward a marginal Mexican urban poverty that nobody saw and that seemed to demonstrate the falsity of the revolutionary utopia and denounce the failures of *alemanismo*.

I find that the definition of the non-place partially helps to define the character of Ojitos of *Los olvidados*, the rural indigenous child who was tricked and abandoned in the slum by his father. He lives only briefly in the fictional space of the film, as well as the viewer. Ojitos is a passenger in transit, a transitory citizen (of second-class status) who has an earlier life that he wishes to regain, one enriched by rural tradition. According to Peter William Evans:

> By the time of the making of *Los olvidados*, Cárdenas's policy of distribution of land to the Indians – according to Niedergang, resulting in the transfer of 15 million hectares to over 80,000 farmers (1971: 272) – had been reversed, and Ojitos, the little Indian boy from the country (from Los Reyes) symbolizes the defeat of Socialism by the more Porfirian instincts of later governments. (Evans, 1995: 74)

The character changes back to his original name upon leaving the slum. Ojitos passes through the slum the way Augé's traveler moves down the highway in the supermodernity of the turn of the century: without his own identity, without identifying with his space, recuperating his individuality at the end. But in the case of Ojitos this experience is traumatic, and the recuperation of the wholeness of his identity, which involves the return to family, to hometown, name, and community, is yet to be seen.[14] His attire – rural or *"fuereño"* (characteristic of the out-of-towner, as the children call him) – his hat and *sarape* (serape) all speak of a character connected to a history that precedes urban centers themselves. His indigenous facial features, which inspire the other characters to give him his new name, suggest the hope of a locality whose values are not represented in the corrupt laws of the burgeoning slum (which half a century later would be assaulted by globalization). Ojitos (from *ojos*, meaning little eyes), as his name suggests, is "the one who watches" and knows he will not stay; he is, to a certain point, an optional witness. Ojitos understands his own poverty; he understands imperfectly his father's reasons for abandoning him in the urban labyrinth, and he knows his rural nature has given him values that are different from those of the other characters who interact with him. Tuñón reminds us that many people are, like the city itself, "halfway between the agricultural and urban worlds" (Tuñón, 2003: 80). Buñuel does not linger on the predicament of Ojitos; nonetheless he gives him a space and presents him as a social alternative. Still, his generosity, his values (he resists killing *"El Ciego"* [the Blind Man] though he initiates an attempt to do so), his tender beauty (which inspires Meche to protect him) are not the traits that

inspire Surrealists. Buñuel offers us Ojitos to remind us of the power of tradition and of the possibility of a space for hope (and also, because Buñuel immediately understood the complexities of Latin America, and in this case Mexican, modernity, which alternates at each step with tradition). Nonetheless it is my contention that the character of Ojitos is understood according to the parameters of Orientalism: as a character seen through the Western and hegemonic gaze, perceived in his folkloric – traditional – dimension as *other*. This character never changes his traditional costume, which goes along with his traditional morals. He does not steal; he is not corrupted; he does not change and he does not surrender. He lives in the secret world of the exotic. Even though he functions as a dramatic counterweight to Jaibo, his character loses force as part of the simplification that frequently comes with *otherness*, the simplification to which Buñuel falls prey. He is the rural *other*, more morally "pure," incomprehensible to the modern, supermodern, or postmodern urban subject, an *other* that is presented as solidly good and morally clean and seems to be part of a positive stereotype that is as damaging as its opposite. Next to him is Jaibo, with his malice, his complex strategies, and his multiple dimensions, someone who little by little becomes increasingly attractive as a character. Ojitos denounces one of the aspects of the economic crisis in Mexico that is beginning to postpone the ideals of the Revolution. This social transformation feeds the way in which all of the characters in *Los olvidados* are perceived (with the exception of the director of the farm) as second-class citizens: "… we introduce the notion of 'informal citizenship,' the precarious implantation of (urban) second-class citizenship, as the long-term result of the mainstream model of economic reforms in the 1980s and 1990s" (Koonings and Krujit, 2007: 8). In accordance with Koonings and Krujit, even though the economic model that banished multitudes to the margins dates from the last decades of the twentieth century, it is clear that that reality was in process well beforehand. El Ciego (Miguel Inclán) is considered the witness of a better, and already lost, world; he longs for Porfirio Díaz and a time when he believes "there was more respect." With this character Buñuel confronts us with the commonplace theme of the physical blindness of a character that does not see tangible reality but rather the one that is beyond sight. But again Buñuel saves himself from simplification, presenting us with a character that is conservative but subsumed by poverty and morally corrupt (he attempts to sexually abuse Meche, exploits Ojitos, and mistreats the other children).[15] His blindness prevents him from seeing the present and emotionally he prefers to look backward, which represents the dark side of a form of poverty that does not recognize itself fully and defends the arguments of those that create it.

Nonetheless, El Ciego is exceeded by Jaibo in his moral, physical, and social poverty. Still, it is important to remember that the characters' villainy stems from the fact that the slum obligates each subject to turn to his instincts to survive. If El Ciego represents the worst of the corrupt world of the past, and if Jaibo represents a future Latin America in which Buñuel has questioned utopia (proof of this is the failed attempt of the director of the farm to rehabilitate Pedro), then there is little

hope. Such a conclusion is not difficult to accept when taking into account Buñuel's ideological perspective, and it has been repeated in many Latin American films (with national variations and diverse theoretical postures) up to today. The suicide of the main character in *Rodrigo D: no futuro*, Víctor Gaviria's film, is the extreme expression of this pessimism with regard to the national projects and the familial and social disintegration of the urban sphere.

Observing the characters and the dramatic oppositions from which they emerge, we see that they serve to create a space of melodrama, the favorite genre in Latin American culture from the nineteenth-century novel to the *telenovela* (soap opera), as well as popular leaflets, radio dramas, and real life. Melodrama is also one of the themes studied by Carlos Monsiváis and which he connects not only to modernity but also to urban violence and the fatalism it inspires in the marginalized citizen. He reminds us that, in the daily acts of violence in Latin American cities, the perpetrator feels he is part of a film that has yet to be produced, given that the melodramatic dynamic has penetrated the popular imaginary so completely (2002).

Jesús Martín Barbero asserts that the popular *folletín* (leaflet) represents a voice through which an underworld speaks, a voice that neither the left nor the right pays attention to, each for its own reasons:

> Me refiero al submundo del *terror urbano*, de la violencia brutal que puebla la ciudad y es no sólo control policial en las calles o ejercicio de la disciplina en las fábricas, sino agresión masculina contra las mujeres, especialmente en el barrio popular, y de las mujeres sobre los niños y de la miseria sobre todos en cada casa. Una mezcla de miedo, resentimiento y vicio que responde a una cotidianidad insufrible … Haciendo trizas la imagen de lo popular romántico folclórico, el folletín habla de lo popular-urbano: sucio y violento, lo que geográficamente se extiende del suburbio a la cárcel pasando por los internados para locos y las casas de prostitución. (Martín Barbero, 1998: 184–185)[16]

The above reflection could be applied to the way in which Buñuel's film represents social injustice. Further on, Martín Barbero reminds us, speaking of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema, that the audience of that time understood: "One did not go to the cinema to dream, but rather to learn" (Martín Barbero, 1998: 227), and explains, citing Carlos Monsiváis, that cinema helps the individual recognize himself, given that it teaches him "to be Mexican" (Martín Barbero, 1998: 228).

It is for this reason that the juxtaposition of characters places Jaibo at the dramatic axis of the film. Furthermore, he is a complex character that needs others (Pedro, Julián, Ojitos, el Ciego) to construct him through opposition. Jaibo receives partial vindication on a couple of occasions during the film: when he tells Pedro's mother of his childhood as an orphan, and at the end of the film, at the moment of his death. He remembers his dead mother, whom he associates with the Virgin in her image of perfection and goodness (in fact, an image of the Virgin during his final dream reinforces this idea). We also know that he never knew his father and

that he suffered seizures when he was very young. In brief, this character who is the essence of evil, the bad seed that grows among the other children, suddenly becomes the emotionally crippled child of poverty. At the end of the film he transforms before our eyes from executioner to victim.

In opposition to Jaibo is Ojitos, who might be what Jaibo was in his childhood. At the end of the film Ojitos is lost in the crowd while searching for his father (who is a symptomatic absence in the film and in all the later cinema of urban minorities and poverty), and the viewer wonders if, within a decade, Ojitos will not have turned into Jaibo. Ojitos is not only an example of the social neglect that the institution of the family cannot undo; he is also an important element of the melodramatic strain, that, though not pronounced, is still present in Buñuel's film (although, according to King, this strain would be a combination of the writings of the Marquis de Sade, which Buñuel admired, with melodrama).[17] In order to show the extreme neglect of these children we see Ojitos suckle at the teat of a nanny goat, searching for nourishment and the origins of the human emotional connection.[18] The director exposes the viewer to the greatest expression of the solitude that is possible in a changing city and culture.

Stephen Hart reminds us that in the film the director does not disguise violence, which occupies a central role (Hart, 2004: 75). For his part, John King effectively expresses the essence of Jaibo and his meaning to the film: "Jaibo is an angel; when they meet him, each of the characters reveals his or her true identity. He flaunts the laws and strictures of society, shatters the myth of the Mexican benevolent state, releasing the desires of love and death, signaling the return of what is repressed by the myth of modernity" (King, 1990: 131).

Jaibo and Julián (Javier Amézcua) form the film's structural opposition, by which Buñuel proposes the dynamic of good and evil where tragedy is seen in its social dimension. Each young man is a two-sided phenomenon: extreme social pressure produces heroes (Julián is morally superior even to his own father) and villains like Jaibo. Brave and hard-working, Julián is a character of a solidly positive nature, but his function as a character is passive – not as an agent of change, but as a victim who is also the vehicle for the fall of others. Pedro (Alfonso Mejía) becomes an accomplice to Jaibo in Julián's crime, and Jaibo himself is killed while fleeing the police. This opposition is repeated, for example, in *Cidade de Deus* but Caetano and Stagnaro do not perpetuate this structure it in *Pizza, birra, faso*, in which all of the characters are lost in the violence of crime, or in depression and solitude, as in the case of *Rodrigo D: no futuro*.[19] The balance between good and evil is the indispensable formula since tragedy and drama have existed as categories of classical literature, though at times the distance between fall and salvation is short. Films that depict urban violence through the use of fiction and professional actors, like *Amores perros*, show devastating social realities, and the tragedy and drama arise from the confrontations of tensions, value systems, or the simple intersection of events – destiny itself – which lends the story more of a dimension of tragedy, in the classical sense, than of drama.[20]

Pedro, for his part, is a tragic character given that he unsuccessfully tries to overcome the forces of his environment (poverty, the indifference of his mother, and Jaibo). The director of the farm tries to give him an opportunity, which he is disposed to accept, but Jaibo steps in. The role of the farm director in the film has been discussed at length, along with the fact that Buñuel included a character that represents the positive (though ineffective) action of the state. His tactic with Pedro is peculiar, and his attitude has been seen by some critics (see Franco, 1989; Tuñón, 2003) as an expression of the paternalism of the state – distant and detached from a surrounding reality that is increasingly overwhelming.

It is in this way that Pedro is betrayed on all fronts: he is the child of a rape and his mother, as a result, does not love him. He is hounded by the gang leader Jaibo, who represents for Pedro the force of a destiny that cannot be avoided (wherein tragedy in its original sense is found). He is also betrayed by a government that intellectualizes, idealizes, and in the end solves nothing, in spite of its best intentions. His mother, the farm director, and his work at the knife factory would be possible escapes from Pedro's moral and economic situation, but Jaibo, who embodies the power of the Moira, makes it impossible each time. Like the mixture of an unwanted child and the father figure of the child gang, Jaibo betrays Pedro by sleeping with his mother, the woman who denies her son everything but surrenders herself to the betrayer and murderer. Jaibo steals the farm director's money and it is Jaibo who takes the knife that causes Pedro to lose his job. Jaibo made him an accomplice and Pedro was never able to rebel, since his neglect is emotional, not just economic. He wants to climb socially (become a part of the "humble but honest" proletariat) but as a character he represents the extreme of social marginalization. All possible political, religious, and psychological narratives fail with this extreme character, whose body ends up lying in a rubbish heap like poverty itself.[21] He is the ultimate representation of human weakness and the reason for his predicament is, even for a skeptic like Buñuel, a lack of parental protection. A similar situation of neglect, familial misunderstanding, and solitude is shown in *Rodrigo D: no futuro* and in every one of the films we have cited that follow Buñuel's example. Rodrigo (Ramiro Meneses) is opposed to the character of Adolfo, a *pistoloco* with an aggressive take on life. Adolfo carries a gun and knows he will die soon; Rodrigo is a punk rock drummer who only carries drumsticks since he cannot afford his instrument. There are no options for any of the characters, as in Stagnaro and Caetano's film. In *Cidade de Deus*, Buscapé is the only one who at the end of the movie has an option: he is able to work and, maybe, he will have a life different than the other boys. He knows it from the beginning; like a Greek hero, he foresees his future.[22]

Pedro's dream in Buñuel's film has been discussed by many critics.[23] Nonetheless, Buñuel asserts in his memoir that when he was uncertain what to add to a film, he added a dream. He could not avoid his surrealist perspective on reality, even in a film like this one, where elements of documentary abound. The use of a dream sequence and the image of the knife are the most clearly surrealist elements that

the director uses and that function as his signature and his contribution to the fictional balance that the film requires. On the other hand is the force of the documentary image, the harshness of a story that had never been told before in Latin American cinema: the crumbling, marginal, and marginalized city, where the urban and the rural are complexly interwoven, the failure of social policies, the lack of faith and the weakness of basic family bonds – ingredients that define modernity.

In Mexican society, where the woman corresponds to either the treacherous Malinche or the Virgin of Guadalupe, Pedro's mother identifies more frequently with the former. Throughout most of the film we identify her as the betrayer, given that she denies her son everything (love, food, respect) and with that betrays her own blood. She becomes an iconic modernization of the figure of the Malinche. Violated, *chingada* (Octavio Paz, 1997), the mythical traitor, she gives birth to a child who is the proof of sin and reproduces the tragedy of his conception at a national level. But Malinche produced the *mestizo* race, and whether the Mexican nation wishes to accept it or not, she is its antecedent. Pedro's mother wishes to suppress her descendant because she knows that she was forced to generate a new side of the nation: the lost race. When she realizes that she has lost her child, she goes out to find him like a shadow, a kind of Eumenide or the evolution of the Malinche into the Llorona.[24] Buñuel, it may be argued, became an astute reader of the culture that hosted him, and this complex simultaneous association of the mother with the figure of the Malinche, the *chingada*, and the woman as sacred figure probably attracted him deeply. Perhaps this fact explains his decision to include the dream sequence in the film.

Tuñón sees human bodies as the reflection of the body of the city in the film and underlines the abundance of damaged bodies: Meche's mother is ill; Pedro's mother has been raped; there are characters with disabilities like El Ciego and the man without legs, along with the dead and injured. The decaying body is associated with the body of the weak, even in the case of Jaibo, and this tendency toward portraying the marginal body as assaulted or infirm is one of the characteristics of the cinema of urban violence, as we have seen. The few adult male subjects in the film are strong and well built, while children, women, and the elderly have to combat their own various forms of powerlessness.[25]

Juan Carlos Ibáñez and Manuel Palacio summarize in one phrase one of the most important and problematic dynamics of *Los olvidados* and of all the films that follow it and have constructed the genre of urban youth and violence: "a mixture of paternal loss and maternal neglect" (Ibáñez and Palacio, 2003: 54). Among the multiple forms of betrayal that Pedro's mother inflicts on her son is Jaibo's seduction, which she encourages. Her sensually washing her legs in front of the young man and her subsequent surrender to him (suggested by the door that Jaibo closes on the viewer) are the symbolic reproduction of what the Malinche did with the enemy, according to the Mexican imaginary. If she was first the victim of rape, her adventure with Jaibo is a voluntary surrender, though her condition as *chingada* is

nonetheless unchanged. As character, Jaibo deepens his association with evil in this act of seduction. Buñuel created in Jaibo a paradigm for all Latin American cinema of urban violence, in that almost all of the positive characters possess their dramatic counterparts in figures that are their violent opposite. Buñuel attacked myths and broke down moral barriers as many art forms to that point had not. Modern Latin American cinema was born.

The cruelty of the image in Buñuel is to be found in his way of portraying the city, the slum, and the characters of *Los olvidados*. Hart reminds us of the relationship between the Mexican cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa and Buñuel and the famous anecdote in which the director asks Figueroa to leave aside his famous low-angle shots and profiles of indigenous peoples and shawled women – all images of melodrama. Buñuel had him change his cameraman's perspective in order to produce a new type of urban cinema, uprooting the melodramatic stereotypes of Latin American cinematic language: "In effect in *Los olvidados* Buñuel turned from the sky to the stones, from the lush landscape of rural Mexico to the dry concrete jungle of Mexico City, form the noble Indian savage to the real Mexico City savage, Jaibo (Roberto Cobo)" (Hart, 2004: 67).

Curiously, Buñuel, an exponent of auteur cinema that the theorists of Latin American cinema criticized, produced one of the films that best portray Latin America, satisfying critics' demands decades before they were articulated. Tuñón says that the city that Buñuel presents is plural but fragmented (Tuñón, 2003: 87), or the beginnings of the overflowing city that Jesús Martín Barbero speaks of 30 years later.[26] Gutiérrez-Albilla reminds us that *Los olvidados* is connected to social realism in its manner of presenting the "socially peripheral other [which] requires a consideration of the problem of the exclusion and social invisibility principally in modern bourgeois and savagely capitalist societies" (Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2005: 30). Or, as Monsiváis puts it, we witness the end of history, which is assumed by a fatalism that sees no alternatives, from the economic to social organization itself, inevitably making us victims (Monsiváis, 2002: 242).

Conclusion

The slum, poverty, child gangs, crime, fragmented families, and neglectful mothers (as in almost every film that follows on this theme, the paternal figure is completely absent or incompetent, like the father of Julián in *Los olvidados* or of Rodrigo in Gaviria's film) coexist in *Los olvidados* with the proletariat and with a state that idealizes a reality without perceiving that that reality has overflowed it (Martín Barbero, 1998). The slum as a space is natural, as are its characters; it is the boundary where the urban merges with the rural and where the margin crumbles on top of its own ruins. Large structures – naked, dirty, poor, and senseless – adorn the surroundings of characters that could be described with the same adjectives. There is almost no

place for play, or the children of the slum do not participate in it because they have to work (at the carousel, for example, that Pedro pushes). Education is nearly nonexistent as an institution or is ineffective while, in some films, popular culture is a stronger force (Rodrigo is attracted to punk music and culture). According to Buñuel, the characters inhabit a wild space, the modern city that has betrayed itself, just as the children betray each other; a place that many directors attempted to reproduce in its national variants. Tradition finds its place in the slum; Meche's mother attempts to cure herself through a ritual in which the sign of the cross is made with doves. Ojitos saves a tooth for luck, but to no avail. For these characters there is a complex balance between a modernity lived at the margins and tradition, a balance that Néstor García Canclini associates with the concept of hybridity.

When Pedro, like Jaibo, is killed by the police, El Ciego, who is the conservative and malignant voice that survives, says "One fewer, one fewer. That is how they all go down. I wish they had killed them all." Decades later, paramilitaries would devastate the Brazilian *favelas* and urban centers, killing homeless children in various Latin American cities, representing this line of thought. Buñuel announces, in a discourse that borders on documentary, the impossibility of many utopias that results in the death of the dreams of the weak (and even for Jaibo, whom we see as strong but who dies calling for his mother and his dog). He also presents the city as the modern Latin American space, where marginalization defies national projects and where the family is fragmented and women are constantly at risk, along with children and the elderly. It is also the space of rancor and disagreement. Buñuel's followers openly fostered the concept of dystopia, though no matter how it is formulated, in *Los olvidados* or in the films that followed it, all characters are resentful because the state has failed them and they have no hope left.

This complex film was able, well before New Latin American Cinema existed as a movement (even in theoretical form), to trace a line that defined that cinema. In other words, this movie invites us to revisit and capture the specificity of the Latin American reality. Buñuel succeeded also in laying the foundation for a genre that today seems inexhaustible, as is the case with the cinema of urban youth and violence, a genre that has rendered great cinematic achievements. Buñuel was a source of inspiration and a model to a cinema that would question the social status quo, an art of ferment that promotes reflection, and eventually, change in the multiple national realities of Latin America.

Translated by Robert S. Lesman

Notes

1 Examples of this are films like *Cidade de Deus* (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, Brazil, 2002) or *Amores perros* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, México, 2000), among others.

2 Exceptions to this rule are the Argentinian comedies of errors of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as those that were released during the Dirty War in Argentina. Cantinflas and

Tin Tán in Mexican cinema are another example. Carl J. Mora asserts that the demand was for "'family' melodramas, *comedias rancheras*, and comedies, all quite endemic to Mexican cinema since the 1930s. However, *alemanismo* generated something new: the *cabaretera* films" (Mora, 2005: 85).

3 Ignacio M. Sánchez-Prado speaks of a new exoticism in his article on Mexican film of the end of the twentieth century (Sánchez-Prado, 2006: 48), or a new invitation to read Latin American cultures in a way that leaves aside the successful formula of magical realism in order to establish a new focus of attraction on the space inhabited by violence.

4 "The first alternative to this type of cinema, which we could call the first cinema, arose with the so-called '*author's cinema*', '*nouvelle vague*', '*cinema novo*', or, conventionally, the *second cinema*. This alternative signified a step forward inasmuch as it demanded that the filmmaker be free to express himself in non-standard language and inasmuch as it was an attempt at cultural decolonization … The *second cinema* filmmaker has remained 'trapped inside the fortress' as Godard put it …" (Solanas y Getino, 1997: 42). This manifesto is originally from 1969.

5 "The film also opposes itself to dogmatic nationalist rhetoric and the visual conventions of classic Mexican cinema, which evolved as part of the visual tradition of the Revolution. Functioning both as a social documentary … [and] as a revision of the Revolutionary mythology propagated by melodramatic films during the golden age of Mexican cinema, such as the works of Emilio Fernández, *Los olvidados* has been considered an oblique precedent for a new cinema in Latin America that could be defined as *auteur* – openly militant, leftist, and formally experimental, as exemplified by the post-classical generation of Mexican, Cuban, Argentinian and Brazilian directors" (Gutiérrez Albilla, 2005: 31). (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

6 Ana M. López reminds us of directors like "Fernando Birri in Argentina, Nelson Pereira dos Santos in Brazil, and Julio García Espinosa and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea in Cuba, who had either trained at the Centro Spermiantale di Roma – the birthplace of Neorealism …" (López, 1997: 140).

7 "rubbish heaps, ramshackle houses, scrap piles, abandoned lots, miserable houses, places of precariousness." (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

8 "what happens when we are left homeless." (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

9 Combining techniques from Surrealism, comedy, tragedy, and documentary, Birri recognizes that "From *Tiré Dié* we passed to *Los inundados* [1961], which is already a fictional film though with a documentary base – another common stand in the new Latin American cinema, that is, the documentary support" (Birri, 1997: 96). For an analysis of the importance of Italian neorealism in Latin American cinema, see Paranaguá (2003).

10 Jáuregui and Suárez (2002: 373).

11 Mora (2005); Gutiérrez-Albilla (2005: 30). Carlos Monsiváis identifies the years as 1935 and 1955 (Monsiváis, 1993: 142).

12 "The film does not offer conclusions; it does not redeem anyone. The characters are not the incarnation of sweet souls or lay saints: the mother is consciously gendered and does not want the child, who is the product of rape" (Tuñón, 2003: 76) (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

13 "The modern, clean and orderly metropolis will only be real, if at all, for one social group, and it adapts in constant tension with the dominant process of urban growth.

Nonetheless, this is the metropolis that is to be desired and is presumed under *alemanismo*, which emphasizes the lights of nightclubs, the housing complexes, the viaducts, the sewage, water and electric services, the public telephones, and the wide avenues. In 1950 the city has a population of 3,480,000. It is the era of the rise of radio and cinema, where tropical rhythm and romantic *boleros* are heard; there is a whole range of sounds we do not hear in *Los olvidados*, since the music there is reduced to the songs of the blind man in the market …. The city that Buñuel represents is broken, sick and festering, like the bodies of several of the characters in the film" (Tuñón, 2003: 79–80). (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

14 "'Anthropological place' is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the unformulated rules of living know-how; non-place creates the shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drivers" (Augé, 2008: 81).

15 The theme of pedophilia as constant risk in this social milieu is suggested on at least a few occasions (we also see Pedro facing the advances of a man on the street).

16 "I refer to the underworld of *urban terror*, of the brutal violence that populates the city and is not only police control in the streets or the exercise of discipline in the factories, but also male aggression against women, especially in poor neighbourhoods, the aggression of women against children, and the poverty of each person in each house. A mixture of fear, resentment, and vice that responds to an everyday life that is insufferable … [s]hattering the popular-romantic-folkloric image, the popular leaflet (*folletín*) speaks of the urban-popular: dirty and violent, what extends geographically from the slum to the prison, passing through insane asylums and brothels." (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

17 (King, 1990: 131).

18 Jean Franco analyzes the significance of milk in Buñuel's film (Franco, 1989: 157). Geoffrey Kantaris, for his part, affirms Buñuel's obsession with eyes, though his interpretation points toward the will to make visible the invisible corruption of the city (Kantaris, 2005: 41).

19 Buscapé, the positive character who is saved at the end of *Cidade de Deus*, makes his way through the *favela* throughout the film and emerges intact, though fed by a considerable new knowledge.

20 In both *Amores perros* and *Pizza, birra, faso* the directors opt for an open ending for two characters (El Chivo and Sandra, respectively), though their circumstances (the illegality of the former and the single pregnancy of the latter) are not hopeful.

21 Gutiérrez-Albilla speaks of an "aesthetics of rubbish," which opposes itself to the existing bourgeois order (Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2005: 32).

22 In her book (1989), Jean Franco explores the multiple dimensions of tragedy as a genre applicable to Buñuel's film.

23 Jean Franco speaks of the mother who is revealed in the dream as the opposite of the paternalistic state of Alemán that is embodied by the farm director (Franco, 1989: 153–154); Peter William Evans suggests the perversity of the feminine figure, also opposed to the standardized Mexican feminine image (Evans, 1995: 85–86); Julia Tuñón focuses on the destruction of bodies, a typical Buñuelian device found in the dream (Tuñón, 2003: 87); Gutiérrez-Albilla sees a correspondence between the abject and the cosmetic-feminine with regards to the dream and to the state of bodies that is associated with the projection of the modern city as extension of the physical body

(Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2005: 35); Geoffrey Kantaris sees a clear representation of abortion in the piece of raw meat, symbol of Pedro as unwanted child, and connects the image to a similar sequence in *Pixote* (Kantaris, 2005: 41).

24 In his essay "Los hijos de la Malinche," Octavio Paz associates her not only with the betrayer but also with the Virgin of Guadalupe and eventually with La Llorona. Feminist interpretations of the Malinche have shed new light on this mythical-historical Mexican figure.

25 Another association that Kantaris analyzes is the way in which Caetano and Stagnaro use in their film the sequence in which boys assault a man without legs on the street, stealing his improvised wheelchair in an act of extreme cruelty that the author reads as a tribute to Buñuel (Kantaris, 2005: 43).

26 Martín Barbero says: "An *overflowing* city both geographically and morally: its situations – invasion of lands at the periphery by squatters and invasion of downtown streets by those looking for a way to survive – actually generate new forms of law that are recognized or permitted by a state that is itself overflowing." ["Una ciudad *desbordada* en su geografía y en su moral: las situaciones de hecho – invasiones de terrenos en la periferia para habitar y de las calles del centro para hacer algo que permita sobrevivir – generan nuevas fuentes de derecho reconocidas o permitidas por un Estado a su vez desbordado"] (Martín Barbero, 1998: 272–273).

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