A TRAIL OF FIRE FOR POLITICAL CINEMA

THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES FIFTY YEARS LATER

EDITED BY JAVIER CAMPO AND HUMBERTO PÉREZ-BLANCO

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The Hour of the Furnaces Fifty Years Later

Edited by Javier Campo and Humberto Pérez-Blanco

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Introduction

The Place of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in World Cinema (and in the Political World)

Javier Campo and Humberto Pérez-Blanco

> Revolutionary aesthetics without revolutionary politics is often futile, revolutionary politics without revolutionary aesthetics is equally retrograde. *The Hour of the Furnaces* remains a seminal contribution to revolutionary cinema.
>
> (Stam 1998)

Cuban revolution, Vietnam War, African de-colonization, May 68, Latin American dictatorships – in the rough seas of crisis, mobilizations, debates, and blood *La hora de los hornos (The Hour of the Furnaces)* (Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, 1968) was made. It was a film that introduced itself as a political essay and intervened in the debates that took place at the time like no other film had done in the history of Argentina, Latin America, and, judging by the words of several critics and academics, of the world. No spectacle at all, and yet, still cinema. Another cinema. A cinema of investigation, thoroughly documented and, at the same time, of political intervention. A cinema that, as Steve Neale highlights, allowed no room for a "conceptual space of a mode of spectatorship located more to the left in the inscription of the structure of the film" (Neale 1984: 441).

This highly significant film has profoundly influenced different cinematographies worldwide because it brought together a work of political reflection and aesthetic experimentation. As Robert Stam notes in the epigraph to this introduction, this is what made the film so significant and we will argue that this is why *The Hour of the Furnaces* continues to be a seminal contribution to revolutionary cinema (Stam 1998).

Two revolutions can rarely be found in the same film, even within those so-called political films. *The Hour of the Furnaces* presented the certain possibility of showing how "content" and "form" could go in the same direction toward rupture and the avant-garde. Its radicalism informed political movements in the Third World and also revolutionary movements in the First World (such as the Black Panthers). It demonstrated how an audio-visual production can hide within itself a counter-hegemonic potency that stirs the conditions of the political struggle. It was not just a question of carrying the cans that contained the filmic material and had the label "*The Hour of the Furnaces*" on the cover to support political rallies, but – on the contrary – it was about transforming the projection of the film into political meetings alongside the projection. This was something thought out by Solanas and Getino when they alternated between fade-outs and black, to open "the space for debate" within the editing of the film.

Over the years, many works have highlighted the worth of *The Hour* for cinema and for political struggles at the time. The recent *Encyclopaedia of the Documentary Film* affirms "*The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La Hora de los Hornos*) was one of the most influential 1960s films" (Hillier 2013).[1] Moving back in time, and without considering the case among Latin American magazines, the film reverberated in countless critiques of political films.

Taking *Jump Cut* as an example, John Hess writes about *The Hour of the Furnaces* when he talks about "[t]he terror and the time," (Hess 1981); John Mraz refers to it while analyzing Mexican cinema (Mraz 1984); and Thomas Waugh recuperates it while commenting on *Underground* (Waugh 1976). That is, the Argentine film had a great impact on both academic studies of cinema (such as those of Robert Stam, Steve Neale, Louis Marcorelles, and Guido Aristarco, among others) and film critics (such as Pauline Kael, Vincent Canby, and Jean Luc Godard). There had to be something about *The Hour of the Furnaces* for so many writers about film to have their eyes on it (and, furthermore, they made statements like: "This brilliant documentary launched the Third Cinema movement and put Latin American cinema on the international map" [Canby 1971]). Numerous anthologies on documentary film and Third Cinema include an analysis of this film. The most recent are the edited works by Beatriz Urraca and Gary Kramer, and Santiago Oyarzábal and Michael Pigott, both published in 2014.

The title of the film refers to a verse by José Martí: "es la hora de los hornos y no se ha de ver más que la luz" ("is the hour of the furnaces and only the light shall be seen"), in reference to the fires that sailors saw when arriving to the American coast. Che Guevara quoted this verse in his seminal work about the "foco revolucionario" (foquism) "to create one, two, three, many Vietnams."

On the other hand, the film and the essay/manifesto that accompanied its exhibition, *Towards a Third Cinema* (1969) contributed to the development and visibility of Third World theories, relating them with its audio-visual equivalent, Third Cinema. This is something that appears in several of the essays compiled by Pines and Willemen (1989) and it is also developed by Wayne (2001). Not first cinema – industrial, commercial, alienating – nor second cinema – modernist, evasive, bourgeois exercise – but Third Cinema, committed with the processes of decolonization and of revolutionary liberation in the Third World, repeated Getino and Solanas in their film and in their essay.

But the film pushes us to talk of the present time too and that explains its currency today, 50 years after its premiere at the Pesaro Film Festival in Italy. It is not just a fancy thought on our part to justify this book. Again, those who study film note the validity of a continuous search for referents and influences from *The Hour of the Furnaces* in films from all over the world. Nicole Brenez in *Sight and Sound,* a few years ago (2012), signaled "the film as a central reference for cinematic activism."[2] There are other recent contributions that made a similar argument, such as Schroeder (2007),[3] Chanan (2008), and Aufderheide (2007)[4] (not including the studies coming out of Latin America about the film). What is important to highlight here is that *The Hour of the Furnaces* is still the source of much talk today. Even at 50, it still shows signs of vitality.

To be "in-between"

The Hour of the Furnaces is considered a milestone of Latin American cinema. Rivers of ink have been used to write about the film (and sometimes on the film). There is always the latent danger of closing down the routes of analysis and simply repeating stereotyped concepts when referring to a film that dialogues so closely with an historical and political context in which its directors did not remain still. We hope to be able to direct the book toward new or rarely followed paths in order to study the ideological, cultural, and artistic influences as they appear in *The Hour of the Furnaces*, without forgetting the film's own journey. The film can be analyzed successfully for what it is but without, and this is when it becomes interesting, closing it down within a formalist and immanent position. At the same time, the inner structure of the film dialogues sufficiently with its own time and influences in different ways critics, researchers, and other directors of political films who are interested in representations of a different world cinema. We think that it is still possible, 50 years after its premiere, to say something new about a film that has been extensively studied both in Argentina and abroad.[5]

The political discourse of the film had its antecedents and influences in left-wing thinkers, such as Herbert Marcuse (the first Spanish edition of his *One Dimensional Man* was published in 1965) and Régis Debray (his *Revolution in the Revolution* was first published in 1967), and in the creators of an Argentine thought that amalgamated left-wing thinking with Peronism, such as Juan José Hernández Arregui, Arturo Jauretche, and John William Cooke. But, above all, the main influence was the model of the revolutionary Latin American man, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and the thinker behind the processes of decolonization in the Third World, Frantz Fanon and his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Furthermore, the position of Solanas and Getino resonates as a suggestive antecedent to the events of May 68 in France, which took place when the editing of the film had finished. It also precedes and resonates in the ideas of Louis Althusser in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* ([1969] 1971) or Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1995) (first published in France in 1967 but translated into Spanish only in 1974). At a regional level, *The Hour of the Furnaces* preceded the publication of *How to Read Donald Duck* (first published in Spanish in 1972 and in English in 1975) by Armand Mattelart and Ariel Dorfman, and the writings of the authors of Dependency Theory. In all these texts, written after the premiere of the film, the notions and debates developed resulted to be fundamental to understanding cultural colonization and the role of imperialism in dominated nations. And these elements can be found, summarized and less developed, in *The Hour of the Furnaces.*

This is why we are interested in thinking of the Grupo Cine Liberación (Liberation Cinema Group, Solanas and Getino's group) as "in-between." After Fanon but before Dependency Theory, after Che but before May 68, after *The One Dimensional Man* but before *How to Read Donald Duck*; *The Hour of the Furnaces* starts at the point where many other stories of revolution finished and the film finishes where many others start. We will suggest that the film had a wide reception on the back of everything that went before it and that the film condenses and anticipates everything that will come after.

At this point then, it is valid to ask: how much is Solanas and Getino's film the consequence of historical context? An Argentine critic argued, "it is impossible to think the film outside its political and social context" (Monteagudo 1993: 13). Although we agree essentially with the statement, we would go further: what are the immediate filmic referents preceding *The Hour of the Furnaces*? At what stage of development was revolutionary struggle in Latin America when the film was being put together (1965–66)? Political cinema in Latin America was still in a phase of presenting inequalities; the writings of the Bolivian filmmaker Jorge Sanjinés show this "defensive" stage. It was not a moment of "offense" marked by the passage from commitment to cinematic militancy. It is possible to carry out an analysis of the film by invoking Dziga Vertov, Bertolt Brecht, and Sergei Eisenstein,[6] as has been done earlier, but we want to be precise and discipline our vagaries, getting closer in time and space to *The Hour*, so our babble will become intelligible. The film has no immediate precedent (at least in Latin America). On the other hand, the armed guerrilla movements found themselves, around the mid-1960s, in a formative period, an educational stage, or, in the case of Argentina, did not exist yet and the film would help with this formative process.

The new revolutionary left – guided by the Cuban revolution, the journey of Che Guevara to Bolivia, the Vietnamese resistance, and the decolonizing processes of African nations, which are a few examples from the three continents forming the Third World – found in Solanas and Getino's film a summary of the structures of feeling under construction. And at the same time, the film constituted itself as the foreseer of the political violence to come.

National and international character

Undoubtedly, the first of the three parts of the film ("Neocolonialism and Violence") is very generous with a foreign audience, even with spectators from outside Latin America. But thinking about the film as a whole, it is a film "for" Latin Americans, and even, during extended sequences, only "for" Argentines (particularly in the second part of the film: "Act for Liberation: Notes, Testimonies and Debates About the Recent Struggles for Liberation of the Argentine People"). The call for action reverberates across the whole of the American continent; its echo can even be heard in other nations of the Third World, and yet, it does not lessen its local intrinsically "Argentine" character (perhaps this is why the foreign reception of the second part of the film – divided in two sections, "Chronicle of Peronism" and "Resistance" – had a number of blurred and confused interpretations, trying to understand the Peronist movement as something close to any European model). Taking stock of his experiences, Octavio Getino wrote some time later: "it is evident that *The Hour of the Furnaces* influenced other groups and filmmakers in Latin America and worldwide. But this fact was beyond the original intention of Cine Liberación and its proposal born out of the specific process of Argentine liberation" (1982: 8).

Equally, in one of his more recent works Mariano Mestman – without a doubt the scholar who has written most extensively and in depth about the film – recuperating an idea formulated in 2010 by Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, highlights a cautionary note about national cinemas in these times of expansion of transnational cinema studies. He affirms that the ruptures coming out of 1968 as seen in the cinemas of each nation share the spirit of those times but, at the same time, show differences from nation to nation (2016: 13–14). Even so, we should not put aside that, although the film comes first, it "never stops a dialogue with aspects of the events in May in France (the finishing touches to the film were being done in Rome in the same month and the printed dialogue Solanas-Godard was reproduced in several magazines in those years)" (Mestman 2016: 44–45).[7] Thus, the film was finished and had its premiere at an unusually precise and particular moment. *The Hour of the Furnaces* emerges from the entrails of the earth when they were burning.

Negation and openness

"False are the principles we were taught," exclaims the narrator of the film. *The Hour of the Furnaces* bases itself on two negations. The Italian political scientist Alberto Filippi noted – ten years before Robert Stam reached the same conclusion – that "the film presents itself as double revolutionary in the linguistic-ideological plane" (1969: 14). The first negation involves the negation of the film itself as a closed work; the second is the negation of the image of the nation (Filippi 1969: 14). The first negation is summarized by Solanas in his conversation with Jean-Luc Godard: "a film about liberation, about an unfinished period of our history cannot be anything but an unfinished film, an open film" (1969: 49). This suggestion comes from the narration too when the image fades to black; the spectator is explicitly addressed to be a participant and complete the meanings of the film there, in front of the screen. Although this type of "open film" does not leave ample margin for disagreements – only within the constraints that we mention in the next paragraph – the film is ideologically positioned clearly in this direction.

The second negation, the negation of the image of the country, is not only forcefully made in the narrative treatment of the film, but is also explicitly stated in the first manifesto of Grupo Cine Liberación: "our people does not own the earth they step on, nor the ideas that surround them, the dominant culture does not belong to them" (Solanas and Getino 1973: 9). Thus, "in Latin America there is no space for expectancy or innocence" (Solanas and Getino 1973: 9). False is everything we believed; we must un-learn to be free. What the words of Solanas and Getino indicate is that we have only one path: "The Option" (the title of the last chapter of the first part that ends with a final shot of the photography of a dead Che Guevara): "a commitment with the liberation of our country" (Solanas and Getino 1973: 9). It is worth noting that in relation to the first negation, the "openness" of the film is only valid so long as the debate continues within the narrow margins that favor the revolutionary search for a New Man. Yet, the proposition still seduces us.

For his part, Robert Stam himself (together with Richard Porton and Leo Goldsmith) recently configured a new category to identify a type of political cinema, the "[t]ransmogrification of the negative":

> Rubs against the grain of the platonic ideal of the beautiful, and even against the idea of aesthetics as an analysis of the beautiful and the harmonious, has, since the advent of artistic modernism, formed a noble and distinguished tradition […] The manifold aesthetic strategies that redeem hunger, garbage, failure, mistakes and even cannibalism for the social purposes of art.
>
> (Stam et al. 2015: 145–46)

Into this category the authors position Third Cinema, attributing the authorship of the concept to Solanas and Getino (1973: 148).

Third Cinema

This book is not only about the film *The Hour of the Furnaces*. It would be incomplete if it did not take on the work of interweaving the film with the most important manifesto by Cine Liberación: *Towards a Third Cinema* (1969). Getino revisited the text ten years later and considered that "the fact that today is so difficult to separate the concept of Third Cinema from *The Hour of the Furnaces,* shows again this intimate dependency of the theoretical elaboration with the concrete practice" (1981: 9). What Getino is trying to highlight is that first came the practice, the film, and its exhibition (1968) and then the theory, that is, the manifesto. This history does not finish with the meta-discourses on the film even within the geographical borders of Latin America; the concepts included in the manifesto were disseminated worldwide to analyze a new category of counter-hegemonic cinema: Third Cinema.

"There is our culture and there is their culture," Solanas and Getino have laconically written in their manifesto (1973: 58). This is the solid base upon which the edifice of liberation under construction is built. According to David Oubiña, "this is the analytical procedure used by Frantz Fanon and by the decolonization discourses of those years" (2016: 92) and this is why in this reductionist essentialism the elimination of the other is imperative. For us to "be," says the film, it is necessary to wipe out those who keep us oppressed. It is the logical journey promoted by *The Hour of the Furnaces*, which concludes with the justification of political violence as a valid tool for liberation.

In this irrevocable path, already being walked without the possibility of turning back, the theory of the "foco revolucionario" (foquism) delineated by Ernesto "Che" Guevara is the most appropriate. Unlike the Marxist-Leninist idea of revolution as a process in which the taking of power is the last stage, foquism aims for actions by militias in small groups that put the State in check so it can be overtaken by representatives of the revolutionary vanguard (as it happened in the Cuban process, culminating in the taking of power in 1959). In this way,

for Solanas and Getino, "it is evident that culture and revolutionary conscience at mass level will only be possible after the taking of power" (1973 [1969]: 59).

On the road to revolutionary process, Third Cinema results for them as pertinent to promote the "decolonization of culture" (Solanas and Getino 1973: 60). Although the authors remark that intellectualism is a vehicle of colonization, their position is not anti-intellectual (in the way suggested by the Peronist dichotomy "books or espadrilles"). Intellectualism marks the territory for the thinker, the writer, and the artist to move. They will have to contribute to the decolonization of culture or they will perish as subjects of the hegemonic power of imperialism that will be devastated by the popular violence already stirring. Seen from the reflexive distance the passing years afford, it was not the elimination of the intellectual as class but to force them to face a life (revolutionary) or death (bourgeois) decision. As Clara Kriger points out, this was also affirmed by *The Hour of the Furnaces* coming before the manifesto (practice before theory, as Getino remarked), "establishing a profound debate about the role the intellectual and the artist play in society" (Kriger 2003: 324).

Furthermore, the filmmaker, already liberated, must be as cautious as the guerrilla fighter, brave because "in the capacity of situating him/herself in the margins of what is known, of moving between constant dangers, resides the possibility of discovering and inventing new forms and structures of filmmaking" (Solanas and Getino 1973: 79). The idea is not to leave cinema progressively, to be more militant and less filmmaker – as Godard said and many other directors that, unlike the Swiss, actually left the camera to grab the rifle. According to Solanas and Getino, the point is to link and weave together the means of cinema and those of the revolutionary struggle. As prophetic as it is daring, they end their manifesto affirming that "the birth of Third Cinema is the *most important cinematic event of our time*" (Solanas and Getino 1973: 90, original emphasis). The belief in this apothegm expanded from *Towards a Third Cinema* to the world.

While questioning the contemporary relevance and pertinence of talking about Third Cinema 20 or 30 years later, the edited collection by Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (*Questions of Third Cinema*, 1989) and Mike Wayne's book (*Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, 2001) evaluated the trajectories of the concept. While Pines highlighted how "the idea of Third Cinema provided a useful (if somewhat tentative) way of framing a range of questions around the various forms of oppositional cultural production" (1989: viii), Willemen pointed out how a concept that catalogues the Third World was actually conceived in the Third World (1989: 5), a rare thing indeed. Furthermore, Pines stressed how Third Cinema permits us to think in counter-hegemonic ways of cultural creation.

For his part, Willemen noted that "what they [Solanas and Getino] do condemn is a particular kind of middle-class intellectual, not intellectual activity *per se*" and at the same time, in a painstakingly and careful reading of Solanas and Getino's manifesto, saw a difference between Third Cinema and counter-cinema (1989: 6–7, original emphasis). Dominant cinema defines the themes that must be tackled by a counter-cinema, as opposition, but, in the case of Third Cinema, its proponents refused to let "dominant cinemas dictate the terms in which they were to be opposed" (Willemen 1989: 7). Consequently, the central point for

Willemen is that Third Cinema cannot mean the same in Latin America or in Europe since in economically dominant nations Third Cinema is consumed as second cinema, as auteur cinema – which is pretty much how it is still appreciated today. Following from this, the author pointed out how the notion of Third Cinema: "reinforces the impression that it was a notion developed by Latin Americans for Latin Americans and that the general applicability of the approach was added as an afterthought" (1989: 10).

However, notions of the local, national, or regional are not the strongest points of the concept of Third Cinema if we follow Pines, Willemen (critical also of the way the concept has been circulated), and Teshome Gabriel. Pines suggested the possibility of an aesthetic of Third Cinema (1989: ix); Willemen found that "there are Third Worldist types of internationalism" (1989: 19), and Gabriel, in an article included in Pines and Willemen's book, utilized a more relaxed notion of Third Cinema that brought him close to a regional concept of underdevelopment. Therefore, for Gabriel Third Cinema can be any cinema made in the Third World that rescues popular memory. In the words of Gabriel: "The 'wretched of the earth', who still inhabit the ghettos and the barrios, the shanty towns and the madinas, the factories and working districts, are both the subjects and the critics of Third Cinema" (1989: 63). In Gabriel's articulation, the concept of Third Cinema has lost, somehow, its revolutionary impulse and takes on a usage as vindication of popular memory.

For his part, Mike Wayne starts with a strong statement: "the most advanced and sophisticated body of political films which the medium has produced to date is Third Cinema" (2001: 1). And he not only aims to sustain that statement in his book, but also to justify why he believes Third Cinema is still alive, applying the concept to films made 30 years after Getino and Solanas published their manifesto.

Wayne distinguishes between Third Cinema and Third World, a task that Gabriel never tackles in his chapter, while arguing with Robert Stam and Louise Spence on the political worth of *Battle of Algiers* (Wayne 2001: 9, 17–18). Furthermore, he confronts the problem of the relation between form and content throughout the twentieth century, starting with the debates initiated after the Russian Revolution. In his discussion, he confronts Steve Neale who accused *The Hour of the Furnaces* of lacking self-reflexivity: "Neale is wrong […] we cannot evaluate *The Hour of the Furnaces* by measuring against a set of avant-garde formal strategies." This is because the film's objective is to be a humanistic call rather than an experimental project (Wayne 2001: 128–29). It introduces avant-garde elements in its form but they are subservient to its political discourse. It is a "dialogical text," affirms Wayne.

Lastly, Wayne reads *Toward a Third Cinema* along the same lines of the original essay: the importance of cultural domination, the influence from Fanon, and the role to be played by intellectuals. In relation to the first point, "Third Cinema explores how culture is a site of political struggle" (Wayne 2001: 22). Without a doubt, Wayne follows a typical Fanon-inspired path, quoting from the Martinican on several occasions. The importance of cultural domination is a key for Wayne as it was for Getino and Solanas. The *intelligentsia* in a non-liberated nation has been colonized and therefore Third Cinema must aim its guns against it, "[t]he intellectuals must be prepared to interrogate many of the assumptions that

they have internalised" (Wayne 2001: 129). Among many virtues, Wayne finds in *Towards a Third Cinema* a perceived fault: he does not agree with Getino and Solanas' selection of documentary as the best tool to make Third Cinema. According to Wayne, "the valorisation of documentary is also problematic because it is potentially at odds with their broader critique of all the channels of cultural education" (2001: 125). Third Cinema, to him, must tend to eliminate the distinction between fiction and documentary, a division he sees as created by mass culture.

Peronism, that problem

Polemics around *The Hour of the Furnaces* usually have to deal with a hot topic: Peronism. This is logical and understandable because this Argentine political party/movement, with all its problematic shades and sharp edges, is still a leading topic of conversation in any Argentine household. Moreover, Peronism is also part of political debates outside its country of origin. Since Solanas and Getino saw their film grow into the biggest Argentine-filmed political manifesto, they never ceased to find resistances, oblique readings, and views on their film based on the directors' adhesion to the Peronist political project. But, why has Peronism generated so many different readings?

Elected in democratic elections under the umbrella of the Labour Party, Juan Domingo Perón started to build in 1946 a party that became a wide movement that controlled trade unions, universities, mass media, and countless other institutions. Even, after the military coup of 1955, Peronism survived, clandestine, in what is known as *La Resistencia* (Resistance, an heterogeneous space for militants), and toward the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, its most radicalized members formed several guerrilla groups such as the Peronist Armed Forces, the Revolutionary Armed Forces, or Montoneros. The evolution of Peronism from governing the state to revolutionary movement was not lineal. Perón was a colonel, and later a general who took part in the military coups of 1930 and 1943. After the second coup, he took the vice-presidency (and the Ministries of Work and War) in a de facto government. Considering his biography together with his swinging back and forth from the left to the right, his actions as president, and his political leadership from exile, it is quite normal that some define him by his acts and ideas as a reactionary military man, and others as a politician who radically transformed social policies in Argentina in favor of the popular classes.

Consequently, it is understandable that the viewings of Getino and Solanas' film were, depending on the audience, controversial. It is well remembered the anecdote after the projection of the first part of the film at Pesaro when the filmmakers were taken out on the shoulders of members of the audience and then the perplexity of the same audience after the screening of the second part dedicated to Peronism. For Europeans, particularly for Italians, Peronism meant fascism. To top it all, Perón was in exile in Spain under the rule of Franco. However, he was having meetings in Madrid with militant trade unionists and leaders of the guerrilla.

This succession of debates and opposed points of view (including important misunderstandings) is highly interesting and it will be developed in some of the chapters of this book. In any case, Javier Campo has pointed out, after analyzing the ideological strategies and theoretical influences in *The Hour of the Furnaces,* that it is not possible to affirm the film is Peronist (Campo 2012: 118). This is because, first, the film is much more than Peronist (like it is much more than only an "Argentine film") and, second, because the film is in some sequences critical of the most hard, pragmatic, and conservative wing of the party and the acts of its leader.

The film in the Argentine cinematographic context

A tradition of documentaries of political intervention established itself in Argentina between 1968 and 1976. Production, distribution, and exhibition groups like Cine Liberación, Cine de la Base (Cinema from the Base), and Realizadores de Mayo (May Filmmakers) produced films that aimed to intervene in the political situation from diverse revolutionary points of view. The political situation was characterized by political debates steeped in "revolutionary violence" and transformative militancy.

After *The Hour of the Furnaces* was received with singular attention in European Festivals and exhibited in clandestine circuits in Argentina (Mestman 2001a, 2001b), Cine Liberación dedicated itself to recuperate the word of the exiled leader. They recorded in Madrid interviews with Perón and edited two films: *Actualización política y doctrinaria para la toma del poder* (*Political and Doctrinary Actualization for the Taking of Power*) and *La revolución justicialista* (*The Justicialist Revolution*) (both from 1971).[8] The leader himself gave advice about the scripts: "the overarching structure [of *The Justicialist Revolution*] could be divided into three chapters: before government, the years in government, after the government" (Perón 2008: 73). His meticulousness went as far as to indicate that it would be necessary for "the arrival of an Argentine youth group that could ask […] how the Justicialist Revolution came to be" (Perón 2008: 73).[9] In the same year, another member of Cine Liberación, Gerardo Vallejo made *El camino hacia la muerte del viejo Reales* (*The Path Towards Death of Old Man Reales*) (1971). Vallejo had taken part in the shooting of the interviews with Perón and on his return to Buenos Aires, he finished off the structure of the film organized in chapters of sorts around each of the three sons of old man Reales.[10] *El camino* did not leave behind completely the ideological precepts of Cine Liberación's previous films, but it presented other approaches and probable solutions to the social problems debated in those documentaries. Almost without archive material and with long sequences of observation and of testimony, Vallejo's film moved away from the paradigm for political cinema created by *The Hour of the Furnaces*.

The other major group that inspired films of political intervention was a strictly Marxist group, Cine de la Base. Formed in 1973 for the making of the fiction film *Los Traidores*

(*The Traitors*) (1973), some of its members (primarily Raymundo Gleyzer, Nerio Barberis, and Alvaro Melián) had already made committed films before. *Comunicados nº 5 y 7 del ejército revolucionario del pueblo* (*Statements 5 and 7 from the People's Revolutionary Army*) (1971) and *Comunicado nº 2 del ejército revolucionario del pueblo* (*Statement 2 of the People's Revolutionary Army*) (1972) were made by Barberis and Melián. According to the latter, "we made the one about Swift [*nº 5 and 7*] with material we got from television, our own recordings and bits and pieces of other things […] it was a film of agitation. There was a voice-over that read a public document of political justification of actions," the other one centers on the robbery in the National Bank for Development, consisting of an interview (in Peña and Vallina 2006: 72). Melián also comments on the making of *Ni olvido, ni perdón* (*Neither Forget, Nor Forgive*) (1973): "this film was made very quickly, we got the press conference [of guerrilla fighters Mariano Pujadas, María Antonia Berger and Pedro Bonet at Trelew's airport after escaping from Rawson's jail in August 1972] and we filmed a number of photographs" (in Peña and Vallina 2006: 141). A year later, another film is finished that quotes in its title, the poem by Nicolás Guillén *Me matan si no trabajo y si trabajo me matan* (*They Kill Me if I Don't Work and If I Work They Kill Me*) (Cine de la Base, 1974). Although it is considered Gleyzer's last film before his kidnap, according to testimonies, he did not actively participate in its making. Juan Greco[11] points out "that film was mainly coordinated by [Melián], Nerio [Barberis] and me" (in Peña and Vallina 2006: 161). Without a doubt, the figure of Gleyzer, even after his disappearance, meant a lot for a number of politically committed documentary filmmakers who have recuperated his figure in recent years.[12]

The event that is taken as a point of no return in the growth of the expectations of revolutionary organization at the time was "el Cordobazo" (a worker-student movement of protest that for a time put the authorities under serious stress in the province of Cordoba in Argentina). The events were widely documented and debated in films of the period. El Cordobazo took place in the last days of May 1969 and two films were made under its influence: *Argentina, Mayo de 1969: Los caminos de la liberación* (*Argentina, May 1969: The Paths for Liberation*) (Realizadores de mayo, 1969) and *Ya es tiempo de violencia* (*It Is Now Time for Violence*) (1969). The first film, according to Getino (2008: 69), was constructed after the formation of a filmmakers' "front." It was constituted by Rodolfo Kuhn, Humberto Ríos, Rubén Salguero, Jorge Martín "Catú," Eliseo Subiela, Nemesio Juárez, Mauricio Berú, Pablo Szir, and even Getino himself.[13] The initial idea of Realizadores de Mayo was to "be each day more militant and less filmmakers. That is, to face the continuity of the work of filmmaking from a militant perspective and not the other way around" (Getino 2008: 69). *Ya es tiempo de violencia* was made by Enrique Juárez, he is uncredited, and it was a documentary that signaled the necessity for revolutionary struggle, taking as its starting point what happened in Cordoba. Subsequent political films focusing on political rebellions will return to the images, originally taken from news items on television, shown in these documentaries (Mestman and Peña 2002).

Organization of the book

"Trails of ink" is how one of the chapters in this collection describes the copious bibliography both in English and Spanish produced over the last 50 years. These two streams have at times hardly acknowledged one another. Our intention is to foster a space in which both scholarly traditions can talk to each other. Most of the authors in this book are Argentinean and those who are not are experts on Argentinean and Latin American cinema at large. Some work within English-speaking academia, some work in Argentina. Many chapters refer to authors and sources not available in the English-speaking world (or not available in English). In doing so, at times they have purposely put aside the important contributions made by English and American scholars. The intention is to offer new perspectives, different takes on a complex film, and offer them in a hopefully open and enriching dialogue with more established views in an English speaking context.

In order to focus the study of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, the book starts with a formal and intertextual analysis of the film. Campo, in Chapter 1, presents a formal analysis of the film. Focusing primarily on the varied voices present in the film, from the different types of narrations to the ways the film uses intertitles and testimonies, the chapter shows how they all work together in one direction: the call for violence as a means for liberation.

Because *The Hour of the Furnaces* is acutely aware of its own time and place, the film dialogues with a canopy of cultural, social, and political trends from Argentina, Latin America, and beyond. The first part of the book explores these different dialogues. In the first instance, as Del Valle Dávila shows in Chapter 2, the film establishes a dialogue with Frantz Fanon's thinking. The author demonstrates how Fanon's weight on the film is much more important than it is commonly acknowledged: it structures the whole film and provides the filmmakers with the analytical tools to approach the history and the reality under examination. In Chapter 3, García and Fuentes analyze how the film establishes another dialogue, this time with literature. Perhaps less apparent, but the film also dialogues with literature. The authors stress how the film utilizes different discursive practices to convey its message, and in doing so, the film employs similar devices to those found in the Argentine literary tradition, like gaucho literature. Furthermore, the film resonates with more contemporary styles and genres: the critical influence of the so-called Latin American boom most frequently associated, particularly in English-speaking countries, with magical realism and the epistolary tradition. A third dialogue takes place between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and music. This is the topic of Crowder-Taraborrelli. In Chapter 4, he focuses on the use of music in the film and demonstrates how it plays a vital role – very often entirely disregarded – for the construction of meaning. Rich and varied, it is charged with symbolic signification and works in counterpoint to the image in a dialectical relationship. To end this first part, Olivera presents in Chapter 5 a significant limitation to the different dialogues the film incorporates and establishes. The author considers how the film negates the concept of difference. *The Hour of the Furnaces* simplifies its historical account by developing a simplistic dichotomy. Society is thus divided into two camps, oppressed and oppressors,

and in this way, any other experience of difference and identities, particularly of gender or sexuality, is eliminated.

The second part of the book focuses on the reception of the film and traces the different paths the film followed after its premiere at the Pesaro Film Festival in 1968. The extraordinary impact of the film and its capacity to generate controversies of all kinds both as political instrument and as a documentary practice are analyzed by Ruberto and Wilson in Chapter 6, who put that impact in context. Why Pesaro? Why *The Hour of the Furnaces*? The authors link the success of the film to the events of May 68 in France (and beyond) and to a very singular festival to show it could probably have not happened in any other way or place. In Chapter 7, Mestman takes off from Pesaro too and provides a historical account of the reception of the film in Europe and North America, revealing controversies and debates generated by the screening of the film in the First World in the years following its completion. These debates took place not only at film festivals but also after individual screenings of the film. In Chapter 8, Piedras journeys through the enormous amount of literature the film has generated. His review of the historiography surrounding the film provides a look, necessarily brief, into the types of debates that over the decades have raged in favor and against the film. Mestman and Piedras show how different specific cultural contexts and times affected the reception of the film.

The final part of the book focuses on documentary traditions and the ways *The Hour of the Furnaces* dialogues with them. It is common to consider the film as an exceptional case – a film that stands on its own isolated from other cinematic practices in Argentina. In Chapter 9, Clara Kriger updates some misconceptions about the relation between Argentina's documentary traditions prior to the release of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (little known outside the country, with the exception of Fernando Birri's *Tire dié* [1958]). According to Kriger, this tradition of short films and newsreels, with a clear political intent, is not only acknowledged but also, in many cases, the films are manipulated, shaped, and adapted to conform to Getino and Solanas' political needs. This adaptation of documentary to political needs can also be perceived in Solanas' recent documentary production. In Chapter 10, Mariano and Zarini provide a necessary brief overview of Fernando Solanas' prolific, political, and controversial return to documentary filmmaking in the twenty-first century and the ways in which his output dialogues with *The Hour of the Furnaces*. The authors divide his contemporary films in two different groups and demonstrate how the two groups of films in different ways actualize, develop, or abandon some of the strategies Solanas used in the films he made within group Cine Liberación, in order to blend his filmmaking practice with his active and present practice as politician. Thus far, the film has been thought in relation to mainstream traditions of documentary production. In Chapter 11, Garavelli considers *The Hour of the Furnaces* in relation to the contemporary concept of experimental film while at the same time questioning its conventional consideration as "unique" to highlight its relations to other artistic forms and debates at the time and the synergies created by this relation. In the final chapter, Pérez-Blanco considers thinking of *The Hour of the Furnaces* as a film essay. If, as the different chapters in the book have shown,

the film offers a plurality of voices, if it dialogues with its own time and place and has generated so much controversy, it must be because the film is more open and less rigid than many traditional accounts acknowledge. Pérez-Blanco suggests that applying the concept of the film essay to *The Hour of the Furnaces* can offer a useful and more nuanced view of the film. To finish the book, Michael Chanan considers the impact of the film at the time of its production and release and how the film's strategies and intentions are still relevant for a new generation of filmmakers and public.

The editors of this book identify themselves as political subjects of the left, cultural militants for a better world. We consider it desirable to acknowledge our own position among the debates described and the arguments developed in this book (both old and new but always relevant for our contemporary world). But to situate ourselves as interested participants is not to suggest the book offers a rigid interpretation, that is, it is open to different readings or to further analyses very different from the ones included here. Our intention is only to show that the film's formal strategies and political stance and the controversies and debates arising from it are not "just" something from the past. For us they matter, they are, and the film with them, both alive and relevant today. Perhaps, more than ever.

Note on the use of the film's English subtitles

Even at the best of times, subtitling is an extremely difficult and laborious task. A film like *The Hour of the Furnaces* undoubtedly presents a major challenge. At the time of writing, the three parts of the film are freely available online with English subtitles. The subtitling in the online version is somewhat deficient. Perfectly fine for the interested viewer, but it is not the best when trying to analyze the film. For reasons of consistency, all direct quotes from the film included in the book are taken from the English subtitles in the 2007 DVD[14] release of the film. They are far from perfect, with a significant number of grammatical errors but they are far better at conveying the meaning of the Spanish script. Grammatical errors in the subtitles have not been corrected in order to help the reader locate specific moments in the film with ease.

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***The Hour of the Furnaces: Notes and Testimonies on Neocolonialism, Violence, and Liberation* (1968)**

Directors: Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas
Production company: Grupo Cine Liberación Argentina 1966–1967
Part One: "Neocolonialism and Violence" (Duration 1:25:55)
Part Two: "Act for Liberation: Notes, Testimonies, and Debate on the Recent Struggles for Liberation of the Argentine People" (Duration 1:50:34)
Part Three: "Violence and Liberation" (Duration 34:21)
Film script: Octavio Getino and Fernando Ezequiel Solanas

Scenes used from: *Tire dié* (*Throw Us a Dime*) (Fernando Birri, 1958), *Mayoría absoluta* (*Absolute Majority*) (Leon Hirszman), and *El cielo y la tierra* (*The Threatening Sky*) (Joris Ivens). Fragments of images from *Faena* (*Work*) (Humberto Ríos), Grupo de teatro Frankestein (theatrical group Frankestein)
Production and direction: Fernando Ezequiel Solanas
Photography: Juan Carlos Desanzo (uncredited)
Camara, editing director, and music: Fernando Ezequiel Solanas (uncredited)
Sound: Octavio Getino (uncredited)
Voice: Edgardo Suárez (uncredited)

Notes

1 For an example within Latin American film studies, see Ruffinelli (2012).
2 She also noted:

> The film's elegant radicalism inspired many later visual essayists such as Chris Marker, the Dziga Vertov Group, the Cinéthique Group, Patricio Guzmán, Alexander Kluge and films such as *The Spiral* (1975) made by Armand Mattelart, Jacqueline Meppiel and Valérie Mayoux (with the help of Chris Marker). In fact the analysis of conditions in Chile found in *The Spiral* and Guzmán's *The Battle of Chile* (1977) can be considered fourth and fifth chapters of *The Hour of the Furnaces*.
>
> (Brenez 2012)

3 "Film's greatest strength: the clear articulation of a revolutionary discourse through an equally revolutionary means of representation. Whether or not one agrees with the worldview and the actions proposed by the film, there is no denying that the questions and the issues it raises are as valid today as they were in 1968" (Schroeder 2007).
4 "*The Hour of the Furnaces* is an argument, delivered by an enraged professor shaking his students by the lapels."
5 Among them are the following studies: Bernini (2007); Kriger (2003); Mestman (1999, 2008); Sánchez-Biosca (2004); Trombetta and Wolkowicz (2009); Aguilar (2005); Marcorelles (1978).
6 The use of collage and of shock tactics in the editing is a consequence of the critique of market economics, using its own tools to attack it and not a revision of dialectical montage. Following Ignacio Del Valle Dávila's view, "the attention given to publicity – whose structures are reproduced also in some segments of the film – can be explained, first, because one of the aims of *The Hour of the Furnaces* is to present consumerism and the mass media as 'weapons' of neo-colonialism" (2014: 307).
7 For a study of May 68 in France, film movements, and criticism, it is still worth looking at Harvey (1980).
8 According to Mestman, "the filmmakers agreed to divide the editing work in Rome: Getino took on Perón, the Justicialist Revolution and Solanas of Actualization […]" (2007: 55).

9 Getino commented years later:

> We finished the interview and we gave the General a transcription of the recorded text that will be part of the film as well as those we had written. We also indicated to him the images and the titles that would accompany each text. He only made one comment. He suggested to get rid of, among the people we considered relevant in the process of liberation of Latin America, the name of Juan Bosch. He argued that the history of the Dominican leader was marked by strong contradictions and that the Justicialist Revolution could only be referenced in real leaders, such as Allende in Chile, Fidel in Cuba and Velasco Alvarado in Peru.
>
> (1995)

10 Vallejo comments: "with six reels of 120 metres, the Beaulieu [camera] from Pino (Solanas), and Abelardo (Kuschnir) with his little sound recorder we went to Colonia San José, to live with my, by now very good friend, 'old man' Reales" (1984: 147).

11 Pseudonym of a witness, the book does not reveal his true identity in Peña and Vallina (2006).

12 The Movimiento de Documentalistas (Documentary Filmmakers Movement) commemorates "the day of the documentary filmmaker" on the day of Glayzer's kidnapping (27 May) and the Asociación Documentalistas Argentinos (Argentine Documentary Filmmakers Association) (DOCA) includes quite often in its screenings films from Cine de la Base. Furthermore, there are at least two recent biographical films on the figure of Glayzer: *Raymundo* (Ardito and Molina, 2003) and *Fuego eterno* (*Eternal Fire*) (Sabat, 2012).

13 For a study of the film, see Campo (2012, Chapter 7). Héctor Kohen affirms:

> the process of production, in a situation of creative freedom, involved the individual work of each director with the collaboration of technicians that had participated in the call: sound engineer Abelardo Kuschnir, Julio Lencina as director of photography, Juan Carlos Macías as editor, a job that was also carried out by Fernando Ezequiel Solanas.
>
> (2005: 517)

14 Solanas, Fernando Ezequiel (2007) *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos: Notas y testimonios sobre el neocolonialismo, la violencia y la liberación*), DVD, CineSur.

Chapter 1

To Invent Our Revolution: An Aesthetic-Political Analysis of *The Hour of the Furnaces*

Javier Campo

To make a film in three parts and over four hours long is taking a risk. To make it in clandestine conditions is dangerous. To screen it as a palimpsest articulating diverse languages is foolish. But the experiment was a success. As Mariano Mestman argues (2008: 27)[1] 1968 in Latin America is signified by the premiere of a "beacon film," *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Getino and Solanas, 1968). For Paulo Antonio Paranaguá "[the film] does not limit itself to agitate, to denunciate or to social testimony […] it sketches another genre, a sort of cinematic essay" (1996: 337). Made with disparate materials, the filmmakers "incorporated the perspective of historical revisionism and a look on the Peronist working class as fundamental subject of the revolutionary transformation in Argentina" (Mestman 2008: 28). The Grupo Cine Liberación (Liberation Cinema Group) was not defined at the time of *The Hour of the Furnaces* as Peronist. It shifted little by little toward the positions of national socialism (not the same as "National Socialism"/Nazi as some mistook it for during the European circulation of the film). According to Solanas himself, there was a process of maturing without shying from the leader of the movement:

> We never concealed our political origins. Octavio Getino flew to Madrid from Cuba with presents for Perón: a bottle of Cuban rum and the complete works of Che Guevara. We were part of an intellectual middle class sector from the left in a process of nationalization that ended up by converting us, definitely, into Peronists.
>
> (Mestman 2007: 53)

That is, it is possible to understand *The Hour of the Furnaces* by locating it at the beginning of a path that commences in the Marxist left (with sympathies for foquism) for whom Frantz Fanon and Ernesto Guevara were standard bearers,[2] and ends in the ample Peronist movement in which the filmmakers lived together with other militants coming from different directions. Other Argentine films made during the period or years later confirmed the monumental character of the film by revealing themselves inspired aesthetically and thematically by *The Hour,* following some of its formal characteristics, repeating some of its messages, or taking actual shots from the film as archive footage.

This chapter will produce a formal analysis of Getino and Solanas' film.[3] Without leaving out the political-thematic variables, it will weave together the core ideas that link the aesthetic mechanisms and the formal structures that construct the film with the presentation and defense of ideas and calls for political action. The sequences will be grouped according to their recurrent functions and, therefore, without attending to their chronological position in the film.

The aim of this analysis is to confront what has not often been asked: how is this indispensable political documentary elaborated? In what ways does it present its political discourses and what is their content? Something as simple as well as complex, how to carry out an aesthetic-political analysis of *The Hour of the Furnaces*?

Latin America is a continent at war

Voice-over with an informative function

From its beginnings, the inclusion of an informative voice-over narration has been frequent in documentary cinema. With the function of informing or explaining and interpreting events, ideas, or concepts, a narrator intervenes in the soundtrack while the image track serves as illustration or proof. Many political documentaries from Latin America made between the late 1960s and the early 1970s use this technique. The second sequence of the first part of *The Hour of the Furnaces* presents a summary of the situation in Latin America in general, and of Argentina in particular. After the titles and initial quotations, the narrator comments over a black image track: "Latin America is a continent at war. For the dominant classes, a war of oppression. For the oppressed people; a war of freedom." Following from this, paintings and engravings from the time of the Spanish colony are inserted. Over these images, the narration continues: "the war of independence was betrayed by exporting elites. While Bolivar lead it, Rivadavia signed loans with Baring Brothers "[…] for the first time here in Latin America a new form of domination begun to be applied. The exploitation of colonial trade through the local bourgeoisies. Neo-colonialism was born." The images of men playing golf accompany the final part of the sequence. A presentation that not only informs about the themes of the film to follow, but also stresses the point of view taken by the coupled narration/sound-image.

The next sequence is the one that provides the most dense amount of information on the population and extension of Argentina, while a forward-tracking shot shows roads lined with trees and houses and inserts of faces shot with zoom-ins ending in close-up. This is followed by illustrative images (villages, rural workers, old people, buildings) while the narration accounts for the figures that show the low standards of living, land ownership, death rates from curable diseases, and the function of Buenos Aires ("neocolonial epicenter"). The search for "objectivity" is lost here when the narrator highlights that the city is the

> cradle of the great middle class. A middling, meddling "mediocracry" […], eternal sniveler of a troubled world. For it change is necessary, yet, at the same time, impossible […] [Buenos Aires] seat of the religious curia,[4] of the Commander-in-Chief of the army, the legislative power, the government, and of 80% of the country's criminal gangs.[5]

This narration is spoken over images of significant buildings representing the powers and institutions mentioned. The oral discourse employs rhetoric strategies that are at odds with the objective tone of the narration, of the figures extracted from official documents and studies (as an intertitle at the beginning of the film tells the audience). Robert Stam (1998: 259) affirms that this last sequence is "dipped in acid. Rather than exalt the cosmopolitan charm of Buenos Aires, the commentary disengages its class structure" in a similar procedure to Luis Buñuel's satire of Rome in *L'Age d'Or* (1930).

At the beginning of the segment "*La Resistencia*" (Resistance) in the second part of the film, Getino and Solanas discuss the scope of the data and information given to announce/justify the historical account of Peronism. Alternating diverse images such as forward-tracking shots through the city, militants speaking with the filmmakers off camera, and assorted shots discarded from other parts of the film, which acknowledge the film as a work-filmic artifice, the directors' point out:

> we knew that information had been misrepresented by the system, that it did not figure in official archives […] but we also discovered that the popular organizations, labour union and political organizations, did not have the necessary information either […] [urgency] makes it difficult for the people to recount their combats and experiences, that is why we directed our search towards that collective memory. We spoke to basic labourers, activists, rural leaders and students.

After this introduction, the formal account of Peronism starts. This is reflexivity on the part of the filmmakers manifested in first person, not a characteristic of classic historical documentaries (Nichols 1988: 48).

The owners of the country

Voice-over with an expository function

In Getino and Solanas' film the function of presenting testimonies or characteristic voices is drawn up with the input from facts that, because of its selection and ordering, account for the position taken by the filmmakers. For example, a sequence announces: "Argentine Rural Society traditional center of our oligarchy, 50 Buenos Aires families who have appropriated forty million hectares, barely 5% of the working population but which annually makes off with 42% of the national income. The country's owners". The images that accompany the narration combine an auction of priced bulls with close-up of those attending. The soundtrack moves on to characteristic voices of that "oligarchy." Steve Neale affirms in his study of the film that images function here "merely to legitimate what the commentary has to say," that is, their value is imposed by the soundtrack (1984: 441). Irony is also included

when we are introduced to the words of Manuel Mujica Lainez. The voice-over narration announces "[a]nd now we go, to the Pepsi-Cola salon. This is where Manuel Mujica Lainez presents his latest book, *Royal Chronicles*." The narration continues enumerating the prizes he has won while the image track goes from a long shot of an illuminated building to a journey through a room full of people shot with a handheld camera.

Another type of exposition in Getino and Solanas' film is the play with space off-screen and with the viewing spectators. Solanas indicates in the first sequence of the second part:

> we hand over to our comrade, the narrator,[6] who from the hall will bring up to date the present circumstances of this ceremony and I request you all, a warm tribute to the peoples and their armed vanguards that are today in violent combat against colonialism and imperialism.

What is the only option left to Latin Americans?

Voice-over with a persuasive function

The persuasive function is not only present in this film but also takes different forms. In the last sequence of the first part, images of a funeral procession in Juella, Jujuy (a province in the Northwest of Argentina) are edited together. The narration claims: "this is our war, a genocide that cost twice as many lives as the First World War." It follows a fade to black while the narrator asks "what is the only option left to Latin Americans?" The image then moves to photographs of a dead Che and the words that close this first part (which will be analyzed below in the section on the use of archive material). The emphatic function of this question formulated without images demands special attention from the spectator. The first sequence of the second part functions in the same way. In it, Solanas makes clear, "this is not just the screening of a movie, neither is it a show. It is a ceremony for liberation," while the blank image track lingers for several seconds.

The persuasive function in the film in conjunction with the editing of images shot by the filmmakers is crucial in *The Hour of the Furnaces.* While military parades are presented, the voice-over indicates that "neocolonialism provides the enemy with our language, without an army of colonial occupation, the identification of the enemy is not so easy. There are no neocolonial policies if there aren't factors that facilitate it." This speech ends with images of police repression in Parque de los Patricios (indicated by the caption in the image) on 17 October 1965 together with a narration presented as the logical conclusion:

> in Latin America the peoples do not have the possibility of changing their destiny by bourgeois democratic means. For the past twelve years the Argentine people have been living politically proscribed […] the people of a dependent country will always be underdeveloped people. A "sub-man."[7]

In this sequence of the first part of the film, the rhetoric path that will result in the different calls to popular armed violence repeated later on is already present. An example of this can be found in the second part of the film in which, over the image of a female worker (Rudi Taborda) in a continuous single shot, the narrator takes over the soundtrack and in a reflexive tone comments "the occupations were violent acts, non-alienated, they erase from the worker's consciousness a history of myths and deceit. By taking possession of their work, they are taking possession of their humanity." The combination of narration and image seems to indicate that the worker is already persuaded that workers are worth more than what they have been led to believe and that they are ready for something more.

The editing procedures in the film have been particularly examined by those studying the film abroad. On this, Robert Stam affirms that it is an open film for its frequent calls to debate among the spectators but not in the sense of polysemy, because "its messages are stridently unequivocal" (1998: 256). For his part, Vicente Sánchez-Biosca is categorical: "the conceptual montage used to narrate the history of Argentina cannot be but totalitarian inasmuch as it imposes meaning without any type of cracks" (2004: 246–47). It could be argued that the director's call to debate from the soundtrack opens a possible channel for a different understanding, but for the Spanish scholar, that possibility is false since "the hypothesis for discussion, in spite of their name, are limiting and without any ambiguity […] Their condition as a report for collective reflection with flesh and bone spectators finds itself in open conflict with the univocal precision of its slogans" (Sánchez-Biosca 2004: 247). For his part, Louis Marcorelles divides the assessment of the first part of *The Hour* (where "the spectator is manipulated, provoked, more than stimulated to reflect") from the second part in which "the tone changes radically. There is no impressive montage, big headlines but the omnipresence of the word" (1978: 103). For Marcorelles, the second part of the film falls clearly in the field of the essay. On the contrary, the first part "could serve equally for any cause: with some modifications and with a simplifying editing, you can prove everything or not to prove anything" (1978: 104).[8]

In the third part of the film (the "true call to action" for Marcorelles [1978: 104]) a sequence is included in which the images and sounds construct a tense atmosphere that calls for political violence. A succession of brief shots of police repression shot with a moving handheld camera fades to black accompanied by a repetitive percussion that gets increasingly louder, reaching the same level, then the voice of the narrator comments: "with the people absent from political power, the crimes of neo-colonialism enjoy the greatest impunity. They are legality. […] violence invades the streets, introduces itself into the houses." The sequence, included after the tales from militants and the reading of their letters and after all the information given in the film's previous four hours, wants to impact on the position to be taken by the spectator in relation to the whole film. Contrary to what happens in other parts of the film in which the images only work to illustrate the discourse, here images, sounds, and words pull together to configure a complex discourse. At the end of the last part of the film, this example is presented as a model for liberation: "for us, Argentines and Latin Americans, perhaps Cuba is the best example. The Cuban revolution demonstrated that a people could free itself starting out from people's historical experiences and its idiosyncrasy."

For Argentina, this historical experience is a Peronism connected to left-wing tendencies. "As it happened with other cultural texts of the time," Jimena Trombetta and Paula Wolkowicz note, "*The Hour of the Furnaces* is strongly denoted by the Cuban revolution" (2009: 410).

People have always been denied their dignity

Voice-over with a function of empathy in order to interpellate

The search for the spectator's empathy through appeals and calls for dialogue that cover from the friendly invitation to the calls to commit deserves a brief discussion. This search for empathy with the spectator is not exclusive to this type of political documentary, it can be found equally in institutional documentaries and fictions. The critical difference is that political documentaries narrow their model of spectator to already politicized groups (or in the process of becoming so: workers, students, intellectuals). The framework created by the narrations of these militant films is built around making explicit that "we" are like "you," a cultural equality of class that uses the mechanisms that will be discussed here.

The identification with the negated other, oppressed or massacred, too, has a function of generating empathy. In *The Hour of the Furnaces* the different popular groupings in Argentina are positioned on the side of the oppressed; their worth is highlighted. While children laugh in close-up facing the camera, the narrator indicates that "[u]nder Sarmiento's[9] slogan, civilization or barbarity, the first form on national resistance was massacred; the guerrilla. Yesterday gaucho or guerrilla, today informers. People have always been denied their dignity." This is followed by the personal testimony to camera of an indigenous Mataco and then, while the camera traverses the "tolderia" (indigenous camp) via a tracking shot, the narrator asks: "would the colonials ever admit that the blood of the colonized is the same as theirs? The colonizer has denied these people." This pursuit of identification with the dispossessed seems to find its limit when, in a sequence of the first part of the film, images of a healer are followed by close-ups and extreme close-ups of people using a wide lens. The narrator notes "priests, fortune-tellers, faith-healers, counsellors, between the system and the people is interposed a multitude of disorientators. Neo-colonial violence is also exalted under sublimated forms." The filmmakers do not see in these practices something that truly belongs to the habits of the popular classes, only an imposition and use by the dominant classes.[10]

In Getino and Solanas' film, there are constant appeals to the spectators interpellated as comrades, exalting their individuality and intellectual worth. The end of the second part of the film is explicit in this function of generating empathy:

> comrades, what matters now are the conclusions that all of you might draw as the real authors and protagonists of this history. That's why the film stops here, it opens up to all of you for you to continue it. Now it's over to you.

As Juan Domingo Perón says in the two subsequent films by the filmmakers, "better than to force is to persuade." To do that, the filmmakers value their audience.

I only know what we still have in excess: Ingenuity

Characterized voice-over ("neutral")

The forms of the voice-over do not correspond only to the model of "voice of God" as defined by Bill Nichols (1988, 1997). The tone and intention do not always correspond with an informative, assertive, and sober stance. As we have seen above, irony and first-person reflection are possible characteristics of a voice-over narration. However, the voice-over can be a characterized voice that feigns to be the voice of a protagonist, or that is still diegetic and reads the testimony of a protagonist or summarizes the testimonies of several of them. These voices are different from the informative, persuasive, or expository voice-overs already analyzed because they introduce the words of others (this does not mean that an announcer is not "characterizing" when he/she reads a document in a sober tone, but that in the case being discussed, he/she does it to "characterize" the words of others). Furthermore, these voices take on diverse function in films: "neutral" or parodic.

In Getino and Solanas' film, several anonymous letters from militants are read in its third part. The letters evaluate the years of Peronist resistance accounting for their activities. Read by Getino, they are illustrated by images of men walking by the coast of Rio de la Plata and pretend to be a dialogue with an old leader and, in another sequence, they are illustrated by still shots of suburbs in Buenos Aires at night. "You ask me what we are still lacking so as to regain power, I don't know. I only know what we still have in excess: ingenuity." Getino reads without changing his diction, "I think we descendants of those who struggled with [José] San Martín, [Facundo] Quiroga, [Chacho] Peñaloza and [Felipe] Varela we will not deny their memories, your comrade J.M." In another letter he reads: "the regime turns into accomplices of its crimes all those who do not fight it resolutely. There are and cannot be intermediate options. My greetings: A. M." It is noticeable how the messages of these letters do not contradict the discourse of the voice-over throughout *The Hour.* They are complementary and some concepts are even repeated in the rest of the film by interviewees or by the filmmakers themselves.

Our aristocracy is very similar to the European aristocracy

Characterized voice-over (parodic)

There are other characterized voices that, ironic or stereotyped, function as inserts with a degree of humorousness unusual in political documentaries before the 1980s.[11] The first part of *The Hour of the Furnaces* includes the remarks of the bourgeois that, because of the ironic

charge and stereotypical tone, cannot be taken but as simulations of testimonies, that is, as characterized voices. In the sequence at the Rural Society, during the first shots of the auction of the prized bulls, a subjective voice is edited onto the soundtrack "our aristocracy is very similar to the European aristocracy […] previously, we had military men who were glorious civilians, General [Bartolomé] Mitre wrote poems and started [the newspaper] *La Nación*, and General [Julio Argentino] Roca was very scholarly." Then, next to images of men and women of the upper classes sunbathing on yachts and in swimming pools shot with a telephoto lens and in long shot, the feminine voice notes that "up to last year we used to go to Punta [del Este], but it was intolerable. There was nowhere to go that wasn't full of all those slobs with Torinos [a type of car]," and then she makes positive comments about Paris and New York. This sequence ends with the voice of another man edited over images of the dispersing of a demonstration in Plaza de Mayo, shot with a handheld camera in closed shots. The man comments: "well, it seems like these people in the present government, have every intention to put things in order and that is going to benefit the people." The function of these feigned testimonies is nothing more than to ridicule the representatives of the upper classes using their ways of speaking and ideas about what is, or should be, a "developed" nation. To write a text that will be read by an actor acting out with his/her voice, it is always much more simple than to carry out a long interview – hiding its true objective – from which only certain sentences will be used (although this was also done by the directors, for example, for the sequence about the intellectuals, which includes the testimony of Mujica Lainez).

All spectators are cowards or traitors

Intertitles

The intertitles play an important role in political films. They reinforce concepts and ideas developed in the film or quote authoritative sentences. *The Hour* is the Argentine film that uses them in more varied ways: to thank and as dedication, to make explicit the sources of the discourse, to quote, to divide sequences, to emphasize the narrative, or used with an experimental intention. Their unfolding at the beginning of the film is accompanied by an increasingly louder and repetitive percussion in the soundtrack: "America Latina, the great unfinished nation," "my surname offended – my first name, humiliated – my civilian status, rebellion. Aimé Césaire." Interspersed are images of repression and protests while the editing of the intertitles in the film becomes more dynamic and the percussion accelerates: "our first gesture and word – Liberation." The word is repeated eight times on the screen until it fills it (the same happens with "power"). This is followed by a succession of quotes from politicians and intellectuals and lastly an intertitle reads "for having loved too much …" (Césaire). The percussion is also used at the beginning of the chapter "The Models" accompanying the phrases of Jean-Paul Sartre ("the European is a racist humanism") and Frantz Fanon ("So, comrades, let us no pay tribute to Europe. We must invent and we must make discoveries").

Later on, a long sequence, constructed as a collage with pop music, is situated by an intertitle "all the information and broadcasting media are controlled by the CIA," followed by tracking shots through Buenos Aires at night and shots of young people in a record shop dancing.[12] The editing of the intertitles accelerates: "What is real – what is true – what is rational – are – the same as the people – on the edge of the law." The sequence continues with images of a tour through an art gallery, more intertitles: "artists and intellectuals are integrated into the system." A caption on the screen: "Institute Di Tella, Buenos Aires." With this announcement starts the recording of a "*happening*" at the Di Tella, the music changes to funk and there are inserts of characterized speeches of other fragments from the film (of the sequences dedicated to the bourgeoisie/oligarchy and the one about healers/fortune tellers in a Northern fair). The camera climbs a staircase behind Jorge Romero Brest into a room at the Di Tella while intercalating photographs from fashion magazines, of poverty, shots of the procession in Jujuy, the fight of men in a shanty town – already seen in the film – and comic panels and photographs of the Vietnam War, but it always returns to the images of the participants in the "*happening*" dancing. The editing accelerates through these images from diverse origins and the soundtrack accumulates new sounds without eliminating the previous ones, adding laughs, horns, and a repetitive percussion. The sequence finishes with the sound of machine gun fire that eliminates the music, the voices, and noises of the soundtrack. The ending of the collage (one of the most experimental sequences of Argentine political cinema in the twentieth century) seems to be already announced in the initial intertitle: "artists and intellectuals are integrated into the system."[13] The beginning of the third part of the film also presents intertitles inserted within an observational register in the image track and with the sound of a guitar as soundtrack. The image uses tight shots to follow, quite obviously staged for the camera, men fighting in a muddy street until one falls and is dragged lifeless. Intertitles follow: "a man awakens from his death. Che Guevara" and "the marks of violence, only violence can destroy them. Sartre," completed with another from Aimé Césaire, while the camera, leaving the men, focuses on tree tops shot in a circular motion and from a low angle.

"A daily violence" – reads an intertitle – "to dominate man it is not necessary napalm or toxic gases," at the same time we hear the sounds from a factory. The synthesis that is intended to be extracted from the sayings of workers edited off-camera. Intertitles are included not only over a black background, as found in all the films of the time. Over a high angle, long shot of Rio de la Plata and the Buenos Aires port, one reads: "those who lived in that land say that further inland there are sierras where endless gold is extracted, Sebastian Caboto, 1544." Another use of the intertitle is the authoritative quotation. The second part starts with the fragment from *The Wretched of the Earth* (Orsini, 1969) in which Fanon expresses that "all spectators are cowards or traitors."[14] The quotes of authority chosen by the filmmakers are of high impact or at times, they summarize ideas (like the seven at the beginning of the film that will be analyzed in the section on sounds by other people and own images ["Someone who chooses their death, is also choosing a life"], in this chapter). Furthermore, the intertitles in this film also give instructions to the spectators or projectionist. For example, "space for the comrade narrator to intervene." The second part of

the film is the one that contains more explicative intertitles about Peronism, while the first part uses a wide range of different functions and the third part includes only a few.

When I arrived here, it occurred to me that nothing good was going to happen

Testimony in voice-off or in voice-over[15]

The testimony in voice-off or in voice-over is the "realist" side in opposition to the characterized voice already analyzed. This realist side is formed by the edited testimonies of the voice of others and it is also provided in interviews or public speeches without "translation" or "dubbing." In some cases, the voice moves from being in-camera to off-camera (the speaker is no longer in the image track with synchronized sound) and in other cases, we never see the speaker. In this case the voice is over. This is the difference between voice-off and voice-over: voice-off (or off-screen) is the one in which the source was on-screen, that is, it was "*in*"; voice-over happens if the source was never seen (Beadling 2012: 23; Laamanen 2012: 16).

Despite being the longest Argentine documentary film, in *The Hour of the Furnaces* there is a small percentage of sequences with testimonies in voice-off or voice-over, although some of the sequences in which either is present are fairly long. In the first part, while an observational camera follows laborers at work in a factory or clocking in, the soundtrack is edited in such a way as to finish forming a collage of voices. The fragments of testimonies by different workers ("lots of factories are closed," "they don't give us what we deserve," "beg to eat," "people were arrested every day") follow each other until they become over-imposed on one another and it is impossible to know what they are saying. This *crescendo* ends while we see the lights on the helmets of miners first only as spots on the screen until they become a close-up of the workers. The voice-over of the narrator associates the estate of the situation described by the testimonies as an aspect of the violence of the system in action. Another sequence, also shot with a handheld camera panning presents Manuel Mujica Lainez in an exhibition hall: "I am a man of a very European culture," says the writer in voice-over and the narrator feigns to be carrying an interview asking "how do you see the country?," "it's so complicated. We live so far away from it all. Over there, how easy it is, all those young men, they take the train and they go to Venice, or they go to Vienna. Here we live so far away and we are in the wrong direction." In the editing of the voice of Mujica Lainez it is possible to perceive a selection of fragments of his comments that account for the fact that the only thing that interests him is "high culture." Even to the question (part of the fake news report) on the situation of the country, the answer included in the film indicates that the main problem of Argentina is geographical. As in the previous example, the narrator takes up the commentary to reflect on the colonial domination promoted by intellectuals, taking the remarks by the writer as proof.

In the third part of the film, Getino and Solanas include a long interview with Julio Troxler carried out in the rubbish dump where in 1956 a number of Peronist dissidents were shot (the massacre of José León Suárez). In this sequence, both the voice-in and the voice-off are articulated. While the protagonist walks through the rubbish dump, shot from behind and

from the front in medium shots and medium-to-long shots, he affirms that "when I arrived here, it occurred to me that nothing good was going to happen. Five comrades dead, one wounded and several of us were able to escape in a very difficult way." The images do not reconstruct, prove, or illustrate the firing squad shooting; they only enrich aesthetically an interview carried out inside a car parked there.

Those who want to shoot us will run out of bullets

Testimony in voice-in

In general, the word of (an)other edited synchronically (or synchronized in post-production) takes the form of reportages with independence of the inclusion on camera, or not, of the interviewer and/or the questions or commentaries made. At the same time, these testimonies and discourses extend and confirm the information given by the narrator and the images. In Getino and Solanas' film, testimonies in voice-*in,* particularly in the second part of the film, are used to reconstruct the history of the Peronist "Resistance."[16] Broadly speaking, they are the words of second-rank militant students and union leaders or members of the bases (except for the presence of Raimundo Ongaro, leader of the General Confederation of Workers in Argentina). The framing includes the interviewers (Getino in the vast majority of cases). Some quotes account for the ideological tenor their words attain. Angel Perelman (union leader, introduced as "Pelman") says: "we cannot deceive ourselves in this matter, the working class did not have a legal, political party after Perón's defeat, by means of its legal organizations, it had to carry forward the resistance with limitations." Ongaro, being interviewed like Perelman, asks himself: "what is the point of having rich unions and workers with just living conditions in a land that is poor? They will not bring us to our knees, bullets will come to an end for those who want to shoot us." This is followed by

> I'm Andina Lizárraga, leader of the Tucuman Peronist Youth, [Tucumán is a province in the Northwest of Argentina] I say that the people wants a different type of action, an armed struggle is necessary to led the revolution. The era is over of the electoral leader, of the darkroom leader. It is necessary for us, for you yourselves to construct a revolutionary led body otherwise, we'll lose time.

These testimonies are scattered throughout the whole of the second part of the film. They are characteristic of the development of the revolutionary idea the film wants to transmit as the crystallization of a logical rationale: from the realization that since 1955 there is no political party that can channel popular aspirations (Perelman), through the necessary unity of trade unions and workers ready to suffer in the struggle (Ongaro) to the revolutionary affirmation of direct action in favor of the path to armed struggle (Andina Lizárraga). In all these cases, the testimonies are treated in a direct and simple form and do not include inserts of images or sounds alien and extradiegetic to the interview. According to Clara Kriger, since the

second and third parts "are based on testimonies, archive materials and photographs," there is an aesthetic change: "the poetic function diminishes although the same rules of freedom in the use of the tools of language and the articulation of the shots remain" (2003: 322).

In the third part of the film, the testimonies are less frequent, but, individually, they are longer. Primarily there are two, the one of the unidentified old worker that opens this part of the film and Julio Troxler's. The old man presents his vision of historical massacres and repression of workers, stating "I begin by apologising because my expression, as I didn't go to university, I have some mistakes." After the intertitles, "Patagonia's firing squad killings," "the rural massacres," and "the labour repressions," he develops his memories of each of the events. The sequence is a static long shot with a ranch in the background in which his relatives come in and out of view in-between cuts. On the other hand, the interview with Troxler takes place inside of a car and it is done with medium shots where the editing includes the filmmakers' questions: "what did the tortures consisted of?", "stripping one naked – he remembers – hood over the head tied to a table. And then the sessions of electric shocks started. The part where they detained longest was the genitals. I had them completely bloodstained." "The important thing to point out is" – Troxler affirms configuring a testimony that not only presents something lived but that elaborates a call to reflect –

> that I was one of the many citizens who for the single fact of defending the constitution I was subjected to that type of treatment […] we are willing to continue this struggle, we are in solidarity with our brother in Latin America and Asia and Africa […] and we will left a better world for those who come after us.

Someone who chooses their death, is also choosing a life

Voice-over with archive material

In the film, the archive footage comes from a variety of sources and in different formats. Sequences from newsreels, photographs, engravings, drawings, paintings, images from television news programs, from films, and newspaper headlines, among others, are interspersed throughout and, in the majority of the cases, their origin or authorship is noted at the beginning of the film. With respect to the soundtrack, it is almost monopolized by a narrator that presents, informs, or attempts to persuade interpellating the spectator, using in some cases the first person. However, some sequences are edited with archive materials with characterized voices or testimonies from protagonists.

The voice-over is informative in many sequences of *The Hour of the Furnaces* when it is accompanied by images shot by someone other than the filmmakers. In one of the first shots, with the accompaniment of an Argentine Northern song the audience is informed: "in Latin America the average income of workers is twenty times less than that of the upper classes

[…] they will need two hundred years to reach what the United States has today." The images are of a soup kitchen in Los Ralos (Tucumán), as it is indicated by a title at the beginning of the sequence. Since some of these shots also appear in the film *Olla popular* (*Soup Kitchen*) (Grupo Cine Liberación and Vallejo, 1968), it is possible to consider that the rest of the images are materials rejected for that film, although this fact is not accredited in Getino and Solanas' film. In any case, in many passages the informative character of the voice-over is difficult to distinguish from the rhetoric interests of the narrator to direct the thinking of the spectators. "The system" – it is announced later on – "an internal enemy opens the door of the country to neocolonial penetration. Thousands of peace-keeping troops infiltrate rural areas, scholarships, loans subsidies to break down national consciousness, to facilitate domination." Successive images show the visits of Jacqueline Kennedy, Philip of Edinburgh, and the North American general Reginald Clizbe during a military act in Buenos Aires. The narration informs of the activities of Peace Corps but the identification of those activities, and of the giving of grants and loans, as "neocolonial penetration" is done without giving any details. The point of view shown does not intend to be considered as objective, and it does not try to hide under any amount of data. The end of the first part of *The Hour* is a logical example of the journey the narration constructs (from information to a call for violent action) while poignant images of the body of Che are inserted. Over the image of the body of Che on a table while peasants walk by, the narrator asks himself and answers, "what is the only option left to Latin Americans? To choose with their rebellion their own life, their own death. Someone who chooses their death, is also choosing a life. In their rebellion, Latin Americans reclaim their existence." These are the words that end the first part of the film, which, open to debate – as it indicates in different passages – imagines an answer or presents "the option" as the chapter is called.

The second part of the film is the one that includes a more extensive use of archive material. It is the one that presents itself as the more informative on the history of Peronism in power and of the Resistencia. The account starts on October 17, 1945; the few images of the mobilization on that day that exist are edited into the film, with a soundtrack that begins with the Peronist march. After the first words, the sound is lowered and remains sustained under the voice of the narrator:

> on 17 October 1945, the Argentine masses irrupted for the first time into national political life, the marginalised became the great protagonists of our history. The bare chested men are the direct inheritors of those nationalists who accompanied San Martin over the Andes or the guerrillas. Perón was the expression of a people resolved to achieve definitive independence.

Here, as in some passages of the first part of the film, from an objective fact (the mobilization of October 17, 1945), the film moves to the elaboration of a discourse with rhetorical intentions that account for only a specific perspective. In this case, the images do not function as proof; they are illustrative and accompany what is being said, as in the following sequence: "what was the world in 1945? The inter-imperialist war was ending" (images of the "mushroom" of the atomic bomb); "a new sharing of the world was

beginning" (images of the conferences that reunited Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt or Eisenhower); "the Chinese revolution did not exist" (protest by Chinese people); "the Arab peoples have not been liberated" (a mobilization in the Middle East); "what did the appearance of Peronism in that era mean?"[17] After the question, the answer follows alongside illustrative photographs and it closes the rhetoric question that already includes its own answer highlighted by the narrator: "the Justicialist[18] revolution came to break all preconceptions." The film continues with a chronological reconstruction of the key measures taken by the Peronist government, with images of parades and Peronist acts. The definitive answer to the question about what Peronism meant is given by the narration: "this was in 1945 the movement of liberation more advance the people could give themselves."

The use of archive material can be not just illustrative of the historical account. Editing it into the film also acts, in some sequences, as an element of signification of a different order. While "contradictions" inside the movement are highlighted, resulting in hesitant policies "that invoke social revolution, but do not carry through the national revolution," the editing puts together about twenty shots in which Perón climbs stages and salutes different audiences: businessmen, military personnel, workers, trade unionists, and politicians. This editing illustrates the "to please everybody" mentality, which was the main weakness of the first years of Peronism in government according to the narrator.

A few sequences after, reviewing the crisis and the coup of 1955, the narrator asks himself: "why did Perón abandon power? How could a government fall without a struggle when it has two thirds of the electoral vote? Was the movement prepared for a civil war?" The images seem to indicate the answer: shots of military parades with tanks and military trucks are interspersed with others of workers riding on bicycles.

Furthermore, the film informs about the measures announced under the intertitle "the violence of the Libertadora"[19]: "Congress will be dissolved, Peronism will be proscribed, and it will be prohibited to use Peronist emblems. It is attempted to erase ten years of history from the people's memories. The 'Violent Decade' was beginning." Meanwhile, the editing puts together images of the celebrations after Perón's fall, military men signing the certificates to assume the government, and the damage caused by throwing things from a building onto the street. Here the images seem to be acting as proof of a violence that will be thought of as the inauguration of the Argentine politics developed in the following years. Getino and Solanas indicate how the "option" for revolutionary violence appears as a response to military violence after the prohibition of Peronism. The narrative of the first half of the second part of *The Hour* ends with a similar account to the one at the beginning:

> [B]y September 1955 it was a year since Yankee mercenaries had invaded Guatemala, Vargas committed suicide in Brazil blaming imperialism, it was still a year until Fidel Castro would disembark at Playa Girón[20] […] the Justicialist revolution was one more expression of the continental revolution would obtain its first great victory in Cuba.

The recuperation of Peronism is highlighted to a great extent by its chronological and spatial positioning. It ends with a positive balance both in 1945 and ten years later. This is a rhetorical procedure that was also utilized in the next film made by the group, *La revolución justicialista* (*The Justicialist Revolution*) (Cine Liberación, 1971).

In *The Hour of the Furnaces* the use of images of the same character with different verbal descriptions is also worth noting. Augusto Vandor, together with other trade unionists, accompanies the affirmation "the trade unions are the principal support of the movement in each election." Further on, his image appears again: "the limitations of the union leaders become evident" and finally, his figure is next to the de facto military president, Juan Carlos Onganía sharing a meeting. All these shots, within the same sequence, from the perspective of the filmmakers, account for his treason to Perón and, therefore, to the people. The inclusion of allusions in the first person conform a discourse that involves persuasive empathic interests: "if a war is a group of partial battles, we have in this decade lost some, and have won others, but imperialism also has its experience." Here, footage of military training in the United States Army School of the Americas is edited together with the testimonies of militants from the Peronist resistance that comment how to arm a "miguelito" (bended iron bar to puncture a tire) or how with pepper it is possible to perturb a group of horses. The voice-over narration informs about the training of 18,000 Latin American military personnel by the Pentagon, rendering absurd the tactics of resistance and ending with Getino's question "can it stop the police?," "it will be hard" replies the female worker interviewed.[21] But while in the image track the military maneuvers and the parade of tanks continue, the overall vision is not so pessimistic: the narrator asks himself: "is the army really invincible? Algeria, Cuba, Vietnam, demonstrate that it is not. That when a people resolve to liberate itself at any cost, it is invincible." The ending of this second part of the film ("Act for Liberation. Notes, Testimonies and Debate About the Recent Struggles for Liberation of the Argentine People") is, following a different path, the same as the ending of the first part ("Neocolonialism and Violence"): "only those who possess weapons have power or those resolve to possess them. The language of weapons is, in our time, the most effective political language. Doesn't this mean a long and painful war? Are there other alternatives for liberation?" The account of the actions of the government and of the Peronist resistance ends with exactly the same conclusion as the first part: people's armed violence is the answer the film finds to both the social and political problems in Argentina. Peronism in power showed that transformations are possible following an institutional path but, at the same time, they will never go beyond a partial and transitory character. This is the sense of the recuperation, exaltation, and critique of Peronism present in the second part of *The Hour of the Furnaces*.

The third part of the film ("Violence and Liberation"), put together from discarded materials and edited by Solanas alone in Rome,[22] begins with an ample use of archive images: paintings by Carlos Alonso, photographs of coffins and dead people in the streets, identity documents under the name José Musy, and the illustration that Ricardo Carpani made of Felipe Vallese. The film informs that "our people has had a lot of martyrs, the victims of 55, those shot in 1956 […] some names, Musy, Retamar, Pampillón and Vallese,

who is the highest symbol of that extreme violence." The images of the 1955 bombings, already seen in the film, are repeated to finish here with the intertitle: "violence in the hands of the peoples, is not violence, it is justice." The narrative construction aims to justify this assertion, editing first the images of the dead people – the violence of the system – to naturalize the tried answer in this well-known sentence by Perón. Editing together more images of revolutionary processes in the Third World than in the other two parts of the film, the journey ends affirming: "the enemy resorts to all sort of crimes not because it has the initiative but rather because it is losing it, As Mao said, it's a paper tiger." The conscience of victory is as strong as the decision in favor of revolutionary violence supported by the enumeration of victorious revolutionary processes in the Third World. Undoubtedly, the shock waves of the worldwide revolution, from this perspective, will reach Argentina.

Let us swear in glory to die

Music

The Hour of the Furnaces includes some sequences in which music is used in order to construct metaphorical rhetoric figures through editing. The film includes national patriotic song "Aurora" in the soundtrack while two men fight in a shanty town,[23] shot with a camera in constant movement followed by panning shots of the room of a prostitute as she eats on her bed while the clients wait. The use of this observational camera, although it is a distinctive characteristic of an open voice according to Carl Plantinga (1997), when accompanied by a patriotic song, results in a sarcastic commentary (closer to a formal voice using Plantinga's terminology) on the responsibilities of a miserable and prostituted nation. In another sequence of the film, the editing of images of statues in the Recoleta cemetery with inserts of shots of lightning in a night sky is carried out by a soundtrack including an opera. The use of music in the film is so varied that it even includes overshots of a child playing with a ball against a wall and of a bar, *Sur* (*South*) (1988), of a song by Homero Manzi, as preamble to the interview with a militant of resistance; concrete music in an accelerated montage of police repression and a folkloric song while a parallel tracking shot follows workers behind a wire fence, ending with images of a soup kitchen

The film of Gerardo Vallejo *Olla popular* is a short that does not include direct sound and lasts only four-and-half minutes. It was done the same year as *The Hour* (as mentioned before, they share some shots) and the soundtrack is made up of fragments of the Argentine national anthem. It starts with a close-up of a child breastfeeding alternating with reverse shots of a dog sniffing the ground. This is followed by the only title in the film: "soup kitchen. Hunger and 'micery' [sic] for the families of San Miguel de Tucuman." Then a parallel tracking shot frames serving plates, faces, spoons, and the feet of those in the soup kitchen. When the anthem reaches the fragment "Or let us swear in glory to die,"

it is repeated nine times together with nine photographs in detail of the participants. The film then goes back to the initial sequences of the child breastfeeding, the camera tilts ending on the face of the mother in close-up. Vallejo reflected on the discursive editing in this short:

> the union of images and sounds will be inspired by different elements that must express an idea: hungry children do not coincide with our *National Anthem that* expresses our historic fight for justice and freedom. The basis of intellectual montage lies in the transmission of ideas and truths from conflicts and contradictions that, sometimes, we cannot see in reality. Because nobody sees hungry children in a closed mill in Tucuman with the chorus of the anthem.
>
> (1984: 93, original emphasis)

According to Mestman, this contrast corresponds directly "with the revisionist policy that the group Cine Liberación defends in relation to patriotic symbols and 'official history'."

> The sequences from *Faena* were used in *The Hour of the Furnaces* but without their original sound, which is not the case with the fragments of films by Fernando Birri, Joris Ivens, and Leon Hirszman that will be discussed below. The images from Rios' film are accompanied by jazz music, inserts from publicity photographs, and some intertitles: the film puts together a shocking collage, with images of fashion models and luxurious products and recently killed cows. However, the sequence of the film that is probably better remembered, and that must be included in this section, is the editing of the frontal photography in the close-up of a dead Ché Guevara together with the monotonous percussion that slowly rises in volume. The image is sustained for four minutes and it is the last image of the first part of the film.
>
> (Mestman 2005: 38–39)

The second part of *The Hour of the Furnaces* also begins with the same percussion in the soundtrack together with photographs of repression and intertitles such as "revolutionary violence will bring the crimes of imperialism to an end." This initial sequence ends with the photographs of revolutionary leaders, Fidel Castro, Ben Barka, Fanon, Perón, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Lumumba, and Guevara. Before proceeding to relate the years of Peronism in power and resistance, Perón is positioned among them, right in the middle of the group of revolutionary politicians. When the narration arrives at the coup of 1955, the march of the winners and citizens happy for Perón's fall is accompanied by an accelerated rhythm sang *a capella* and preceded by a categorical intertitle: the "party of the gorillas."[24] Lastly, in the third part of the film, a protest song ("prepare the combat, prepare the gun, prepare your mind to resist") is the soundtrack to a rebellious military training taken from *I dannati della terra* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) (Orsini, 1969).[25] The editing here does not generate contrast; the images and the music go along the same thematic and ideological rails.

Homage

Filmic quotations

According to Ignacio Del Valle Dávila, "without any doubt, *The Hour of the Furnaces* is an exercise in intertextuality" (2014: 306). He considers not only the quotations from intellectuals and politicians but also reserves a relevant place for filmic quotations. In fact, the film is one of the Latin American documentaries that include a larger amount of filmic quotations with original sound and the only Argentine documentary of the time that credits them. The *Hour* uses the sequence from *Tire dié* (*Throw Me a Dime*) (Birri, 1958) in which children run alongside a train asking for a few coins, ending with a close-up of a child in a high-angle close-up (this is countered by the next shot, it does not belong anymore to *Tire dié,* of an office building shot from a low angle as if the child was asking it for money). From *El cielo y la tierra* (*The Threatening Sky*) (Ivens, 1965), the sequence of the theatrical representation of an anti-air bombardment acted out by a group of Vietnamese children is included. Lastly, *Mayoría absoluta* (*Absolute Majority*) (Hirszman, 1964) is the only fragment that includes a voice-over (the original one in Portuguese). It is necessary to point out that these fragments of sequences never last for more than a minute. However, contrary to the parodic use of other people's films in Latin American political documentaries from the period, in this case it is a homage to the directors of political films with whom Getino and Solanas share ideas.

Conclusion

In *The Hour of the Furnaces* it is possible to highlight the primacy of sequences with an authoritative voice-over, not only for those that utilize archive material but also for those made up by material shot by the filmmakers. However, the use of the voice-over does not mean necessarily the absolute dominance of the author over the spectator's understanding, although in many cases this is what it indicates. Through the use of characterized voices, the directors promote the inclusion of other points of view but they remain under their absolute control. The reading of letters from militants allows thinking about the erasure of the authoritative voice of the "official" narrator. Lastly, the voices of antagonists are present in the characterization; they say what would be very difficult to actually get first hand. The bourgeois, for example, are "the others" the film reviles.

Although presented as an open film, it offers, particularly in its second part, the superiority of the authoritative voice-over and of the testimonies, reaffirming the ideological line sustained by the narrative. When a testimony by an "other" is edited in, like the one by Mujica Lainez, the narrator considers it proof of "cipayismo."[26] Under the appearance of plurality, a unilateral discourse is found – that of the directors. They constitute their narrations adhering, using Plantinga's terminology, to a formal voice.

However, there is also the presence of examples that incite to consider the presence of an open voice. In *The Hour of the Furnaces* we can find sequences of observation that do not modify the meaning of the recorded acts (processions, demonstrations), although it is necessary to affirm that in these sequences the words or actions of the protagonists do not contradict the information or the previous reasoning coming from the authoritative voice-over. That is, there are no polemic voices that problematize the presented assessment of the state of the situation.

The Hour of the Furnaces does not include many testimonies that move from the personal to the collective; from an account of the particular to what is of public interest. This is due, to a great extent, to the fact that the interviewees speak generally of what is public not of what belongs to the private sphere. But the testimony that travels this journey is essential: Julio Troxler, in the third part, tells about the murders by firing squad in the rubbish dump of José León Suárez in 1956, but soon enough links this personal lived experience and the tortures he suffered in the years of resistance to the revolutions in the Third World. His account is completely in accord with the direction Getino and Solanas give to their film. Troxler reveals himself to be in favor of a violent revolutionary change of Peronist orientation.

Without a doubt, revolutionary violence is one of the topics revisited and primarily promoted by many Latin American political documentaries of the time. Getino and Solanas' film established an indelible rhetoric and aesthetic model for documentaries to follow. It maintains an absolute coherence with the objective of inciting a violent revolutionary transformation. The typical discursive construction can be discerned from the first sequences of the film. The historical assessment indicates that "Latin America is a continent at war" and this warlike dilemma will only find a solution by the use of violence. And in the first place, the violence was started by "them." Second, the political maturity of leaders and of the people meant moving away from a critique of the institutions toward the certainty of the need to destroy them. The editing into the film of the testimonies of Perelman, Ongaro, and Andina Lizárraga indicates a "logical" process of radicalization that must be followed by the new generations (in fact, the age of these trade unionists and militants goes from the oldest to the youngest). Finally, the victory will be inevitable, although the film criticizes the spontaneity of non-organized individual actions and the "mistakes" of Peronism in its search for social changes without the support of the violent actions of the masses. In spite of this, *The Hour of the Furnaces* also presents the "revolution" as an unstoppable march in Latin America, from the Cuban revolution onwards.

Historical events are reviewed to justify the taking of positions by contemporary groups to the making of the film or to allow the film to elaborate conclusive parables. In the second part, after the extensive reviewing of the history of Peronism, it is highlighted how Peronism was "the most advanced movement for liberation" in Latin America, comparable with others around the world (in the two documentaries with interviews that Perón made after *The Hour,* the same is affirmed again using the same images and text). From the historical facts to interpretation in the contemporary context, the images function as illustrations in most

of the sequences. However, their editing is also discursive and ideological in some cases. For example, the account that understands as "limitations" the conciliatory attitude by Perón is accompanied by repeated images of the president saluting different publics. Equally, the denunciation of the lack of organization of the people and the question of the possibility of people's resistance to the 1955 coup are answered by images of workers riding bicycles and of military tanks. Lastly, it is necessary to point out the presence of music edited together with images, as ideological readings with a supremacy of elements that allows thinking about the presence of experimental techniques in a discursive montage that metaphorically contrasts image and sound.

The Hour of the Furnaces created new images and sounds in dialogue with new political times. It took the path in which revolutionaries worldwide demonstrated that the histories the system had taught us are false and, at the same time, how possible are the histories of liberation. As Solanas summarized to finish the four-hour long film, "in short, invent our revolution. The protagonists of this search are fundamentally you […] the film is thus left open so as to add new notes, combatants' testimonies about violence and liberation." 50 years later, *The Hour of the Furnaces* can still teach us some lessons to take on this task: to invent our revolution.

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Notes

1 According to Jimena Trombetta and Paula Wolkowicz, the film "inaugurates not only a new way of making political cinema in Latin America, but also a new way of understanding cinema" (2009: 406). One of the most positive comments on the film did not come from a persuaded revolutionary Peronist but from Louis Marcorelles: "After a film like this, our conception of cinema as art, or simply as a medium, and of its function in society must be reconsidered from beginning to end" (1978: 105).
2 Mestman stresses that the "political-ideological perspective" of the producing group "combined the historiographic revisionism of the rising national left, the main themes of the Tricontinental in Havana and a thirdworldism with its roots in Fanon" (2008: 28).
3 The version analyzed is the one published on DVD in 2007. I consider that it is the closest one to the original: without the additions to the final sequence of the first part (when it premiered in Buenos Aires in 1973) and without the cuts made to the second part (when it was re-edited for its European circulation, after its premiere in the Festival of Pesaro).
4 The English subtitles leave out "the curia" from the list mentioned in the narration (translator's note).

5 For a brief study of the representation of Buenos Aires in the film, see Campo (2014) and for a more extended one see Podalsky (2004).
6 The English subtitles mistranslate the word "relator" in the voice-over for narrator. Relator refers to the facilitator, the person organizing the screening and introducing the film (translator's note).
7 "Sub-hombre" (sub-man) in the original Spanish narration is missing from the English subtitle (translator's note).
8 See Chapter 8 in this book for an extended discussion of the different critical visions of these three authors.
9 Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was an Argentine pedagogue, politician, and military man. He became president of Argentina and was the first to introduce positivist education in the country.
10 The images of the healing are also present in *El camino hacia la muerte del viejo Reales* (*The Path Towards Death of Old Man Reales*) (Vallejo, 1971), but they are not understood in the same way as Getino and Solanas do.
11 In the book edited by Waugh (Neale 1984) about militant political documentaries from different countries and periods, no article mentions the presence of comical or humoristic films.
12 See Chapter 4 in this book.
13 See Chapter 11 in this book.
14 For a comparative study of Fanon's book and the film, see Chapter 6 in Campo (2012) and Chapter 2 in this book.
15 Here and in the sections titled "testimony," I am referring in a wide sense to testimonies (autobiographical accounts) and also to speeches that may not make reference to lived events.
16 See Chapter 9 in this book.
17 See Chapter 7 in this book.
18 In Argentina, "Justicialism" is another word for Peronism.
19 Revolución Libertadora (Liberating Revolution) refers to the de facto military government that ousted Perón in 1955.
20 In reality, it refers to the landing of the yacht *Granma* in the South East of Cuba. Playa Girón was the place where in 1961 mercenaries paid by the CIA tried to invade Cuba.
21 Analyzing this sequence, Mariano Mestman highlights that "these testimonies are incorporated and articulated by the argumentation offered by the narration" (2008: 39).
22 Author's interview with Getino (Campo 2013).
23 Inverting in the interpretation the words "mar" ("sea") and "cielo" ("sky"). "Blue, a wing the colour of the sky, blue, a wing the colour of the sea" is the correct order of the words in Aurora.
24 "Gorilas" was the name given to extreme anti-Peronists.
25 Apparently, the director offered the images to Solanas when he was editing the third part of *The Hour*. On the relations between Solanas and Getino and the Italian director, see Campo (2013).
26 Colonial subject that sympathizes with the interest of the metropolis (translator's note).

Chapter 2

Fanon and *The Hour of the Furnaces*

Ignacio Del Valle Dávila

Frantz Fanon is one of the authors most often cited in the intertitles of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 1968). Consequently, his name is frequently mentioned in the large bibliography on this famous Argentine film. Broadly speaking, the brief mentions refer to the influence that the thinking of the Martinican psychiatrist and militant of the independence of Algeria had on the film. At the same time, there are very few works that have tackled in depth the relationship between Fanon and *The Hour of the Furnaces*.[1] Perhaps this lack of interest for the topic stems out of its apparent obviousness: the film assumes explicitly this connection. In their subsequent essays and manifestos, Solanas and Getino often cite Fanon and both filmmakers mention his importance in interviews.

However, the danger of thinking something is obvious is that it may lead to simplifications or may set the issue aside altogether. It is possible to ask, in the first place, what are the specific elements of Fanon's works that establish a dialogue with *The Hour of the Furnaces*? In the second place, how are these citations articulated among other intertextual connections that the film establishes with other authors? Lastly, at what level, content, intertitles, voice-over, images, is the relation between Fanon and the film made by Grupo Cine Liberación (GCL) established? These three questions guide the following pages.

Intertextuality

Despite the large number of textual references from Frantz Fanon that are present in *The Hour of the Furnaces,* Solanas and Getino only cite one of his books in the intertitles: *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). It is quite possible that they had access to the text from a Spanish translation by Julieta Campos first published by Fondo de Cultura Económica in 1963 and then in 1965.[2] The direct quotations reproduce Campos' version, and therefore, it seems unlikely the two filmmakers had resorted to the original French text, *Les damnés de la terre,* published by François Maspero in 1961.

Some sequences in the first part of the film, particularly those dedicated to racism, remind us of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). The allusions to violence as a vehicle for liberation have a number of similarities with those that Fanon includes in *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne* (*Year Five of the Algerian Revolution*) (1959) and *Pour la Révolution Africaine* (*Toward the African Revolution*) (1964). However, the relations are indirect and they seem to be the consequence of the fact that the three books share common ideas with *The Wretched*

of the Earth and are not the result of the filmmakers' direct contact with the books, at least not before the film. In spite of this, it is necessary to note that the three books had been translated into Spanish between 1965 and 1968.[3]

The only exception is a sentence from *Pour la Révolution Africaine,* spoken by the narrator in the third part of the film. It is also the only incorrect quote from the written texts. The voice-over affirms: "colonialism cannot be understood – said Fanon – without *the need* to violate, *to destroy,* to kill" (emphasis added). However, in the book Fanon wrote: "colonialism cannot be understood without the *possibility* of torturing, of violating, or of massacring" (Fanon 1988: 66, emphasis added). These alterations from the original French text and from the Spanish and English translation suggest the filmmakers had no direct access to the book whilst making the film or perhaps that they read it in a language that they did not command. Lastly, the intertitle "to free man" could come from a sentence in the introduction of *Black Skin, White Masks* but it is hard to tell. To summarize, it can be argued that GCL engaged in a direct dialogue with *The Wretched of the Earth* but not with Fanon's completed works.

The analysis of the relations between the book and the film must be historically contextualized. In an Argentine context, it must be located within the left-wing re-readings of Peronism in the 1960s (see Chapter 7 in this book). In a Latin American context, it must be located in the movements for liberation following the Cuban revolution in 1959, which was officialized in 1967 by the Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad (Organization of Latin American Solidarity) (OLAS), the subcontinental arm of the Tricontinental conference of Havana (OSPAAAL 1966).

As Olivier Hadouchi (2012) explains, the Tricontinental movement contributed to radicalize liberation processes in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, the number of wars of liberation rose at the expense of processes of dialogue. Meanwhile, Latin America experienced an intensification of guerrilla movements. Those called to the Tricontinental Alliance and to violence as a form of liberation found their main theorists in Régis Debray and Ernesto Guevara, and renewed the thesis defended by Fanon until his death in 1961. The translation to Spanish between 1963 and 1968 of all of Fanon's books demonstrates this interest although, as Hadouchi pointed out, *The Wretched of the Earth* was the book that, to a greater degree, was a source of inspiration for the Tricontinental (Hadouchi 2012).

In the cultural and intellectual spheres of the 1960s, the debates around the concepts of liberation and revolution were reflected in countless articles, books, films, songs, round tables, and conferences. In the area of film, this process resulted in what Hadouchi (2012: 26) calls "tricontinental films" and Mariano Mestman (2015: 30), "cinematic Third Worldism". Mestman stresses the networks of circulation of militant works via festivals and cinematic encounters. These networks of exchange were also connected to other projects aiming to create regional filmmaking alliances, such as, in the case of Latin America, the so-called Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano (New Latin American Cinema)[4].

These kinds of debates and cultural circuits will have affected the type of appropriation of Fanon's book done by Solanas and Getino. This is the context that must be taken into account and not the subsequent re-readings of Fanon through postcolonial studies. John A. Gronbeck-Tedesco's thoughts about the Cuban readings of Fanon are also pertinent in relation to the film:

> Cubans set Fanon in the ranks of Che and Malcolm X in their defence of anticolonial violence in third world revolution. Fanon also belonged to the school of Caribbean philosophers responsible for rewriting postcolonial ethics: Aimé Césaire, Edouard Glissant, C. L. R. James, and René Depestre leached out the historical links between race, capitalism and colonialism.
>
> (2015: 223)

Gronbeck-Tedesco refers in the passage cited to the article "Frantz Fanon: Man of violence" published in December 1967 in issue 21 of the Cuban magazine *Tricontinental* (reproduced in Gronbeck-Tedesco 2015). The first page of the article, with a doubled photograph of Fanon appears in the prologue of the second part of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, which leads to the supposition that it was one of the readings that guided GCL's interpretation of Fanon's thought. The quote, in the third part of the film, from Stokely Carmichael about the struggle to "humanize" the man of the Third World comes from the article "El Tercer Mundo, Nuestro Mundo" ("Third world, our world") that Solanas and Getino probably managed to access, thanks to the translation published by *Cuadernos de marcha* (*Marching Notebook*) in April 1968 (Carmichael 1968: 113–18). Among other anti-colonialist and third wordlist texts quoted in the film, it is worth mentioning: "Mensaje a la Tricontinental" ("Message to the Tricontinental") (Guevara 1967), whose epigraph by José Martí – "is the hour of the furnaces and only the light will be seen" – gave the film its title; the speech by Guevara in Santiago de Cuba on November 30, 1964; the book *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (Sartre [1965] 1968); the *Second Declaration of Havana* (Castro 1962); the speech by Fidel Castro on March 13, 1966, as well as maxims by Mao Tse Tung, among others. All this without mentioning the ample number of Argentine authors cited and who occupy themselves either with a re-reading of Peronism, the denunciation of the oligarchy, or the promotion of a national mass movement. A significant number of these third-worldist discourses establish intertextual links between them. For example, the famous call by Ernesto Guevara to "create two, three, many Vietnams," included in *The Hour of the Furnaces,* and that summarizes the theory of "focos revolucionarios" (foquism), echoes Fanon's comment about the possibility of achieving "manifold Dien-Bien-Phu" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 55).[5]

This is why I do not believe the comparative study of *The Wretched of the Earth* and *The Hour of the Furnaces* can be understood as the comparison of two isolated variables. Neither do I believe the contents of the former are "transferred" into the latter following the univocal logic of what is commonly labeled as "influence." Other historical elements intervene in this relationship, establishing triangular mediations and transferences between both objects of study (Espagne 2013). In this sense, the metaphors of "reading" and "translation" proposed

by Robert Stam to understand the intertextual logic that a cinematic adaptation of a literary work establishes can be useful to understand the relation between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, although, obviously, we are not really dealing with an adaptation. What is interesting about those metaphors is the active and subjective role taken by the one doing the reading or the translation, as well as the importance of the transposition from the written text to the audio-visual. As Stam highlights, it is "a principled effort of intersemiotic transposition, with the inevitable losses and gains typical of any translation" (Stam 2000: 62).[6]

Direct quotes

Depending on the version of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* we find four or five direct quotes taken from *The Wretched of the Earth.* They start with an intertitle in the prologue to the first part: "colonized man is liberated in and through violence" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 68).[7] It is taken from the first chapter of the book, "Concerning Violence". The second quote, also an intertitle, appears at the beginning of the chapter "The Models" in the first part of the film and corresponds to a selection of some of the last sentences of the book:

> So, comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions and societies which draw their inspiration from her. Humanity is waiting for something other from us than such an imitation, which would almost be an obscene caricature […] we must invent and we must make discoveries.
>
> (Fanon [1961] 1990: 254, elision in the film)

In the second part of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* we find two further quotes. The first one, in the prologue, is taken from the end of chapter four of the book and retakes the concepts of culture and national conscience: "if culture is the expression of national consciousness, I will not hesitate to affirm that in the case with which we are dealing it is the national consciousness which is the most elaborate form of culture" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 198–99). The second and more interesting consists of two consecutive intertitles attributed to Fanon. Although not indicated in *The Hour of the Furnaces*, this quote is really a composite of three fragments from three different paragraphs in the book, whose order has been altered.

> Political education means opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence; as Césaire said, it is "to invent souls" […] The branch meeting and the committee meeting are liturgical acts. They are privileged occasions given to a human being to listen and to speak […] Yes, everybody will have to be compromised in the fight for the common good. No one has clean hands; we are all soiling them in the swamps of our country and in the [terrifying] emptiness of our brains. Every spectator is either a coward or a traitor.

The first sentence comes from the last pages of the third chapter (Fanon [1961] 1990: 159); the second and the third come a little before in the text ([1961] 1990: 157); the last four come a little after the first one ([1961] 1990: 161). The word "terrifying" has been omitted; did Solanas and Getino consider it undesirable to talk of the "terrifying emptiness of our brain"?

Finally, in some versions of the film, the third part ends with a chapter titled "Violence and Liberation" that opens with an intertitle from Fanon. It corresponds to the second and third last sentences of the second chapter of the book

> Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and give the key to them. Without that struggle, without that knowledge of the practice of action, there's nothing but a fancy-dress parade and the blare of the trumpets.
>
> (Fanon [1961] 1990: 118)

This quick survey allows us to make some observations: the direct quotes are not taken from just a few parts of the book; they encompass the conclusion and four of the five chapters.[8] The range of topics quoted from Fanon is also wide-ranging: violence as a vehicle for liberation; the necessity of creating cultural models that do not depend on the West; national consciousness; the political commitment of militant cells; the necessity for organization and direction in the struggle.

The weight of the book as a source for the film is even greater if we consider that Solanas and Getino also quoted directly part of the introduction that Sartre wrote for *The Wretched of the Earth*, "[…] for with us there is nothing more consistent than a racist humanism since the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters" (Sartre in Fanon [1961] 1990: 22). This fragment comes at the beginning of the chapter "The Models," next to the quote from Fanon mentioned before: "So, comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe […]" ([1961] 1990: 254). It is necessary to highlight that the original sense of Sartre's comment is modified in the film, since it seats next to the quote from Fanon that rejects European models. The "us" alluded to by Sartre does not refer to those dominated but to the dominants. The interlocutor constantly defied by the introduction is the European reader. Sartre denounces European "racist humanism," built on a premise of dominance, but he does not propose as an answer another "racist humanism."

Sartre is not the only case of an author other than Fanon who is quoted in *The Hour* via *The Wretched of the Earth.* As Campo has shown (2012: 106) all allusions to Aimé Césaire in the film come from Fanon's book. Specifically, it is a fragment of a theatrical piece, *Les Armes miraculeuses (Et les chiens se taisaient)* (*Miraculous Arms [And the Dogs Went Silent]*) (1946) quoted in the first chapter of the book. In the film, three fragments are used, two in the prologue to the first part (the second without being attributed) and one in the prologue to the third part.

This chapter so far has shown the presence of *The Wretched of the Earth* throughout the film. Solanas and Getino carried out a careful reading of the book and they came back frequently

to it to support their own thesis. However, thus far it has only dealt with what is immediately obvious: the direct quotes. If the most superficial layer of the analysis demonstrates the relation between the book and the film, this is even more evident after a thematic study of *The Hour of the Furnaces.* As Campo states (2012: 118), the film owes Fanon not just some quotes but also, its structure and terminology share "several common elements with *The Wretched of the Earth.*" The diagnosis the film makes of the situation in Argentina, Latin America, and the Third World, and the calls to organized violence as a path to liberation have strong roots in Fanon.

Historical agents: Popular masses, the party, the leader

The analysis of the history of Latin America in the first chapter of *The Hour of the Furnaces* as well as the analysis of the history of Argentina during the years 1945–68 shown in the second part and at the beginning of the third part are guided by a logic that bring us back to the "maniqueism" that Fanon defends as a characteristic of colonial and neocolonial societies. The first words told by the voice-over narration in the film are: "Latin America is a continent at war. For the dominant classes, a war of oppression. For the oppressed peoples, a war of freedom."

If in the first part of the film the study of the past highlights the "treason" by Latin American elites after Independence or, in other words, their economic and political deals with the British and North American powers, in the second and third parts, the focus shifts to mass movements (primarily Argentinean) that oppose this domination. The past is interpreted as a long struggle for freedom taken up by the national masses both when it refers to the nineteenth century – the film includes engravings from the period and a call to fight by José de San Martín – or to the twentieth century. Similarly to *The Wretched of the Earth,* national history for the film is the "history of national resistance to conquest" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 54). Great men are "those who have directed the national resistance" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 54). The engine of change in both cases is the people: "people are getting ready to begin to go forward again, to put an end to the static period begun by colonization, and to make history" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 54). At the beginning of the "Chronicle of Peronism," in the second part of the film, the narration expresses itself similarly "[…] the eternally dispossessed, the marginalised, became the great protagonists of our history."

On the other hand, the oligarchy seems interested in perpetuating the "dead time" alluded to by Fanon. In the chapter "The Oligarchy," in the first part of the film, the Argentine elites are shown in a festive commemoration dressed in Belle Époque clothing and with vintage cars. The luxurious cemetery of La Recoleta is shown to stress their petrification, their immobilism. The accompanying music is the opera "Aurora" by Héctor Panizza (1908). The narration reinforces the idea conveyed by the images: "crystallising history, making time stand still, turning the past into a perspective. Behold the supreme dream of the oligarchy."

In the second part of the film, "Act for Liberation," the analysis of the two first Peronist governments and of the popular struggles after the fall of Juan Domingo Perón in 1955 seems to be structured also from a reading of Fanon. The "people" that "makes history," as Fanon will

say, is not the Argentine popular masses *tout court* but "the Peronist proletariat that forged the Argentine national consciousness" to whom this part of the film is dedicated. The description of the Peronist movement highlights its social successes and its anti-imperialist nationalism, but the critique of the weakness of its multi-classist base and of its bureaucratization has certain similarities with the contradictions of the "nationalist parties" exposed in the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth.* Fanon sees them as progressive but weighted down by improvisation, lacking an ideological base, incapable of radically changing the system of domination, and lethargic due to party mechanisms. These parties find themselves overtaken by the speed of the political dynamics of the people (Fanon [1961] 1990: 49–50).

Despite all this, comparatively, the evaluation of the Peronist movement is much more positive than Fanon's judgment about national parties. It is not only the images of speeches by Perón and Evita and the huge public Peronist demonstrations to the music of the party's anthem – in themselves highly symbolic, given the prohibition of all Peronist iconography at the time – but that Peronism is mentioned twice as the "most advanced" political attempt of its time. Lastly, Peronism is described, with images of Fidel Castro in the background and in a third wordlist re-interpretation of the movement, as "another expression of the continental revolution." Its limitations are justified by the premature crystallization of the movement. Two different instances repeat the same idea: it is a "pioneering event" that came about before the Cuban revolution, the Algerian war, the struggle of Patrice Lumumba, when "the third world was barely a starting project."

The figure of Perón is valorized in *The Hour of the Furnaces* both through the comments of the narrator and through the multiple newsreels of its governments constructed as archive material (see Chapter 9 in this book). He is the opposite to the leader of the national party described by Fanon as someone who utilizes his charisma to betray: "far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people becoming […] the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that Company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 133).

It should be added that the two gravest accusations Fanon makes against national parties are present in *The Hour of the Furnaces*: to make a pact with the bourgeoisie and with the interests of the metropolis and to copy the methods and doctrines of European parties (Fanon [1961] 1990: 134). However, those criticisms are not aimed at Peronism but geared toward the intellectuality opposed to the movement and toward the traditional parties, whose alliance against the "*Justicialist*[9] revolution" will give birth to the Democratic Union. This is reaffirmed by the narration: "the middle classes influenced by the intellectuality and with neocolonial support will only see in Peronism a confabulation Nazi-fascist-Falangist."

Spontaneity and violence

Less nuanced is the reading that GCL makes in *The Hour of the Furnaces* of two essential concepts in *The Wretched of the Earth:* violence as a way for liberation (Chapter 1) and the

strengths and weaknesses of spontaneity (Chapter 2). The second concept is already present in the "Chronicle of Peronism" and it is the central thesis of the second half of "Act for Liberation" entitled "Resistance." One of its chapters is actually called "Spontaneity." The national consciousness of the masses and their spontaneous political action would be in the origin of Peronism. That same spontaneity will surge again strongly in the popular, trade unionist, student, and armed oppositions against the different military and civic regimes that succeeded each other after 1955, after the fall of Perón and the prohibition of *Justicialism*. However, according to the film, the absence of organization, of tactical clarity, and of ideological consistency limited the process of resistance and led to strong setbacks caused by regimes with well-equipped repressive apparatuses. In the face of this, the risk of demoralization and demobilization is evident. The film, in its three parts, makes an open call to violence as the only path for liberation since democracy is seen as a facade manipulated at will by elites and the military (see Chapter 1 in this book). But this violence must be channeled through militant organizations:

> The combativity and heroism of the Resistencia are not enough to overcome the enemy when spontaneity and the initiative of the masses are not channelled within the revolution. All that is left is contestation, resistance, self-defence. The initiative belongs only to the enemy.

These words from the film echo the conclusions reached by Fanon. The "revolutionary channeling" mentioned by Getino and Solanas is similar to the "violence organised and educated by its leaders" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 118), without them mass action will be ineffective:

> You can hold out for three days – maybe even for three months – on the strength of the sheer resentment contained in the mass of the people; but you won't win a national war, you'll never overthrow the terrible enemy machine, and you won't change human beings if you forget to raise the standard of consciousness of the Rank-and-file.
>
> (Fanon [1961] 1990: 108)

The film moves away from Fanon's thinking when it defends hate as a driving force of the liberating violence. It is a factor that is made explicit at the beginning of the film: "people without hate cannot triumph" and in the song that ends some of the versions of third part: "hit and attack without interruption, with hate, with hate and organisation." In both cases, they are references to the "Mensaje a la tricontinental" by Ernesto Guevara:

> Hate as a factor in the struggle; intransigent hate in the face of the enemy that pushes beyond the natural limitations of the human being and transforms him into an effective,

> violent, selective and cold killing machine. Our soldiers must be like that; a people without hate cannot triumph over a brutal enemy.
>
> (Guevara 1967)

Opposing this, Fanon discarded hate as a force for liberation: "[r]acialism, hatred and resentment – 'a legitimate desire for revenge' – cannot sustain a war of liberation." They are elements that the Martinican psychiatrist associates to "giddiness" and to a "quasi-pathological oneirism," that is, to the passions and emotions that feed spontaneity: "the leader realises, day in day out, that hatred alone cannot draw up a programme" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 111).

The victims of repression, those tortured and murdered, the pursued militants, are a theme that criss-crosses *The Hour of the Furnaces*. According to the film, it is through violence that the Argentines and the Latin Americans recuperate their human condition negated by the oppressor. This humanization through struggle is linked to the revolutionary sacrifice that, in its last instance, can lead to the death of the guerrilla fighter. Both elements are condensed in the final sequence of the first part that ends with the famous still shot of the face of a dead Che. Fight, humanization, sacrifice, the three ideas are condensed by the voice-over narration and reinforced with the images of the fallen guerrilla fighter and his comrades.

> When enrolling in the struggle for freedom, death stops being the final instance. It becomes a liberating act, a conquest. Someone who chooses their death is also choosing a life. They are now life and liberation in themselves, totally. In their rebellion Latin Americans reclaim their existence.

As background to that image of sacrifice and resurrection there is a certain Christology, but above all, Fanon and Guevara's image of the "New Man" (see Chapter 5 in this book). However, the words mentioned before seem to be closer to some of the formulations of those concepts in Sartre's introduction to *The Wretched of the Earth* than to Fanon himself. Some examples:

> He knows this; this new man begins his life as a man at the end of it: he considers himself as a potential corpse. He will be killed; not only does he accept this risk, he's sure of it […] We find our humanity on this side of death and despair; he finds it beyond torture and death […]. The child of violence, at every moment he draws from it his humanity.
>
> (Sartre in Fanon [1961] 1990: 20)

The issue of violence is very interesting because it shows how the transfers between the film and Fanon's book are not always straightforward. Quite the opposite, they are part of a dialogue in which other voices take part, sometimes to bring nuance to Fanon's postulates, sometimes to take the film away from them.

Cultural and political models

The issue of national consciousness, mentioned before, is in *The Hour of the Furnaces* very closely related to the debate on national culture. In the chapters that make up the first part, "Cultural Violence," "The Models," and "Ideological War," in the interview with the intellectual Franco Mogni in the second part, and in the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* (1969), Solanas and Getino developed a thesis inspired, to a great extent, by the fourth chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, on national culture. The basic ideas of the analysis are as follows: (1) Colonizing nations have imposed on the rest of the world, together with their economic and political dominance, their own culture to which they attribute a universal value. (2) The intellectual elites in the Third World have been characterized by their cosmopolitanism and by their assimilation of those values that they reproduce mimetically, guided by the acknowledgment of the colonizing countries. (3) This intellectuality has proven incapable of taking on board the popular interests and of developing an organic function that could shape a national conscience and culture. (4) True national culture is the one that rises during and through the struggle for national liberation.[10]

The critique of universalism does not mean, in itself, a rejection of the models of western art but a critique of their hegemonic imposition and of their acritical reproduction. Both are seen as forms of symbolic domination. This appears to be the suggestion of one of the intertitles of the chapter "The Models": "Culture will be a universal fact, at the service of all mankind, when we have destroyed imperialism at universal level and class society."

However, there is one aspect of Fanon's analysis that is not considered by GCL. Fanon recognizes the existence of three phases in the development of a national culture: the first one corresponds to an assimilation stage of the dominant culture by the intellectuality (Fanon [1961] 1990: 178). The second is a moment in which the national intellectuality breaks with those models and focuses on the recovery of the national past, producing works where the exaltation of the customs and traditions does not go hand in hand with a stronger connection with the daily lives of the people, thus, producing an art characterized by a "search for exoticism" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 178–79). The third phase is the one in which the intellectual shakes the people, aiming to become "the spoke person for a new reality" through a "fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 179). The nationalism of the second phase is not given any consideration in *The Hour of the Furnaces*. Perhaps this is due to its search for demanding of the people and of society openly defined positions. GCL establishes a stricter dichotomy than Fanon: one is either for the system or against the system. All artistic expressions that do not assume explicitly a position like, for example, the experimentalism and avant-gardism of the Di Tella institute are classified as universalist and anti-national, in the same category as advertising, the mass media, and the cultural industries.

There is, or seems to be, a fundamental difference between the book and the film with respect to the sort of dependency they describe and within which it is possible to insert the debates about national culture. The Argentine film describes a neocolonial situation and

emphasizes, as Campo (2012) notes, some theses that remind us of the Latin American Dependency Theory. Conversely, in the analyses of *The Wretched of the Earth* the relation of domination privileged is colonialism. However, it will be reductionist to limit the book exclusively to this. Although the book was published before the end of the Algerian war, Fanon wrote at a time in which most African nations had already gained independence. In the book, this situation is explicitly acknowledged and the author offers multiple analyses of the challenges the new African republics face in a situation that he characterizes as neocolonial (Fanon [1961] 1990: 133). Thus, African national bourgeoisie are accused of covering themselves with the "masque of neocolonialism" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 122) for making pacts with the former colonial powers while the new nations rely on international loans that accentuate their dependency:

> The economic channels of the young state sink back inevitably into neocolonialist lines. The national economy, formerly protected, is today literally controlled. […].every three or four months the chief ministers themselves or else their governmental delegations come to the erstwhile mother countries or elsewhere, fishing for capital.
>
> (Fanon [1961] 1990: 134)

Strictly speaking, political independence is not the factor that, for Fanon, leads to achieve liberation.

The city and the countryside

There is throughout the first part of the film a tension between the rural and the urban, which is expressed through the moving images and the commentary of the voice-over narration. The flatness of La Pampa is stressed by a tracking shot from a moving vehicle and it alternates with successive and abrupt zooms on the faces and hands of mestizo peasants and indigenous people of all ages. The landscape of the Andes, the coastal areas, and the woodlands of Tucumán are also shot following the same technique as in the chapter "The Country." This geographical and human landscape is in sharp contrast with the verticality of Buenos Aires highlighted by low-angle middle shots of buildings in the chapter "The Port City." The triumphal music at the beginning of the chapter is in sharp contrast with the simple melody of Andean sonority that opens the rural sequences. At the same time, while Buenos Aires is described as the center of the neocolonized bourgeoisie and the middle classes, the roots of the national identity are attributed, generally, to the rural space.

In the second part, once the limitations of the spontaneous uprisings are explained, two militant leaders from Tucumán are interviewed, declaring that rather than to fight for isolated sectorial improvements, it is necessary to fight to gain political power by means of an armed struggled organized by a political leadership. The voice that is more decisively revolutionary comes then from the countryside. In those sequences, the narrator speaks

of peoples' "memory" while we see images of peasants behind some rails and children in a soup kitchen.

It is interesting to note that the dichotomy countryside-city runs similarly through the whole of *The Wretched of the Earth.* Fanon sees in the city the source of colonial domination and, later on, of the neocolonial bourgeoisie. Contrarily, in the countryside there is a stronger conscience of resistance and it is there where, faster and more lively, the movements against oppression arise (Fanon [1961] 1990: 88–92). GCL's movement to the interior of the country during the making of the film realizes at the same time Fanon's wish for an encounter between the urban militancy and the masses of peasants.

Continuing with this dichotomy, Buenos Aires is described as a city "with its back to the country, open to the great river." There is a clear effort to associate the Argentine capital with the epicenter of neocolonial domination the country is subject to. It is described as a "white city of a mixed-raced America" and "appendage of the great metropolises" with "seven millions of inhabitants and a million foreigners," a population made up of "public officials, professionals, overseers of colonials, middle-men for colonials, foremen for colonials." In the film then, Buenos Aires becomes "the city of the colonials" of *The Wretched of the Earth.* The similarities with many passages of the book must be noted. Fanon notes: "The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 30), inhabited by "overseers, workers, intellectuals and traders" and whose bourgeoisie functions as "transmission belt" and "business agent for Western bourgeoisie" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 122).

In the second part of the film, Buenos Aires is described twice as "the city of stone and iron." First, when the proletariat "takes" it: "hundreds of thousands of workers spontaneously assault the city of stone and iron." Then, when the opposition celebrates the fall of Perón: "the city of stone and iron lives its party." The film does not only reproduce the dichotomy oppressor-oppressed, but again, it describes the capital with the words Fanon uses to describe the "settler's town": "the settler's town is a strong-built town, all made of stone and steel" ([1961] 1990: 30).

Reverberations of Fanon can be felt in the interest to shoot, in successive zooms, the statues and monuments of Buenos Aires, particularly, the statue of Carlos María de Alvear and the mausoleums in the Recoleta cemetery. "Here the statues are more deserving of distrust than of respect," ironically comments the voice-over. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, statues serve the purpose of demonstrating the power of the colonizer over the territory: "a world of statues: the statue of the general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 40).

The critiques in the first part of the film against faith-healers, fortune-tellers, priests, and, in general, against popular beliefs can be found too in other films of the period, such as *Viramundo* (Sarno, 1965). There are a number of similarities between them, since Edgardo Pallero worked in the production team for both films. However, the denunciation of this popular "alienation" that is signified by these practices can also be found in Fanon's book ([1961] 1990: 43): "Believe me, the zombies are more terrifying than the settlers; and in consequence the problem is no longer that of keeping oneself right with the colonial world

and its barbed-wire entanglements, but of considering three times before urinating, spitting, or going out into the night."

Other paraphrases can be noted: "geography of hunger," mentioned in isolation in one of the intertitles of the first part, could come from a sentence in the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth:* "The mass of the people struggle against the same poverty, flounder about making the same gestures and with their shrunken bellies outline what has been called the geography of hunger" (Fanon [1961] 1990: 122). In the chapter "Neo-racism" from the first part of the film, the indigenous Matacos are described as "inferiorized, but not convinced of their inferiority." These are the same words that Fanon uses to describe the colonized in relation to the settlers (Fanon [1961] 1990: 41). Furthermore, Fanon's maxim "we must create, we must invent" is not only quoted directly in the chapter "The Models" but its echoes come back later on in the film. In the second part it is mentioned: "the proletariat invented or discovered new forms of struggle" and in the third part, the public is asked to "invent our revolution." It is also worth noting that the sentence will be used as epigraph in the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema.*

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of *The Hour of the Furnaces* and *The Wretched of the Earth* allows us to establish the existence of a profound intertextual relationship between the two. The book is one of the main sources of theoretical and thematic inspiration for the film. It played a significant role in establishing the criteria and setting the basis from which to orientate the study of the Argentinean and Latin American reality the film proposes. It was also used as a theoretical reference for the revolutionary violence defended by GCL in 1968.

To a great extent, it is in the secondary details, in the brief paraphrases where it is possible to realize the degree of closeness that Solanas and Getino established with the book while writing the script and editing *The Hour of the Furnaces.* Those aspects show how the allusions to Fanon pervade the whole film. It could be possible to affirm about the film, as José Carlos Avellar (1995: 117) does in relation to the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema,* that: "from time to time a sentence in Solanas and Getino's text sounds like a transcription or a presentation of something learnt with Fanon."

The group's objectives with the film can also be associated to Fanon's thought. GCL saw itself as a "militant cell" that, through its work, facilitated the political education of other "ground cells." The intention was to help to develop a national consciousness and to break the logic of spontaneity with a film that assumed a pedagogical function in the political education of the public. This is why in the second and third parts, the film adopts an explicit character of film-act: work destined to foster debate within a militant cell. As Fanon explains, "[t]here must be a basis; there must be cells that supply content and life. The masses should be able to meet together, discuss, propose and receive directions" ([1961] 1990: 157).

Overall, there is a significant difference between Fanon and GCL in the analysis of the political and social situation. The former, putting into words his thinking, elaborates a discourse that, broadly speaking, comes out of an observation of the need to build a theoretical schema. The latter starts with a theoretical schema – from Fanon and others – as the basis of their observation. The ways both "invent and create" represent, in this sense, opposing positions.

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Notes

1 Javier Campo (2012: 104) already noted this surprising lack of bibliographical sources: "there have not been studies that included an analysis of 'how much' of Fanon there is in *The Hour* …." His book is one of the exceptions. The work of José Carlos Avellar (1995: 115–73) is also worth mentioning.

2 The same translation was published in *La Habana,* in 1965, by the publishing house Venceremos. However, it is more likely that Solanas and Getino read the Mexican or Argentine editions, both published by Fondo de Cultura Económica.

3 *Peau Noir, Masques Blancs* was translated into Spanish in Barcelona, by Editora Nova Terra, in 1966, with the title *¡Escucha blanco!* (*Listen, you White!*). Two years after, the Instituto del Libro, in La Havana, published it under the title *Piel negra, máscaras blancas* (*Black Skins, White Masks*). In 1968 the publishing house Era in Mexico City published *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, under the title *Sociología de una revolución* (*Sociology of a Revolution*). Lastly, *Pour la Révolution Africaine*, a collection of Fanon's writings published by Maspero, was translated by Fondo de Cultura Económica and published in Mexico in 1965 as *Por la revolución Africana*.

4 The relations, quite often problematic, between some of the members of GCL and other actors of the New Latin American Cinema or of other third wordlist movements are important to understand the effect that their first film and their ideas and manifestos had in the cultural debates of the time, but they cannot be addressed here. For a more detailed analysis, see Mestman (2014, 2016).

5 As Hadouchi remembers, the book *The Wretched of the Earth* arose such interest in Ernesto Guevara that he wanted to write the introduction to the Spanish edition (Hadouchi 2012: 23–24)

6 I am not unfamiliar with the writings of Jim Pines/Paul Willemen (1989) and Mike Wayne (2001) on the presence of Fanon's ideas in the film. This issue has already been studied in the Introduction of this book.

7 The English translation of the book moves away significantly from the original French edition and even from the Spanish edition. In the English edition some sections have been modified, causing changes in meaning and sentences have had some parts omitted. The chapter uses the English version published by Penguin and the Spanish version used in the film.

8 The exclusion of the last chapter, "Colonial war and mental disorders," is not surprising since in it Fanon associates some psychiatric cases in Algeria with French colonial domination

9 Justicialimo (Justicialism) is another way of referring to Peronism (translator's note).

10 The limitations of this chapter prevent me from dealing in detail with an issue that deserves more attention. I refer the reader to the analysis of intellectualism and the relations between Fanon and Cine Liberación that I have published previously (Del Valle Dávila 2014: 321–30).

Chapter 3

A Look from Literature on Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's *The Hour of the Furnaces*

María Amelia García and Teresita María Victoria Fuentes

By way of introduction

In the context of the classic binomial fiction/non-fiction that literature proposes as alternative to group its productions, a number of points of contact are present, which also involve documentary cinema and journalism as new discursive practices that open the way for exchanges. This new way of narrating gives rise to a multiplicity of gazes and to an ambiguous play of readings: journalistic texts can be read as fictions and non-fiction adopts features of historical narratives. And all these discursive varieties are also part of the field of literature.

On the other hand, the devices of documentary film leave their mark in the new non-fiction texts, challenging the reader and allowing the construction of a critical perception of reality. The new voices within the Argentine narrative (Drucaroff 2012) introduce multiple strategies to deal with the themes that interest them today. Productions freed from pre-established canons place themselves as readings that mobilize beyond the act of thinking. The significant hybridization of genres, styles, and modes of expression in contemporary culture opens spaces to question the limits imposed by traditional classifications. Invention is not thought about in absolute terms, dialogue and the weaving of existing resources, combined, produce a new aesthetic object, one that, perhaps, is in accordance with the new mechanisms for reception.

It is in this dialogue where we can discern recurrent features in emblematic Argentine works both of literature and film. If we can understand that "any utterance is a link in a very complexly organised chain of other utterances" (Bakhtin 1986: 69), it is then possible to frame the concepts of the new modes of artistic creation thinking about a re-elaboration that calls into play what came before, confronting, questioning, recuperating, or reformulating it (Drucaroff 2011). In this context, the discussion will recuperate certain ties between Argentine literary productions and the documentary *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Solanas and Getino, 1968). The analysis will focus on the construction of an epic history framed by the subjectivity of its collective characters that, from the discursive aspects of the documentary-essay, shapes a message that even today – 50 years later – is still current, prominent, and mobilizing.

The Hour of the Furnaces in perspective

Solanas and Getino's *The Hour of the Furnaces* is the main film of Grupo Cine Liberación (Liberation Cinema Group). Aiming for the transmission of a mobilizing message, the film included the most varied mechanisms to increase its effect and in this way complete a

documentary representing the vision of the country held by its creators. Taking as a starting point Sylvia Saitta's analysis suggesting thinking of the essay as one of the discursive genres most apt to transmit a subjective exegesis of a reality in crisis, the path chosen by Solanas and Getino is clear. They framed their film as an attempt to tell their vision of reality as well as their proposal for change. Structured around the methods typical in argumentation and dealing with a manifest thesis from the first seconds of the film, *The Hour of the Furnaces* postulates itself as an essay that, through fragmentation and editing, provokes and impacts (see Chapter 12 in this book).

Recuperating Català Domènech's definition of the film essay as a cinematic and political reflection on reality through images and sounds, it is possible to analyze the internal structure of the film starting from the deployment of key mechanisms that constitute an argumentative discourse. In this way, the directors freely use the material in different formats at their disposal, composing their message in a creative way. It is evident that they do not just want to convince, persuade, or incite but that they also want to educate and instruct people. In this sense, the interviews and direct testimonies from political protagonists and militant comrades from different unions add validity and credibility to the message. To strengthen even further the argument, the voice-over narration, with a clear didactic intent, contextualizes and explains with specific information the statements: "the comrade, militant of a textile union, speaks of the first spontaneous mobilization in the Great Buenos Aires area in September 1955; the same day the oligarchy took up power."

In the words of Emilio Bernini, "the film does not, in any way, invite identification with what is shown, it asks to follow the argumentation of the voice-over that explains the meaning of the increasingly striking and fast editing of the images" (2007: 26). And it is in this sense that the narrative constitutes its own and precise form, impossible to classify from the point of view of the classic discursive structures. These are complex issues that are further explored by Humberto Pérez-Blanco in his chapter in this book.

Without losing sight of the complexity, variety, and re-formulations arising from the Bakhtinian theory of intertextuality, it is possible to affirm that *The Hour of the Furnaces* proposes a conclusive intertextuality with the intention of creating a new cinema by bringing into action texts still alive in the collective memory. In this dynamic editing, the intertitles play a crucial role showing quotes from San Martín, Che Guevara, Fanon, Castro, Scalabrini Ortiz, and Perón, together with filmic citations as an homage to other filmmakers. To top this criss-crossing, the title *The Hour of the Furnaces* refers to a verse by José Martí, a Cuban poet, revolutionary and intellectual and considered the father of literary modernism in Latin America. The words are re-signified in turn by Che Guevara, who used them as epigraph in a message from 1967.

Intertextual relation goes through two stages: it is first recuperated as a fragment from its original text and then it is manipulated in a first instance to foster a political discourse. In a second moment, it becomes homage to the speaker of the original discourse, a chain of meanings that charges semantically an idea of vital importance for the possible recipients of the film. This intertextuality implies then an organization of the discourse aimed at

producing a cognitive impact, "awareness rising" on the spectator. The narrative voice utilizes a metadiscourse that, through the manipulation of forms, images, and voices, compiles and re-signifies information to postulate a thesis.

As a paratextual element that pretends the entry of the reader to the proposed fictional world in a literary work, the title plays the role of access gate. Appealing, creative, enigmatic, or suggestive, this starting point of the reading proposes a hidden universe that will be revealed as the story advances. In non-fiction literature, a number of impacting elements are incorporated in the title that anticipates, to a certain degree, the fact to be revealed and induces one to imagine the subjacent thesis in the work. A similar device is employed by Solanas and Getino when deciding the title of their film. The choice of Martí's sentence becomes a metamessage for the spectators summoned. The film has a predetermined addressee and appeals to them from the start. Metaphorically and repeatedly, the image of the title is recuperated in the fire as an emblematic icon throughout the whole film, symbolizing revolution's transformative power.

Another mechanism of the argumentation used by the filmmakers is contrast. This play of significations calls for an active and competent addressee, capable of associating antagonistic ideas. For example, the quote from the left-wing historian Juan José Hernández Arregui used in the film, "is near the time in which the uncivilised will educate the civilised," is opposed to the dichotomy civilization versus barbarism as stated by Sarmiento in his work *Facundo* (1845). *The Hour of the Furnaces* inverts the roles and locates its gaze from a different optic.

Epic cinema

Among the multiple mechanisms employed by the directors to channel their message, the creation of collective characters takes on a greater artistic value. Individual subjectivity takes a back seat and men get together to act as a group, as part of a great, collective, and social heroic deed. Individuality fades and a collective hero is assembled representing the people and the working classes.

Classic epic, as a narrative genre, is understood as a recreation of facts, both legendary and fictitious. These, centered on the deeds of heroes, are composed – generally – of real fights, but also imaginary ones, with the clear objective of extoling and honoring people – the people for whom this message, in the form of a fiction, has been created. It is in this aspect where the invention needs to justify itself to get as close as possible to the discourse of the real. From the origins of the genre, poets felt the necessity to protect the veracity of their accounts in prologues, establishing a first contact point with the reader from a space allocated to pre-announce absolute truths.

The Hour of the Furnaces, as an epic narration, contrasts image and voice-over leaving on the hands of the recipients the final construction of the message. But, where is the absolute truth? How to guarantee that the specific referent of the message to be transmitted reaches its destination? Solanas and Getino, with the objective of legitimizing the correct reception,

the desired interpretation, planned stoppages in the projection of the film to encourage the debate and strengthen the essence of their artistic intervention: to promote the struggle. The spectator was summoned to leave aside any passivity and was not only incited to debate or to be verbally critical but also, as a last instance, to take arms: "every spectator is either a coward or a traitor".

The Hour of the Furnaces and literature

Well into the twentieth century, men of letters in Argentina define their identity from their condition as writers. Argentine literature is born when its antagonist appears and works better when it is written *against* someone. As an example it is worth mentioning the work by the writer Esteban Echeverría's *El matadero* (*The Slaughter House*), one of the precursors of the Latin American short story and considered the first Argentine example of the genre. Written between 1838 and 1840, it was only published in 1871. According to Ricardo Piglia:

> Echevarría did not publish the work because it was fiction and fiction had no place within Argentine literature in the way it was thought of by Echeverría and Sarmiento. The lies of the imagination – in the words of Sarmiento – must be left aside so prose can achieve its efficacy and fiction seemed antagonistic to a political use of literature.
>
> (1993: 10)

It is possible to think then, as Piglia (1993: 9) suggests, that literary fictions appear in Argentina as an attempt to represent the world of the enemy, of the different, of the other. "It is called barbaric, gaucho, indigenous or immigrant." In this way, the discourses intertwine each other attempting to reflect the social problems that frame them and adapting characteristic features from autobiography, biography, and the historical fiction. At the same time, they construct their proposals from a fictional form. Literature presents itself then from its origins with a clear, committed function: it is literature with an intention to provoke.

The Hour of the Furnaces has been considered as an emblematic work of Latin American cinema. It is a landmark around which all analyses of later productions revolve. In the same way as the previous paragraph thought about the origins of literature, the film seduces from several possible angles: documentary, political essay, literary essay, collage, intertextuality. If it is correct to think, as Harold Bloom considers, that the power of an original text can be measured in the texts in which it is reincarnated, *The Hour of the Furnaces* has assured its place in the canon. Its potency is reflected in subsequent films through the recreation of images that evoke it.

Solanas and Getino also represent the world of the other. The dichotomy in the structure that constructs the film (they and us) favors the elaboration of the notion of exploited people that does not have enough with breaking the imperialism sustained from abroad (Campo

2012). The enemy is represented, pointed out, accused, and judged. Cinema in *The Hour of the Furnaces* is therefore film with a clear political intentionality, film and commitment, film that incites. There are then two artistic spaces that coincide and two origins with a deep militant feel. Literature and cinema in Argentina travel paths that liberate borders, allowing for the coexistence of mechanisms and strengthening the idea that makes of hybridity a new phenomenon in postmodern times.

Understanding that any historical account reconstructs the past according to "chosen fragments" (Erausquin 2008), we accept that *history*, as human endeavor, affords different perspectives. But the past of the country does not live on only thanks to the work of historians. On the contrary, it does so, primarily, through the collective memory of the people, it is found in books, films, places, and buildings in what can be called the spirit of an epoch. History and myth are closely connected because, in the vast majority of cases, they contain teleological constructions that involve known individuals and/or others that are raised as icons for social groups. We consider myth, then, defined as "political myth" that in reality surges from the ideological discourse that impregnates the life of a society. These political myths do not have a sacred value, as in primitive societies, because in these secular societies power is recognized only by certain groups. Myth, in this sense, as Estela Erausquin considers, would not be a false account, nor an invention or fable but a manner of perceiving reality tinged by ideology and affect.

Trombetta and Wolkowicz suggest that *The Hour of the Furnaces* "tries to establish a mythology and a genealogy of Peronism as a socialist and revolutionary movement" (2009: 404). 50 years after its making, the film allows us to capture the reflection of that reality lived by those militants who were part of the social and political circumstances of revolutionary Peronism. It accounts for a perception of that reality and captures in this way the history of a people from their collective memory. In this sense, the connections of Solanas and Getino's film with the literary sphere are multiple, allowing one to rethink, from the perspective of art, the place of the oppressed in the national and Latin American space. In the same way, in the nineteenth century, Gaucho literature, from poetry and novels, wanted to reincarnate the voice of the gauchos and its adventures.

The figure of the gaucho represents a key symbolic role in the culture of Argentina. It is a paradigm for shaping the national sentiment; it establishes and gives direction to a possible axis in the identity web. This protagonist role is the reason why it is convened by literature and film when trying to contrast a local figure against others defined as hybrid or tainted by their European slant. The most significant example of all this is José Hernández's creation *Martín Fierro* (1872), which recuperates the image of a free gaucho that, after being conscripted by the Argentine Army to fight in the border, becomes a deserter and a runaway from the law. However, his actions are justified by the successive injustices the character endures due to numerous actions by different governments that hardly ever benefitted him. It is, by the way, a prolific work if we think of the intention that lies underneath in Hernández's creation and of its future projection or if we think about the numerous and varied interpretations of all sorts that have been made in the most diverse fields (Jitrik 2009).

It is not a coincidence that Fernando Solanas chose the figure of the gaucho as protagonist of his first fiction film, *Los hijos de Fierro* (*Sons of Fierro*), that he finished shooting in 1975 and was premiered in 1984 (a temporal gap explained by a military dictatorship during those years). The film represents, in metaphorical form and from the point of view of its director, the history of Peronism from 1955, when the second democratic government of Perón fell, until 1973, when the proscription of Peronism ended. Solanas recuperates a character that brings a weight of "representativity," and it is promoted to the front of big debates on Argentine culture. It is possible to visualize in this process the constant tension between what is owned and what is inherited, between what is autochthonous and what is acquired. In this sense, the structural framework of the artistic object reflects some productive peculiarities that can serve to analyze the world view that lies beneath the imaginary of its maker. In the words of Rama:

> To restore literary works within the cultural operations of American societies, recognising their daring and significant constructions and the immense efforts to genuinely manipulate the symbolic languages developed by American men, is a way of reinforcing these fundamental concepts of independence, originality and representation. Literary works are not outside cultures, they crown them.
>
> (1987: 19)

In *Los hijos de Fierro*, Solanas transcends again the account of historical events and constructs a reflection on those who fight, on those who sustain their ideals in factories, in trade unions, in clandestine conditions, in the neighborhoods. The protagonist is not the lonely and marginalized gaucho Hernández introduced but organized people, ready to defend their rights. The working class is formed as a collective character and individuals mutate when they join the mass and act consequently. Again, it was an epic cinema that narrates the vicissitudes of the Argentine people and its erratic progression toward the construction of a fairer society.

From the first sequences, the mechanisms implemented in *The Hour of the Furnaces* are recuperated: sound of drums, voice-over that contextualizes history and, in long shot, the collective protagonist, the people. It seems at first to be just a visual metaphor, but it is aural too. In the documentary, it is the people who fight, struggle, and do not give up. And the sound "in crescendo" amalgamates, homogenizes, adding an idea of continuity to the fragmented action. In *Los hijos de Fierro,* the sound of drums triggers the collective voice that repeats, in the way of a folk song, "suena el bombo y a contar la memoria popular" ("the sound of the drum can be heard, let's go and tell the memory of the people") (see Chapter 4 in this book). In the recollection that is constructed, from the standpoint of fiction, intertextuality stitches together verses of the poem *Martín Fierro* with sentences of speeches by Juan Domingo Perón. A combination that reflects Solanas' intention when commenting "the figure that leads is Martín Fierro, and I conceived him not only as another character but as a convergent point, the apex of the pyramid, the synthesis of the representation of an historical conscience (Solanas 1975). As in *The Hour of the Furnaces*, in *Los hijos de Fierro* the debate and the

discussion on the role of art at the service of social change are given a privileged position and images, events and characters are re-signified to crown the combative message.

Latin American boom

The premiere of *The Hour of the Furnaces* takes place in the decade of the 1960s at the time of the literary phenomenon known as the Latin American boom. Historically, the boom has been framed between the years 1960 and 1970. Writers such as Gabriel García Márquez in Colombia, Julio Cortázar in Argentina, Carlos Fuentes in Mexico, and Mario Vargas Llosa in Peru succeeded in placing their literary works in Europe, defying classic conventions of Latin American literature presenting experimental novels. Inside these fictions lies the revelation of a metaphor of power and its corruption that attracted the gaze of readers from other continents and focused their attention on the reality of Latin America. Most of the novels of the boom are essentially avant-garde works. The breaking of the linearity of time and the use of polyphonic narrative voices allowed for the superimposition of different points of views. Together with these mechanisms, the new narrative breaks existent borders between the fantastic and the mundane, accounting in this way for the appearance of a new reality.

Magic realism, the singular aesthetic of the writers of the boom, proposes as distinctive characteristic the introduction of magical elements from a real world. These elements are perceived by characters as normal, coexisting harmoniously with them without affecting their daily lives. The term *magic realism* was used for the first time by the German art critic Franz Roh in 1925 not in relation to literature but in relation to an expressionist style in painting characterized similarly for incorporating elements of fantasy and of irreality in an essentially realist work.

Solanas' style, at the same time committed, oneiric and artistic, has been related many times to the magic realism of García Márquez or Julio Cortázar. Solanas himself advocates for a cinema in communion with other arts:

> I've made fiction films where all arts can be found. My films are a temporal art, linked to rhythm and to music. Furthermore, it is plastic art in movement. The best cinema is the one that expresses the drama or the history in the painting, in the image, more than in the dialogue.
>
> (Solanas 1975)

His comments refer particularly to *Tangos: El exilio de Gardel* (*Tangos, the Exlie of Gardel*) (1984), *Sur* (*South*) (1988), *El viaje* (*The Voyage*) (1991), and *La nube* (*The Cloud*) (1998). For an extended consideration of Solanas' filmography, see Chapter 10 in this book.

Gabriel García Márquez thought that a new system of words was necessary for Europeans to understand the reality of Latin America. He considered that words stripped from their plethoric reference to the Latin American landscape could not account for reality. In the

same way and in the same context, Solanas and Getino told their story using images that broke with the classic notions of cinema. They renovated the hegemonic aesthetic gaze and dislocated the official discourse and, in this way, conquered a new language.

Collage, as a literary method for magic realism, allowed for the configuration of this other reality that coexists with the true one. Solanas and Getino, in their documentary, resort to their experience with commercial cinema and incorporate a number of superimposed brief images edited in quick succession, which led to the creation of a discontinuous narrative.

It is in this work of construction that aims to show us the other reality, the one we cannot see at first glance, where irony plays a key function. The Mexican Carlos Fuentes in his key novel *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (*The Death of Artemio Cruz*) (1962) superimposed narrative voices to construct, using irony as method, the true history in all its facets. In the same way, Solanas and Getino included a sequence with a strong impact: the public presentation of the book *Crónicas reales* (*Royal Chronicles*) (1967) by the Argentine writer Manuel Mujica Lainez in the saloon Pepsi Cola. The voice of the journalist questions the writer and Mujica Lainez manifests his admiration for Europe, acknowledging that his education in clearly European and thanks to it, he has managed to build his career as translator and writer. The images that accompany the interview are a tour, a sort of general panning, that registers those attending the cultural event. The camera stops on significant details: pearl necklaces, sandwiches, drinks, hairdos, hats, and headdresses. Just in case the message is not clear enough, the voice-over narration clarifies: "Mujica Lainez's thinking is also that of an intellectuality subject to the neocolonial power […] a hybrid elite, depersonalized, always disguised as something …" (see Chapter 1 in this book). Irony that is multiplied by recuperating the argument of *Crónicas reales*, work in which Mujica Lainez sketches out the history of a fictitious dynasty with a ludic and satiric tone, making fun of the importance given traditionally to the historical tale. The novel accounts for the comical possibilities of an excursion through Europe in a tone of ingenious mockery. Montage of fiction and reality, that like stripes in a lattice, shapes the final message.

Epistolary reflexions

In the world of literature, the epistolary genre has marked epochs and interests. It is a textual typology that allows for a reflexion from the most intimate of narrative voices tolerating absolute freedom in the search to validate an idea. In the decade of the 1960s, this practice gains new vigor and historians turn to reading letters to investigate the social context and the repercussions of the events under investigation. In the majority of cases, they transcend their function as mere means of communication in order to constitute real manifestos that could enunciate, in an organized manner, ideas and preoccupations. This device is not passed over by Solanas and Getino who, in the third part of *The Hour*, include the reading of letters from militants as a way of reflecting and to underpin the final conclusions. This

discursive operation permits the incorporation of the voice of others with a structured and thought out message as a unit of full meaning. They also add an important truth value, essential in any documentary film.

The letters, as well as the direct testimonies, together with the speeches and the first person accounts, constitute the device that enables the rhetoric construction of the message in the film. It is clear though that in all evoked referent there is a creative work carried out through words. Used with propagandistic and militant undertones, in this part of the film words become, over the power of the images, the vital tools. Julio Troxler recounts, from the place where the events took place, his experience of surviving the shooting in the rubbish dump of José León Suárez in 1956. Direct narration to camera that adds a strong element of shock and feeling to the scene but the words transmit a text created with tact and care:

> After the shootings I stayed expectant in a nearby place […] they all lay there lifeless […] peppered with shots in a pool of blood […] the important thing to point out is that I was one the many citizens who, for the single fact of defending and ideal and defending the constitution, was subjected to that type of treatment (torture). In spite of the killings by firing squad and the tortures that many Peronists were subjected to, we are willing to continue this struggle to its ultimate consequences. In this sense, we are absolutely in solidarity with our brothers in Latin America, Asia and Africa […] and we have not the slightest doubt that in this struggle we shall have success and we will have left a better world for those who come after us.

Doubtless, there is a direct testimony but also an agreed linguistic construction looking for the propagandistic rhetoric formulated by Peronism. This last part of the documentary assumes violence as the only possible path to achieve revolution, and it is within this framework that the narrative voices become plural. Troxler re-signifies his experiences from the use of an inclusive plural and, like a traditional epic hero, reconstructs the tale as a journey and a process. The ending must be written between all of us.

A similar intention is present in the letters that only include the initials of their authors. In the first one, the message is structured around a question, "what are we lacking so we can regain power?" And the answer is "I only know what we have in excess: ingenuity." The assumption is then that it is naïf to think in a legal outcome, it is the time to move beyond dialogue. Connoted and subliminal, the path suggested is intuitively known: violence. And the author of the text cannot be identified with certainty since it does not represent anybody in particular but the group functioning as collective memory of all those who fought for liberation.

The letter from the intellectual presents its message in the same way. Anonymous but plural, it talks of a time for action, a time for change that must arise from inside each one of us. It is right to remember that one of the most common characteristics of the epistolary genre is the possibility of interaction, exchange, or debate. Facing an absent interlocutor, the texts of this third part of the documentary convene to construct the answer and it is in that

induced directive where underlies the proposal hoped for: it is necessary for an organized and planned force to drive the armed action. No more ingenuity or spontaneity. It is the hour of the furnaces.

This thesis is confirmed by the proposal of the old militant that recuperates his story from the beginning of the twentieth century:

> Well comrades, all that I have just told you is a summary of my struggle fulfilled during a stage […] now I am learning from all of you and I wish with all my heart that you will continue enthusiastically because the fall of capitalism is a matter of a few years, it's already consumed. It's already falling down.

By way of conclusion

Although *The Hour of the Furnaces* does not intend to be a spectacle, from the moment of its inception, and the inception of the political debate surrounding it, it is possible to assert that the presence of artistic devices framing the film have been key for its continuous presence in popular memory. A large part of its international appeal and of the impact of the message Solanas and Getino advocate for is due to this construction that weaves elements of different discursive practices to channel its message.

As in literature, cinema constructs its own myths and places in the collective memory. Memory – a reinvention of the past, of places, spaces, and characters that provide direction for the community. If the origins of *The Hour of the Furnaces* are related to the necessity felt by its creators to give an account of their view of the country and how a change could be consolidated, it is possible to consider that the final product went far beyond this objective. Interchanging readings, discourses, and themes with a literary context signified by the peculiarities of magic realism, by the popularity of the epistolary genre as reflexive discourse and by the constructions of epic heroes as emblematic characters, the directors contributed to shape a final product complex and versatile.

The directors of this film essay (also essay film) delved into the considerable range offered by different strategies of argumentation with the aim of taking apart words and presenting them sometimes with crudity, sometimes with a symbolic meaning. Maybe it was not a conscious effort, but literature interfered to consolidate the ideological meaning of the proposal.

The critical vision of the social and political circumstances offered was fundamental for the dissemination of their ideas. It was literature, with its baggage or new and millenary old resources, which sustained an insistent and renewed at every step narrative to the point where literature questioned itself and therefore engaged in new searches, even in the development of the film itself. Today, 50 years later, the film constitutes an indispensable document of its time because it is possible to read in it, on the one hand, the view of the authors, and on the other, also their silence.

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Chapter 4

Popular Music and Political Militancy in *The Hour of the Furnaces*[1]

Tomás Crowder-Taraborrelli

He didn't hire a single black bodyguard,
he wasn't Lennon or Rucci,
he wondered why his children never invited him out drinking;
someday he'll go back to the source
I don't think he can stop protesting.
He's worried, he lost some of his fame
but he's doing OK.
Giving in.

(García 1983)

50 years after its making, *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968) remains relevant. Its aesthetic and political proposal for liberation continues to feed a popular project that fights to defend the rights of the working class. In its four-and-a-half-hour runtime, Grupo Cine Liberación's film explores the concerns, wishes, and ambitions of Argentine workers and political activists, and urges them to mobilize. Grupo Cine Liberación's objective is no doubt ambitious. Perhaps for this reason, along with its undeniable formal innovation, *The Hour of the Furnaces* is hailed as one of the best Argentine political documentaries and one of the best documentaries of all time.

With this text, I aim to analyze the presence of popular music in the film's soundtrack and its counterpunctual relationship with the image. The filming of *The Hour of the Furnaces* began some months before General Juan Carlos Onganía's coup d'état in 1966. In Argentina, middle- and lower-class youths, like a large portion of North American and European youths, were enjoying rock music and adding momentum to the hippie movement. Valeria Manzano argues that this pioneering generation built a space of rebellion and struggle against the conservative and authoritarian ideology of Onganía's dictatorial regime: "rockers created a 'fraternity of long-haired boys' based on a common taste for rock music and the deployment of bodily styles that challenged the gendered rules of 'manners and morals' on a practical level" (2014a: 395).

Director Fernando Solanas and screenwriter Octavio Getino cite Hegel and the combative philosophies of Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Aimé Césaire, and Patrice Lumumba as some of the thinkers who informed both their political and cinematographic strategies (see Chapter 2 in this book). It is my opinion that Hegelian dialectic, filtered through the Marxism that was in full resurgence during the years of production of the film, the liberation movements in the Caribbean and Africa, and Juan Domingo Perón's Justicialist

doctrine, contributed to the articulation of a revolutionary and anti-imperialist message. Fortunately, many critics have analyzed *The Hour of the Furnaces*, thus advancing research regarding the processes of colonization and neocolonization that Grupo Cine Liberación's film addressed (Aguilar 2009; Buchsbaum 2011; Burton 1978; Campo 2013; Mestman 2007; Podalsky 2011a, 2011b; Stam 1990; Vogel 2005). I will build upon their research in order to reflect on the dialectic movement of the film's revolutionary message, which is actualized in large part by the counterpoint relationship between music and image. The revolutionary message in Solanas and Getino's documentary, as Mariano Mestman explains in detail, had an "agitational" function (2007: 7) and aspired to transcend the screen, to move the spectator, and to give a voice to the people. Similarly, rock musicians wanted to surpass the limits of the stage in order to mobilize the audience and transform them into consumers of their albums and sympathizers of their vital rebelliousness. This essay attempts to determine Grupo Cine Liberación's perspective on rock music's potential as a movement of political and social transformation. In which way does the selection of musical genres complement the film's ideological discourse? How do rhythm and the lyrics of popular songs relate to the movement of the bodies of different social classes that are represented in the documentary? These are some of the questions I wish to explore in this chapter.

The film-act, the film as a detonation, is one of the central tenets of militant cinema. For Solanas and Getino, by attending the film's screening, the spectator assumes a "risk" and participates with his or her life experience in a community act (the screening) and is transformed into an actor: "a more important protagonist than those who appeared in the film" (Buchsbaum 2001: 157). The soundtrack, music especially, is not used in *The Hour of the Furnaces* with the intention of entertaining the spectator. Rather, it attempts to reveal the contradictions of an oppressive system that must be dethroned through popular mobilization. The worker must not invest his or her energy in popular traditions that promote a false consciousness, but rather in plastic expressions that allow them to detonate the cultural traditions that oppress them and allow them to transcend the limits of their class in order to attain liberation.

As Alberto Julián Pérez describes, Solanas edited the images and the soundtrack separately and "throughout most of the film superposed the sound to the previously recorded images [asynchronous sound]" (2014: 437). Tzvi Tal suggests that the making of the soundtrack was inspired by the dialectic approximations present in Eisenstein's, Pudovkin's, and Alexandrov's manifestos about sound (2002: 1). For her part, Paula Wolkowicz notes that the soundtrack, particularly the music, formalizes the representation of the people (2008: 11). Critics agree that Grupo Cine Liberación succeeded in incorporating a system of cultural signs into the soundtrack. Borrowing from Graeme Harper's research on the role of sound in the media, I suggest that, in the case of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, the relationship between image and sound is so loaded with cultural content that "audiences can determine even the minor influence of particular local or distant styles" (2009: 6).

It is undeniable that music is a vital element in the construction of the national agitprop in *The Hour of the Furnaces*, and that Grupo Cine Liberación makes use of musical genres that

are representative of sectors of Argentine society: tango, cumbia, and vidala, among others. This "compendium of musical styles," as Robert Stam states, "make a mordant comment on the image" (1980: 288). In a film that is so concerned in granting a privileged space to the working class, the popular should represent an anti-establishment discourse. Julianne Burton explains it as follows:

> The national or people's culture consists of an impulse toward emancipation. "Genuine" national reality is "truth" and any form of expression or communication which tries to express that reality is automatically received as subversive by the dominant sector. It has subsequently become clear that the "truth" of the Argentine situation was more complex and elusive than what Solanas and Getino at one time believed.
>
> (1978: 59)

What were those complexities that Solanas and Getino were trying to capture and analyze? Catherine Malabou rescues the term *plasticity* from Hegel: that which can "grab the whole" (2005: 5). According to Malabou, plasticity can shape a promise of future by contesting a rigid past: "if it *plasticizes* that past – by solidifying or laminating it – it also detonates that past, through what the French call *plasticage* or bombing" (2005: 190, original emphasis). In *Film as a Subversive Act*, Amos Vogel celebrates the effectiveness of *The Hour of the Furnaces* at fusing "a passionate onslaught of radical provocation to jolt the spectator to a new level of consciousness" (2005: 163). For his part, Stam highlights the film's ability to mobilize: "fostering motor and mental activity rather than self-indulgent fantasy" (1980: 254). Part of my argument is that this new level of consciousness that Vogel refers to is contingent on the plastic relationship between music and image, a cinematic exercise that detonates the past, as Malabou suggests. Getino himself mentioned the importance of the plastic in *The Hour of the Furnaces*:

> In unliberated countries, saturated with false information or simply lacking any at all, it is a priority to develop a cinema [or any other tool for communication: literary, plastic, musical, etc.] that can remedy, according to its specific potential, this lack of information that is peculiar to neocolonial situations.
>
> (2011: 46)

In an extensive interview, Fernando Solanas admitted that during production for the first two parts of *The Hour of the Furnaces* they feared the edited material would have too much of a "documentary" tone, and that it was a tedious retelling of inequality in Latin America and the history of *Peronismo*. The challenge was to conceive of an opening sequence that, like a slap to the face, wakes the spectator up. Grupo Cine Liberación was aware of the power of manipulation of the mass media that were trying to monopolize the cultural goods market and immobilize the spectator's creative ability (Podalsky 2004). In a separate interview, Fernando Birri recalls that when he first watched the film in Italy, a few weeks after its completion, the opening sequence made him jump out of his seat. He immediately realized that it marked a break in the

history of cinema for Argentina and the world. One of the aspects that gives this opening sequence its aesthetic and enunciative vigor is the plastic relationship between the bodies of the protagonists, detained and brutally beaten by the police and military, and the percussion that submits them to a choreography between affirmation and negation. It is a proud prelude, exemplifying the Hegelian notion of plasticity that Malabou synthesized – one that can shape a promise of future by contesting with a rigid past (see Chapter 1 in this book).

It should not surprise us that Solanas' intention was to make a documentary with the dramatics and sensuality of an opera. Grupo Cine Liberación brought to the screen Marx's proposal to force "the frozen circumstances to dance by singing to them their own melody" (cited in Ollman 2003: 154). In his essay, "The cinema as political fact," Getino disapproves of the lack of dedication on the part of militant filmmakers during screenings, which he defines as the moment of "instrumentalization" (2011: 48). He adds that these filmmakers lack experience and an appetite for experimentation. During Part Two of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, entitled "Act for Liberation," the film's production team addresses the audience from the screen, noting that one of the reasons why resistance was not effective after the coup d'état that overthrew J.D. Perón in 1955 was the separation between the people and the intellectual class. They proceed to outline the most effective actions to mobilize the proletariat and popular intellectuals and to organize resistance (see Chapter 9 in this book).

The rhythms that sensuously emerge during the opening sequence, an impetuous and somber overture, are sketches of this declaration of aesthetic political principles. Solanas points out that the percussion (African drums) was supposed to refer the audience back to the source of Latin American cultural heritage. With this in mind, Solanas asked acclaimed Argentine percussionist Domingo Cura to bring congas and bongos into the recording studio, and added that he would accompany him by hammering on oil drums. The combination of traditional percussion instruments with the primordial beating of metal gradually accelerates its syncopated rhythm, its dissonance, and its sense of urgency. These drums do not just add intensity to the images of repression – police and soldiers beating civilians – they also give the film its dialectical impulse. Drums are the leitmotif of the movie; they reveal the rhythm of the crowd, of the people in their marches to demand greater rights. In the opening sequence, it is the torches lit by the protesters demanding Perón's liberation that signal a more complex choreography. Their wavering in the night takes us back to pre-Columbine bonfires, to sugar mill fires, to the *montoneras* (Pick 1993: 55). During the times of slavery, when the only means of expression for slaves was their music and dance, drums were speeches that called upon the Gods to come to earth to destroy oppression and free their spirits. The Cuban revolutionary government, or the "first free territory" according to the intertitles, would become a model institution for the recovery of traditional music. Grupo Cine Liberación makes, out of music and the film's entire soundtrack, a language that articulates with plasticity its revolutionary dialectic: *our first word: Liberation.*

The scope of *The Hour of the Furnaces* is continental; this allows the filmmakers to borrow from different musical traditions. Since the film revolves around the central theme of neocolonization in the Latin American territory, the filmmakers fall into the common practice

of identifying the elites with European musical genres, like opera, and the people with popular genres such as cumbia, cuarteto, and folklore. The social and cultural context of the film's production presents other, more complicated challenges, like the rise of rock music as one of the youths' preferred forms of expression. *The Hour of the Furnaces* is contemporaneous with the Vietnam War, the French events of May 1968, the liberation movement in Algeria, and the consolidation of the Cuban revolutionary government, as well as massive music festivals like Woodstock and Altamont Free Concert, both of which are recorded in two memorable documentaries, *Woodstock* (Wadleigh, 1970) and *Gimme Shelter* (Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin, 1970). According to Jeffrey Ruoff, in this decade "[…] the documentary musical emerged as a distinct subgenre, focusing primarily on the sounds of new youth culture of rock music" (1992: 226). For their part, Mara Favoretto and Timothy Wilson highlight the importance of these events for the consolidation of a community identity. The same authors recognize that in societies under an authoritarian regime, like Argentina during the 1960s, popular music unfolds in a dialectical relationship with authoritarianism. In these cases, concerts become spaces for resistance (Favoretto and Wilson 2010: 44).

In Argentina, rock music had reached an audience that was marginal yet significant for the history of popular culture. In this new millennium, very few doubt that Argentine rock (*rock nacional*, as it is commonly known in the country) has been one of the country's most important contributions to Latin American popular culture. For Grupo Cine Liberación, cinema was a revolutionary weapon, which is why Latin American filmmakers had to break with formal traditions. The pioneering musicians of Argentine rock, partly due to their commercial ambitions, also wanted to subvert the musical forms of the previous generations, such as tango and folklore. By the early 1960s, rock groups were writing original songs in Spanish, as opposed to singing loosely translated hits by the Beatles. I do not intend to review the first years of Argentine rock in this text, I will only mention that in 1967 Los Gatos recorded the single "La balsa" ("The Raft"), which sold 200,000 copies in six months, thus becoming the first rock hit sung in Spanish (Manzano 2014a: 401). It is clear that rock groups belonging to this generation understood that music could engender an active audience, as opposed to a passive one. Musicologist Sheila Whiteley posits that open-air concerts were not seen as a simple form of entertainment: "music was considered to say things of cultural and political importance" (in Edgar et al. 2013: 1).

As a young man, Solanas studied music and had ambitions of becoming a concert pianist. Later, he became interested in theater and subsequently film. Before forming Grupo Cine Liberación, Solanas ran an advertising company, which is how the group was able to obtain the fragments from commercial print advertising inserted in the film (Podalsky 2004: 219–20). As part of his activities as an "ad man," Solanas filmed jingles. Thus, he was not unfamiliar with the musical tastes of the wealthy youth from the capital. It is fair to state that Solanas belonged to what José Luis Romero calls the "non-traditional sectors" that rebelled against the conservatism of oligarchical families. Solanas borrows from this cosmopolitan culture, a culture in which, as Romero holds, "friendship and dialogue were being replaced by the conventional forms of public relationships, and in which spontaneity seemed as inadequate

and dangerous as a baroque court" (2001: 371). I turn now to the question: what is the role of rock and modern music in the dialectics of *The Hour of the Furnaces*?

The analysis of the soundtrack proves complex due to the sophistication of the mix of sounds, music, and sound effects. The narrative arc of the documentary culminates with the percussion that gives vigor to the opening sequence. It is clear that the intention of the filmmakers is to close the narrative circle, moving from the oppression of the Argentine working class up to the first signs of its liberation. During this journey, strategically raised as a dialectic movement, different forms of popular music are used with an intransigent rhetorical rigor. It would be too tedious to enumerate and describe the sequences where sound or music play a crucial role, but it is useful to mention some of the sequences in order to evaluate how the message of liberation is articulated through modern music, particularly rock music.

In Part One of the film the voice-over summarizes the social conflict of colonized countries like Argentina as a class confrontation: "the colonial government's exploitation through the bourgeoisie […]" or "[o]ne people was turned against another people." Melancholic melodies played on *quena* transport the spectator to a mountainous region. Despite the fact that the rural population is represented in different sequences as alienated individuals, both social sectors are dominated, as the narrator states, by "an infinity of political, cultural and economic means as efficient as weapons of war." For this reason, the voice-over, for a great part of the film, adopts a pedagogical stance, one of conscientization.

The continent's autochthonous instruments, such as the *quena* or the *berimbau*, are sound recordings that transport a bourgeois spectator to the regions in which original populations survive in misery. In contrast, the poor Latin American imitation of consecrated European musical traditions, such as opera and national anthems, denounces the corruption of the middle classes. In the section entitled "Daily Violence," a teenager waits for his turn to sleep with a prostitute in a poor neighborhood. The camera moves through the reduced living space as we hear a strident rendition of "Aurora," a song in honor of Argentina's flag. The scene's documentary register, despite the fact that Solanas confessed that its protagonists were actors, is subverted by the sly tension between the sexual mercantilism of the encounter and the kitsch glorification of a national symbol, prostituted by a bourgeoisie that condemns the lower classes to commodified sexual practices, to the submission of their bodies (see Chapter 5 in this book).

A triumphal march opens a central sequence in Part One of *The Hour of the Furnaces*. Buenos Aires, the pride of Argentina's middle and high classes, is re-signified as the bastion of the administrative classes of an oppressive system: "a white city in a mestizo America." That is, a social class that denigrates its national traditions and acquires, through money (private university education, social gatherings, memberships in social clubs), the cultural products that allow it to be and feel more valuable than others. Two sections, "The Oligarchy" and "The System," drive the film's central statement, assembling a chorus of violent (due to their discriminating tone) statements. In these few minutes, *The Hour of the Furnaces* displays, with an absorbing degree of sophistication, the resentment of the middle class (those who fancy themselves what they are not), *"el medio pelo"* as Arturo Jauretche refers to lower-middle class *wannabes* in *El medio pelo en la sociedad*

Argentina: Apuntes para una sociología nacional (1967: 193). This social group adheres to deformed conventions of what Marxist theory defines, according to Jauretche, as "false consciousness" (1967: 194). As these two sequences end, what is stated is not only the antagonism and hate between classes that prevails in the country, but also the persistence of these sectors to reaffirm, by means of authoritarianism, a version of the truth that intends to "stop time" and prevent other bodies from "exploding history," as Malabou suggested in an earlier quote.

The section titled "The Oligarchy" takes place at a cattle auction of Sociedad Rural Argentina (The Argentine Rural Society), an institution that defends the interests of the higher classes. Images of a prize bull accompany loose dialogues emerging from the soundtrack and emulating jazz phrasings: "Mitre translated Dante… Roca was a scholar… Justo had the best library of Argentine history in the country" (all of them were presidents of Argentina) says a man with the typical affected tone of the bourgeoisie. These testimonies, recreated by Solanas' friends and family, glorify nefarious characters like General Julio A. Roca, who led the genocide against the indigenous people, the extermination of the polluting bodies. "I'd like to live in the United States… if you want to go out somewhere, you find thousands of places where they play jazz," says a wealthy woman. In this sequence, Grupo Cine Liberación portrays the *porteño* high and middle classes as avid consumers of European and North American fads. They are the executors of a corporate project that oppresses the working class and, through its corporations, floods the cultural market with products for consumption that impose, as García Canclini suggests, "[…] economic and cultural patterns on dependent societies and the popular classes" (1989: 39). In these sequences, women's bodies strut around in bikinis while tanned, big-bellied men read the newspaper in recliners and beach chairs. The melodies that accompany this sequence establish a valuable and delicate discourse with the images, one that centers on the body, class consciousness, and exploitation. As Giorgio Biancorosso suggests, "the strategic use of a melody in a film can accent the frivolous role that a melody can hold in a consumer society" (2004: 192). False consciousness conditions the affinity of these social classes with musical genres, shown off as fashion items, such as jazz, but a jazz that has been separated from its diligent development as a form of artistic expression representative of African-American culture. Bodies under the sun on the Uruguayan coast are one more attribute of an exploitation system that few benefit from; they enjoy time but it is poorly employed to the detriment of their countrymen. The modernity they flaunt is as precarious as the foundations of the national economy that depends on livestock and farming commodities rather than industrial products. They are the livestock that marches toward the slaughterhouse, blind to their own destiny, or as David Harvey would say, they live in the "fetish world of surface signals," like the glassy eye of the slaughtered cow that dominates the screen in a close-up (2014: 6). In the next sequence, a great decision in the construction of the film's narrative reveals a fragment of Joris Ivens' *Le ciel, la terre* (*The Sheltering Sky*) (1965). In it, young Vietnamese people form anti-aircraft cannons with their bodies in order to defend themselves from American bombers. It is a tragicomic ballet of a Third World army that must sacrifice its life in order to liberate itself

from the oppressor. Their choreography aspires to restore their power of conservation. In his "Message to the tricontinental," whose epigraph is the José Martí quote from which *The Hour of the Furnaces* gets its title, Che Guevara celebrated the courage of the Vietnamese people: "What stoicism and courage! And what a lesson for the world is contained in this struggle […] The largest of all imperialist powers feels in its own guts the bleeding inflicted by a poor and underdeveloped country […]" (1997: 3–4).

Violence is bombings, Napalm, coups d'état, proscriptions, police repression, hunger, misery, and illiteracy. The lack of education is the mechanism that mobilizes extermination. The objective of neocolonialism, as the voice-over suggests in the section titled "Cultural Violence," is that the people are not aware of the system that is preventing their economic development and well-being. Through an education that does not respond to the national interests, an ideology is spread, one that justifies sacrifice, surrender. In one of the most recalled sequences from Part One, writer Manuel Mujica Lainez complains about having been born in Argentina, a southern country that is "so far from everything… we're so out of place" Stam sharply summarizes the importance that this testimony acquires in the film: "No professional actor could better incarnate the intellectual bankruptcy of the elite, with its fossilized attitudes, its nostalgia for Europe, its hand-me-down culture, and its snide ingratitude toward the country and people that made possible its privileges" (1980: 258).

This condemnatory testimony made by Mujica Lainez regarding national culture haunts the rest of the film. Aguilar shrewdly notes that Solanas and Getino represent "colonialism as the effeminate and artificial, and artists as 'sinister translators' […]" (2009: 7). How is an authentically national culture created and advanced? In the section titled "The Models," *The Hour of the Furnaces* makes use of two quotes from Fanon and Sartre, which are accompanied by drums befitting a march. The national being must assume its transformational capability, a concept that the film tops off with a quote from Hegel: "The most rational thing that children can do with their toys is to break them." Grupo Cine Liberación aspires to continue Hegelian tradition by refuting Cartesian passivism and replacing it with active reflection permeated by desire. In her book about Hegelian desire, Judith Butler states that, for the German philosopher, the subject can only be known through its actions, understood in its movement (1987: 19). In *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Alexander Kojève ponders the transformational ability Hegel grants to desire: "The human I must be an I of Desire – that is, an active I, a negating I, an I that transforms Being and creates a new being by destroying the given being" (1980: 38). Or as Hegel once stated: "an individual cannot know what he [really] is until he has made himself a reality through action" (Jameson 2010: 62).

Bells ring and we can see a procession in Tilcara. The soundtrack accompanies the crowd with prayers to the Virgin Mary. The montage in the sequence consists of street swindlers and a boy lying down on a cot as he receives a healing procedure that involves a toad. This sequence creates a disorienting, almost surreal counterpoint with the soundtrack. The message is established with great cinematic authority: the lower classes deposit their

hopes of redemption into gambling, religion, and superstition, rather than creation through critical work.

This avant-garde montage is the interlude preceding the epilogue of Part One of *The Hour of the Furnaces*. The section titled "Ideological Warfare" begins with the first chords of "Wachi Wara," a hit by famous vibraphonist and Latin Jazz composer Cal Tjader. The camera travels through Lavalle street, known for its movie theaters, bars, and restaurants in 1960s Buenos Aires. We see posters for films starring Catherine Spaak, Doris Day, and Richard Harris. The narrator states: "In Latin America, the war is waged principally in the minds of men," then adds, in one of the film's most famous lines, "for neo-colonialism, mass communications are more effective than napalm." The filmmakers choose a Ray Charles song to drive the sequence filmed in a record store. An advertisement inside the shop reads "say it with music." Young men and women check shelves as if they were not being filmed. An apparent admirer of the British invasion shows his friend a Franz Liszt record as if it were the latest hit on the market. The record store seems to vibrate with Ray Charles' soul: "I don't need no doctor 'cause I know what's ailing me." The song repeats the chorus with a catchy rhythm – "I don't need no doctor… I don't need no doctor." An intertitle consolidates the section's message: "All means of mass communication are controlled by the CIA." According to Aguilar, this scene is another "inadvertent condemnation" of everything that a consumer-oriented, apolitical modernity represents (2009: 19). It is clear that the decision to use Ray Charles for this sequence is disconcerting. Soul music, blues, and, to a lesser degree, rock were popular genres in the African-American community in the 1960s – a community in which many artists defied the establishment. Popular idols such as James Brown, Jimmy Hendrix, and Lena Horne, who collaborated with Santiago Álvarez in the documentary short *Now* (1965), had declared themselves against the Vietnam War and against the Jim Crow laws that legalized segregation. Artists such as Charles had been victims of the appropriation of their rhythms and vocalization styles by white musicians, in order to fill their pockets and the bank accounts of record labels. In 1961, Charles refused to sing in Augusta, Georgia when he was informed that the dance floor was for whites only. The Ray Charles song in this sequence blends with other tracks and dialogues that resonate with previous sections of the film. The frames of the film attempt to recreate a psychotropic experience. Let us remember that in the 1960s Timothy Leary had already tried LSD and became a guide to thousands of young people that formed part of the hippie movement – the most important counterculture movement of the decade. In Argentina, the press had written about an experiment with lysergic acid conducted by psychoanalysts. Manzano states that this article was mythical "in part because actors, filmmakers, and some left-wing intellectuals underwent it" (2014b: 224). A "happening" filmed at the Di Tella Institute, one of the most memorable scenes in *The Hour of the Furnaces*, submerges the spectator in a psychedelic ritual. As Manzano points out, a large part of the events organized by this cultural institution were considered to be indecent (2014a: 400). Aguilar also questions Grupo Cine Liberación's choice of presenting the happening as a "product of colonialist penetration," as well as the counterpoint between the hippies at the Di Tella Institute and a religious procession in the North of the country

(Aguilar 2009: 5). Asynchronous dialogues attempt to highlight the beliefs of these young men and women: "We don't consider ourselves citizens of a country, but of the world" (see Chapter 11 in this book). A Paul McCartney lookalike mingles with dancers in miniskirts and Go-Go boots. Another young man mentions Artaud and abstract art as cultural registers that challenge the conservatism of the previous generation. Both the right and left in Argentina were aware of these strategies of self-representation among certain sectors of this generation:

> To the military, this existentialist shipwreck during the second half of the 60s was diametrically opposed to their aims for 'the youth' was and it was necessary to repress and neutralize; to the Left it was harmless, a naive way of giving in to imperialism. The strange ethics of the extremes dictated that those outlandish people were an annoying flock of faggots and drug addicts, an ineffective stone in the shoe of the bipolarity of the Cold War.
>
> (Del Mazo 2016: 1)

In the new millennium, Solanas would later recognize that the Di Tella Institute made significant contributions to Argentine culture, like the Contemporary Music Institute that was part of its space (Rombouts 2007: 2).

In this sequence, a series of frames follow each other at great speed: images of starving children, a Nancy Sinatra album cover, a photograph of the Empire State Building, stills from a western, an image of a black man who has been lynched, and the Mercedes Benz logo. Once again, the filmmakers add the Ray Charles track to the mix, in order to drive this amazing sequence. Different sound effects further disorient the spectator and prepare them for the final act. A short sequence appears: a white cop beating a young black man, American president Lyndon B. Johnson and his wife, a Vietnamese child crossing the street through gunfire. "Monstrosity disguised as beauty," adds the narrator. A woman's laughter seems to mock these terrible tragedies. The sound of a machine gun generates a succession of advertising images and frames from movies, culminating in the image of a Vietnamese woman holding her son in her arms. Cut to black. Silence. A folk chant transports the spectator to a cemetery in the North of Argentina and the narrator asks: "What choice is left for Latin Americans?"

The image of Che lying dead is what detonates Part One of *The Hour of the Furnaces* and interpellates the spectator to make the choice of joining the revolutionary movement, a decision that implies risk and the concrete possibility of death. It is a political decision but an existential one as well. The desire for freedom, greater autonomy, and the power to choose is expressed through the negativity embodied in the remains of Che. As Jean Hyppolite states in a text about Hegelian phenomenology: "Man cannot exist except through the negativity of death which he takes upon himself in order to make of it an act of transcendence or supersession of every limited situation" (in Butler 1987: 91). The body takes on an essential dimension in protest movements. The true protagonists of Part Two of *The Hour of the Furnaces* are the student movement, factory occupations, syndicalism, and the resistance of Peronism. In "The Viewer's Dialectic," after somewhat skeptically

analyzing the value of happenings as a strategy to involve the spectator, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea precisely defines what (true) involvement demands: "What this is about, then, is stimulating and channeling spectators to act in the direction of historical movement, along the path of society's development" (Alea 1997: 127). Javier Campo suggests that the struggle is also against an internal enemy, a "national bourgeoisie, loyal guarantor of dependent underdevelopment" (2014: 79).

Despite their musical sensibility, recognizing the importance that popular music had in lending plasticity to the sequences in *The Hour of the Furnaces*, Grupo Cine Liberación did not recognize rock music as an ally in the practice of the film-act. Perhaps absolving themselves from that responsibility, Getino stated "if we had been musicians we would have made music" (2013: 134).

In the years after the distribution of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, Argentine rock would become the most popular of the artistic movements. Independent labels and local producers like Jorge Álvarez, a supporter of left-wing Peronism, would collaborate with artists and bands in a creative process of appropriation of foreign fads and musical traditions (Manzano 2014a: 393). This cultural movement placed the body at the center of the argument, challenging Onganía's subjugation of it under the forces of dictatorship. According to Paul Willemen, Third World filmmakers were unable to transcend their anti-modernist critiques of the technology of mass culture, and thus unable to promote new forms of popular culture (Willemen 1997: 233). In "Skoteinos, or how to read Hegel," Theodor W. Adorno points out that advanced (musical) compositions require temporal constructions in which time can be articulated through the rift between what exists and what is new, between the familiar and the unusual:

> the condition of moving forward is a retrogressive consciousness. One has to know a whole movement and be aware retrospectively at every moment of what has come before. The individual passages have to be grasped as consequences of what has come before, the meaning of a divergent repetition has to be evaluated, and reappearance has to be perceived not merely as architectonic correspondence but as something that has evolved with necessity.
>
> (1993: 136)

The final sequence in the documentary takes us back to the film's very beginning. The narrative structure of *The Hour of the Furnaces* respects the dialectic order described by Adorno and, precisely because of its devotion to this order, with clear aspirations to conscientization, Grupo Cine Liberación denies the potential contribution that a new generation of young artists could have contributed to a liberation movement.

Rock musicians, regardless of whether or not they were political activists, would fall victim to a repressive system that tried to silence them and, in many cases, expel them from the country. It was not until the final years of the last dictatorship (1976–83) that rock musicians, as well as those from other popular genres like folklore and folk, would

become leaders of the democratic recovery and the denouncement of the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the military regime. Although it is difficult to substantiate with academic references, perhaps *The Hour of the Furnaces* helped to encourage young artists to finance their own projects and, in spite of repression, to bolster the brotherhood of politically progressive musicians who, from clandestinity, struggled for individual, national, and transnational freedom.

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Note

1 Translated from Spanish by Pedro Escobar Uribe.

Chapter 5

The Hour of the Furnaces' Sexualized History

Guillermo Olivera

By way of introduction: Temporality, dislocation, discourse

This chapter analyzes achronic temporality and one-dimensional dislocation as aspects of crucial "discursive dominance" in Argentine 1960s and 1970s social discourse, and how these modes of representation of history tended to manifest themselves in the depiction of gender and sexual diversities within the important political documentary production of that era. The purpose of this intervention is, however, neither to deny its undeniable political and aesthetic value nor disregard the extraordinary historical legacy of the 1960s and 1970s film collectives and their crucial impact on the younger generations of documentary filmmakers in the new millennium. Rather, my aim is to critically revisit *how* a historically conditioned social discourse sets limits to the political potential of a period's documentary production: the critique will thus be posited at the level of social discourse rather than at that of the individual filmmakers or collectives involved. Taking *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Solanas and Getino, 1968) as a paradigmatic example within Third Cinema's revolutionary discourse, my contribution analyzes the documentary's discursive construction of an achronic temporality that tended to oversimplify the social field into an already "sutured space" by way of a two-camp paratactic discourse that left no room for the articulation of (critical) differences other than class or national/ethnic antagonisms, and in particular, the implicit disregard of the political potential of sexual/gender differences leading, in these latter aspects, to the reproduction of the dominant discourse, particularly with respect to sexual diversities and dissidence. This is inscribed, more generally, in an achronic representation of history that, by dichotomically opposing structure and agency, tends to confuse the synchronic moment of historical diagnosis with stasis. Within the boundaries of such a limited discursive representation of history and historical transformations, any subject hinting at sexual diversity or dissidence is disregarded or (un)recognized as abject, and as such, is unable to access the necessary threshold of intelligibility and recognizability (Butler 2010) to become an *element*, specifiable in its identity, *outside* the "system" of neocolonial oppression (defined in purely male heterosexist terms). In such a discursive formation that encompassed both right- and left-wing voices, what was ultimately obstructed was the emergence of sexual diversities as political subjects, in that their difference as discursive *elements* was denied, and hence disabled for any possible articulation as *moments* of (a broader counter-hegemonic) discourse. From a combined semiotic and politico-discursive perspective, my reading will make use of Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) analytic concepts of "articulation," "moments," and "elements" of a discourse[1] as well as that of "floating signifiers," and these will be considered in their respective

relations with those of "diachrony," "synchrony," and "achrony" (particularly the latter two) as conceptualized by diverse theoretical approaches: the structuralist tradition and its critical developments through the contributions of Foucault and Agamben. My analysis on historicity and temporality and their textual construction will take the documentary as a whole, and will use an array of different segments from different chapters and parts of the film. Of particular significance to gender and sexuality, the close reading of the text as a whole will start with a detailed analysis of two particularly relevant segments of the triptych.

Sexuality and gender in *The Hour of the Furnaces*

The historico-political diagnosis put forward by *The Hour of the Furnaces* fixates the neocolonial antagonism in an achronic opposition between two identities as if they were fully constituted – Latin American people vs. "European/Western man" – and the fullness of such a suture is sustained by that which the closed opposition excludes, namely, its constitutive outside (Laclau 1990): differences based on gender and sexuality, thus, operate as their discursive supplements, that is to say, those elements or floating signifiers that make possible, and at the same time threaten, such a discursive suture. The non-identification or lack of discursive specification of those differences is what obliterates the recognition of other temporalities and their reactivation[2] as elements and moments of a new counter-discourse.

This documentary has been critiqued from a feminist and gender viewpoint by Ciallella (2003: 302–05). Her analysis concentrates on Chapter 11 ("The Models") of the film's first part, and claims that women are represented as mere, albeit conflicting images trapped within a "graphic war" "waged in the mind of man" (304), and staged and shot from a sadistic-masculinistic narrative perspective and gaze. Building upon the critical value of such a reading but also departing from it, my analysis of *The Hour of the Furnaces* shall take a different perspective: from a rhetorical-argumentative and enunciative viewpoint, I will attempt to account for the specifically cinematic obliteration of sexual and gender diversities.[3] Such diversities did in fact emerge as dissident *identities* in other media and spheres of the 1960s and 1970s Argentine social discourse, albeit not in the cinema of that period, thus demonstrating that social discourse is not a homogeneous whole, because it is constituted by temporalities that diverge from each other according to their respective field or social sphere. In the following two sections, I will concentrate on two examples taken from other chapters and parts of *The Hour of the Furnaces*: Chapter 10 ("Daily Violence") of Part One, and a particularly relevant sequence from Part Two of this documentary triptych ("Act for Liberation").

Between "cultural violence" and "the models"

A large section of this chapter consists in a long sequence featuring the well-known homosexual writer Manuel Mujica Lainez. He is introduced as the emblematic example of

the *pedagogical colonization* and of the Argentine bourgeoisie's cultural violence. Set in the Pepsi Cola salon, the whole scene is presented by emphasizing the extreme superficiality of a culture of which Mujica Lainez would be its epitome: piped music, sarcastic tone of the (mostly masculine) voice-over overdetermining our reading of the affected tone of the writer's voice as well as the banality of the content of his speech. In a narrative that reduces culture to a vain heraldry of knowledge deprived of any authenticity, Mujica Lainez enumerates all the prizes and awards that he has received. The voice-over sums it up:

> Mujica Lainez's views are shared by a whole class of intellectuals who submit to neo-colonial power. The intelligentsia of "the System." An elite that translates into Spanish the ideology of the oppressors. Its second-hand culture is lapped up by the educated middle classes. A hybrid, depersonalised elite, always hiding behind something [disguised as something else]. Claiming to be apolitical or objective, indifferent or intelligent.

Without disregarding the criticisms that are voiced here with respect to cultural neocolonialism and dependency as well as toward the role that the upper classes and many intellectuals have played in this process, my analysis points to the fact that *The Hour of the Furnaces* has chosen a gay writer from the hundreds of "*europeizantes*" (Europeanizing) intellectuals that could have been considered for this argument. A sexually "minor" subject is taken as an emblematic example of the (neo)colonized and (neo)colonizing mentality: the representation of (neo)colonialism as "feminine" in the figure of a writer who is not only homosexual, but also affected and slightly effeminate is, thus, a rhetorical operation that tends to reinforce both the documentary's (hetero)sexist and homophobic perspective. Mujica Lainez is referred to with the offensive nickname "*el rey picapedrero*" (the stonecutter king), and he is associated with the Europeanizing and "treacherous" figure of the translator.

In discursive terms, the logics of the example are the logics of the paradigm (Agamben 2009): it singularizes at the same time as it illustrates and generalizes by analogy – rather than by induction or deduction. Examples operate through the rhetorical-argumentative force of the *case* (Foucault 1980, 1996): that irreducibly singular element – a homosexual, effeminate, and celebrated translator-writer, a "famous infamous" man – which paradoxically *constitutes* at the same time as *renders intelligible* the more general class – the intellectual elites that perpetrate (neo)colonialism and its banal culture. The argument that is intended to be substantiated here is, therefore, *contingently* loaded with the order of analogy, "firstness", and abduction (Peirce 1958, 1983): it establishes analogical chains between singularity and singularity. But the generalizing claims of the logics of the example conceal this analogical and singularizing operation insofar as such a logics literalizes or "naturalizes" the attribute in question in the body of a particular group ([neo]colonized intellectual ="feminine"= "passive"="homosexual"). It is this literalizing sedimentation that conceals its tropological nature (i.e., a figure, a trope) and the contingent status of its being a "case." The group of the "neocolonized intellectuals" would thus be *immanently* inscribed in the paradigm of a homosexual and effeminate translator-writer. In other words, the neocolonial elite is not

thus "presupposed" in his homosexuality: rather than the former being logically prior to the latter, neocolonialism is *immanent to the very enunciation* of *the* singular case of his being gay (implied by his affectation and effeminacy).

In terms of rhetoric, the use of a homosexual writer as *the* paradigmatic *example* of neocolonialism reveals the sexist and homophobic tropological logics that underpins *The Hour of the Furnaces'* discourse, by pointing out *the very site* of the postcolonial, ethnic-class difference's *failure* in constituting itself (the "*pueblo latinoamericano*" [the Latin American people]) as a political identity with a real (counter)hegemonic capacity, precisely because of that which it excludes – sexuality and its colors. This is because the paradigm/example, far from the metonymic order of (counter)hegemonic articulations, is closer, rather, to singularizing analogies (or to particularizing sinecdoques), and it is in this sense that Agamben (2009: 18)[4] associates it with the allegory (rather than with the metaphor, since the latter involves operations of semantic transfer that are much more generalizing than those implied by the former). Hence, the enormous *(epistemic) capacity* – provided by the very tropological logics of the paradigm/example – of *rendering intelligible* a whole constellation or configuration, and this is due to the example's greater analogical and abductive potential that allows for new, "peculiar" forms of knowledge (Agamben 2009: 19) to emerge (even if this makes it much more singularizing than metaphors, which are based on a very strong semantic homogenization). And conversely, it is this closeness to the allegorical that also explains the paradigm/example's *(political) incapacity of articulating* the particular to the universal – that is, its limited articulatory power in the socio-symbolic terrain – since, as we know, hegemonic articulations are fundamentally metonymical operations (Laclau 1990: 217–18, 2001), rather than metaphoric or allegorical ones, considering that their "effects always emerge from a surplus of meaning which results from an operation of displacement" to other context/s (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 141).

The final fetishizing image is of the writer's pen in extreme close-up, signing his latest book for members of the bourgeoisie – mostly women, his "Greek chorus" – and a synthesis-shot of "La violencia cultural" ("Culture violence"), cuts to the next chapter "Los modelos" ("The Models"]), which opens with a static relic-representation of western culture, namely, a still image of the Parthenon. "The Models" will then become a sequence of artistic images of women, many of them naked or half-naked, produced by the sexist gaze of European art for their (neo)colonizing consumption – a gaze that *The Hour of the Furnaces'* camera reinforces (Ciallella 2003: 304) without any visual-enunciative distance framing it. The visual montage and the verbal narration establish analogical chains (of equivalence) that link paradigmatic examples to paradigmatic examples not by means of a semantic structure shared by heterogeneous phenomena – which would be the case with metaphors – but through a process of singularizing allegorization that institutes at the same time as illuminates a "new" homogeneous space of intelligibility: neocolonialism as a system. If the gay translator-writer is the paradigm of *pedagogical colonization* and the artistic images of (naked or semi-naked) women illustrate with great exemplarity the aesthetic-cultural (neo)colonial models, both paradigms *render intelligible, at the same time as they constitute – they do not*

just metaphorize – the very system of neocolonial domination in its totalizing homogeneity. None of such paradigmatic cases "thematize," "semantize," or "resemble" neocolonialism: both *are* the latter in its very being, rendering it, *at the same time, particularly intelligible*. Using Sextus Pompeius Festus's terminology recalled by Agamben (2009: 18), one may say that homosexual Mujica Lainez and his pen would be neocolonialism's "*exemplum,*" whilst the beautiful naked women of European art would be its "*exemplar.*"

To sum up, the operation that these examples perform is rhetorically and enunciatively complex: what the filmic-enunciative source or *foyer* (Metz 1991) produces is a text regulated by the logics of the paradigm that *makes inseparable* – in the very same audio-visual statement – neocolonialism, homosexuality, and "feminine body," *by rendering them mutually intelligible* – without really articulating them as independent or interdependent moments, in their own self-identity. Consequently, it becomes impossible to separate in their very utterance – i.e., from an enunciative perspective – their exemplarity (neocolonialism) from their singularity (homosexuality, feminine body, a "merely translating" intelligentsia).[5]

"Act for Liberation": For whom?

In the second part of Solanas and Getino's monumental documentary triptych, while the voice-over gives as example the official position of the 1940s Argentine Communist Party regarding Peronism, the visual montage shows us a (political) cartoon with a number of simultaneous scenes representing "the common, vulgar, weak, licentious crowd" led by Perón, who is caricaturized as a military band conductor and dressed in military uniform. The audience is confronted with a caricature-like image produced as an allegory of October 17, 1945, and in turn, as a synecdoche of Peronism. However, this is not any image whatsoever. Rather, the communist cartoon is presented, from the viewpoint of the filmic text as a whole that quotes it, as a moral paradigm – the *exemplum*, again – able to condense the "(neo)colonialist" interpretation made of the movement led by Perón by both the Argentine left as well as the country's right during the rise of Peronism. The filmic-documentary enunciation renders, thus, this *particular* hate-speech act – the insulting Communist synecdoche – into *exemplum*, into the veritable paradigm of the neocolonial mentality.

If we observe in detail the content of the caricature, the only woman in the cartoon is represented as a prostitute who is pickpocketing a "low-life" malefactor. The iconic representation of this (very) only woman in the frame shows her in this highly fetishizing and grotesque figuration of the typical prostitute – scantily clad and with excessive make-up on. The mini-scene in question – framed as a sub-sequence of the cartoon that is meant to illustrate Peronism as a "*clan de malevaje, prostitutas y desclasados*" ("gang of malefactors, prostitutes and outcasts") – is brought to the fore in an extreme close-up shot by a camera that appropriates caricaturized Perón's own pivotal gaze, and evokes the caricatures of transvestites because of the very *plastic* excess of the woman's figurative representation,

the woman as mere masquerade. The extreme fetishistic eroticization of both the figure and the camera movement that fragments it by zooming into extreme close-up shots, emphasizes sexuality over gender – her excessive, clown-like lipstick, for instance, makes her lips indistinguishable from a beard. Rather than a representation of "the feminine," what is actually bursting into the scene here is sexuality in itself, its excess. However, sexuality's abject figuration and the fact that it is monopolized by the only woman-figure represented in the frame is what makes it sexist. Notwithstanding the fact that this is certainly a misogynous and classist representation produced by the Communist Party of the time, this depiction is also reinforced and implicitly endorsed by Solanas and Getino's documentary, whose visual and verbal enunciation does not distance itself from the discursive *operation* of insulting – the very hate speech acts as a double-edged sword – due to the fact that its enunciation does not recognize or acknowledge the insult*ing*, injur*ing* element in its own self-identity.

The sexualized representation of Argentine history and politics analyzed above can be paralleled to another appearance of the woman as prostitute in the film as the paradigm/example of neocolonialism, this time in Chapter 3 ("Daily Violence"). Edited with the soundtrack of the "Himno a la bandera" ("Anthem to the [Argentine] Flag") voicing "[i]t is my motherland's flag," the woman-prostitute scene here is allegorizing the (neo)colonialized nation, through the use of paradigm/example (female prostitute = the motherland's flag = neocolonized nation). From a different viewpoint, Ciallella (2003: 303–04) has analyzed this scene as a counter "mini-narrative" that symbolizes the Argentine nation as a "captive woman" in despair to be "saved" and "liberated" by the revolutionary male. This "'beloved' ideal" of the woman-nation to be liberated by a man-savior oozes heterosexism, but has a longstanding history as one of the hegemonic foundational myths in the nineteenth-century Argentine nation-building – the figure of the (white) captive female was shared by both liberals and anti-imperialistic nationalists – and is, of course, the epitome of the dominant heteronormative understanding of "national liberation."

What is actually emerging in all these uses of sexuality and "the homosexual" as figures of speech is nothing but *antagonism*, that is, (neo)colonial antagonism through displacement. The use of example/paradigm as analyzed above – as well as allegories and metaphors pointing to "the feminine" and "the infantile" as we shall see further on – are recurrent rhetorical figures, within the documentary's argumentative texture, with the crucial role of *expressing* the (neo)colonial antagonism in its specifically *revelatory* function (Laclau 1990: 19–99, 34–44, 190–91): their epistemic capacity of rendering intelligible the very *impossibility* of the Latin American *pueblo*/people (as reduced to "the Latin American [heterosexual] man") to constitute itself (as "himself") without any metonymic overdetermination or "contamination" by the feminine, the homosexual, or the infantile. Rhetoric here does not conceal or lie: it has a crucial expressive function of what otherwise could not be said. Precisely by pointing to the very world of appearances, illusions, and falseness that *The Hour of the Furnaces* so vehemently denounces in neocolonialism, gender- and sexuality-defined differences provide a (visual and verbal) language that is actually able to *reveal* (neocolonial) antagonism – and not just produce an explicit account of its oppressive effects, which

obviously the documentary does so consciously. However, this antagonism does not express the identity of the Latin American *pueblo*/people, but rather, it attests to the very failure (Laclau and Mouffe 2001) or the impossibility (Laclau 1990) of the latter in constituting itself. Precisely by figuring it as a set of eroticized, feminine, and infantile "appearances" and "shallow" images (that are meant to betray, conceal, or disguise reality), Latin America's experience of negativity – its (neo)colonial history – can be *positively expressed* by its sexualization; therefore, the very rhetorical form that antagonism takes – sexuality, "the feminine" or "the infantile" – cannot be reduced to mere "appearance" or "illusion" that is just concealing the emergence of a "more objective" or "deeper" meaning (i.e., the fundamental contradiction "European man" vs. "Latin American 'subhuman' man"). As a result, Argentine (and Latin American) history is sexualized through different rhetorical operations – the example/paradigm, allegory, and metaphor – that can be read as symptoms of the very failure or impossibility for the constitution of the Latin American *pueblo* as a differential identity that is only defined, by default, as masculine and heterosexual.

In terms of political discourse analysis, in such a discourse as epitomized by *The Hour of the Furnaces*, there was no logical-tropological space whatsoever available for sexual diversities (Laclau 2014), despite the fact that they did occupy a site: the discursive *topos* of the object, be it as fetish, or be it as insulting element rather than as insulted subject. Even if discursively present either as abject a-subjects or as fetishizable objects, the *articulability*[6] of their difference – that is to say, their status as *discursive elements*[7] – was denied, and hence disabled and obliterated for any possible articulation as moments of a greater, more encompassing counter-hegemonic discourse.

Sexualizing the historical and feminizing stasis: Synchrony and the achronic

Synchrony, temporality, and sexual/gender diversity

What is that dimension that, in the argumentative texture of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, prevents sexuality/gender differences from being identified, or made visible as elements, thus obstructing their passage to discursive moments? It is the suture of a discourse that essentializes history by *reducing elements to fixed moments, and synchrony to achrony*. It is certainly part of the documentary's anti-colonial strategic essentialism, but this essentialism has serious consequences not only for sexual/gender subaltern subjects, but also for a broader diagnosis of Latin American histories and their complex, multiple agents.

Let us first define the concept of synchrony in relation to temporality and history in order to be able to distinguish it from another related concept, that of achrony. Synchrony can be understood as a structural, albeit dynamic bundle of, on the one hand, (1) relatively and temporarily fixed moments or "forms" and, on the other hand, (2) free-floating elements. The fallacy of identifying synchrony with stasis (and conversely, diachrony with history) is probably the effect of certain epigones' literal readings based on the letter of some of

Ferdinand de Saussure's (1945) explicit formulations, but this fallacy has been noted and pointed out by critical theorists genuinely engaged with structuralism as a crucial tradition of thought, such as Foucault (2013: 129–52) and Agamben (1993: 84–86). The former, on the one hand, has explicitly affirmed that "synchronic analysis […] is not, by any means, the analysis of stasis and of the motionless; rather, it is actually, the analysis of the conditions for change" (Foucault 2013: 133, my translation), and this is because the synchronic perspective focuses on the historical "*present,*" and hence, far from being "anti-historical" (133), synchrony is "profoundly historical" (134) and the complete opposite of "a-historical" (133). Agamben, in a similar vein, has reaffirmed and extended what Jakobson had argued for linguistics: "that synchrony cannot be identified with the static nor diachrony with the dynamic" (1993: 85), and goes beyond: "that the pure event (absolute diachrony) and the pure structure (absolute synchrony) do not exist" (1993: 85). Historical becomings, for Agamben, are produced in the "differential margins between synchrony and diachrony" (1993: 85). These "differential margins" are what Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 113) call "elements" and "floating signifiers" – key conceptual aspects that are central to the emergence of new historical subjects that Laclau (1996: 69–86) has later developed further in close connection with his notion of "empty signifiers" – and these differential margins are effaced in *The Hour of the Furnaces*.

Now, how does this reduction of synchrony to achrony operate in the documentary's conception of history and the present? Achrony takes synchrony as a purely sutured structure *devoid of elements* (i.e., free-floating signifiers), and implicitly assumes that those elements are unavoidably articulated as moments of an already constituted whole – the discourse of neocolonialism as totality – as if synchrony was constituted only by moments and not elements. In such a fully sutured discursive totality, sexual diversities and dissidence seem to be constructed, by default, as an *already distributed* (as Althusser taught) and *assigned* "moment" of the neocolonial discourse, to the side of the (neo)colonized mentality. Synchrony conceived in the manner described above – that is to say, only structured by fixed moments, without elements or free-floating signifiers susceptible to be articulated – is not actually synchrony but achrony, because it forecloses (gendered *and* sexualized) history. In other words, it is the film's achronic diagnosis – rather than synchrony – that forecloses the historical and the living elements of a discourse by taking them as if they were already constituted as moments. Synchronic formations – discourse as unstable and provisional fixations, or "regularities in dispersion" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 105–06; Foucault 1972: 37–38, 143–45) – always entail unarticulated elements or free-floating signifiers: these are the dynamic elements of a "system" that allows for (historical) change, in the form of either displacements within a structure or radical discontinuities. In fact, it is the *elements* – necessarily present in the durativity of any "synchronic cut,"[8] even if they are not pertinent for the constitution of the given discourse as discourse (in its regularity) – that actually makes dynamically possible the discourse's internal transformations, even within its synchronic state: elements or free-floating signifiers are the very dynamic components of synchrony. In *The Hour of the Furnaces* the Latin American *pueblo* – rhetorized as the "Latin American man" – is a

moment of its anti-neocolonial discourse that presents itself as a (seemingly) achronic bloc, as if it were deprived of any temporality by processes of discursive sedimentation (Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Laclau 1994).

Logics of difference, logics of equivalence, and antagonism

Elements of unarticulated differences (or differences that are uncritically taken as "already articulated" and automatically aligned to "the other side") have to do with the patriarchal[9] discourse of most of the Argentine left of that time – let alone right-wing discourse with its longstanding tradition of patriarchal (hetero)sexism and homophobia. Because these elements of unarticulated difference (gender, sexualities, the gendered and sexual[ized] look) are not able to become moments of an alternative (gender-sexual critical) discourse, they *inadvertently reproduce* the dominant patriarchal discourse through taking those differences as already articulated moments of a discourse (neocolonial discourse's very own patriarchy and homophobia) and through naturalizing the attributes assigned to homosexuals, women, and sexual dissidents more generally (e.g., prostitutes, queers, etc. as condensed in the different "vignettes" providing scenes of the "licentious crowd"). The logics of difference is, thus, obliterated by an all-encompassing paratactic logics of combined antagonism and equivalence,[10] resulting in a *differential space being reduced to a minimum*: LGBTQ and non-class or non-racial differences are either not articulated in the equivalent chain of the subaltern/oppressed – discarded as "irrelevant," objectified or abjected – or automatically articulated to the neocolonizing equivalent chain of the neocolonial antagonistic forces (by naturalization, that is to say, by pre-emptively fixating the overflowing surplus of meaning that these differences might carry with them within the broader field of discursivity). As a result, LGBTQ persons are used as abjected or fetishized *social* figures of a discourse that bars them from becoming *political* subjects. The potential subversion that these "overflowing" social figures and elements might contingently introduce into the Latin American identity is what is neglected or "sutured out" by the film's discourse.

According to Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 114), subversion is "the presence of the contingent in the necessary," and this can give us clues for understanding a crucial question with respect to this documentary: why is the (neo)colonized, dependent mentality – that which does "not assume, reclaim or develop its own creativity"[11] by giving up "its capacity to explore, research and invent"[12] – recurrently figured as feminine or gay or infantile? If the fundamental contradiction is established between the (neocolonizing) "[European] 'Man'" and the (neocolonized) [Latin American] "inferior[ized] man,"[13] why does *The Hour of the Furnaces* rhetorically figure this apparently straightforward "real opposition" and logical contradiction between two dichotomic identities by using a third, unnecessary element, an element that we could call "the feminine" and "the infantile"? The (visual and verbal) figures used to rhetorize this (neo)colonial supplement as "the feminine" and "the infantile" are not just women's bodies or voices, but also affectation, posing, "feminized"

bodies (as in too beautiful or ridiculous) or other performances characterized by obvious excess, such as imitation, copying, "epigonal" art, translation, disguise, or camouflage. This rhetorization does not respond to logical necessity as both the "colonizer" and the "colonized" are defined as heterosexual and male: for instance, Chapter 8 of Part One describes neocolonialism's neo-racism as the reduction of the people from a dependent nation to a degraded "underdeveloped man" or "a subhuman man" in the sense of "lesser man" or "lesser human being," but still a *subject*, however oppressed, because he is textually and cinematically marked as male, masculine, and heterosexual. Even if the term "*hombre*" could be interpreted as either "human being" or "male," the corresponding images that embody the expressions such as "Latin American man" (Chapter 13) or "*the man of a colonized country*" (Chapter 8) suggest a male anchorage for such an ambiguity in linguistic expression. In fact, while the voice-over explains the content and context of this neo-racist discourse, the visual editing shows images of working-class men and a male child (with profuse use of close-up shots of them), all involved in typically masculine activities and spaces (the men are in an all-male bar playing snooker, the boy is playing football). Furthermore, no females feature in these scenes, and it is not until much later in the chapter when working-class women appear only as "couplified" with men on the dance floor (dancing to Latin American popular music).[14]

In my reading, such logically unnecessary "feminine" and "infantile" rhetorization of an all-male defined antagonism points to the emergence of contingency, or more precisely, to Laclau and Mouffe's (2001: 114) definition of *subversion* as the very "presence of the contingent in the necessary" that "manifests itself as symbolization, metaphorization, paradox which deform and question the literal character of every necessity."

The film can actually be read as a symptomatic catalogue of tropes pointing to mimicry and disguise: the status of copyists attributed to docile and infantilized Amerindian peoples, the figure of the child allegorizing (neo)colonial intellectual alienation,[15] the role of the treacherous translator and interpreter attributed to affected or feminized intellectuals, the superficiality and "confusion" assigned to playful youths and artists,[16] the position of cowardly spectatorship granted to the middle classes and the recurrent trope of consumption having women, youth,[17] and the petty bourgeoisie as the chosen sinners. So, for instance, the very concept of neocolonial cultural alienation is introduced by an (allegorical) narrative of *infantilization*:

> As soon as he learns to read, the child of a dependent country is assailed by the models of a civilization which he is forced to accept as the only universal value. […] Hegel said: "The best thing a child can do with its toys is break them." But breaking with alien values ingrained in us is not easy. To succeed, neo-colonialism must convince a dependent people of its inferiority.

The toys – European art, ideas, and thinkers – are obviously metaphorical tokens for the sources of neocolonial cultural alienation, and the child is the duly allegory for the neocolonized intellectual of this fable. In my reading, this allegorization is reductive insofar

as it "colonizes" differential temporalities by translating them into a space – a space that is first sequential, and then synchronic[18] – that is to say, it domesticates history, transformations, dislocations, and events – "history is child playing" (Agamben 1993: 82) – to the oversimplified space of a one-dimensional side of the two-camp paratactic space of (neo) colonialism. *The Hour of the Furnaces*' metaphor of "the child who has not broken his toys" is thus allegorizing the (neo)colonized condition as the infantile condemnation to "the absolute diachrony of infernal time" (Agamben 1993: 86) that the film is trying to overcome by achronic suppression of historical temporality, and by reducing *events* into a fully sutured *structure* (Agamben 1993), that is to say, to a space of representation in which all differences are (apparently) fully representable by the structuring effect of repetition (Laclau 1990).

With regard to "consumption" and "the feminine," for instance, in Chapter 1 of Part One ("History"), the voice-over states: "Argentina sent meat and hides and received grand pianos." In this way, the bourgeoisie, the exporting elite, became the agrarian *branch* of European industry. While this is said, we are faced with a drawing of a naked woman taking a shower in an elegant designer bathtub, an advertisement of what could then have been classed as a sumptuous token of bourgeois consumption (the brand name is, of course, in English: "Cochituate Water"). In the context of the other more "serious" stills and shots of the montage that feature industry, banking, wars, and battles, this highly stylized, feminizing image of consumption (the shower is particularly stylized), along with the words "grand pianos," stand out as somewhat ridiculous and "camp" in style, at the same time as unnecessary, grafted, and derivative (an "appendix" or "branch" of something else). This is preceded by another nineteenth century (newspaper) drawing illustrating neocolonial patterns of trade (with the title "Buenos Ayres Dollars"), showing an extremely androgynous figure of a youth with a hat on, smoking and sitting on a "dollar barrel." Furthermore, images of women are recurring figures in the film, pointing to consumption and commodified culture. For instance, the illustration of "neocolonial" practice of "copying of the latest European trend" is a young woman dressed in fashionable clothes photographed in Chapter 4 of Part One ("The Port City"). Furthermore, in Chapters 9 ("Dependency") and 12 ("The Ideological War") of Part One, the great majority of the images of consumption and advertising are of women or eroticized female body parts through abundant use of fetishizing fragmentation through close-up and extreme close-up shots, and these images recur and feature prominently in important segments of Part Three. Chapter 12 of Part One is particularly eloquent in this respect as the fast-paced montage that is created to show the "false cosmopolitanism" of a westernized, Europeanized neocolonial society as confusion is edited with an oversaturated soundtrack that includes an adult female voice uttering phrases in English such as "I am a little girl" followed by "I am a citizen of the world." The "alienated" confusion of neocolonialism is embodied as "a little girl": again, it is the very element embodying and figuring neocolonialism, rather than the denunciation of the system itself, that seems problematic here.

The problem opened up by the reductive process described above – i.e., reducing *events* into a fully sutured *structure* in which all differences are already fully representable

by repetition – is that all these figures – the copyist, the translator, the interpreter, the infantilized dependent intellectual, the spectator, the feminine/feminized consumer – are to be read as just "banal" metaphors – its very rhetorical enunciation is banal: a list, chapter by chapter, that enumerates them equating them as interchangeable in an equivalential chain: evil is in the very listing – that would be distracting us from seeing the Master Signifier of Betrayal: the principle of intelligibility that always lies behind as *the* semantic structure and argumentative premise, providing the necessary unity and explanatory rationale (the *explanans*), is betrayal. The figure of betrayal is the homogenizing "semantic content" that links, by way of logical necessity, all these tropes together through bestowing them with narratological weight and moral gravity.

> Already in the 17th century, the Jesuits missionaries proclaimed the aptitude of the native for copying European works of art. Copyist, translator, interpreter, at best a spectator. Neo-colonized intellectuality will always be pushed to not assume its creative possibility. […] it renounces its capacity to seek and to invent. So inhibition grows, rootlessness, evasion, cultural cosmopolitanism, metaphysical weariness, betrayal of the country.

Broader implications for understanding Latin American history and its agents

I am not contesting here either the unavoidable rhetorical binarisms of Solanas and Getino's Third Cinema discourse – recurrently noted by critics and sometimes assessed as simultaneously "seminal" and "bombastic" in its conceptual formulations (King 2000: 87; McGuirk 1999: 236) – or the instrumentality that *The Hour of the Furnaces*' status as a counter-informational, political tool for radical change inevitably entailed (Mestman 1995; Garibotto and Gómez 2009: 128). I am not contesting either its commendably clear or exemplarily "unequivocal message" (Stam 1980–81; Shohat and Stam 1996: 251–66): these are the documentary's political highlights, attesting to the filmmakers' technical and cinematic genius. Rather, and in dialogue and response to Garibotto and Gómez's analysis, I am taking issue on this documentary's diagnosis of history as well as its present, and on its formal construction of temporality as achronic.

On the one hand, I agree on the non-closure of *The Hour of the Furnaces* as a film *act* – a feature that has been praised by many other critics (Stam 1980–81; Willemen 1994: 185; Chanan 1997: 373; Mestman 2003: 125–28; Chanan 2014: 19–20; Garibotto and Gómez 2009) – as its openness to dialogue, participation, and ultimately, political agency through *concientización* (raising consciousness), to the extent that the film was used at the time by a wide spectrum of the left to raise consciousness, including not only the Peronist resistance but also its "adversaries," the Marxist, and Trotskyist left (Masmun 2011: 165–66). At this specifically externally material level of analysis of the film as a medium of communication, in its external materiality (Angus 2000), in each material event of its (socio-discursive) (re) screening, the film can be regarded as radically open to history, and allowing that openness to

happen.[19] However, whilst I agree on this openness to dialogue, I would question Garibotto and Gómez's (2009) argument with regard to its *textual* openness to history and the present,[20] its *formal* construction of (historical) sequences, and ultimately, the very conception of history, histories, and the present that underpins both its content and form. Rather than open to a "free-floating argumentative causality" (Garibotto and Gómez 2009: 30), in my analysis, *The Hour of the Furnaces* is a text encapsulated and trapped by a totalizing achrony. If, as Garibotto and Gómez (2009: 29) have put it so well, its narrative can be reduced to a "straightforward sequence" that oversimplifies the history of an entire continent to a nuclear chronology, *argumentatively*, this laconic narrative schema is far from "free-floating," insofar as it operates by fixing causality to a basic story of betrayal with its formulaic false-bottom economy of duplicity (appearance/reality) that cannot but repeat itself, with history being reduced to the revelatory unfolding of a simple "truth" that lies always behind the surface provided by a tapestry of endless acts of betrayal. This painting-like narrative is so laconic that it can be encapsulated by a simple duplicitous scene, the *founding scene* of betrayal as a little visual scenario consisting in just two contradictory scenes. Furthermore, Garibotto and Gómez (2009) also point out its repetitiveness, which I agree is a good strategy to achieve political effectiveness, but it is not so much in the repetitiveness *itself* of a simple structure where the problem lies. What I see as problematic is, rather, the film's inability to read the synchronic, that is to say, the multiplicity of living histories and hegemonic *processes* – including a region and a country's complex and multiple political histories, both to do with social movements (not reduced to Peronism) *and* institutions. In other words, my critique is directed towards the film's foreclosure of the multiple lines of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces and hence, the country's (and the region's) living present. Fortunately, history is not a picture, let alone a two-layered painting.

The double-trouble "betrayal scene" recurs and functions in *The Hour of the Furnaces* – as well as in *Memoria del saqueo* (*Social Genocide*) (Solanas, 2003) – at different levels: as *motif*, as an argumentative premise, and as paradigm of the film's temporal construction. In this latter sense, Garibotto and Gómez lucidly analyze *The Hour of the Furnaces*' "fractal structure" as a result of "the prominence of synchronicity over sequentiality" (2009: 129) – namely, "its nuclear, simplistic chronology"[21] gets interrupted by its very repetition and eventual merging into the sameness of a single, synchronous "visual image" or Benjaminian "dialectical image" (2009: 129–30).[22] In their analysis, such an overriding "synchronicity" is condensed by the documentary's initial statement: "The independence of Latin American countries was betrayed *in its origins*"[23] (Garibotto and Gómez 2009: 129, emphasis added). This is a very perceptive point, except for the fact that these authors seem not to analytically distinguish between "*syn*chronicity" and *a*chronicity – by assuming simultaneity or mere *a*chrony as if they were *syn*chrony – because what is discursively emphasized and formally performed in *The Hour of the Furnaces* is an *achronic structure* of (neo)colonial domination/oppression at the expense of *synchronicity*, and hence of *differential temporality – differential repetition* – and ultimately, history and the present.[24] A note on synchrony, achrony, "system," and (a)temporality seems pertinent here in order to clarify what I am pointing to with my

argument about the formal construction of history and the present. From the tradition of structural linguistics and structural semiotics and their subsequent critical developments (Agamben 1993; Foucault 2013), it is the concept of "system" – and *not that of* "*synchrony*" – the theoretical tool that actually denotes atemporality, and was devised to convey such a meaning by means of designating a state in which all differences are *purely* and *nothing but* relational. The atemporal concept of "system" also corresponds to Laclau and Mouffe's notion of a fully sutured "discursive totality," a construct that they contest and reject. In synchrony, on the contrary, temporality (and history) are crucial as they correspond to the internal transformations within a given relational system, and have to do with the durativity and continuity of its elements as well as with minor alterations and displacements (Saussure 1945: 140–45, 163–65, 171, 175–77), and hence synchrony designates not a frozen oppositional system of relations, but the *relational* as the *formal*, *a priori* historical conditions (forms and relations are not snapshots, even if diagrams can represent them visually). Thus, temporality is always already inscribed in synchrony (i.e., in any given "state of language/discourse" or "synchronic cut") insofar as there are always transformations that are internal (a concept developed by Hjelmslev) to the (linguistic or semiotic) system in question (Greimas and Courtés 1993: 97–98, 374–75).

The Hour of the Furnaces' achronic structure analyzed above prevails so much over both, on the one hand, *events* (i.e., historical discontinuities) and, on the other hand, *any dimension of synchronic temporality* (i.e., historical continuities, including change),[25] that temporality and history get suppressed in favor of a highly de-historicized past always recurrently identical to itself, a past of which the present cannot but be its ritualistic repetition, despite the film's explicit plea for (directive) audience participation and call for action. This is partly to do with the (normative, apolitical, a-hegemonic) "*metaphysics of origin*" on which the film heavily relies, and that is so clearly expressed in the above-mentioned motto centered on "betrayal." In other words, in the film's discourse, both institutional politics and economic policies betray not only social (the crowds, the *pueblo,* etc.), but also military forces (the independence armies), and this is not presented as historical contingencies but as something that constitutes Latin American identity at the level of its essentialized origin, an essentialized identity understood as what always lies etiologically "behind." The betrayal scene is, thus, by definition, a double scene characterized by its simultaneous nature, but its recurrence and repetition is represented as devoid of difference, temporality, and historicity, as achrony rather than synchrony: the ritualistic reappearance of an action devoid of performativity and hence historicity. History is thus conceived as a kind of "(re)-painting" of what would otherwise be hidden there anyway. In other words, *The Hour of the Furnaces* represents history as if the very same scene – the betrayal scene – could be (undifferentially) repeated as a mere picture, that is to say, history paradoxically reduced to achrony rather than opened up to synchrony. Through achrony, what is actually being suppressed is the very possibility of symbolizing *dislocation*, considering that dislocation is the very form that *temporality* takes up (Laclau 1990: 58) in the making of political identities, through a process of emergence that implies discursive ruptures and discontinuities (Foucault 1980: 43–48) as the fundamental bases for any historical transformation. Dislocation as temporality is hence

intrinsically linked and inseparable from the (unrepresentable) tensions between synchrony and diachrony, and it is these marginal tensions between them that gives rise to historical becoming (Agamben 1993) understood as the transition between elements and moments (and vice versa) through processes of reactivation of those "identities" that otherwise remain sedimented or unarticulated (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: viii–x; Laclau 1990: 172, 222–23; 1994).

The Hour of the Furnaces' "neocolonial system" – and hence, its historical diagnosis – is thus "a discursive structural formation," a fully sutured totality in which "every moment is subsumed from the beginning under the principle of repetition" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 106) that suppresses all living elements in favor of frozen moments "of a closed and fully constituted totality" in which contingency, and hence any new articulation, becomes impossible. If "every moment is subsumed from the beginning under the principle of repetition" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 106), then articulation is impossible, and what remains is only the ritualistic repetition of a founding, "originary scenario" or "primal scene" condensed around a few recurrent tropes of self-identical betrayal.[26] Tokens of these tropes are, for example, the betrayal scene in which Rivadavia's monetary policies would be "betraying" Bolívar's achievements in the military battlefield (Ayacucho), or the rhetorical three-element list that repeats the allegedly very same (neo)colonial betrayal scene across the centuries: "Mitre, Pellegrini, Pinedo; Frigerio, Prebisch, Alsogaray."[27] By having a three-name economic plot set in the long nineteenth century and the early, pre-Peronist 1900s repeat itself, self-identically, in the the post-war twentieth century, as essentially, yet again, the same story, the film is suggesting that the history of Argentina and Latin America can be reduced to the very repetition of a three-element list, and that the logics of (neo)colonialism is a sutured "system" always identical to itself, the achronic repetition of an eternally interchangeable, or equivalent, list, that expresses nothing but an underlying intelligible essence that is only brought about by purely a-historical *necessity* (and not by contingent discursive, historical *regularity*). Its insistent repetition as a three-element list – *its very rhetorical* form suggesting "always-identical-to-itself" – is *not external* to the argument and content of *(neo)colonialism as a sutured, fixed totality,* but constitutes this very system as such (i.e., as a *closed* totality whose differential positions or moments can only be defined *internally* to that system; "*hombre latinoamericano*" / "*hombre europeo/occidental*").

Within this achronic and historically fixed diagnosis, the space assigned to gender and sexual diversities is reduced to this all-encompassing, minimal narrative reduced to a moralizing, essentialized scene: betrayal. Alien to any critical (counter)hegemonic thinking, trapped in an achronic conception of history that reduces it to a vicious circle between (right-wing) cynicism and ("left-wing") moralization, *The Hour of the Furnaces*' sexism and homophobia lies in the very *repetition* of the betrayal scene as the only and all-encompassing "*omni-explanans*" for all Latin American ills throughout the centuries of coloniality. *Within* the always already assigned superficiality or (bombastic?) "banality" bestowed upon them by this apparently inescapable circle, women, epigone-intellectuals, and effeminate or camp images cannot but betray.

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Notes

1 According to Laclau and Mouffe's (2001: 105) discourse theory, the concept of articulation refers to

> any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call moments. By contrast, we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated.

2 I am introducing here the notion of reactivation as opposed to sedimentation, following the Husserlian tradition as applied by Laclau and Mouffe (2001: viii–x; Laclau 1990: 172, 222–23; 1996: 42) to the field of political discourse analysis.

3 Such an obliteration has been pointed out by Paul Willemen (1994: 183–84) with respect to the manifestos and programmatic discourses of Third Cinema as conceived by Solanas and Getino. More specifically, this critic has noted the blatant lack of acknowledgment of gender or ethnic differences within their "negative" definition of "the people" (a definition "by default," of everybody who is not the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie). It is clear that *The Hour* enacts such an obliteration of differences in its mostly class- and nation-centered definition of the "people" as the underdog that truly expresses nationhood (i.e., victims, but not part of [the neo]colonizing, Europeanizing mentality). However, it is also fair to say that the documentary does acknowledge racial differences in its poignant critique of the country's "neo-racism" against indigenous peasants and working-class "cabecitas negras," as presented in Chapter 8 of Part One.

4 In Agamben's own words:

> Paradigms obey not to the logic of the metaphorical transfer of meaning but the analogical logic of the example. Here we are not dealing with a signifier that is extended to designate heterogeneous phenomena by virtue of the same semantic structure; more akin to allegory than to metaphor, the paradigm is a singular case that is isolated from its context only insofar as, by exhibiting its own singularity, it makes intelligible a new ensemble, whose homogeneity, it itself constitutes. That is to say, to give an example is a complex act which supposes that the term functioning as a paradigm is deactivated from its normal use, not in order to be moved to another context but, on the contrary, to present the canon – the rule – of that use, which cannot be shown in another way.
>
> (2009: 18)

5 As Agamben has pointed out: "The paradigmatic case becomes such by suspending and, at the same time, exposing its belonging to the group, so that it is never possible to separate its exemplarity from its singularity" (2009: 31).

6 I am following here Laclau and Mouffe's concept of articulability of differences as the passage or transition from elements to moments – a passage that is dependent on an excess or surplus of meaning on the part of the (social) field of discusivity over a fixed discourse – in the very process of emergence of (political) subjects:

> Since all identity is relational […], since, too, all discourse is subverted by a field of discursivity which overflows it, the transition from 'elements' to 'moments' can

> never be complete. The status of 'elements' is that of floating signifiers, incapable of being wholly articulated to a discursive chain. And this floating character finally penetrates every discursive (i.e. social) identity. […] the ambiguous character of the signifier, its non-fixation to any signified, can only exist insofar as there is a proliferation of signifieds.
>
> (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 113)

This proliferation or freeing of possible meanings is what the discourse of *The Hour* is (inadvertently) suppressing as regards gender and sexual diversities, by constructing a metaphoric chain that equates neocolonialism = the feminine = "passivity" = homosexuality. Metaphor and allegory (as figures of substitution) as well as paradigm/example (as configuring neocolonialism as a new tropological space by the very exclusion of the feminine and the infantile) do not work here by repression or denial of difference, but quite the contrary, by keeping difference as fixed (by equivalential procedures), and thus, suppressing any sexual/gender symbolic subversion that those differences might generate.

7 Let us recall here Laclau and Mouffe's conceptualization of elements as those differences that are not discursively articulated as moments; for their respective definitions, please refer to note 1.

8 This is precisely where temporality becomes evident: the "structural" synchronic cut is not just a "synchronic state," but the result of a cutting operation performed by the analyst and/or by the discourse or discursive formation that is the object of the analysis. If synchrony and historical continuities are achieved by repetition (e.g., *The Hour's* discourse of coloniality by joining up colonialism and neocolonialism), this repetition has to be actively renewed and differentially performed by the discourses in question (Foucault 1972: 166–77), instead of according to them an essentialized "original passivity" through "anticipations and foreshadowing" (1972: 170). The Latin American "primal scene" of betrayal is what is precisely operating in *La hora*'s version of (neo)colonialism as foreshadowing an already given origin and "essence."

9 This discourse is, first and foremost, patriarchal and (hetero)sexist, and only by derivation, "masculinistic."

10 Pure equivalence is necessarily patriarchal (hence, sexist and homophobic) in the same way as pure difference – liberated from "the same" (Deleuze in Laclau 1996: 57–59) and from any antagonism or experience of dislocation – is reifying and inherently conservative.

11 Original Spanish: "[…] el intelectual neocolonizado será siempre empujado a no asumir su posibilidad creadora."

12 Original Spanish: "[…] renuncia a su capacidad de búsqueda y de invención."

13 In the original Spanish, this contradiction is enunciated in Chapter 11 as the domination of (1) "el 'Hombre', con mayúsculas" ("the real 'Man' or the [European] 'Man' with capital M"), over (2) "el hombre inferior" ("the inferior man"), by means of a process of alienation of the latter in the former.

14 See Chapter 4 in this book.

15 In a different interpretative context, Epplin (2014: 31–32) reads Solanas and Getino's use of Hegel's infantilization metaphor as a productive contradiction that results from the filmmakers' ambivalent engagement with the western cultural canon.

16 As presented in Chapter 12 of Part One, through scenes of the exhibitions, parties, artistic events, and happenings.

17 As presented in Chapter 12 of Part One, through scenes showing "alienated" youths listening to English-language rock and pop songs, at a time when *rock nacional* – sung in Argentine Spanish – was emerging in the country.

18 Laclau (1990: 58–59) understands this as the "synchrony of the successive" that symbolizes trauma by opening up a space of representation as a "total structure" (by reducing temporality), and uses precisely the Lacanian interpretation of the Fort/Da scene through which the child achieves subjectivity and identity through his/her alienation in language. Such a scene marks the moment in which the child acquires language and crosses the threshold of the symbolic to become a subject.

19 For a lucid analysis of this performative horizon of the cultural production of this period as a generalized *estética-acción* ("aesthetics of action"), see Sarlo (1998). Within such a performative horizon, what is important is not so much *The Hour's* content or form, but the rhetorical act of confirmation of what the audiences already knew. Form and content of films and artworks of this period, according to Sarlo (1998), tended to be reduced to the purely performative – either the rhetorical-performative or the poetic-performative. What is crucial here is that it was not just a question of "an intensification of the performative"; rather, it was about the sheer cannibalization of form and content by the performative, by action. This overriding performative (rhetorical in the case of *The Hour*) status of the film act could also be seen as the ritualistic, liturgical "encounter of wills" that Solanas and Getino talk about in their manifesto.

20 In contrast with, according to their analysis, *Memoria del saqueo*'s (Solanas, 2003) closure of history. (See Chapter 10 in this book).

21 These authors describe this "straightforward sequence […] that tends to repeat itself over and over again" as "colonization, colonial exploitation, underdevelopment and the wish for liberation" (Garibotto and Gómez 2009: 129).

22 For a discussion of the specific senses in which film and photography might embody the non-lineality and discontinuity of historical time as expressed in the Benjaminian concept of "dialectical image," within the broader context of Benjamin's theories of temporality and time, see Olivera (1995–96: 136–39), and also Missac (1988: 96–97).

23 Not any betrayal but a defining one, a betrayal situated "in its [very] origins" or "from the outset" ["desde sus orígenes"], suggesting a "beginning" or even a "birth malady" as the narrative inception point: historical contingency and struggles are reduced to this etiological "beginning," an "essence" providing Latin American countries with their "beginning" and their (original) politico-moral identity that is bound to always return, and explain (or illuminate) the present as purely "deceptive" (Garibotto and Gómez 2009: 129). This original (de-historicized) "beginning" and essence is narrativized (and rhetorized) as betrayal.

24 As non-mechanistic, dynamic dependency theorists have argued for the viability of Latin American relatively autonomous development within (social) capitalism by dynamizing the already existing progressive elements of Latin American economic and political structures, including its longstanding institutions, social movements, and democratic histories despite authoritarianisms (see the complex discussions regarding these multidimensional and

overdetermined processes in, for instance, Cardoso and Faletto 1998; Dos Santos 1973). This is not, of course, the "externalistic," "mechanistic" (Blomström and Hettne 1984), and rather static and achronic version of Dependency Theory that *The Hour* seems to be drawing upon (as in Gudner Frank's [1971, 1972, 1978] works, which tended to extremely oversimplify these processes). For a detailed analysis of the strand of Dependency Theory underpinning in *The Hour*'s argumentative texture, see Olivera (2008).

25 For a conceptualization of "synchronic temporality" as "duration" or living "endurance," and its crucial role in the dialectics between (historical) events and (historical) structures, see Agamben (1993: 75–96; particularly page 81 onwards).

26 Repetitive (neo)colonial betrayal occupies in this discourse the space that Foucault (1972: 174) calls "a primary and ultimate donnée that must account for all the rest," as if its (presumed) repetition was not a differential practice.

27 This recurrent argumentative trope of betrayal abidingly reappears in the documentary's narration of Latin American history. Another key example is the nineteenth-century balcanization in 23 countries as a betrayal of Latin America's "originary" or "essential unity," and later, the twentieth-century Organization of American States (OAS) where betrayal narrative recurs in the illusionary character of the unity (Chapter 1 of Part One).

Chapter 6

The Hour of the Furnaces, May 68, and the Pesaro International Film Festival

Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson[1]

> The screening of a film act will always
> express in one way or another the
> historical situation in which it takes place.
>
> (Solanas and Getino in Buchsbaum 2001: 157–58)

The May 17, 1968 issue of the Italian daily newspaper *L'Unita'* ran a brief story on the Pesaro Film Festival, with the simple headline: "These, the first films selected for Pesaro" (1968: 9).[2] The piece goes on to list, without much fanfare, some of the chosen films, noting that over 100 had been submitted for potential inclusion in the festival, that there would be a special "round table on Latin American film," and listing among the films from Latin America, "*La Hora de los Hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*) by Fernando Solanas (Argentina)" (1968: 9). Written between the lines is the story that the paper did not run, the story that it could not have thought to run but which, today, some 50 years later, we can report with hindsight. That is the story of this chapter. Why the Pesaro Film Festival and why this particular film? What was the greater cinematic community in which the film screened?

The Pesaro Film Festival would have been noted in a number of Italian daily newspapers but it is significant to see it mentioned in *L'Unita',* given the paper's political history: it was the official news organ of the Italian Communist Party and had been started by Antonio Gramsci in 1924, two years after Benito Mussolini came to power and two years before Gramsci was imprisoned by Mussolini. By the 1960s, the paper, having survived fascism as well as the anti-Communist policies instituted in Italy with the help of the US's post-war reconstruction resources (i.e., the Marshall Plan) continued to be a prominent left-leaning public voice in Italy. Indeed, on the front page of that issue, May 17, is a story about the upcoming Italian elections, recognizing the power of the left vote, as well as a story about the French student movement. It should thus come as no surprise that *L'Unita*' covered the relatively unknown Pesaro Film Festival, a festival that was only in its fourth year, but was one that had developed as an alternative voice among the film festival circuits. What the unnamed reporter could not have known was the impact one of the films on the program would have (see Chapter 7 in this book).

The Hour of the Furnaces made its debut and won first prize at the 4th International Film Festival in Pesaro, Italy (June 1–9, 1968), putting little known filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino on the international map and beginning a 50-year span of cultural and political exchange that would grow out of the film. The film was in good company, especially given the Pesaro Film Festival organizers' decision to emphasize films from Latin America

that year, and the general climate of protest and social movements on university campuses and city streets around Europe. In particular, *The Hour of the Furnaces*, along with several of the other films screened at the festival, as we will show, fit into the revolutionary artistic movement that accompanied the period of civil unrest and political protest that is broadly understood as "May 1968."

While France experienced occupations in universities and factories, as well as large-scale general strikes that brought de Gaulle's government to a standstill, in Italy the tenor was similar if not stronger, although perhaps less widely visible outside of the peninsula. Indeed, the ideological shifts that were played out on the streets throughout the globe in the late 1960s and early 1970s were most publically first felt in Italy with the Battaglia di Valle Giulia (Battle of Valle Giulia) at La Sapienza University of Rome on March 1, 1968 (only months before the more famous May uprising), when about 4000 people, mainly students, gathered in Rome's central Piazza di Spagna and were violently pushed back by the Italian military police. The event is often credited as being the first significant Italian protest of the so-called *Sessantotto* ("68," i.e., the 1968 Italian student movement).[3] And so by the time the Pesaro Festival began in early June, the heat of the clashes happening across southern Europe was already strongly felt.

In 1966, Gillo Pontecorvo's anti-colonial film about the Algerian War, *The Battle of Algiers*, won the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival (among other accolades, including three Academy Award nominations). The film, however, was informally banned in France by theater owners who feared outcry from veterans' groups. In fact, the film's first official screening on French television did not occur until November 2004 (Stora and Stevens 2007). The 1968 Cannes Film Festival in France was cancelled halfway through due to filmmakers withdrawing from the festival in solidarity with protesting workers and students. Following the abrupt cancellation of the Cannes Festival, Bernardo Bertolucci and various members of the Italian National Filmmakers Association (ANAC) held meetings to determine whether the Pesaro Festival should be cancelled or not (Solanas in Peña, 2007). Having been founded in 1965 as an expressly political, alternative model to typical European film festivals, the festival directors decided to continue. In particular, the Pesaro Festival aimed to provide programming that would offer "a direct challenge to the historical nationalistic bent apparent in festivals since Venice in 1932" (Donnelly 2015). Pesaro organizers (Lino Micciché and Bruno Torri) revamped the conventional film festival style in a number of ways: "Pesaro had substituted the conventional format of international juries and prizes for a practice of roundtable discussions, lengthy publications, and audience participation" (de Valck 2007: 167). Beyond the style of the festival, Pesaro deliberately promoted films from lesser-known, radically bent directors, especially coming from Latin America and Eastern Europe (see Mestman, in Giovacchini and Sklar 2011: 169–71). Further, it gained support from a whole host of left-leaning thinkers, artists, and activists: including, at one point or another, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Christian Metz, and Roland Barthes.

But what, in 1960s Italy, did such a cinematic challenge consist of? Rather than reviewing Italy's complex film history let us succinctly call attention to some of the more prominent moments in that history that bear on the Pesaro Film Festival by 1968.

Certainly, any understanding of the 1960s era in the Italian film industry must look back to Mussolini's involvement. It is a well-known history: the emergence of the Istituto L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa (LUCE), the Centro Sperimentale di Cinema (CSC), the inauguration of Cinecittá, the production of pro-fascist films, his eldest son, Vittorio Mussolini's visit to Hollywood, and the beginning of the Venice Film Festival. With respect specifically to the Venice Film Festival, it is important to keep in mind that the festival, generally considered the oldest film festival in the world, developed directly in relation to Mussolini's interest in mass media. As Marla Stone summarizes "as of 1935, the regime's propaganda ministry donated the majority of the money [for the festival] and expected the majority of the influence" (2002: 296). With the advent of the war the festival quickly deteriorated; it stopped entirely before the war ended, not resuming again until 1946, at which point it followed some of the same style and approaches developed for the Cannes Film Festival. As such, along with Cannes and the revamped Berlin Festival, Venice quickly became one of the prominent determiners of cinematic success internationally.

The Pesaro Film Festival, though, was not alone in reacting against the Venice Film Festival's cultural hegemony. In fact, a smaller but older film festival, also connected with Pasolini and other well-known filmmakers and critics, had begun in 1959 in southern Italy. The event, the Festival del Cinema Neorealistico, was an offshoot of a leftist film journal, called *Cinemasud*. Both the journal and the festival were run out of the province of Avellino in the region of Campania and were spearheaded by a local film scholar, Camillo Marino, with the support of Pasolini and other more prominent voices in cinema and culture (see Speranza 2007). The festival began as a way to promote locally produced works but quickly became interested in exhibiting films from the "global south," creating Gramscian solidarities between filmmakers from Italy's southern regions, Latin America, and Eastern Europe (Speranza 2007). That Pesaro, not the Festival del Cinema Neorealistico, ended up more internationally visible and thus influential might have something to do with the Neorealistico's relationship to the so-called Southern Question. Pesaro, a town in the province of Urbino, in the northern Marche region had a level of geopolitical privilege not afforded to Avellino, situated in Italy's rural south (not to mention Pesaro was simply closer to both Cannes and Venice).

With respect to filmmaking in Italy, by the time the Pesaro Film Festival started, the Italian film industry had truly resurfaced since the war into a dynamic industry producing the politically charged neorealist and post-neorealist films of De Sica, De Santis, Pontecorvo, and others on the one hand, and the hyper-stylized existentialist art films of the likes of Fellini and Antonioni on the other hand, while also coming out with popular genre films (comedies, police thrillers, westerns, etc.). The neorealist legacy certainly dovetails with what Bruno and Miccichè were doing or were trying to do with the festival and we see an expressly neorealist element in many of its films featured in 1968, as we will discuss below.

Elsewhere, we have dealt with neorealism at length (Ruberto and Wilson 2007), suggesting that while the filmmaking style was relatively short-lived in a strict sense, it was refashioned and reflected both in and out of Italy for decades to come (see also Giovacchini and Sklar 2011). Neorealism is a general term used to define a group of socially conscious

films produced in a naturalistic, documentary-style, which focused on plots that reflected the everyday realities of marginalized peoples.[4] The films were made in the immediate post–Second World War era but yet continue to spark the cinematic imagination of artists both inside Italy and outside of Italy.

In particular, several prominent Latin Americans studied neorealist techniques at the CSC in the early 1950s under theorist and writer Cesare Zavattini, including Gabriel García Márquez, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Julio García Espinosa, and Fernando Birri, all of whom roomed together while in Rome (Francese 2007; Crowder-Taraborrelli 2007) – and many, if not all of these artists, eventually screened their films at Pesaro.[5] Years later, long after establishing the renowned Escuela Documental de Santa Fe (university film institute) in Argentina and producing his internationally acclaimed film *Tire dié* (*Throw Us a Dime*) (1958), Birri, in particular, would be instrumental in ensuring that *The Hour of the Furnaces* appeared in the Pesaro International Film Festival's 1968 line up.

Reflecting on the making of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, Fernando Solanas recalls the challenges of working on the film during the dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía, which included having to pretend to be making a historical documentary for European television about Argentina. Solanas travelled to Rome with 170 cans of film and worked for two months on the editing. Then he invited Fernando Birri (himself an exile in Rome) to view the footage. Birri was shocked and honored to see his film, *Tire dié*, referenced in *The Hour of the Furnaces* and he became an instant champion of the film. According to Solanas, it was Birri who began to promote the film fiercely among film circles in Rome. Having been invited to see the film in a very "small and depressing" studio in Rome, Birri recounts that he sat down to view the film, about which he knew nothing, and:

> I began to feel my temperature rising. I'm looking at a ground-breaking polemic work, of unique importance, at a very specific moment, when, after a long, cold lonely and disappointing – not disappointed – years of exile, I thought that all of what I did here, in Argentina, was quite frankly, good for nothing […] let's be sincere. *Tire Dié*, *Los Inundados/Flooded Out*, all the little I had been able to do. I see in this movie a tiny fragment from *Tire Dié…* when I saw that, which Pino [Fernando Solanas] hadn't told me about, I said, "well, something remained." A small seed of all that was done, that remained.
>
> (Peña 2007)

"In Good Company": A snapshot of films that accompanied *The Hour of the Furnaces* in Pesaro

Reviewing the program for the Pesaro Film Festival in 1968 we find what was typical of the festival's early years. Of the 23 films screened, the majority were not Italian but rather from Latin America (five different countries, for a total of nine films) and Soviet Bloc countries

(four different countries, a total of five films). However, there were also films from the United States (five) as well as from France (two) and Italy (two).[6] By observing some of the narratives and context of a short selection of films that competed against *The Hour of the Furnaces* at the festival, we can have a better sense of the significance of this film as well as the atmosphere in which it was first screened.

Csillagosok, katonak (*The Red and the White*) directed by Miklós Jancsó

Csillagosok, katonak, Hungarian director Miklós Jancsó's most internationally well-known film, was slotted to be screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1968 but was not due to the festival's cancellation. Many expected *Csillagosok, katonak* to be a commemorative film about the October Revolution (Powell 2015). Instead, audiences were presented with a less-than-celebratory tale of the Civil War between Czarist "White" forces and the combined forces of Hungarian communists and Bolsheviks, the "Reds" along the Volga river. Peter Cowie has described Janscó's work in the 1960s as "one man's analyzing of the ruthless and obduracy of old style communism" (2004: 143). Adam Powell characterizes the depictions of war in this film as examples of "choreographed disorder" (2015). In fact, the opening shots of *Csillagosok, katonak*, featuring epic shots of soldiers on horseback galloping wildly across a desolate landscape call to mind the lawless disorder of a Hollywood or later "spaghetti" (Euro) western. The film focuses primarily on Hungarian "Reds" soldiers' and collaborators' struggles to stay engaged in the fight against the Czarist "Whites."

The opening of the film features a Hungarian soldier who, having witnessed the ruthless death of a comrade, hides in the water along the river bank until the coast is clear, throws down his gun, and walks away. We learn shortly thereafter that the Hungarians are unhappy with the lack of support from revolutionary forces. From this point forward, the film follows the Hungarians as they fight among themselves, and engage in a variety of guerrilla tactics against the more traditionally efficient and ruthless "White" army. The "Whites" are cold and calculating, depicted with a depraved, ruthless aesthetic evocative of Nazi characters in Italian neorealist films of the 1940s. In addition to depictions of the random violence of war (some soldiers are killed and others spared by the "White" army for no apparent reason), the film features several significant scenes of sexual violence against women. Women's bodies are displayed in front of soldiers and utilized for forced sex acts.

The Hungarian "Reds" do their best to fight the "Whites" with whatever available means they have. Women collaborate by trying to distract soldiers, not always successfully, and men steal horses and weaponry, and hide among the general population. The film lingers on the disorder of war by layering a variety of modes of warfare and resistance into its shots. For example, toward the end of the film, there is a shot that features fighter planes, soldiers running on foot with guns, soldiers on horseback wielding swords, and soldiers in horse-drawn carts. The overall confusion, desolation, and futility of war depicted in *Csillagosok, katonak* calls to mind Roberto Rossellini's 1946 film, *Paisan*, about the Allied invasion of

Sicily. Both of these films highlight the sometimes meaningless experiences of ordinary soldiers seemingly abandoned and left to their own devices.

Pasado el meridiano (*Passing the Meridian*) directed by José María Arzuaga

In *Pasado el meridiano*, Spanish director and resident of Colombia, José Maria Arzuaga tells the story of an elevator operator/errand boy at an advertising firm in Bogotá. This film can be viewed through a neorealist lens for many reasons, not the least of which includes the fact that Arzuaga was an ardent admirer of the principles of Italian neorealism (Osorio 2014). The story is oriented around a day in the life of an ordinary worker, Augusto, who learns of his mother's death via telegram and has to ask for time off to return to his village and attend her funeral. Augusto's marginalized position on the periphery of the advertising firm and society at large is emphasized from the first opening shots depicting daily life in the bustling office. Everyone in the office, from the well-dressed young men and women who drink coffee, smoke, and laugh while they brainstorm creative, if vapid, ideas for the various products they must sell, to the office manager in charge of answering a phone that never stops ringing, seems to know what they are supposed to be doing. In contrast, Augusto never seems to fit in. He is scolded by the office manager when he shows up for work out of uniform. It turns out that his uniform is at the tailor's and a considerable portion of the film is devoted to his efforts to retrieve his uniform (essential to his job) so that he can return to his position in the elevator. This scene, which chronicles the complicated relationship between a worker who has nothing and the minimum requirements for holding down a job (Augusto has to settle for a portion of the tailor's work because he cannot afford the full service), calls to mind Antonio's desperate search for his stolen bicycle in Vittorio De Sica's 1948 classic *Bicycle Thief*.

Back at the office, Augusto manages to share the news of his mother's death with a cleaning woman but nothing changes. The sorrow and violence that characterizes the everyday lives of poor people is subsumed in the empty, but constant, work and interpersonal drama at the ad agency. Like the pensioner, Umberto, in another De Sica film (*Umberto D,* 1952), Augusto waits impotently for his concerns to be taken seriously by those around him. He watches and wanders around like a ghost in a bustling world that has no room for him. And like Umberto, Augusto is an ambivalent anti-hero of sorts. While it is easy to feel sorry for him, he thwarts audience sympathy in certain scenes that betray his own lack of compassion. He finally receives permission to leave work but when he arrives at his village, the local priest informs him that they buried and held mass for his mother the day before. The priest demands payment for the funeral but Augusto does not have it. He is treated callously by the priest and is reduced to praying for his mother at the back of the church (again on the margins) during a regular mass. There is no resolution to Augusto's story. Like Umberto, he remains an outsider and there is no indication at the end of *Pasado el meridiano* that his life condition will improve.

Targets directed by Peter Bogdanovich

Targets, unofficially co-written by Peter Bogdanovich and Sam Fuller, and produced by Hollywood heavyweight Daniel Selznick and B-movie king, Roger Corman, was probably one of the slickest films at the festival in 1968. *Targets* features Boris Karloff in a role as tailor-made for him as the character Norma Desmond was for Hollywood screen legend Gloria Swanson. Karloff plays Byron Orlock, an ageing monster movie star who sees the death of his genre and wants to retire, in spite of his studio's insistence that he keep working. High production values aside, *Targets* finds its thematic place at the Pesaro film festival with the subplot story of Bobby (played by Tim O'Kelly). Bobby is a gun-crazy Vietnam War veteran suffering from what is commonly referred to today as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Home from the war and not fitting into everyday civilian life, Bobby wanders through his parents' home (which is stocked with rifles and gun collector magazines) and from gun shop to gun shop, purchasing guns and ammunition that he loads into the trunk of his convertible Mustang.

Targets is a film about two types of horror and monstrosity: the classic monster film genre, a cinematic extension of the nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, and the monstrosity of war. While the genre of blockbuster monster movies seems to be fading in US society, the real spectacle of war and the cinematic reaction to its violence has only begun. In fact, characters like Bobby, alienated and lonely, are bringing the war experience home much the way Vietnam War veteran and horror special effects designer Tom Savini described it in Adam Simon's horror film documentary, *The American Nightmare* (2000): "… that's what Vietnam did for me. It gave me the sense that if it's gonna be horrible, it's gonna be horrible the way I saw it …." Modern horror director Wes Craven mentions in the documentary that he was accused of being a sadist and describes his work as "almost as subversive as a communist plot to undermine the morals of American youth."

Targets had its world debut at the Pesaro film festival, two months after the assassination of civil rights leader and anti-war activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the same year in which George Romero's groundbreaking modern horror film, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) came out. In its own way, with *Targets*, Bogdanovic foretells the death of the monster movie and the birth of the slasher film, conceived in the post-Vietnam era from the collective nightmare of Vietnam War veterans and young people who were deeply impacted by this war.

Memorias del subdesarrollo (*Memories of Underdevelopment*) directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

Memorias del subdesarrollo, probably Alea's most internationally famous film, complicates, for a European audience, an understanding of revolutionary politics in Latin America. The film's protagonist, Sergio, is an unsuccessful aspiring writer, who is neither a revolutionary nor a reactionary. He is quite simply stuck somewhere between the two poles. With the missile crisis between Cuba and the United States looming on the horizon at the end of the

film, Sergio's ironic ambivalence turns to impotence. Unable to act or participate in society in any meaningful way, he concludes bleakly that his life has become "like a stale plant." Unable to shed his identification with European values, Sergio represents the type of neocolonialized man depicted in *The Hour of Furnaces* sardonically in such key scenes as the pop-culture montage sequence, featuring European music hits and footage from a Warholesque happening at the DiTella Institute, and the Pepsi Salon literary ceremony scene, which follows an exploration on illiteracy and poverty in the "Cultural Violence" chapter of the film.

In *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, Sergio cannot avoid noticing his neocolonialized position, as his country has undergone a revolution. He is simply unable or unwilling to change. Sergio, however, is at least able to reflect upon his own elitism and racism. His country's revolutionary politics requires him to do so.

In 1967 Solanas criticized Italian critic Guido Aristarco's appraisal of the revolutionary Latin American cinema he saw at the film festival in Merida as a continuation of earlier Soviet Cinema:

> The analysis certainly could be correct on the plan of experiment and form, but is nevertheless wrong in isolating it from its historical context, as the large part of European critics do […] [ours is] a cinema on the margins of the system, a cinema radicalized ideologically, a cinema of combat, of essay and of reflection born of some very precise circumstances which were occurring in unliberated countries where the mechanisms of oppression are powerful. Eisenstein and Vertov had the Soviet power behind them, the Latin American filmmaker has the police behind him. That is the difference.
>
> (Buchsbaum 2001: 161)

Beyond viewing, spectatorship, and political action

What does it mean that *The Hour of the Furnaces* won in the context of 1968 Pesaro? How was it different than the neorealist style films that accompanied it as part of the offerings? The answer might lie in what can be understood as an uncolonized relationship between the film and its spectators. According to Mariano Mestman, the seeds of Third Cinema were already taking shape before the debut of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in Italy, but the Pesaro screening was a key part of the movement (Mestman in Giovacchini and Sklar 2011). As Fernando Birri points out in *The Making of the Hour of the Furnaces*, the Pesaro screening resulted in a mini-social movement, or rather coalesced with one in the town of Pesaro (Peña 2007).[7] Birri recalls that after the screening of Part One (which ends with a four-minute shot of Che Guevara's dead body), the salon erupted in a level of applause louder than he had ever heard and continued for a full four minutes, into the credits. The spectators, we should recall, at Pesaro were not merely watching films. They were also

participating in dialogic exchanges and debates sparked not only by the films themselves but also by other media that circulated among attendees.

These exchanges among participants were a crucial aspect of how Pesaro was distinguishing itself from Venice and other more mainstream film festivals. Amidst the applause that followed the screening of Part One of the film (the other parts were screened the next day), Birri, Solanas, Getino, and others nailed a banner under the screen that featured a phrase (which was also highlighted within the film itself) from Frantz Fanon: "every spectator is a coward or a traitor."[8] Solanas and Getino were then hoisted onto the shoulders of the crowd and paraded into the streets toward the town's main square where the crowd encountered a student and worker demonstration. The police intervened and ended up arresting some of the filmmakers from the festival – in all, 305 filmmakers, students, and workers were accused and twenty were arrested (see Montanari 1968: 5). Festival co-organizer, Torri, some 40 years later recalled the heated tension in the city created by the event: "In quella indimenticabile edizione dopo la proiezione del film di Solanas tutta la folla ha riempito la piazza e c'è stata una repressione che la polizia ha provveduto a sedare anche arrestando alcuni cineaste" ("During the unforgettable edition [of the Festival], after the projection of Solanas's film, the crowd filled the piazza and there was a state of police repression and some cineastes were even arrested") (Cuk 2008: n.pag.).

According to Solanas, militant film is only militant if it functions in a particular context to revolutionalize audiences/participants and prompts them to action. So the same film might be militant in one context and not militant in another (Buchsbaum 2001). Thus, no one aesthetic necessarily works in all contexts. The context of the Pesaro International Film Festival in 1968 was ripe for *The Hour of the Furnaces*. The film's clandestine production history, specific political critique, and unique set of expectations for spectators coalesced with an international audience that sympathized with the wave of protest sweeping France and other parts of Europe. In the 1950s, Latin American filmmakers and artists had looked to Italian neorealism for a model that could inspire their efforts to create a different kind of national cinema (Hess 1993: 104). As we have shown in our snapshot of some of the international offerings at the Pesaro festival in 1968, many of the films that competed with *The Hour of the Furnaces* employed neorealist strategies and references. Given the history of Italian neorealism's influence on Latin American cinema and Birri's direct involvement in promoting the film in Italy, *The Hour of the Furnaces* could be understood as an extension of neorealism's reach coming full circle back to the source (see also Ruberto and Wilson 2007: 4–5). As Hess points out however, this interpretation would miss the mark, because there is a significantly more "catalytic" role for the audiences of *The Hour of the Furnaces* than for a standard neorealist film (1993: 107), and its form, a frenetic blend of archival and recreated footage, is far more radically experimental.

Imagining the exact type of spectatorship and venue for *The Hour of the Furnaces* (totally outside of mainstream movie theaters) was a concern from the very initial thought process for Solanas. This act of imagining began to "open the shell" in his process. Spectatorship was a concern from the film's inception because Solanas was aware of the

possibility that nobody would want to see the type of "epic historical fresco" he envisioned making. As Buchsbaum points out, Solanas and Getino encouraged rearranging parts of the film according to the purpose of a given screening, placing more emphasis on the "film act" than on the film as a work of art. Thus, they fell in line with Walter Benjamin's confidence in the mechanically reproduced object rather than the sanctioned original (Buchsbaum 2001: 157).

Perhaps in part due to the film's reception there, Solanas continued editing *The Hour of the Furnaces* after the Pesaro Festival. He added more footage (the "paper tiger" international components) and months later, when he was preparing the foreign language versions of the film in Rome, he added an additional ten to twelve minutes to the film. The result was the more widely distributed, international version of the film. The interview with Juan Perón was added later as well. Thus, in various ways, the international quality of the festival had a direct impact on the later versions of the film and ultimately on the film's legacy today.

In the years after Pesaro, the film appeared at the Cannes Film Festival where it was denounced by almost all of the mainstream Argentine publications, and embraced by the French film critics. It had a very successful post-Cannes run in Paris in the Latin Quarter for five or six months and Godard even invited Solanas for an interview on his television show (see Peña 2007). The impetus to write a theoretical piece, which resulted in the manifesto entitled *Towards a Third Cinema* (1969), arose out of the film's post-Pesaro afterlife in Paris.

Thus, theory followed practice and the film was, from its release forward, inextricably linked to a manifesto about militant cinema and liberation.

In 1968, the Grupo Cine Liberación distributed for the first time pamphlets where, as Octavio Getino recounts, the roles of the filmmaker and the audience were addressed:

> Our responsibility and our commitment as men of cinema and as individuals in a dependent nation is neither with a universal culture, nor art, nor with the concept of man in the abstract. Above all else our commitment is with the liberation of our Country, with the liberation of the Argentine man and the Latin American man.
>
> (Getino 2006: 109–10)

Indeed, we hope to have shown with this brief snapshot of the Pesaro Film Festival in 1968 how that particular context may have shaped the later work both of writing *Towards a Third Cinema* and editing *The Hour of the Furnaces*; a film that, in that moment, was the strongest example of what would later become known as Tercer Cine. While the other films at Pesaro that year were reflective of social themes and the need for political justice they did not change or challenge the role of the spectators to the extent that Solanas and Getino's film did. Thus, it was fitting for the spectators to become involved with the film act and the film's actors, so to speak, just as it was fitting for the film's audience to take action and converge with the social movement that was going on in the streets of Italy.

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Appendix

Films Screened at the Pesaro Film Festival, 1968

Listed in the order they appear, with country and director named as presented in the original catalogue. Given the variety of languages for the films, we only list the films in their original language.

Argentina

La hora de los hornos, Fernando Ezequiel Solanas
Tute cabrero, Juan Jose Jusid

Brazil

Bebel, garota propaganda, Maurice Capovilla
Proezas de santanas na vila de Leva-e-traz, Paulo Gil Soares
Cara a cara, Julio Bressane

Czechoslovakia

Kristove roky, Juraj Jakubisko

Colombia

Pasado el meridiano, José María Arzuaga

Cuba

Aventuras de Juan Quin Quin, Julio Garcia Espinosa
David, Enrique Pineda Barnet
Memorias del subdesarrollo, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

France

Anemone, Philippe Garrel
Les idoles, Marc'O

Italy

Tropici, Gianni Amico
Satellite, Mario Schifano

Yugoslavia

Praznik, Djordje Kadijevic

United States of America

Targets, Peter Bogdanovich
Wild 90, Norman Mailer
Sally's Hounds, Robert Edelstein
David Holzman's Diary, James Mcbride
The Wind is Driving Him Towards the Open Sea, David Brooks

Hungary

Cati, Marta Meszaros
Csillagosok, katonak, Miklos Jancso

Soviet Union

Treugol'nik, Genrich Maljan

Notes

1 Many thanks to Pedro Armocida, the current director of the Pesaro Film Festival for sharing the original 1968 program of the festival with us for this research. Much gratitude goes to Tomas Crowder-Taraborelli for his careful reading of an earlier draft of this essay.
2 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are ours.
3 The Battle of Valle Giulia has also been highly mythologized by individuals and expressive culture generally (see Portelli 1997).
4 Such a position, as with others, resonates with Cesare Zavattini's theory that film must have the power to "stir up emotion and indignation" in a spectator in an effort to have the audience reflect and act on that reflection. Precisely these positions both attracted Latin American filmmakers to neorealism's approach and led them to criticize the limitations of such spectator engagement (see our discussion of Zavattini's position in Ruberto and Wilson 2007: 6–8).
5 See the final chapter in this book.
6 See the appendix for the complete list of films shown at Pesaro in 1968.

7 *L'Unita*' covered the demonstrations, arrests, and strike (planned for the following day) in detail. See, for instance, the multiple articles published on June 6, 1968, http://www.dellarepubblica.it/legislatura-1968-giugno-68. Accessed June 6, 2018.

8 For a full exploration of the relationship between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and the theory of Frantz Fanon, see Javier Campo's essay "Filmando teorías políticas: dependencia y liberación en *La hora de los hornos*" (2014). See also Chapter 2 in this book.

Chapter 7

Tracing the Winding Road of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in the First World

Mariano Mestman

In the last 50 years, an extensive bibliography has discussed *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968) and the inseparable proposal of *Towards a Third Cinema* (1969). In this chapter, I will focus on a less explored aspect: the film's journey in European and North American alternative and militant circuits during 1968 and the years that immediately follow.

The Hour of the Furnaces and the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* can be inscribed, as it is well known, within a wider period, the so-called *long 60s*. After the pioneer essay by Fredric Jameson (1984) on this period – that according to him could be tracked back to sometime in the second half of the 1950s and could be extended until 1972–74 – many other authors used the same concept and proposed different periodizations. As far as I am aware, the "widest" locates the origins of the *long 60s* at the beginning of the Algeria War (1954) or the Bandung Conference (1955) and its ending in the Sandinista Revolution (1979). Of course, it is a periodization that takes into account also the idea of the *global 1960s* inasmuch as the 1960s account for the expansion of a common sensibility at an international level that tries to cover a wide range of processes of rebellion, revolt, insurrection, and revolution in a number of countries around the world. That temporal (*long 60s*) and geographical (*global 60s*) extensions are quite apt to think about *The Hour of the Furnaces* in its national and international context. Although its world premiere took place amidst the revolts of 1968, at the same time, it is possible to find the historical conditions that made the film possible as far back as the middle of the 1950s. And this not only because of its Third Worldism dialogues with Algeria and Bandung but also because 1955 is the year of the civic-military coup against the government of General Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and the beginning of the so-called "Peronist resistance" against successive governments. The whole of the second part of the film, sometimes disregarded by academic accounts, concerns itself precisely with Peronism and "the Resistance." At the same time, we can extend the film's "sixties" influence until the end of the 1970s. In this respect, we can take as a significant fact the almost forgotten dossier organized in 1979 by Guy Hennebelle and the group CinémAction for the magazine *Tiers Monde* about the influence of the film and the manifesto in several countries around the world (Hennebelle and Mignot-Lefebvre 1979).

As it is well known, in the 1980s, and even in later periods, the film and the document were revisited in new manifestos, events, and proposals in different places. Although from my perspective, the historical period of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (and of Third Cinema) had already concluded even in those years, its ideas (cinematic, political) could still dialogue with oppositional filmmaking practices in many countries. In an important essay on the "changing geography" of Third Cinema, Michael Chanan (1997) reconstructed, among other

questions, the history of the film and the Third Cinema manifesto; some misinterpretations and modifications of the original definitions of the three types of cinema; the connections of the film with parallel movements in different countries; and the "transnational function" of Third Cinema. The author also addressed the subsequent restoration of the thesis put forward by the film and the manifesto and their dialogue with other perspectives more or less similar in the 1980s. Chanan not only underlines the pioneering works by the scholar Teshome Gabriel on Third Cinema, but also focused on the well-known Third Cinema Conference held in Edinburgh in 1986. Organized by Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, the event approached the relevance of the concept of Third Cinema for the oppositional practices in film and video in the 1980s in the metropolitan centres of First World countries.[1]

In what follows, I will return to some of the testimonies and ideas included in those two moments of the debate around Third Cinema (the *CinémAction* dossier of 1979 and the meeting in Edinburgh of 1986[2]) and survey other less well-known sources and documents such as catalogues from parallel distributors, letters, testimonies, or press notes from those days. From there, I aim to explore *The Hour of the Furnaces* in the circuit of political and militant cinema in the First World, the discussions it sparked, and the polemics in which it took part.[3]

Festivals: Between Pesaro, 1968 and Cannes, 1969

> I personally lived the strongest expression of the *contestazione* (protest) in festivals: the one in Pesaro 68 […] undoubtedly, like probably all episodes of *contestazione*, was fairly spontaneous and confusing […] In any case, I must say that […] all of us were a little stupid in doing a *contestazione* so violent and direct against such a progressive and innovative festival […] Pesaro, I repeat, was the only or one of the very few festivals that offered so much space to the most innovative cinematographies and in particular, that had shown […] and openness, an interest and a predisposition for the presentation of Latin American cinema that until then it had not enjoyed in any other festival.
>
> (Solanas 1970)

A particular scene is repeated in the accounts of the international premiere of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in the IV Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema di Pesaro (IV International Meeting of New Cinema in Pesaro), Italy, in June 1968: after the screening of the first part of the film, summoned by its expressive force, interpellated from the screen by the dead face of Che Guevara in extreme close-up accompanied by a deafening percussion rhythm, those attending stood up to shout and carried the filmmakers on their shoulders.[4] The memories associate this scene to the concurrent agitation of 1968 in Europe and, in Italy, to the coincidence in the street with a student-popular demonstration that ended with several people arrested after clashes with neofascist groups and members of the Italian police. That is, the film turned into a political act as its directors hoped in each screening and as they will argue for a short time

later in the notion of the film-act and militant cinema as the "most advanced" category of Third Cinema.

The Argentine filmmaker Fernando Birri pointed out:

> On my pointy shoulder blades and on the shoulders of dozens, hundreds of spectators , we carried Solanas and Getino along the aisle in the jam-packed room for the opening of *The Hour of the Furnaces* that had just been screened that night for the first time in Europe. Endless ovations, enthusiastic cheers, revolutionary chants. A short time before, under the screen still empty, we had pinned with anything we found at hand, I with the heel of my shoe, a large sheet where in red letters the words of Frantz Fanon had been written: "all spectator is a coward or a traitor." That was the beginning of the epic story of a political and militant cinema that in the following decades changed the virtual potency of those images that want to change the world.[5]

Birri sent us these words to be included in a homage to the film during the Pesaro Film Festival in 2008, on the 40th anniversary of its premiere. Who better than the legendary Birri to evoke those events? A few days before the 1968 edition he had seen in a private screening a fragment of his documentary *Tire dié* (*Throw Us a Dime*) (1958–60) included as a "filmic quotation" in *The Hour of the Furnaces*. Birri was "shocked" and "moved" by the inclusion of the sequence from *Tire dié*. After the screening of the film in Pesaro, he pointed out:

> […] this is what I think is really formidable about the function of *The Hour* […] for the first time, a Latin American film arrives stating rules of ideological and aesthetic behaviour for a possible European action in the future. This must be understood also in light of the singular moment Europe is living and in light of the singular moment Pesaro is living […].
>
> (Birri 1968)

The following year, Birri appeared in the film *Sierra Maestra* (Giannarelli, 1969) playing the role of a Latin American guerrillero in jail. In a memorable scene, the character looks at the camera and explicitly quotes the "main idea of *The Hour of the Furnaces*" – said Birri – "every spectator is either a coward or a traitor." Although in Europe there was already acknowledgement of the so-called New Latin American Cinema (particularly of Brazilian Cinema Novo and of Cuban cinema), 1968 hastened and radicalized this connection. While in Argentina and Latin America it is possible to track back a previously committed cinema, the bibliography and the testimonies have dated back, correctly, the origin of the radicalization of militant cinema in the 1960s/70s to that scene in Pesaro. The beginning of an "epic journey" (a term as grandiloquent as precise in describing the Zeitgeist at the time) that in those years would involve many other films and filmmakers.

But the scene in Pesaro 68 described by Birri had its counterpart the following year at Cannes, the famous festival that had to close down because of protests in 1968, a few days

before Pesaro. A year later, in May 1969, during the VIII International Critics´ Week at Cannes, the three parts of *The Hour* are screened amidst a huge polemic. The Argentine government hands an official protest through its ambassador in Paris, Aguirre Lagarreta, where it questioned the screening of a film that it considered controversial because it distorted the image of Argentina and constituted a call for violence. It requested also the screening of another film, *Invasión* (*Invasion*) (1969), with a script by its director Hugo Santiago and Jorge Luis Borges based on a story by Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares. At the same time, the correspondent of the conservative Argentine newspaper *La Prensa,* Gloria Alcorta, and other critics protested too to the administration of the festival. Alcorta lamented the absence of the directors of *The Hour* because she would have liked to talk to them about "a film that misleads and confuses public opinion and in particular French people badly informed about our problems […]" (Alcorta 1968). These comments seemed rather ironic considering the street protests and the police repression of those days of May 1969 in Argentina were a prelude to the outburst on May 29 and 30 in Cordoba, known as Cordobazo.[6]

To the extent in which *The Hour* was persecuted and censored in Argentina,[7] Solanas and Getino thought that the international recognition of the film would generate some sort of impact in the Argentinean media and the possibility of generating fruitful expectations for its subsequent clandestine distribution in its country of origin. In this sense, the impact of the "diplomatic conflict" that took place at Cannes 69 in the Argentine press seemed to achieve that goal.

The International Critics' Week at Cannes was created in 1962 due to the impression that the official selection of the festival was too narrow to allow for a *new cinema*. This initiative was part of a new circuit of festivals and filmic encounters that during the 1960s opened themselves to cinematographies from the "periphery." For example, for the New Latin American Cinema, these and other events in western and eastern Europe represented privileged spaces to showcase the films, even before the circuit Viña del Mar (Chile, 1967–69) – Mérida (Venezuela, 1968) became its launching pad. In that international alternative circuit, the Pesaro Film Festival occupies a key place. Its origin goes back to 1965 when it joins those first efforts to build autonomous events independent from the demands of the film market. In fact, the Pesaro's director Lino Micciché acknowledged the International Critics' Week at Cannes and other previous filmic encounters in Italy (such as the Review of Latin American Cinema at Santa Margherita and the International Encounter of Porretta Terme[8]) as antecedents of the event. For Micciché, Pesaro was not a "festival of stars" but an encounter-forum and reference point for the *new cinemas* of the world. He also talked of the purpose of Pesaro to "awaken an interest, until then unheard of, on the problems of language and the structural analysis of the film, that is, a new film criticism that was not just a new imposture" (Micciché 1976). The first three years of the Mostra, as it is well known, focused on this last goal, with the presence of renowned critics, theorists, and intellectuals like Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, Umberto Eco, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Gianni Toti, and Galvano della Volpe, among others.With these antecedents, the premiere of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in the 1968 edition took place within the framework of a clear radicalization of the Mostra. In fact, as I mentioned above, the space of international festivals had been strongly questioned a few

days before in one of its core centres, the Cannes Festival, occupied by critics, filmmakers, and students and in the middle of a general strike. The festival shut down on May 19 without any prizes in parallel with the establishment of the Estates-General of French Cinema in Paris. Soon after, in September, a sort of *contestazione* (protest) also took place at the Venice Festival. Between Cannes and Venice, at the beginning of June, Pesaro found itself in a particular situation: the tensions of 1968 could do nothing but affect its own organization too. Thus, the festival organizers – with internal disagreements – established an *autocontestazione* (self-protest): they proclaimed that festivals were experiencing an historic crisis, opened the event to its functioning as a permanent assembly and assumed the revision of its organizational structure; extending its operative criteria to self-management in contact with cultural, artistic, and political groups, and expanding projections to an emerging circuit in urban areas and working-class suburbs that in the following year would be called the "alternative circuit" (Miccichè 1976).[9]

This peculiar form of "self-protest" taken on board by the organizers of the Pesaro Film Festival and expressed in the general assembly is the result of a coalition of forces there. First, the pressure from groups belonging to the Movimento Studantesco (Student Movement) that, together with Goffredo Fofi and other radical writers from the magazines *Ombre Rosse* and *Quaderni Piacentini*, saw in the Mostra a bureaucratic obstacle to their revolutionary and anti-institutional project.[10] They presented a document to the plenary session of the Mostra that radically questions any cultural alternatives within the system. Second, a group of important filmmakers from the left (with a strong influence of the Italian Communist Party but also of the third-worldist left) suggested transforming the Pesaro Festival into "a showcase for a free and oppositional cinema," committed to confront all other cinematic manifestations, like the Mostra in Venice, as will happen a few weeks later under the drive of the National Association of Italian Filmmakers (ANAC).[11] Third, Latin American filmmakers (from Cuba, Brazil, and Argentina) who shared the spirit of the student protests but who, somehow, put pressure together with the authorities to have the event taking place inasmuch as Pesaro constituted a fundamental enclave to exhibit their productions abroad and even, in some cases, the possibility of reaching the European market.[12] The long review of that year's festival by the Cuban Julio García Espinosa for the magazine *Cine Cubano*, in the same way as the "Latin American Cinema's declaration in Pesaro," is telling about the balance the Latin Americans were trying to achieve between the protest of the European revolutionary student movement – that in broad terms they shared – and the necessity for the Mostra to take place (Espinosa 1968). Solanas' words quoted in the epigraph account to this.

Although the reconstruction of the events in Pesaro is not the object of this essay,[13] it is important to stress their influence and dynamism because they are relevant to the later impact gained by *The Hour*. Some of the founders of the Mostra – such as Lino Micciché and Bruno Torri – considered that this impact came out stronger because of the crisis of the Festival in 1968.[14] But overall, it was a very complex and controversial situation.[15] Primarily because the groups mentioned above – and others like the delegations from Eastern Europe – found themselves in a globally key context for the political and cultural left. In the run-up to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the disputes between the communist left and the

numerous emerging new lefts were in vogue. Among many other testimonies on those days, Goffredo Fofi insisted more than once in the scope of the radical position assumed by him and the Student Movement against critics and filmmakers of the socialist or communist parties, among others those directing the Mostra. For Fofi, those critics and filmmakers were "social democratic," "opportunistic," and "corporative" in their interests in the world of cinema.[16]

In contrast to this position, Valentino Orsini – somehow the intermediary between the organizers of the Mostra and the rebellious movement – president of the assembly of filmmakers – recalled his participation alongside other left-wing filmmakers in tackling the "chaos" and the attempt to sabotage that edition of Pesaro. "A communist without the identification in disagreement with the political line of the party" – according to his own memories – Orsini was on those days, together with Alberto Filippi, finishing a third wordlist film inspired by Frantz Fanon and had quite a role in the origin and in the making process of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Mestman 2017). In reference to those days, Orsini recalled: "for the Latin American friends, the Festival was extremely important from a political point of view […] the problem was Venice, Cannes but it was not Pesaro."[17]

Pesaro 68 resulted then in a "baptism of fire" for *The Hour of the Furnaces*. In such a scenario, as radical as negotiated, it is possible to observe almost all the issues that will frame the debates and tensions that will accompany the international diffusion of the film in the following years: the fascination for the impact caused by the insertion of the image of a dead Che Guevara at the end of the first part; the call for a dialogue with the spectator to transform him into an "actor" of the political process; the criticisms of the film's totalizing discourse, at times Manichean, "short on dialectics"; the acknowledgment and questioning of its emotive interpellation or of its use of the languages of advertising, as expressed in the daring montage of its first part; the almost unanimous rejection of Perón by the traditional left (and beyond) and at the same time the recognition by the new lefts of the working-class potential of the Argentine Peronist movement recovered by the second part of the film; the debates surrounding the call for revolutionary violence.[18] Questions that are interwoven tangled together in the numerous commentaries about the film even since his first international projection at Pesaro 68.

Militant distribution of the film in the First World

> Dear comrade: two months have gone by since we send you the film *The Hour of the Furnaces* for a number of projections in your region […] In all this time, in spite of repeated demands, you have not sent us the results of the political work carried out, as you promised us to do […] As such, you do not offer us any guarantee of a rigorous political work in the discussion of the films with the proletariat.
>
> (Pasquali 1972)

In the year between the IV Mostra of Pesaro (June, 1968) and the VIII International Critics' week at Cannes (May 1969), while in Argentina, Cine Liberación starts the clandestine

projection of *The Hour of the Furnaces* during the military dictatorship of general Onganía, the film visits numerous international events such as festivals, mostras, cine-clubs, cinematheques, and film libraries (and it is bought by some European public televisions). It is well known the notable impact the final images of the first part of the film had on these and other places: the television sequence of the dead body of Che lying on a stretcher over a large cement sink-trough in the laundry room of Vallegrande hospital (to which his remains were taken after his execution in La Higuera), criss-crossed by a revolutionary third-worldist discourse proposed by the voice-over narration, followed by the photograph of Che's face in extreme close-up, with a deafening soundtrack rallying to action.[19] Probably less known is the also important interest raised by the sequences of the struggles carried out by the workers of the Peronist resistance seen in the second half of the second part of the film. Although festivals and even the alternative circuit exhibited primarily the first part of the film, those other images of the mobilizations and factory occupations in Argentina entered also into a dialogue with a global spirit of revolt and achieved and fulfilled a function, in no way less important, in the international militant circuits of exhibition (students, neighborhoods, trade unions).

The European "parallel" or "alternative" circuit configured since 1968 was in itself heterogeneous. Perhaps as an expression of that phenomenon we call 68: in-between counter-culture and workers and popular insurgency; in-between the new subjectivities of the 1960s, armed action, and Third Worldism; in-between rebelliousness and revolution. In an essay on Third Cinema written for the Third Cinema conference at Edinburgh 1986, Paul Willemen recuperated the three categories proposed by Solanas and Getino (first, second, and Third Cinema) and observed that in Europe, the vast majority of films from the Third World were consumed or read in a "second cinema way." That is, displacing their political dimension and favoring, however, their artistic-auteurist dimension (Willemen 1989: 9). Of course, it is an affirmation valid in many cases, which includes the recurring phenomenon of "discoveries" from peripheral cinematographies to the centers of cinema in the world and the "recuperation" of filmmakers or films that in those years (and from well before) came from the emergent Third World and were read as "auteur films." However, in the case of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* its distribution in the First World is a paradigmatic example of the fact that the type of reading/consumption highlighted by Willemen coexisted with a militant use, as it was even reflected in a known French political fiction film, *Camarades* (*Comrades*) (1970), by Marin Karmitz. In this film, a scene (recorded live) shows the screening by a union committee of the famous fragment of the "factory occupations" (ten minutes) from the second part of the Argentine film. The workers and militants watching the projection debate over their own experiences of strikes and occupations in France. It is an important scene in the development of Karmitz's film since, as Christian Zimmer perceived, it is situated in a key moment in relation to the problem of awareness-raising of the protagonist in relation to class solidarity (Zimmer 1976: 178).[20] In the same years, other well-known political filmmakers (like the French Chris Marker or the Indian Mrinal Sen)[21] incorporated minor fragments of *The Hour of the Furnaces* and other films by Cine Liberación. But the interesting aspect of Karmitz's case is that he put on

the screen precisely the experience of a militant use of *The Hour* that had taken place in similar circumstances between worker and student groups in Paris and other French cities.

The manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* was published for the first time in 1969 in France[22] and *The Hour of the Furnaces* had an early recognition amongst militant cinema groups in 1968. According to Sébastien Layerle (2007: 156), the film was cited as an example of a possible "project of synthesis" by several representatives of the different tendencies within the General States of French Cinema movement formed in May. In the same way, the majority of film magazines devoted important pages to *The Hour of the Furnaces*.[23] Some articles, like those from *Positif* and *Cahiers du Cinema* (end 1968, early 1969) gathered attention for its projection at the French cinematheque as well as in an alternative and militant cultural circuit. If in March 1969 the critic Guy Hennebelle denounced that, although screened at the French cinematheque and at the Locarno Festival (Switzerland), the Argentine film was prohibited in France and, consequently, it had been impossible to screen it during the fortnight organized by the magazine *Positif* (Hennebelle 1969) a little later on in May, it was screened within the International Critics' Week at Cannes (sparking the "diplomatic" scandal mentioned above) and would be distributed in Paris and other French cities.

A particular characteristic of the post-1968 period was the inclusion of political films by Third World filmmakers in the catalogues of the principal non-commercial and/or militant distributors in the world such as The Other Cinema (London); Third World Cinema Group, Tricontinental Film Centre and Newsreel (United States); MK2 owned by Karmitz (France); Cinéma d'Information Politique-Champ Libre (Canada-Montreal); El Volti (Spain); Collettivo Cinema Militante, San Diego Cinematográfica, and Centro Documentazione Cinema e Lotta di Classe (Italy), among many others. *The Hour of the Furnaces* occupied a significant space in the activity of many of these collectives.

The Third World Cinema Group, for example, was created by students and young Latin Americans in the city of San Francisco who had been in contact with films from the region in a solidarity trip to Cuba in 1970 and then with the films that arrived in 1971 to the San Francisco Festival, like *The Hour of the Furnaces* or *Sangre del Cóndor* (*Blood of the Condor*) (Jorge Sanjinés and Ukamau group, 1969, Bolivia). In this last event, they had contacted the Uruguayan distributor Walter Achugar who they considered as a promoter of the organization. Almost from the start, the group had installed a distribution office in the West Coast (Berkeley) and another on the East Coast (New York) with the objective of showing films in cine-clubs they could reach followed by the forming of a distribution company and the screening of the films to community organizations, theaters, schools, trade unions, or churches (Anon. n.d.).[24] A short time after starting their activities, its organizers will remember that the origins of the group had been shaped "around *The Hour of the Furnaces*" (Lofredo and Broullón 1972). Some years later, in the answer to a poll included in the dossier by *CinémAction* mentioned above, Gary Crowds – then editor of the magazine *Cinéaste* and member of the Tricontinental Film Centre in New York, a group that followed from the experience of the Third World Cinema Group – will also recall the importance of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (also of *Sangre del Cóndor*) in the construction of a distribution network for films from the Third World in the United

States. In the case of the Argentine film, Crowds said that – despite its main audience coming from art house cinemas and universities (intellectuals, left-wing militants, students) and not managing to influence in the creation of new "models for distribution" – the film had impacted progressive filmmakers and it had received an "incredibly favorable" reception in the United States, even by "bourgeois critics" for its cinematographic power and political sharpness, contributing in this way to the increased respectability of the so-called cinema from the Third World in the critical sphere (Hennebelle and Mignot-Lefebvre 1979: 627–29).

Responding to the same poll, the Canadian André Pâquet pointed out the important influence of the Argentine film in left-wing circles in Quebec. Pâquet recalled the similarities and convergence between the film and the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema,* and progressive Québécois filmmakers but he complained about those who tried to impose the Argentine film as an "ideal" type of militant cinema without recognizing the differences between the national situations (Argentina and Quebec). Furthermore, he dismissed the appropriation of the film by militant groups from Quebec with the objective of confirming their own radical positions in their disputes with other progressive filmmakers in Quebec equally important – in his view – who were also sympathetic to the general spirit of *The Hour of the Furnaces*.[25] Although Pâquet did not mention which militant groups he was criticizing, there is no doubt he was thinking of the Comité d'Information Politique (Committee of Political Information) (CIP). Moreover, the CIP had incorporated *The Hour* into their catalogue in 1971. CIP produced a dossier with "accompanying" materials about its activity of film distribution precisely with a summary of the Argentine film, the completed titles and subtitles, comments by Solanas and the group Cine Liberación. In *Champ Libre,* the magazine edited by the Committee, it was mentioned that this dossier was intended as a starting point for a "political debate" about the film in Quebec, and two chapters of the dossier were highlighted as "hypothesis for further work." They were proposals for discussion. The magazine affirmed: "the analyses done to verify those hypotheses come from groups 'in situation' during the discussions," that is, they came from the practical experience of the exhibition in the region (CIP 1971). Beyond critical comments on the film, it is interesting that the group put the film in such a central position in relation to their activity. CIP commented that the Argentine film could be used not only in relation to Argentina and Latin America, but also in relation to their own circumstances: Quebec in the middle of initiatives for its political, cultural, and linguistic "decolonization" from Canada (Anon. 1972, 1973). The testimony of scholar Zuzana Pick about her own experience as a spectator of the film somehow confirms the last point:

> I had the opportunity to attend a full screening of the film in Montreal during the spring of 1971 and in London in the winter of 1977. Although no provisions were made for discussion, the breaks between each section gave rise to all kinds of debates. In Montreal, the denunciation of neocolonialism in the first part of *The Hour* elicited debates on the status of Quebec in view of the events of October of 1970 and the suspension of civil rights by the federal government of Canada.
>
> (Pick 1996: 207)

In Italy, in the weeks before Pesaro 68, the editing of the Argentine film had been finished by Ager Film, a small production company owned by Giuliani De Negri – renowned figure of the Communist resistance – where Valentino Orsini and the Taviani Brothers made their films. While in one moviola *The Hour* was taking shape in another one Orsini – who had developed with Solanas and Getino in Buenos Aires a previous project three years before – was finishing the editing of the fiction film *I dannati della terra* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) (1969), made with Alberto Filippi. It is not coincidental, in this sense, that together with the Third Worldism inspired by Fanon, both films shared precise proposals or formal expressions: the use of similar intertitles and archives, titles about violence or flashes over a black screen, and even the unique appeal to political action on the part of the spectators.[26]

As in France, Italian filmmakers also dialogued with *The Hour.* The document, mentioned above, handed in Pesaro by the Student Movement includes a radical critique of the "cinematic institution" with arguments close to those of Cine Liberación. Furthermore, the idea – obviously of its time – of articulating "cultural struggle" and "political struggle" includes an explicit reference to Solanas. Even more, Goffredo Fofi – director of *Ombre Rosse* and co-author of the document – went with Solanas to Trento to introduce the film at the university, at that moment occupied by students. In the months that followed, *The Hour of the Furnaces* continued its journey through the militant circuit in universities in the North of Italy. In February 1969, for example, with the presence of Solanas, the Colletivo Cinema Militante (CCM) screened the completed film (the three parts) in Turin. In fact, many other exhibitions of the film were organized by the CCM and students militant groups in Perugia, Turin, Trento, and Milan. In the years that followed, *The Hour* continued to be used in militant projections in several Italian cities. One of the groups that quite often included the film in its activities was the Centro Documentazione Cinema e Lotta di Classe coordinated by Vico Codella. This group had appeared from the internal dissent in the Rome branch of the Colletivo Cinema Militante and for a while worked linked to the production company San Diego Cinematográfica of Renzo Rossellini, a key figure in the promotion of Latin American and Third World cinema. The letter cited in the epigraph is an actual statement of the political work with *The Hour* by the Centro Documentazione. In this respect, Vico Codella remembers that in the projections in working-class neighbourhoods on the periphery of Rome it was possible to notice an effective interest and a "very intense participation" by the workers convened. According to Codella, among the foreign films the group screened, *The Hour of the Furnaces* was one of the films projected more often in those years "because it was useful to organize the debate."[27]

In Spain, *The Hour* was also used with a militant intent toward the end of Franco's dictatorship and then during the period called "transition," as remembered by the political filmmaker Andrés Linares, the journalist Ignacio Ramonet, and the historian Román Gubern.[28] Most probably, the film was shown in Madrid by collectives like the ones formed by Linares or Tino Calabuij. However, it was incorporated in a more systematic way in Catalonia, where it formed part of the catalogue of the collective El Volti, whose materials would, later on, end up forming part of the better-known Central del Curt. The activity of El Volti reached its

peak between 1969 and 1975, that is, still during Francoism and in a context in which, at the same time, the Comissió de Cinema de Barcelona (Barcelona's Committee for Cinema) was formed. El Volti was formed by a group of professionals, linked to the Communist Party of Catalonia (PSUC), although not in any organic or systematic way, and organized a repository of militant films and a clandestine distribution company. El Volti worked together with other collectives (particularly those of the Communist trade union Comisiones Obreras) to carry out dissemination work in religious schools, semi-legal cine-clubs, private homes, or in spaces facilitated by neighbourhood committees in Barcelona and other parts of Catalonia. These organizations had the responsibility of convening the public, sometimes in small gatherings but sometimes in large numbers.[29] In this context, Román Gubern – associated to El Volti – remembers that the copy of the Argentine film (the first part) was in high demand.

This reconstruction (partial and incomplete, of course) of the use of *The Hour of the Furnaces* by militant cinema collectives in Europe and North America demonstrates an aspect very often put aside in the textual and historiographic analyses of this type of films: their political use in the militant circuit to generate discussions and political actions. These experiences, around the social intervention of the films, are the ones that, in the last instance, define the so-called militant cinema and are fundamental when evaluating the value and meanings associated with the films in each place and historical moment. Although some of these filmmakers and militant groups that disseminated the Argentine film also moved away from its hypotheses and even from its formal aspects,[30] it is well known that the Third Worldism promoted by *The Hour of the Furnaces* as well as its audacious editing and its avant-garde language (the first part) was celebrated almost unanimously due to their agreement with the explorations associated with 68 around the world. There was even talk in reference to Eisenstein of a new *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). However, the film gave way to a number of debates. Perhaps the most important were those associated with its support of general Perón and to the Peronist movement.

The "damned fact"

> Augusto Martínez Torres: "This defence of Peronism, is it really because you think is ok or, maybe, is it an instrumentalization […] is it a sort of infiltration of leftist groups within Peronism?"
> Octavio Getino: "No, no, there is no trap here".[31]

As we have seen, although the first part of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (we could say the least Peronist) was the one more often exhibited worldwide, the history of Peronism and of the workers' struggle of the "Resistencia," included in the second part[32] occupied an important place in the militant circuit (less diffusion had the third part, a radical call to the revolutionary violence in the Third World that was rarely screened). The decisions about what parts of the film to screen – either in the parallel circuit or in festivals – sometimes had to do with

technical reasons or just pure chance, but many other times they had to do with specific reasons. It is true that the long duration of the whole film (more than four hours) inevitably meant the screening of separated parts. But, at the same time, it is evident that the decision of privileging the first part was linked not only to its formal appeal and its revolutionary potency, but also to the suspicions about, or direct rejection of, Peronism (second part of the film) by an important section of the European and North American left that, with far too much ingenuity and lightness, related it to the fascisms of the old continent.

In the previous section I mentioned the insertion of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in the French militant circuit. In the already mentioned dossier by *CinemAction* in the magazine *Tiers Monde*, Guy Hennebelle (1979: 642) remembered that with Solanas' agreement, the sequences perceived as "too" Peronist had been cut from the first version of the film circulated in Paris although, later on, the film was exhibited in its complete version. This difference between the first version and subsequent ones in the memory of Hennebelle seems to be plausible because other critics[33] refer in passing to a shorter French version and even Solanas does too: toward the end of 1969, he sent a letter to the director of the Cuban film institute (ICAIC), Alfredo Guevara, about possible changes to the original version of the film for its exhibition in Cuba. In that letter, Solanas wrote about the placement in the film of the reels about the "Chronicle of Peronism (1945–55)" – where it was explained the successes achieved in the economic, social political spheres – and affirmed:

> without the analysis of Peronism in power, it is not possible to understand what the movement has been, nor its actions or its transformation from the moment of its fall until today. For example, in France, due to necessities of shortening the time of the exhibition, we cut that part and the experience was negative because it created more confusion.

The American critic Gary Crowds and the German Peter Schumann (in Hennebelle and Mignot Lefebvre 1979) also referred to these issues. Crowds remembered that in general, in the political scene of the United States, only the first part was screened precisely because "the sequences about Peronism were widely thought of as unacceptable for the North American public." (in Hennebelle and Mignot-Lefebvre 1979). Schumann considered the absence of a profound debate of the film's arguments in Germany in part due to the problem with Peronism. That is, to the misgivings expressed by the left in relation to a phenomenon that it suspected to have "fascist roots." Consequently, according to Schumann, the German left never fully assumed the Argentine film while sharing some aspects of the political line of the film around revolution and violence.[34]

The rejection of Perón and the movement was particularly frequent among the critics of the European communist left. The Italian case has its peculiarities because together with the groups of the new left, many individuals and institutions linked to the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) – some already mentioned above – supported the film. Even so, from its startling premiere at Pesaro, both the Peronist question and diverse aspects of the language of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (the tension between the emotive and the rational, for example) were themes

of different Italian reviews and, in some cases, criticized.[35] In any case, the acknowledgment of the film is present in almost all the film magazines and it is highlighted – not without polemic – in the pages of Guido Aristarco's *Cinema Nuovo* ("il film piú importante della rassegna di Pesaro" ["The most important film of the Mostra at Pesaro"] "grossa lezione di honesta política e di correttezza socialista" ["great lesson of political honesty and of socialist correctness"]). It was also highlighted in comments in *Ombre Rosse* or in *Cinema 60* –where together with an extended interview by Lino Micciché with Solanas, there was an early and profound analysis of the film by Alberto Filippi that reached Latin America when it was translated in the first number of the Uruguayan magazine *Cine del Tercer Mundo* in 1969.[36]

Some of the harshest criticisms of the Argentine film came from the French and Spanish critics close to the communist sphere (Lara 1968a, 1968b).[37] The critic Fernando Lara, who attended the 1968 Pesaro Festival for the Spanish magazine *Nuestro Cine,* acknowledged the importance the Argentine film had ("made a little into the symbol of the festival") but he considered that the projection of the whole film was "a big disappointment" because "it is just a Peronist pamphlet […] whose success is the most horrible contradiction the Pesaro Festival could fall into." In his anger, Lara went further in the next article of the magazine, where in direct reference to that Peronist option in the film, he wrote "ethical and political immorality," "ideological careerism," "lack of information and of an honest approach to Latin American reality," "craziness," and "fascist-like act." Furthermore, for this Spanish critic, Solanas used dishonestly "'Che Guevara, Frantz Fanon, Fidel Castro, Sartre, Lenin or general San Martín to produce a big pamphlet in favour of Peronism and to present Perón as a precursor of the Cuban revolution of 1959." And he sustained that "in Pesaro, we hoped to find anything except a debate around Peronism, Argentine movement unanimously considered as a degeneration of European fascism not only seen like this – as the directors of the film intended – by the left-wing intellectuals victims of cultural neocolonialism" (Font 1969: 22).[38]

Contrary to these positions of radical rejection of the political option of the film, other critics and filmmakers associated with the "ruptures" of 1968 shared the thesis about revolutionary violence and even accepted the left-wing reading of Peronism the film defended as one more of the "national paths" toward socialism. Some also highlighted the new analysis of Peronism the film proposed.[39] In fact, in several articles in newspapers and magazines, Solanas and Getino insisted on how the film argues for a critical reading of the historical experience of Peronism (1946–55) showing its multi-classist character and recuperating its "more advanced" aspects. In an early interview by Louis Marcorelles in *Cahiers du Cinema*, for example, Solanas recuperated the importance of nationalisms (among them Peronism) in the processes of Latin American liberation and pointed out that many people had not understood the critical analysis and the thesis the film formulated: on the limits of bourgeois nationalism, on the impossibility of a democratic-bourgeois revolution if at the same time it did not project itself onto a socialist revolution; on the Latin American horizon of the national struggles (Marcorelles 1969).[40]

Getino too debated these issues explicitly with Spanish critics (see Getino 1969, 1970). In fact, after the already mentioned review by Lara in 1968, *Nuestro Cine* interviewed Getino in 1969 as a sign of "openness" on the part of the magazine with the objective of "clarifying

certain aspects (although) our positions and yours remain opposed," as the critic Martínez Torres commented in the introduction. In the article, they insisted that viewing the film during its premiere at Pesaro, the first part was interesting, although debatable, while the second had deeply outraged the journalists of the magazine. In this sense, they asked Getino what was the reason that, after Pesaro and other festivals (such as Karlovy Vary in Czechoslovakia, Manheim in Germany, or Mérida in Venezuela), only the first part had been screened, if "it is evident that the first part functions, isolated, in one way and in another together with the second part." For *Nuestro Cine*, the defense of Peronism was "debatable," but the defense of Peron was "unacceptable." Getino's answer was forceful: "We do not understand Peronism without Perón […] for us, at that stage, Perón could be for Argentina what Castro has been for Cuba," he asserted.

Some years later, the Spanish political magazine *Triunfo,* subtitled another interview with Getino with the telling subtitle: "The reception in Europe: Peronism, a fascism?" (Getino 1971). In it, Joaquin Jordá went back over the debates generated in other magazines around Peronism. Getino rejected – as a mix of ingenuity and dirty tricks – critiques like those of Lara in *Nuestro Cine* or the one by the French communist party through *La Nouvelle Critique* but, in spite of everything, he considered logical the discussions arising from the film because to a large extent, they were linked to the "disinformation" about the Latin American reality in Europe as a consequence of the deformations imposed by "imperialist mass-media". The Argentine filmmaker also linked that "confusion" to "a vision from a left that, in general, did not understand, has not investigated or gone deep into the reality of the national movements of liberation in most parts of the Third World." He carried on:

> and even less has understood the process of Peronism in Argentina, confusing the external and anecdotal forms of this process or the anecdotal nature of the discourses of its leader with the essence and the clearly anti-imperialist and revolutionary direction hat is the one present in the mass movement, in the Argentine working class, fundamentally Peronist.
>
> (Getino 1971: 13–14)

This idea of "disinformation" or "incomprehension" on the part of European intellectuals of the political processes of the Third World (like the Argentine Peronism) became the common threat in those years for the defence of the film not only by its makers but also by other militant filmmakers who promoted the film. In the case of Spain, for example, Andrés Linares – who dedicated several pages of his book on militant cinema to *The Hour of the Furnaces* – associated the criticisms of the second part of the film outside of Argentina to the fact that "the phenomenon of Peronism is almost always badly understood and worst interpreted" (Linares 1976: 144). In this sense, if in the late 1969 letter mentioned above, to the director of ICAIC Alfredo Guevara, Solanas had insisted on the inclusion of the reels on the history of Peronism for a better comprehension of the film in Cuba, some years later – perhaps as a corollary of some of the criticisms that we have followed – Solanas justified the projection of only the first part at the Benalmádena Festival in October 1977[41] because it was directed to a wider public "even ignorant of the conditions of Argentina," while the rest of the

film was "a material developed and conceived for a political and militant work on the specifics of the Argentine political practices" that, when it was projected outside of its country of origin, had not achieved the "results we hoped for" (Pâquet 1974: 3).[42]

During the 1960s and 1970s, the highest point of the polemic about the "Peronist question," was reached in June 1974 during the Rencontres Internationales pour un Nouveau Cinema (International Encounters for a New Cinema) in Montreal organized by André Pâquet and the Comité d'Action Cinematographique. For a week it gathered together over 200 filmmakers, critics, producers, and distributors of political cinema from Europe, North America, Latin America, black Africa, and the Maghreb. The debates that took place there in search of a political-cinematographic alternative were varied, but the theory of Third Cinema and the presence of Solanas took an important role. Although I have written about this event and the polemics around Peronism elsewhere (Mestman 2014, 2015), it is worthy to come back here over this issue because it accounts for the dynamics of the political process navigated by militant cinema in those years; in the Argentine case, I am referring to the increasing insertion of Cine Liberación in the Peronist movement – under the exclusive leadership of Perón – that took place via *The Hour of the Furnaces,* the filmed interviews carried out with the leader in his exile in Spain as a communication tool with his followers in Argentina (1971–72), and the final insertion of the group into the state and its progressive policies for cinema with the return of Perón to government for his third presidency of Argentina (1973–74).

In this sense, Solanas' conference in Montreal 1974 was on the history of the group Cine Liberación from its opposition to the military dictatorship (1968–72) to its participation in Peron's third government (1973–74); and it was harshly attacked in the debate that followed by two key figures of the New Latin American Cinema in exile: the Uruguayan producer/distributor Walter Achugar (founder of the Third World Cinemateque in Montevideo and linked to the Tupamaros) and the Chilean filmmaker Miguel Littin (ex-director of Chile Films in the first months of Salvador Allende's government and associated to Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria [MIR]). Lino Micciché, director of the Pesaro Film Festival, also attacked Solanas' position. In fact, Micciché headed the most aggressive criticisms against the director of *The Hour of the Furnaces* since he questioned the lack of acknowledgement of the obvious movement to the right by Perón and his third government. Furthermore, Micciché legitimated his attack remembering that six years before, as host of the international premiere of the film in Pesaro 68, he had been in charge of defending the Peronist option, explaining to his colleagues in the Italian and European classic left (communist and socialist) the complexities of the Argentine Peronism, the importance of its working and popular base, as well as the process of revolutionary radicalization that the Peronist movement was experiencing at the end of the decade of the 1960s. However, six years later in Montreal, Micciché questioned Solanas precisely for the lack of dialectics in his conference, and the lack of acknowledgement of the contradictions within Peronism between its left and right wings. He also criticized the increasing influence that, in 1974, the latter had gained with Perón's support.

This polemic of 1974 – long and including other personalities of political cinema from all over the world attending – accounts for the endurance of the debates on Peronism in the

years after Pesaro 68. In this sense, it is important to realize that, beyond these and other arguments or maybe precisely because of them, *The Hour of the Furnaces* and the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* gained a strong level of influence in the debates about political cinema worldwide. It is significant that the *Rencontres* in Montreal – perhaps the largest event of political cinema worldwide in this period (the long 1960s) – used as epigraph of its announcement a citation from the Argentine manifesto: precisely the one that linked together the struggles in the Third World with those that were taking place inside the First World.[43] In fact, the organizers and several critics proposed the event as the General Estates of Third Cinema, a sort of widening to militant cinema worldwide of the notion originated in France around 68 and that it had already been considered in Solanas and Getino's manifesto.

Although by 1974 the rise of the Third World was reaching its peak, the third-worldist influence and with it *The Hour of the Furnaces* and the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* will last a little bit longer. The dossier of *CinemAction* in 1979 testifies to this. At the end of his life, Guy Hennebelle remembered that it was in Montreal 74 where he met Solanas, whose film was considered by all as the "archetype of the militant cinema of the time" said Hennebelle. In spite of the differences that he and Solanas held, some expressed in Montreal too,[44] Hennebelle will become Solanas' friend and from then on a "propagandist" for the manifesto (Hennebelle 2004). To a greater or lesser extent, with greater or lesser differences with respect to the Argentine Grupo Cine Liberación, the same will happen with other protagonists of political cinema worldwide mentioned in these pages.

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Notes

1 Chanan provides a detailed commentary on the ideas of Gabriel and of the tensions during the conference in Edinburgh. On the conference, see Willemen (1989).
2 These are the two "final" moments of discussion, still under the influence of the Third Worldism of the long 1960s (particularly in the first case); this influence will be more and more displaced in the world scene, as Chanan (1997) observed in reference to Edinburgh 1986. On the eclipse of the Third Cinema model, see also Chanan (2007: 11).
3 In this essay, I will only refer to the distribution of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in Europe, the United States, and Canada, following festivals and militant use of the film. I have explored the film's place in Latin America and the Third World in other texts elsewhere.
4 See Chapter 6 in this book.
5 Fernando Birri (2008), letter to the author, Rome, 5 August.

6 In any case, the reporter at Cannes centered her main questioning on the Argentine Institute of Cinematography "that insists in not answering the invitations of the president of the festival and does not send any official films, as if our country had died and our talents disappeared."

7 The directors looked for a certificate of nationality for the film in other countries with the objective of distributing it beyond alternative circuits. A few months after its screening in Pesaro, Solanas wrote to Alfredo Guevara, director of the Cuban film institute ICAIC:

> […] After coming back from Havana, serious news awaited me: they don't give us the certificate of nationality in Belgium either […] The problem is at breaking point […] We have tried in different ways in Italy, France, Sweden and there is no way given the political nature of the film and the fact that all those countries have reciprocity agreements with the Argentine government and friendly diplomatic relations. The object of this letter is to ask about the possibility that you could recognise it as a film originating in Cuba and with Cuban nationality […]. I am aware that I am asking for a lot but I do it with the trust typical among comrades […].
>
> (letter from Solanas to Guevara, Rome, January 10, 1969 [Guevara 2008: 180])

8 The review of Latin American Cinema at Santa Margherita Ligure was promoted by the Centre for Studies Europa-América del Colombianum in Genoa. In 1960 and 1961 it took place in Santa Margherita, Ligure; in 1962 and 1963 in Sestri Levante, and in 1965 (last edition) in Genoa. For its part, the New Latin American Cinema attended the Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Libero (International Encounter of Free Cinema in Porretta) since its first edition in 1960, particularly those in 1962, 1964, 1966, and 1969.

9 On the discussions on the "circuito alternativo" ("alternative circuit") in Italy, see Argentieri (1970).

10 Author's interview with Goffredo Fofi, Roma, September 11, 2000.

11 The proposal developed these issues in eleven points and was presented to the assembly by Valentino Orsini, Pio Baldelli, the Taviani brothers, Alberto Filippi, and Gianni Amico, among others.

12 The organizers of Pesaro had been preparing the 1968 edition with an important and varied participation of Latin American films in projections and roundtable discussions. One had been programmed on "Latin American Cinema, culture as action." At the same time, there was a special program of American "Newsreels" curated by Robert Kramer, and the urgent militant practice of Cesare Zavattini was also present with his "Cinegiornali liberi" as well as cinematographies from Eastern Europe.

13 I wrote about *The Hour of the Furnaces'* presence in Pesaro 1968 in other essays. Recently in Mestman (2017).

14 Author's interview with Lino Micciché and Bruno Torri, Rome, 2000; and Micciché (1976).

15 Mino Argentieri was one of the members of the board of the Mostra of Pesaro, director of the magazine *Cinemasessanta,* and responsible for the film committee of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) since 1964. In an interview by Antonio Medici, Argentieri gave many details of the 1968 events at Pesaro. He spoke about the revolt during that edition of the Mostra and the subsequent agreement of the organizers of the Mostra with the demonstrators to

continue with the festival and the projections in parallel with the activity of the assembly. In this sense, Argentieri remembers his negotiations (and those of Giuliani De Negri) with the prefect of the city for the liberation of Orsini and the other Latin American filmmakers detained in jail because of the initial protests in Pesaro city. He also remembered his demand to the Communist Party in Rome to send a student leader to infiltrate the demonstrators in the assembly of the festival in order to calm the atmosphere (conversation between Antonio Medici and Mino Argentieri, in Aamod [2001: 64–87]).

16 See an immediate reading of Pesaro 68 in Fofi (1971, especially the chapter "Después del 68/After 68"). Subsequent texts show more nuanced revisions, but always critical, of the traditional left-wing parties in those years and their filmic referents.

17 Interview with the author, Roma, 2000.

18 See "Afterthoughts" in this book.

19 See Chapter 11 in this book.

20 Marin Karmitz held *The Hour* in high esteem. See Getino and Solanas 1970.

21 Mrinal Sen incorporated images from *The Hour* into his film *Padatik* (1973) and he recognized the influence of Solanas in his work. He also wrote about it. I mentioned the political, cinematographic links between Mrinal Sen and the Argentinean political cinema (Solanas and Raymundo Gleyzer) during those years, in Mestman 2001.

22 The manifesto was published in issue 3 of the French edition of *Tricontinental* (1969), the internationalist magazine published by the Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In recent years, Jonathan Buchsbaum (2011) and Ignacio del Valle (2012) highlighted the diverse emphasis and content found in the different versions, in several languages or in new documents supporting the same theses.

23 Among them: *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Positif, Jeune Cinéma, Écran, Cinétique, Le Monde, La Nouvelle Critique, Afrique-Asie, Cinéma d'Aujourd'hui, Cinéma Politique*. As an example of the impact of the film and of the manifesto among French militant critics, it is worth noting that the last magazine mentioned, a publication of a collective of the same name, published in 1975 the completed manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* and carried a debate for four editions. We need to remember also the dialogue between Solanas and J. L. Godard published from 1969 in several world magazines.

24 On the history of this group, see Buchsbaum (2015).

25 He mentioned as example the film by Arthur Lamothe, *Le Mépris n'Aura qu'un temps* (*Hell no Longer*), which had been distributed in trade unions in Quebec and also recognized as "militant cinema" in international events, but it was questioned, however, in its own country by comparison with the model of *The Hour of the Furnaces.* In 1974 André Pâquet invited Solanas and gave a prominent place to the theory of Third Cinema during a big event on political cinema worldwide in Montreal to which I will return later.

26 See Chapter 2 in this book.

27 Author's interview with Vico Codella , Rome, 2000. Also, in the correspondence sustained by the Centro Documentazione with the groups from other parts of the country (as the one cited in the epigraph) it is possible to read a request, not infrequent, for the Argentine film. On their behalf, Renzo Rossellini remembers that San Diego distributed a version of two hours of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, a synthesis of Parts One and Two. In 1971, San

Diego will lend its equipment for the completion of three films by Cine Liberación (Renzo Rossellini's comment to the author, Rome, 2000). In another text (Mestman 2017) I have referred at greater length to these links. Together with the already mentioned examples, here I only remember the acknowledgment of the value of the film in the same circumstances by renowned political filmmakers such as Marco Bellochio, Ugo Gregoretti, and Ansano Giannarelli, among many others. *The Hour* is also mentioned even as a possible alternative in the conversations between filmmakers recorded at the *Cinegiornale Libero* número 1, of Cesare Zavattini (1968).

28 Andrés Linares (1976) stresses the interest for the call to the active participation of the spectator. Ramonet (2000: 147–49) mentioned the influence of the film on Spanish filmmakers. Gubern (1997: 276) commented its inclusion in the militant circuit in Catalonia. (The comments here about *The Hour of the Furnaces* in Spain are taken and in some cases expand those on a previous article co-written by the author and Alberto Elena [Elena and Mestman 2003].)

29 Author's interview with Joan Antoni González i Serret (organizer of El Volti) and with Adonio González Mateos (militant of the trade union Comisiones Obreras). Barcelona, June 2000.

30 It is not possible to mention here all those differences. But, for example, one of the groups that used the film more often in the militant circuit, like the already mentioned CIP in Quebec, criticized the film for "resolving little of what was explained" and to propose a "romantic and abstract" idea of revolution (Anon. 1973). The North American critic Gary Crowds, founder of Third World Cinema Group, mentioned the "disastrous romanticism of guerrilla cinema" defended in the Manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* (Gary Crowds in Hennebelle and Mignot-Lefebvre 1979: 627–29). Other examples could be mentioned.

31 Interview by the critics Augusto Martínez Torres and Miguel Marías with Octavio Getino (1969), *Nuestro Cine*, 89, Madrid, September, p. 45. See a previous harsh critic to the film by Martínez Torres in the Peruvian magazine *Hablemos de Cine*, Lima, 41, Mai-June 1968. See the response of Solanas in *Hablemos de Cine*, Lima, 46, March-April 1969.

32 See Chapter 9 in this book.

33 That year, in a review in the Spanish magazine *Film Ideal*, Ramón Font, who had seen the film in France, commented that its actual duration (1969) was much shorter than the one exhibited at Pesaro in 1968.

34 In those years, Schumann had frequent contacts with the so-called New Latin American Cinema and he places the first showings of *The Hour of the Furnaces* by the German Cinemateque in the days immediately following Pesaro 68. That is, three months before its official participation in the Manheim Festival. The screenings had a great impact in both cases. From there, he remembers its distribution by the circuit created by the Cinemateque that privileged the first part (the others were screened not very often). But, at the same time, he mentions that the television showings (shown several times until the end of the 1970s with a total audience, he estimates, of 400,000 to 500,000 spectators) included a summary version of 40 minutes of the second and third parts (Schumann in Hennebelle and Mignot-Lefebvre 1979: 331–333).

35 See, for example, the review by Spila (1968) on the screening in Pesaro. A few years later, the critic Ciriaco Tiso would reject the film for placing its axis on "the visceral," on the passionate and irrational participation that will end up falling into sentimentality (since

"the revolution must be a logical and rational fact"), and of course, for its exaltation of a Peronism that "is pure fascism" according to him (Tiso 1972).

36 See Chapter 8 in this book.

37 In the first case, for example, see the debate organized by the magazine *La Nouvelle Critique* (Anon. 1969). In later years a filmmaker and key theorist of the French Communist Party, Jean-Patrick Lebel, remembered the discussions around the film within the communist movement: on the left's strategies of "creating fronts," the primary value of armed struggles, and, of course, on Peronism (Lebel 2001).

38 It should not be strange that this review has a radical anti-Peronist position since at that time Perón was in exile in Spain, under Francisco Franco's regime. However, the relations between Perón and the dictator were more difficult and complex than it is generally believed.

39 Other Spanish reviews took a very different direction from Lara's. Ramon Font, for example, characterized *The Hour* as "the first film for a new society," "passionate and lucid," "a crucial film in the history of cinema and in History." And in opposition to Lara, he argued that the film "extracts from the Peronist experience linked to the popular classes the guidelines for its future overcoming" (1969a).

40 See also, for the Italian case, another important interview with Solanas in *Ombre Rosse* (Volpi et al. 1969), where the problem of the "European look" on Peronism is discussed (particularly on pages 16 and 17). Away from those years, some scholars dealt with the issue of the treatment of Peronism in the film. Although these works are not the topic of this essay, it is worth mentioning that after its earlier work on *The Hour of the Furnaces* and the two avant-gardes, Robert Stam would return to the film (Stam and Shohat 1994), and, among other issues, he affirms: "The film rightly identifies Perón as a Third World nationalist *avant la lettre* rather than the 'fascist dictator' of Eurocentric mythology." And he also pointed out that the film mentioned the historical mistakes of Peronism.

41 Its projection in this small Spanish festival of committed films (in line with Pesaro), in the middle of the Spanish transition, was still striking. Carlos Heredero, for example, considered the film "the zenith of the Latin American contribution" to the event (Heredero 1978: 30).

42 In "*La hora de los hornos*. Tres Preguntas a su Realizador," mimeo, 1977, 2ps. Mimeographed document in boxes of the Festival de Benalmádena held at the archive of the library of the Spanish Cinemateque (Filmoteca Española) in Madrid. In the same direction go the memories of the festival director about that decision: Julio Diamante (interviews with the author, Madrid, August 2000).

43 The chosen fragment reads: "The anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalent inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. Third Cinema is, in our opinion, the cinema that recognises in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time, the possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point – in a word, the decolonisation of culture" (program to announce the *Rencontres*, quoted in "Rencontres Internationales pour un Nouveau Cinema. Cahier 1. Projects et résolutions," Montreal, 1975, p. 3.).

44 The distance (political and cinematographic) expressed there will be reflected a little bit later in the prologue Solanas wrote for the Spanish edition in two volumes of Hennebelle's *National Cinemas Against the Imperialism of Hollywood* (1977). In spite of this, he stressed his friendship and "basic agreement."

Chapter 8

Trails of Ink: An Approximation to the Historiography on *The Hour of the Furnaces*

Pablo Piedras

> Our art, like medieval art, is a non-systematic art, but additive and compositive. Today like yesterday, the refined elitist experiment coexists with the great endeavour of popular dissemination […] with mutual and continuous exchanges and borrowings: the apparent byzantinism, the frenzied taste to collect, the catalogue, the gathering, the piling up of different things is due to the need to fragment and re-evaluate the debris of a preceding world, harmonious maybe, but now unusual […].
>
> (Eco 1999: 83)

To critically address the abundant bibliography produced on *The Hour of the Furnaces* is an enormous undertaking. Although I am not driven by a statistical and quantitative impulse, I will not be in great danger by suggesting that it is the Argentine film that has received the greatest attention in academic studies and in specialized film criticism. The 50 years separating the film's first projections and this text are traversed by trails of ink[1] about this emblematic work. Quite probably, this anniversary will put again in circulation some of the aesthetic, political, and ideological debates the film gave rise to in its time, and this constitutes a singular fact if we want to ask ourselves what does the Grupo Cine Liberación's (Liberation Cinema Group) film say today to contemporary Argentina, Latin America, and the world. Half a century after its appearance, *The Hour of the Furnaces* is an object in which it is impossible to distinguish between the aesthetic and the political. An event (Badiou 1999) that does not stop gathering meanings from the course of history (distant and recent), from the memories of the 1960s, more and more dense and produced by the mass media; and from the conflicts characteristic of a present in which certain social actors, at one point protagonists of the film, went through a process of transformation even if they present themselves today dressed in old clothes. The New Middle Ages that Umberto Eco (1972) predicted in an essay contemporary with *The Hour of the Furnaces* seems to be in place in the twenty-first century diluting the power of the nation-states, while disseminating and masking the legitimating core of the barbaric discourses that conforms the hegemony of the new common sense of the social body.

The words disseminated about *The Hour of the Furnaces,* although originating from three centers of gravity (the film and cultural studies coming from the United States and the United Kingdom, the Latin American historiography of film, and European critical-cultural studies), open themselves to languages and territories in which never a word had been written about Argentine cinema. In this extensive landscape, the aims of our study are much more modest, wanting to identify the main lines of argument and theoretical axes

that have been followed particularly in the first two centers mentioned above. In historical terms, it is worth noting that *The Hour of the Furnaces*, in the context of the New Latin American Cinema, is a paradigm that established the epistemic coordinates of visibility for Argentine cinema outside its country of origin, as well as the horizon of expectations relating to Argentine cinema. In other words, the interest in Argentine national cinema has fixated on its capacity to represent the political, economic, and institutional conflicts in what has been constituted as how "it should be" in the symbolic distribution of clichés and narratives, thanks to which the Argentine cinematography gains a pin in the map of international film and cultural studies. Its character of rupture and the foundational nature of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, together with the manifestos and other texts written by Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, lend themselves to generate this view of the film as a starting point, or as an exceptional case in a cinematography in Argentina, that by 1968 could boast about a rich filmic past with an industrial development unheard of in other countries of the region, with the exception of Mexico and Brazil.[2]

With the intention of constructing a tentative cartography about the ways in which *The Hour of the Furnaces* has been reflected upon over the years, the chapter aims to separate different approaches to the film. To this end, it will combine different theoretical, analytical, chronological, and institutional criteria since there are a number of variables that define the appeal gained by the readings of the film produced by different authors: language, number of editions, the publishing houses, the format of publication (before and after the arrival of the Internet), the legitimacy of the spaces occupied by the authors, etc. From these premises, it is productive to distinguish four types of approaches – that are not presented as closed categories but as privileged modes – sometimes superimposed, from which the interpretations of the film has been produced. The four approaches are constitutive, historic-cultural, formalist, and revisionist.[3]

Constitutive approaches

The analyses of the film postulated by these texts are not necessarily characterized by their originality (although it is present in many cases) but by the urgency employed in constructing concepts and ideas that subsequently were borrowed by other analyses to produce their own interpretation of *The Hour of the Furnaces.*

It is not a coincidence that the contributions I will refer to below come from authors in the academic worlds of the United States and France. As it is known, political cinema in Latin America, on occasions produced and exhibited in clandestine or semi-clandestine conditions, was difficult to access even by critics and researchers in the region. First, because some copies of the films were hidden, burnt, or buried for security reasons in the face of state persecution and repression. Second, because accessing the few clandestine projections was really dangerous. Third, because, later on, with the return of democracy during the decade of the 1980s, the access to the 16mm copies that existed in Latin

America, or to the ones returning with exiled filmmakers, was a lengthy and bureaucratic process.

A decade after the first screenings of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* Julianne Burton (1978) published a seminal article on the New Latin American Cinema in which she locates, from its title, a formulation that will become a common feature of the films of political intervention in the region: "the camera as 'gun'." Besides taking a motto from the directors of political cinema to summarize the type of intervention in society that these films promoted, Burton calls attention to one influence in Solanas and Getino's film. She refers to the formative role of Fernando Birri as the head of the Escuela Documental de Santa Fe (Documentary School in Santa Fe) and the foundational character of *Tire dié* (*Throw Us a Dime*) (1958–60) for the social documentary in Latin America. Burton's article stands out from early on for highlighting the militant and innovative imprint of the film and, at the same time, for signaling its ideological weaknesses. Consequently, she does not hesitate to mention the Manichaeism produced by a simplistic reading of reality (1978: 58) and the alleged political incongruent actions of Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino when they joined the system they criticized themselves (when Peronism returned to power in 1973) and the subsequent support of the filmmakers to Isabel Perón's government (1978: 60). While stressing the exemplarity of the film as militant cinema, Burton contrasts, without too many nuances, the coherent political commitment of Grupo Cine de la Base (Cine from the Base Group) – headed by Raymundo Gleyzer – against the institutionalization of Grupo Cine Liberación and, furthermore, she sneaks in the historical complicity of the directors with the birth of the Peronist right (1978: 59).

A critical evaluation together with the acknowledgment of the privileged historical function the film had for militant cinema is a line of argument that Robert Stam (1998) developed and problematized. In his article on *The Hour of the Furnaces*, probably the most quoted and valued,[4] the author points out with extreme clarity and for the first time that the characteristic that defines the film is the convergence between a formal avant-garde and a theoretical-political avant-garde: "experimental language is indissolubly wedded to its political project; the articulation of one with the other generates the film's meaning and secures its relevance" (1998: 254). It is possible to suggest that this formulation has been replicated and reused in the majority of analysis on the film and it has been rarely questioned. However, Stam, as Burton does, relativizes and questions the political position of the film in light of the historical events that followed, highlighting that Perón only returned to the country to die, that it was a period of virtual civil war, and that the government back then showed quasi-fascist traits (1998: 255).[5]

Therefore, *The Hour of the Furnaces,* in spite of its successes, would have made a historical mistake. It goes without saying that, generally, these readings are sustained by a unidimensional reading of Peronism according to the negative concept the traditional left had (and still has) of Latin American populisms.[6] The political-ideological avant-garde finds its limitations and the aesthetic avant-garde, following Stam, would be more related to the process of production and to the vicissitudes of history than to the

intrinsic formal qualities of the work. According to the author, the messages in the film are "stridently unequivocal" (1998: 256) because here, the concept of "openness" does not refer to multiple significations, polysemy, and possibility of multiple readings, but to the political act that is meant by the call to debate that was usually generated among the spectators (1998: 256). Although Stam, in the development of his article, gives several interpretative keys through filmic analysis and through the contextualization within the European cinema of political intervention at the time (particularly with Godard), he stumbles with his political preconceptions to understand Peronism and the mode – indirect, mediated, strategic – in which Solanas and Getino's film connects with this movement.[7]

The discussion about the didactic and persuasive strategies imposed by an effective combination of publicity's techniques and forms, tested by the Soviet avant-garde (to be precise, by Sergei Eisenstein), is the axis of the criticism the French critic Louis Marcorelles (1978) makes of the film.[8] According to him, the techniques of editing used in the first part of the film, "Neocolonialism and Violence" manipulate and provoke the spectator instead of moving him toward reflection. This narrative conception "in a sense, could equally serve any cause: with some modifications and with a simplifying editing, it is possible to proof everything or to not proof anything" (1978: 104). However, the second part "Act for Liberation" had been constructed with the essence of political cinema in line with Direct cinema aesthetic arguments:

> there is no more impressive montage, big headlines, only the omnipresent word, the word of students, trade unionists at work or in clandestine conditions. We enter then into the political essay […] the word, only the word, takes our breath away and forces us to reflect, to elaborate our own dialectic.
>
> (1978: 103)

Guy Hennebelle (1977) in his work on cinemas of the periphery against the Hollywood system provides the elements, in relation to the Argentine national context, that our opinions are lacking in the readings of the film by Burton, Stam, and Marcorelles. From a political position in accordance with the vision of the filmmakers that does not require film analysis to prove his hypothesis, Hennebelle, a friend of Solanas, noted the resistance that *The Hour of the Furnaces* generated in France for the film's closeness to Peronism. The Argentine historian Mariano Mestman (2008) confirms Hennebelle's actions as one of the promoters of the film from the pages of the magazines *CinemAction* and *Positif*, as well as of the initial prohibition of the film in France and the ensuing screenings in a version cleansed of Peronist elements. In a similar line, Steve Neale (1984) positions himself among the authors that sustain the idea that the politics of the film of Grupo Cine Liberación are not to be found in its form but in its model of clandestine distribution and exhibition and in the active participation of militant groups that really oppose the commercial dispositive of Hollywood cinema (1984: 434–36).

Beyond the elements already discussed, the perspectives and the interest in the film of these constitutive approaches show the international appeal *The Hour of the Furnaces* gained rapidly as a *summa* in which coexisted the aesthetic, political, and counter-cultural strength of a work without precedent in peripheric cinematographies with the expectations and desires of sectors of a left-wing intellectuality with respect to the transformations the irruption of the New Latin American Cinema will bring in the film system.

Historic-cultural approaches

This approach concerns two types of texts. On the one hand, those that analyze historical and cultural aspects based on documents, testimonies, and other sources about the production, distribution, and exhibition of *The Hour of the Furnaces* are inscribed, in some cases, within the framework of the New Latin American Cinema or, more locally, in the cinematic practices of political intervention in Argentina. On the other hand, other articles took on the character of historiographic sources that generated indexes and provided information on the film that, later on, will be incorporated into other research. And this was so because of the articles' temporal proximity with the date of exhibition of the film, because of the closeness of their authors with the filmmakers, or because of the formats in which they were published.

The articles, notes, and brief reviews published within this second approach are numerous and generally account for the impact *The Hour of the Furnaces* generated in the publications linked to the New Cinemas of Latin America. This is why it exceeds largely the objectives of this chapter to detail these texts that reference the film and saw the light in magazines such as *Cine Cubano* (Cuba), *Cine al Día* (Venezuela), and *Cine y Medios* (Argentina), just to mention some of the most prominent in a Latin American context. However, I do want to highlight two contributions not only because of the arguments they put forward but also because of their context of publication in which they appeared. The texts by Alberto Filippi (1969)[9] and Godard and Solanas (1969) appeared in the first issue of *Cine del Tercer Mundo* (*Cinema of the Third World*), a magazine edited by the Cinemateque of the Third World.[10] The title of the magazine and the institution to which it belonged leave no doubts about its militant and committed approach to the causes of a cinema of intervention. The same can be said of the rest of the magazine's contents dedicated to a report by Grupo Cine Liberación, a text on the New Latin American Cinema signed by Oswaldo Capriles, and another on Godard and popular television.

In a short text, Filippi points out two core ideas that will be taken up later on by other authors. In the first instance, he notes the influence of the figure of Frantz Fanon on the film that goes well beyond the direct quotes from his work and that directly relates to the position of the colonized intellectual who, starting from a revolutionary political action, rejects universal and bourgeois culture and advances toward his own decolonization (1969: 12). Filippi locates Solanas and Getino's praxis and their rejection of cosmopolitan ideology and of the aesthetics of colonization as being in accordance with Fanon's position. In a second moment, the author reflects on the use of the language of publicity (one of the possible

aesthetics of neocolonization) that "inverts" its common usage in the mass media (1969: 13). As we can see, Filippi presses one of the most sensible keys of the film but, contrary to the critical positions of some of his peers already mentioned (Marcorelles, Stam), finds there a positive value since this usage of the opposite direction of the enemy's tools, according to the author, produces an effect of demystification and revelation (1969: 14).

The contrast of his vision with respect to the constitutive approaches can also be noted in his evaluation of Peronism. For the author, it represents in the film the reconstruction of a "popular and collective memory of the everyday"[11] (1969: 16) and not the dangerous exponent of a populist fascism, vision entrenched among intellectuals associated to the traditional left in Europe and the United States.[12]

The transcription of the encounter "Godard by Solanas, Solanas by Godard" (Godard and Solanas 1969) is not particularly relevant for the concepts they discuss in the dialogue but for the internationalist and strategic gesture constituted by the convergence of two figures so different in relation to their contemporary filmic positions and coming from their valuing (and knowledge) of classic Hollywood cinema and, above all, in relation to their ideas about *mise-en-scène.* The communication between Godard and Solanas is the symbol of an era in which the affinity of political objectives could erase the bluntest aesthetic differences. Furthermore, at that time the two filmmakers coincided in their questioning of the figure of the bourgeois auteur and on the significance of two opposed but complementary symbols of the aesthetic and political Soviet avant-garde: Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein. Godard will vindicate Vertov's legacy,[13] not just his practice but the form of his political commitment; Solanas, as I indicated already, will appropriate Eisenstein's montage for the formulation of a discourse of interpretation and denunciation.

From the approaches associated to the history of cinema (in their cultural, social, aesthetic, or economic aspects), the book by Peter Schumann (1987) expresses a vision that follows, without too many differences, Solanas and Getino's positions in their different manifestos with respect to the history of Argentine cinema. In this way, the author reserves for *The Hour of the Furnaces* a privileged place in the chronological journey through Argentine cinema's past and identifies the film not only as a "hinge" in the history of film in Argentina, but also as a model to follow. His position is somewhat justified by the fact that Schumann was one of the main driving forces of the New Latin American Cinema in Europe through his collaboration with the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale). Paulo Antonio Paranaguá (2003), however, despite valuing the indisputable historical role the film played, projects on the film a much more disenchanted look in relation to its formal and political aspects. He positions the film together with *La batalla de Chile* (*The Battle of Chile*) (Patricio Guzmán, 1975–79) as monumental works of Latin American documentary but considers, controversially, that the Peronism of the filmmakers "was attributed, in the best of cases, to the irremediable Argentine idiosyncrasy and in the worst, to a suspicious populist trope" (2003: 59). He further argues that for "a generation fascinated by guerrilla warfare, *The Hour of the Furnaces,* is equivalent to the *Why We Fight*" of the Second World War (2003: 60). In contrast to Schumann, the historiographic works of Paranaguá usually sustain a disenchanted attitude toward the New Latin American Cinema

and its radically politicized and militant films, although this does not stop him from praising the formal virtues of the documentaries of Santiago Álvarez and the critical-poetic positions of filmmakers such as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Nicolás Guillén Landrián.

One of the objectives of the article by Emilio Bernini (2007) is to calibrate the type of inclusion that *The Hour of the Furnaces* has in the history of Argentine cinema and particularly in the development of documentary. Although the author positions the film, like Burton (1978) and many others, in a continuous line with *Tire dié,* its predecessor and source of inspiration, he notes the differences between interpellation and exposition, political assertion and poetic suggestion that differentiate both films. He then considers that modern political filmmakers are those interested in maintaining active the links between their works, the present and the spectator and, in this sense, *The Hour of the Furnaces* connects itself to other films of the time. The negation of the scene and of realist representation is another of the distinct qualities of the work imposed by a montage of fragments interested in capturing the profilmic (2007: 26). Mariano Mestman, one of the authors that often and in depth has studied and researched the historical, cultural, and political vicissitudes that surrounded the production and circulation of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* has shed light on several aspects of the work that had remained unexplored. In this way, he offered precision on issues that the constitutive approaches dealt with in a more general way. That is how Mestman (1999) – on whom I will not write too much since he is one of the authors of this book – clears the intense debates generated around the inclusion of the image of Che Guevara (dead Che or Che-Christ) in the mythical original ending of the first part.[14] Mestman's investigation is essential at least in two accounts. On the one hand, it recuperates the controversies that the appropriation of Korda's[15] photography caused in some figures of Cuban cinema (Alfredo Guevara, Santiago Álvarez), demonstrating the heterogeneous territory, in permanent conflict, that fertilized the development of the New Latin American Cinema. On the other hand, it also problematizes the relationships that Cine Liberación and its work had with Peronism[16] – "the damned fact" of the bourgeois country (Cooke 2011) – that caused so much discomfort among critics and progressive academics.[17] In the presentation of his recent book (Mestman 2016), the Argentine historian resituates Solanas and Getino among the "ruptures of 68" in Latin America as part of a dense political, social, and cultural fabric, in which diverse artistic and political avant-gardes converged throughout the whole region. Outside the Latin American plane, Nicole Brenez (2012) considers that *The Hour of the Furnaces* establishes a productive dialogue with an international tradition of committed cinema from which it not only draws inspiration but that also instigates:

> the film's elegant radicalism inspired many later visual essayists such as Chris Marker, the Dziga Vertov Group, the Cinéthique Group, Patricio Guzmán, Alexander Kluge and films such as *The Spiral* (1975) made by Armand Mattelart, Jacqueline Meppiel and Valérie Mayoux (with the help of Chris Marker). In fact, the analysis of conditions in Chile found in *The Spiral* and Guzmán's *The Battle of Chile* can be considered fourth and fifth chapters of *The Hour of the Furnaces*.
>
> (Brenez 2012)

This approach has the particularity of geopolitically repositioning the work of Solanas and Getino from the periphery to the center, stressing the spreading effect of its influence for the cinema of political intervention in Europe and North America. However, in my opinion, in this enterprise it over-stresses the alleged audio-visual innovations of the work instead of understanding them as a summary of the techniques of the Soviet avant-garde of the first decades of the twentieth century and of the publicity cinema of its time.

Formalist approaches

The Hour of the Furnaces is usually noted for its experimentation with cinematic language and its strong aesthetic innovations (Brenez 2012). However, the bibliography devoted to an exhaustive textual analysis of the film is substantially smaller than the one designated in the previous section.[18] Somehow, the political content of the film, the extraordinary historical elements that surrounded its production and circulation and the density of its narrative and enunciative structure provoked (and still provoke) a certain distancing effect from the detailed analysis of its formal aspects. This singularity is particularly understandable in the texts produced before the decade of the 1990s, before *The Hour of the Furnaces* started to circulate first on VHS and later, on DVD.

It is possible to perceive that the more detailed textual analyses elect to dedicate themselves to revise the first part of the film, leaving aside (or giving less attention to) the other two parts. As a hypothesis, it is possible to argue that this is because the second and third parts seem to be characterized by more transparent narrative models associated to Direct cinema and to Cinéma Vérité. But, from that it should not follow that there is a weakening of their potency for signification. As several critics and researchers have indicated, given the extensive duration of the film, and the aesthetic-political charge of the first part, it is the one that has been primarily distributed and exhibited and this, at least in part, justifies the lack of analyses of the other two parts.

The analysis by Zuzana Pick (1993) is directed to what seems to be one of the most controversial points, in formal terms, of the film: its capacity to construct a discourse that makes possible the appearance of a varied range of interpretations against the mere transmission of contents through a narrative dispositive, completely controlled, that tends toward the manipulation of the spectator. According to the author, although the film uses the representational modes of the most traditional documentary (voice-over narration, archive footage, on-camera interviews), its openness toward the forms of the film essay is sustained by the combination of heterogeneous audio-visual materials and by the break with traditional conventions of cinematic expectation (1993: 59). The aesthetic tension dominating the audio-visual structure of the film is summarized by Pick by highlighting that while the signification the archive material incorporated is constantly questioned, its "function is regulated by discursive rather that aesthetic formations" (1993: 62).

In a short text, Clara Kriger (2003) adheres to the idea that the first part of the film is more formally innovative than the other two since the first one includes a more important poetic function. This argument is sustained from the identification of the rhetoric use of metaphor and metonymy as recurrent ways in which the film provokes the spectator to reflect (2003: 321). She proceeds with a detailed analysis of two significant scenes: the one in the "villa miseria" (shanty town) and the one in the slaughterhouse[19] – whose images come from the short film *Faena* (*Work*) (Ríos, 1960).

Jimena Trombetta and Paula Wolkowicz (2009) wrote an extensive article on *The Hour of the Furnaces*, which is noticeable for incorporating several of the ideas mentioned from the bibliography of the film. From this, the authors go on to elaborate a comprehensive analysis that articulates the political and cinematic dimensions of the film, starting from the concept of the essay.[20] It is in the conjunction between political essay and filmic essay where the authors find the potency of the signification of the film that reaches audiences today. The formal analysis includes scenes from the three parts of the film where it is possible to find continuities and not only the breaks mentioned by the majority of the writings on the film. The question about the narrative cohesion of a film that juxtaposes heterogeneous materials is tackled by recuperating the idea of "image-concept" that Trombetta and Wolkowicz take from the theoretical work of Solanas himself.[21] These images are thought of as units of knowledge that when articulated together through editing constitute a film essay (2009: 421).

Revisionist approaches

In the past few years, innovative approaches appeared in relation to *The Hour of the Furnaces* that have moved partially away from, or took a critical look at, the canonical explicative core ideas to think and characterize the film: the notion of the film essay, the theory of Third Cinema, the convergence of a double avant-garde, aesthetic and political, the isolation of the film from the history of Argentine cinema and from its time, its ideological inscription within Peronism, etc.

The two fundamental ideas that these approaches question or problematize are those of the break with the cinematic traditions of Argentina and the suggestion of a unique artistic and conceptual singularity for the film that does not dialogue with other artistic and cultural events of the same period. What is fundamentally put into motion is a search for continuities, series, and parallelisms between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and other socio-aesthetic events or exponents that took place from the 1960s until the civic-military coup of 1976. In historiographical terms, several of these approaches formulated a comparative methodology (Paranaguá 2005), positioning the film into diverse artistic-cultural groupings (comparison with the visual arts, literature, music, publicity) and specifically cinematic (new dialogical relations of the film with other films seemingly different).

The articles by Gonzalo Aguilar (2009)[22] and David Oubiña (2016) share the intention of examining the film by the Grupo Cine Liberación as a singular piece that dialogues with

the cinematic and artistic avant-gardes of the end of the 1960s. The first article tackles the modes in which the discourses on violence are presented in *Invasión* (*Invasion*) (Santiago, 1969) and *The Hour of the Furnaces.* Building on the historical fact of the incident that took place at Cannes 1969 in which the film by Hugo Santiago substituted the one by Solanas and Getino as representative of Argentina after the negotiations of the military government, Aguilar proposes – inspired by an article by Marcel Martin (1971) – an examination of both films as antagonic poetics in which the conceptions of "the people" take on (given their presence or absence) opposed and complementary values. The author gives particular attention to the modes in which the city and cosmopolitanism are represented in both films. He does this by noting a large quantity of cultural and bibliographical references. Aguilar's thesis is suggestive: according to the author, although the conceptions of politics in these works are opposed (and, I add, maybe because of it), "both films meant the end of a cycle of political themes in Argentine cinema" (2009: 96). Since euphemism and allegory, always according to Aguilar, were the privileged modes to refer to politics in Argentine cinema, *The Hour of the Furnaces* broke with euphemism by assuming a partisan position. *Invasión* did the same with allegory by formulating an aesthetic style completely reluctant to give codes for translation or clear references to the spectator (2009: 96).

David Oubiña (2016), in a long text, weaves brilliantly the cultural analysis of the changes that Latin America (and the world) experienced at the end of the 1960s and the artistic examination of *The Hour of the Furnaces* and a number of other contemporary works with which it is rarely compared: *El dependiente* (*The Dependent*) (Favio, 1969), *Breve cielo* (*Brief Heaven*) (Kohon, 1968), *Mosaico* (*Mosaic*) (Paternostro, 1969), and *The Player vs. Ángeles Caídos* (*The Players vs. Fallen Angels*) (Fischerman, 1969).[23] In contrast to Aguilar, the author indicates that it is this film by Fischerman, more than *Invasión,* that generates the greatest antagonism with *The Hour of the Furnaces.* Through the comparison of both films, he develops his ideas to show how the antagonisms were present in the filmic discourses of these three films coming from different influences but in all of them the experimentalism coming out of the Institute Di Tella provoked some kind of impact. According to Oubiña, as was the case in *The Hour of the Furnaces* and *Invasión,* also in *The Players* "there are two sides clearly opposed. As in those films, the battles announce violent transformations [and] the imminent change appears as a revelation of a process that remained invisible to the common man" (2016: 88). In some sense, Oubiña's historiographical proposal connects with that of Rita de Grandis (2008) who, from the title of her article, describes *The Hour of the Furnaces* as a "filmic *happening.*" The author considers – not without reason – that the interconnection between Solanas and Getino's work and other avant-garde expressions in Argentina has not been sufficiently explored, particularly in relation to both the "happening" in its politicized version and the expression of conceptual political art that was Tucumán Arde (Tucumán Is Burning). One of the core ideas of de Grandis is that

> *The Hour of the Furnaces* is a singular artistic expression of that time and allow us to analyse, beyond the specific framework of national politics, the modes in which the

> Argentine intellectual field received the new times in philosophy, culture and revolution, imprinting them with its own stamp.
>
> (2008: 43)

The points of contact the author identifies and develops to reflect on *The Hour of the Furnaces* within the context of the avant-garde manifestations associated to the "happening" are first a similar idea of editing and the questioning of art as institution; second, the formal, conceptual, and ideological transactions that can be postulated between Peronism, modern art, and left-wing culture; and lastly, the notion of "happening" as an attack on the established order.[24]

The nexus between Frantz Fanon's thinking (*The Wretched of the Earth,* 1961) and *The Hour of the Furnaces* is explicit in the film and a good deal of its bibliography analyzed it generally in the context of many other references cited in the works of left-wing, Peronist, and third-worldist intellectuals. However, Javier Campo (2012) revises the structure of the film identifying the figure of the Martinican writer as its instigator. This type of approach allows the author to unravel in detail the political and ideological origins of the film since he examines core concepts of Fanon's text (violence, spontaneity, liberation, and dependency) through *The Hour of the Furnaces*, demonstrating that Fanon is probably the axis that organizes the referential system of the film.[25] In this way, in agreement with Mestman and moving away from the constitutive approaches mentioned, Campo affirms that the film finds itself "located in the first part of the path that commences in the Marxist left (with sympathies for foquism) and ends in the ample Peronist movement in which the filmmakers lived together with other militants coming from different paths" (2012: 116–17).[26]

Finally, Laura Podalsky (2004) is the person who, in my opinion, glimpses the aesthetic-ideological paradoxes of *The Hour of the Furnaces* that explain, perhaps, the coexistence between those avant-gardes identified in the famous article by Robert Stam and the uncomfortable political position the film caused outside Argentina even among its defenders. The thesis of Podalsky's article is that beyond the film's preoccupation with the immediate and desired revolution (accompanied by the return of Perón), what the film explores and criticizes rigorously are the everyday practices of the city of Buenos Aires, and in this point, the article connects with a reference that, obviously, has been excluded from the quotation system around the film: the essay by Ezequiel Martínez Estrada ([1940] 2016) *La cabeza de Goliat* (*Goliath's Head*). The city is precisely the battlefield of a new ideological invasion called "neocolonialism" where the mass media operate (Podalsky 2004: 210–12). Contrary to the most common analytical perspectives, the author indicates that, in general, the connection between the film and consumer culture has been put aside. This culture was in a process of expansion in Buenos Aires and the film's confluence with Martínez Estrada's text is made obvious in the denunciation of the modernizing process. With these antecedents, Podalsky affirms that *The Hour of the Furnaces* uses the techniques of publicity precisely to question publicity and the commodity fetishism it imposes (2004: 222). The article points out in its analysis that, beyond the editing techniques it shares with publicity, the strategy

of repetition of graphic slogans (in this case that mobilize to revolutionary action and to awareness rising) is identical to the way in which publicity slogans operate (2004: 223).

What is left to say?

This chapter has tried to explore and map out the theoretical and historiographical approaches employed on a film that has continued to gain value and density not only because of the passing years but also for the trails of ink that hundreds of critics, academics, and essayists – of which I have only been able to mention but a minimal part – have poured over it. In this case, it is easy to contradict the authors who, for years, warned that nothing new could be said about *The Hour of the Furnaces.* They never cease announcing its death, together with the death of cinema at large, the exhaustion of its semantic potency, of its capacity to dialogue with the present. In some cases, these pessimists are precisely the ones who come back to the film through Grupo Cine Liberación again and again to prescribe against what particular aesthetic and discursive options should contemporary political cinema be made of. However, the film has gained independence from its makers – some are dead and some others are chased by their own ghosts – and carries on interpellating students, fans, and, of course, scribes, who insistently take chances in order to capture what has not yet been said, what went unnoticed to those who preceded them, and what *The Hour of the Furnaces* still has to say.

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Notes

1 I take the liberty of borrowing this expression, which is also the title of this chapter, from the title of the much admired book by Sylvia Saítta (1998) *Regueros de Tinta* (*Trails of Ink*)

about the newspaper *Crítica*. This publication, representative of a modern press, was founded and directed by Natalio Botana. It was edited in Argentina between the years 1913 and 1962 and was characterized by its intervention, sometimes decisive, in the most important political debates in the country. "Trails of ink" is a figure of speech that can take on multiple meanings. However, in the context of this chapter, it is used to refer to the numerous written productions on *The Hour of the Furnaces.* The meaning of the term *reguero* ("trail") more apt to the use we are giving it is a mark or a series of signs or objects left behind by the passage of someone or something (in Spanish particularly by the passing of a liquid, like ink or blood). The title of this book references another trail, in this case of fire.

2 See "Afterthoughts" in this book.

3 It is possible to consider a fifth category. One that refers to the brief notes and articles or entries in encyclopedias that address the film in a general and concise manner, combining more than one of the approaches mentioned. Some examples in recent years of this type of approach are the texts by Mestman (2004), Soberón Torchia (2012), Hillier (2013), and Scorer (2014).

4 Proof of this is the inclusion of Stam's original article (1980–81) in two important books. See Stam (1990, 1998).

5 All of this has been debated (sometimes negated) in a bibliography as copious or more so than the one produced on *The Hour of the Furnaces*.

6 See Chapter 7 in this book.

7 See Chapter 9 in this book.

8 According to Timothy Barnard (1998), alongside Marcorelles, only the essays of Raúl Beceyro (1986) and Pascal Bonitzer (1970) criticized the publicity style of editing as technique that aims to generate an irrational compulsion in the spectator instead of truly moving him to reflection.

9 It is the Spanish translation of the article that the well-known Italian theorist published originally in issue 69 of the magazine *Cinema 60*.

10 The magazine can be visited online in the digital repository of the Cinemateque of Uruguay: http://www.cinemateca.org.uy/biblioteca%20digital.html. Accessed November 18, 2016.

11 Two decades later, Gabriel (1989) developed the idea of Third Cinema as guardian of popular memory.

12 The contribution by Mike Wayne (2001), discussed in the introduction of this book, develops in depth the relations between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and third-worldist theories.

13 According to Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (2004: 229) there is a continuity between the tenets on cinema of Dziga Vertov and three tendencies of the film avant-garde that claim its heritage from the mid-1950s, Cinéma Vérité of Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch, the experimental cinema of Peter Kubelka and the political-militant cinema of Jean-Luc Godard at the end of the 1960s when he formed together with Jean-Pierre Gorin the "Dziga Vertov Group."

14 The duration of this sequence was four minutes and was drastically cut short in the new editing done for the official screening of the film in 1973 with the return of Peronism to power.

15 The same author has made an exhaustive analysis of the historical, political, and aesthetic paths of the image. See Mestman (2010).

16 Mestman (2007) examined in more detail the evolution of that link after the completion of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, when Grupo Cine Liberación started the production of the documentaries on Juan Domingo Perón.
17 Another example of this negative opinion of Peronism and the "political agenda" defended by *The Hour* can be found in the interpretation of Nissa Torrents (1988: 98) for whom the core ideas of the political discourse of the film "have been particularly harmful to Argentina, dividing the country and preventing the formulation of long-term political, social and cultural strategies."
18 Chapter 1 in this book is one of the contributions that helps to correct the lack of rigorous textual analysis of the film.
19 The sequence of the slaughterhouse is probably one of the most quoted in the bibliography dedicated to the film. Although obviously it has been related to one of the foundational works of Argentine literature (*El matadero* [*The Slaughter House*], Esteban Echeverría, 1871), it should be possible to revise the symbolic potency of the "matadero" – symbol of multiple violence over bodies and of the dychotomy civilization vs. Barbarism – the symbolism was also summoned by principal works of Latin American art of the time from the short story "El Fiord" (Osvaldo Lamborghini, 1973) to the fragment "Uruguay for export" from the LP *Guitarra negra* (1972–77) of the Uruguayan singer-songwriter Alfredo Zitarrosa. See also Chapter 3 in this book.
20 On the forms of the film essay in *The Hour of the Furnaces,* see Chapter 12 in this book.
21 See Chapter 10 in this book.
22 Gonzalo Aguilar (2005) is also the author of a brief essay on the reception of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in which he studies the different modes of appropriation of the film by the public and the critics in different cultural and historical contexts. Aguilar is not very benevolent with the film when he concludes that "*The Hour of the Furnaces* has transformed from a film open to history into a film that whisks it away and that it cannot look now towards the future, only to a shamefully guilty revision" (2005: 499).
23 This brief list does not exhaust the range of cultural and artistic references from which Oubiña analyzes the transformations that took place at the end of the 1960s in Argentina. The author explores in detail the universe of filmic experiences of the directors belonging to the so-called Neovanguard, such as Rafael Filippelli, Miguel Bejo, Julio Ludueña, and Edgardo Cozarinsky, among others; as well as the sphere of a clearly experimental cinema occupied by Claudio Caldini and Narcisa Hirsch.
24 See Chapter 11 in this book.
25 See Chapter 2 in this book.
26 We can cite in this respect the work by Jessica Stites Mor (2012) that analyzes the role of *The Hour of the Furnaces* and its discursive strategies in the context of the changes in the Argentine left after 1968.

Chapter 9

The Dialogue between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and the Tradition of Argentine Documentary

Clara Kriger

This chapter seeks to track those elements of *The Hour of the Furnaces* that establish a dialogue with the Argentine documentaries of the first half of the twentieth century focusing primarily on the second part of the film, "Act for Liberation" that starts with a "Chronicle of Peronism (1945–1955)."

It will take the voice-over narration and the use of images taken from newsreels and documentaries, filmed during the first Peronist period, to consider their use and the changes in signification implemented. In this way, it will investigate how the film tells the story of the first Peronism taking into account what images and discourses are chosen and what the filmmakers' interventions upon the found archive material are.

For a long time, the historiography of Argentine documentary cinema insisted on negating the existence of any documentaries prior to Fernando Birri's efforts at the Santa Fe School. The two volumes of the first *History of Cinema* written by Domingo Di Núbila between 1959 and 1960, as well as his followers, combined their proposals about documentary activity with popular ideas in the 1960s that negated the existence of a local documentary tradition.

The texts we read until the 1990s limited themselves to mention the existence of newsreels during the silent era and after the coming of sound, as well as the existence of a small group of documentaries made by Carlos Pessano within the Instituto Cinematográfico del Estado (National Institute for Cinematography) and the propaganda activity during the Peronist government. These mentions did not include any type of analysis and the films were not even mentioned in the filmographies. All this material was thought of as a marginal activity, without any continuity or future, that simply fulfilled the role of complementing the daily programs in cinemas.

Later on, Solanas and Getino reinforce this idea when they assert that "the cinema known as documentary, with all the vastness that the concept has today, from educational films to the reconstruction of a fact or a historical event is perhaps the main basis of revolutionary film-making" (Getino and Solanas 1997: 47). According to the authors, from the preceding Argentine cinema it is only possible to rescue some auteurs who made fiction films, such as Manuel Romero, José A. Ferreira, Leopoldo Torres Ríos, Mario Soffici, and Hugo del Carril, who invested their films with a critical, albeit limited, attitude (Solanas and Getino 1973: 137).

Only in 2003, did Paulo Paranaguá account for the existence of a documentary tradition before the 1960s, formed by numerous films in diverse formats. Around that time, a number of other studies delved into different aspects of this documentary life during the first half of the twentieth century.[1]

In spite of all this, the second part of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, "Act for Liberation," shows how Solanas and Getino construct the account of the "Chronicle of Peronism (1945–1955)" by editing together fragments of newsreels and documentaries filmed during the Peronist period.

In analyzing this paradox, a curious fact arises: in multiple occasions the two authors cite a number of filmic materials as a way of paying homage and recognition to their political and cinematic values. Is it possible to think that, in this case, we are facing a similar operation? Why use these filmed works rather than graphic or animated materials to tell the tale of the classic Peronism? Are they being recognized as politically worthy? Did Solanas and Getino find in those images something that could be rescued in spite of the fact that they belonged to an industrial mode of production?

This chapter's objective is to make progress into some of these questions that aim to shed light on the ways in which classic documentary is appropriated in *The Hour of the Furnaces* as well as on the strategies for editing together the original materials in order to reconstitute the significations anew and to appeal to a different ideal spectator.

Where do those images come from?

The second part of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* "Act for Liberation," commences with a chapter of about 35 minutes, "Chronicle of Peronism (1945–1955)." This audio-visual chronicle follows the criteria of the literary genre: historical or important facts are compiled and described in chronological order. At the same time, the expository mode assumed by the documentary brings this chronicle closer to a journalistic piece inasmuch as the filmic material is backed up by a narration that tries to add objectivity rather than to introduce the emotional subjectivity of the witness.

The linear structure employed in this chapter is one of the elements that are in clear contrast with the overall construction of a film that always favors a less-conventional structure for its narratives. In any case and in principle, it seems coherent for the eye of a spectator accustomed to the link between such linearity and the documentary image in the classic period. However, in relation to the rest of the film, this temporality is not the most significant disparity that can be noticed. Perhaps the sharpest difference is that in these images, it is possible to see the masses expressing joy and enthusiasm in clear contrast with the rest of the film characterized by suffering, fury, helplessness, and despondence.

Let's analyze the narrative structure from the beginning. The film starts with images that testify to the violence of the revolutionary struggle. We see murdered people, bodies lying on the streets, highlighted words such as "brutality" and "barbarism." A succession of blows, furious mobilized masses shouting alongside close-ups of defiant faces. The statements that can be heard or read call for the victory of the peoples of the Third World over USA's imperialism and, furthermore, caution against confusing the socialist revolution with a caricature of revolution.

In-between these calls to agitate and the "Chronicle of Peronism," an intertitle operates as an intervention to warn that there will be information about "the first means adopted to break neocolonial servitude." This explanation is crucial for the spectator to understand the difference between the violent masses seen and the festive masses that will be shown a few seconds later.

The first intertitle guides the chronology, "17 October", and immediately we hear the Peronist march over shots of a happy multitude walking in one direction, occupying the space uncontested; singing, shouting, and waving their handkerchiefs. The voice-over narrates the facts that took place on October 17, 1945, emphasizing the "spontaneous storming of the city" that took place "without any organization" but it is obvious that the images are "divorced" from the discourse of the narration. The footage registers a different 17 October or, rather, it is made up of fragments of recordings of different mass meetings in Plaza de Mayo. A lack of synchronicity is present here and it will be sustained throughout the chapter both in the image track and in the soundtrack (the Peronist march was created in the following years).

This is interesting because the tenets of the classical chronicle are shattered, since the images are no longer a testimony of truth; they are no longer the visual record of what the voice-over is narrating. Solanas and Getino propose the coexistence of complementary registers that generate independent significations. Against a voice-over speaking of a lack of organization, we see masses hoisting placards and flags. Both registers appeal to the idea of a process that had as its protagonist the mobilized masses.

However, at times the two registers coincide in order to stress the signification. For example, when the voice-over narration states that "on the 17 October, the people gave birth to Perón,"[2] at that precise moment we see him on screen. It is obvious that this is a very important moment because what the film will relate is that the masses generate this political process and are its protagonist; Juan Domingo Perón being "the national expression of a people resolved to achieve its definitive independence."[3]

Here we find the first challenge of the film: how to represent these ideas with short films created or commissioned by the National Sub-secretary of Information and the Press to exalt for the masses the figure of the leader? How to put the masses center stage if the documentaries that registered public events during the period of classic Peronism placed Juan Perón and Eva Perón at the center of the representation?

The first procedure taken toward this objective was to remove the soundtrack almost in its entirety. Only the ambient noise is kept (shouts and murmurs of those attending), together with some discourses by Eva and Juan Perón. Since the soundtrack gave meaning and grounded the images that constructed traditional newsreels and documentaries, the original was substituted by a new one that could explain the facts differently.

In this case, the omniscient narration is mitigated a little by the intervention that the makers of the film made in the introduction where they stated that it is an "open report" offered to incite dialogue and debate. The voice-over narration of the new soundtrack presents the "report" in a highly assertive manner but with a vocation to submit the truths

to the spectators' discussion since the filmmakers assure us that "our opinions have value as much as yours do."

Evita enters the scene too accompanied by a definition by the narrator. She is "the standard-bearer of the deepest and most exploited layers of society." The images and her speech are of a recording from May 1, 1952. Most likely, this choice is due to the fact that her speech was one of the most inflamed, since Evita appeals to popular violence to defend Perón and the movement threatened by traitors and those who want to sell the nation.[4] In this way, a link is created between the discourse of Evita and the overall message of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* and, furthermore, the acknowledgment of the figure of Evita as the origin of the revolutionary movement is also established. Without any doubt, during the 1970s this notion gains strength within the thinking of the Peronist Youth and of Montoneros as the posters and songs relating Eva Perón with the "socialist nation" demonstrate.

The camera privileges public spaces and balconies. In the first case, filming is done using high-angle shots to inform on the number of people present in the acts, the size of the crowd, and also to reveal its affirmative gestures, the collective will that is translated into a political manifesto. The balconies, occupied by political leaders, are shot from different angles with the intention of highlighting the fluid communication with the masses. In some cases, a camera movement is mobilized as a strategy to link the public space and the balcony. In other cases, all the different social actors are presented together, each occupying a different level within the shot.

Consequently, in the chapter "17 of October" as in the chapter "Peronism in Power," the importance of the national movement over the leader is established and this is why the successes of the "10 years of national democracy" are accounted for in simple intertitles at the end of the account of the constitutive process of the political movement. In this sense, it is astonishing that the enormous quantities of footage shot about the plans for housing, tourism, public health works, or education (traditional documentaries, docu-dramas, newsreels, posters, etc.) were never used. Obviously, the omission presents a strong message for the spectator in the sense of highlighting the strong capacity for struggle that Peronism generated among the popular sectors more than what its public policies achieved in modifying society. *The Hour of the Furnaces* endorses a radical change of the economic-political-social structures and not the improvement of certain parameters or living conditions and proposes "[…] to acknowledge in populism an ideological and conceptual limitation unsuitable to recognise and confront the problems experienced by the Latin American man" (Solanas and Getino 1973: 51).

The next rubric, "Contradictions of a National Movement," further develops the ideas pointing in this direction. The segment consists of a selection of images in which we see Juan Perón taking part on a number of acts accompanied by different people. There is a stark counterpoint with the images described previously. Here, the events take place in closed surroundings and at all times, Perón is the protagonist. The president greets, explains, thanks, smiles, and talks to everybody. The occasions are attended by a variety of people, all belonging to well-off sectors of society (most probably businessmen), and members of the

military and of the Church. Meanwhile, the narration talks of the multi-classist nature of the movement and of the internal contradictions this generates.[5]

These fragments, edited with a criterion of successive accumulation, invite us to read them as a single whole. It makes no sense to recognize the identity of those present in each event or the reasons for the meeting. The whole shows us an image of Perón as someone without enemies, that is, as someone who does not assume categorical positions. While in the fragments in open air he socializes with the masses, in this edited segment he socializes with the establishment. A contradiction is born out of this clash, reaffirmed by a voice-over that explains the impossibility of a "national policy that does not eliminate the principal contradiction with imperialism."

Solanas and Getino managed to establish in a montage of a minute and 44 seconds the basis to show a profound critique of the Peronist leader. While the voice-over talks in theoretical terms about political systems, the images show how Juan Perón incarnated the mistakes that led the movement to its defeat.

To the already mentioned internal contradictions, one must add the death of Eva Perón. With it, we enter in the chapter "The Crisis of Peronist Power." A portrait of Eva Perón with black ribbons takes the center of the screen, following the intertitle announcing the crisis. Here the editing follows a cause-and-effect logic in order to present an obvious message: the death of the "most combative figure" in the movement becomes associated with the end of this historical process. The images of the extended wake in which thousands of people are protagonists can be read then as a multifaceted goodbye. They say goodbye to the standard-bearer for the humble but they also say goodbye to a more noble society that bestowed upon them a vital role (James 2010).

The crying and the expressions of sadness and despair are accompanied by a silence that establishes a hiatus in the narration. When the voice of the narrator returns, it locates itself in 1955, the year of the defeat. The images show less-defined demonstrations that represent the break of the national front and the end of the revolutionary process due to its "lack of organization and direction."

From this point, the mode of the visual and aural registers changes completely. It could be thought that it is the beginning of a transition toward the tone of violence the film calls for. Menacing planes, explosions, burning cars, people running in Plaza de Mayo, and the sounds of machine guns are some of the signs selected to narrate the bombing of June 16, 1955. On the other hand, the account incorporates a speech on the radio given by Perón, sitting and reading the speech, in an attitude of clear retreat. The other speech we hear is the last one given to the masses from the balcony. Over images of a jam-packed square with a roused crowd we hear the voice of Perón setting up an energetic formula: "we have to respond to violence with greater violence."

The film constructs a representation that expresses popular support for the speech and the appeal to fight. To achieve this, it combines the shouts of the masses in the soundtrack with the use of a fragment from the newsreel *Sucesos Argentinos* (*Argentine Events*), 718, dated August 29, 1952, that recorded a march with torches in homage to Evita. The multiple

points of fire, shinning in the darkness, can be easily reconciled with an organized fighting force and with it, this construction appeals to the spectator to read these images as a positive response to Perón's plea to redouble the offensive against the enemy.

Over the end of Juan Perón's speech, Solanas and Getino construct a poetic image that lasts on screen for 80 seconds. A torch occupies the center of the shot; its movement akin to that of a flag. It is the end of the Peronist process but the fire has been started and still burns "to save the people's cause."

The minutes that follow are dedicated to, on the one hand, displays of happiness by "gorillas" and of their intimidatory actions that reveal their thirst for revenge and, on the other hand, to the "[r]eflections for discussion." This is a space for the moral of the tale constructed from what has been seen and heard. The remembrance of the past is justified by the necessity of delineating a critical action. Why is it necessary to introduce a written moral? Is it an attempt at reaffirmation? Is it a mistrust of the effectiveness of what has been shown previously? Are the filmic fragments perhaps too recent and, because of it, the spectators can quickly recognize the artifice of the editing? It is also possible that given the very critical reading of historic Peronism, the filmmakers needed to set up very clearly that that critique did not have the objective of nullifying the process developed in the decade 1945–55. In his eagerness to reaffirm this point, the narrator captures the audience's full attention as they confront a black screen. His voice asserts that "Peronism in power can be accused or errors and blamed, but these may only be judged within the limitations of a given historical moment."

Operations with found archives

This brief description of "Chronicle of Peronism (1945–1955)" allows for a number of reflections in different areas. In the first place, it is necessary to point out that the dialogue Solanas and Getino's film establishes with the filmic material of the classic period implies a valorization of this material; the assertion that the rich tradition of Argentine documentary should not be obliterated.

Although historiography forgot for a long time these archives, even its participation in *The Hour of the Furnaces,* it is important to promote a more productive look over them. Obviously, they are political documentaries, that is, short films that had a strong will to intervene in the political arena. There was a large volume of documentaries and newsreels on the first Peronism (and we still have a good number of them in the national repositories). They constitute a wonderful entry point to rethink power relations, the forms of doing politics and of leadership among many other possible angles. In this sense, these symbolic objects deserve a more aesthetic approach and an analysis of the modes of representation they assumed.

However, Solanas and Getino take these materials in order to recycle them, which means to treat them as found footage. The images are freed from the political, ideological, and aesthetic functions in operation in their original context to become part of a new context.

Even if the spectators cannot forget the original frame of reference, the filmmakers aim to change the signification of the re-used images by being re-edited.

Maite Alberdi (2005) defines the new film as a *máquina recicladora* ("recycling machine") because it transforms the meanings but maintaining, in the majority of cases, the form of the fragments. In many cases, this way of constructing films has a general objective of presenting an ironic message with respect to the original text and, of course, with respect to the signification intended by the original authors. In this case, there is no irony. The authors took away, added, and combined images and sounds in order to construct a critical version of the history of Peronism.

If, as Daniel James (2010) points out, the identification between activism, resistance, and workers' organization with the condition of being Peronist was accepted as commonsensical by the working class in the period 1955–73, this "Chronicle of Peronism" could be felt by the spectators as a cold shower.

How to reach trade unions and popular audiences in 1968 with a film that, as we have seen, centers in devaluating the conceptions and the work of the exiled leader? How to challenge the expectations of an audience little inclined to this view? Clearly, in the appropriation of images that spoke of a recent past, the filmmakers found an intervention that allowed them to offer their new proposal. The old and well-known images in their new reassemblage offered a space to present the festive masses without having to resort to glorifying the period or to the melancholy of what was lost.

It is interesting to note that in this chapter the textual authority is never displaced onto any interviewee, no word is allowed from the subaltern sectors. As a consequence, it is possible to find here the didactic-propagandistic premises of the film. Conversely, in the next chapter "Chronicle of Resistance (1955–1968)" other social actors offer an essential component of the arguments expounded. I concur with Mestman (2015) in thinking that the 1960s proposal of "giving a voice to the people" seems to find its most genuine expression in the second part of the film in the accounts of workers, delegates, and activists provided by themselves in their places of work, in bars, the union office, the assembly, and the street. Despite the evident communion of ideas between the narrator, the filmmakers, and the interviewees, a more diverse range of ideas is realized.[6]

The univocal discourse of "Chronicle of Peronism" could not allow for testimonies from the mass of workers that supported Perón because of its social policies and the economic benefits they received and because of the speeches and rites that granted them a new position in society. The film aims at transforming that identity; it calls them the proletariat rather than "comrades" or "without shirts"; it reveals to them revolutionary truths instead of proposing "a hegemonic alternative viable for the Argentine capitalism" (James 2010: 57).

Fifty years after *The Hour of Furnaces,* this modern filmic construction gains a new signification. The film became a synonym of Argentine cinema for a historiography that went from the exoticism of tango to the exoticism of the revolution. Its well-deserved fame instigated countless filmic citations and critical analysis but, at the same time, made it more difficult the appreciation of other interesting Argentine films both contemporary and from

the past. Today, like always, the film still finds its followers although it is evident that political documentaries now do not usually call for agitation and in many cases they turned toward subjective looks at the processes. However, the tradition of the genre in Latin America is so powerful that it instigates a constant renovation. Like Peronism, political documentaries remain at the center of the Argentine scene, ratifying regularly its heretic character in their appeals for social dignity.

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Notes

1 See, among others, Marrone (2003); Marrone and Walker (eds) (2006, 2007); Kriger (2009a, 2009b).

2 The subtitles on the DVD mistranslate this. The subtitle reads instead "[o]n 17 October, Perón was born as a leader" (translator's note).
3 See Chapter 7 in this book.
4 Some fragments we can hear:

> […] I want my people to know that we are all willing to die for Perón, and the traitors should know it, may the traitors know it, since we won't be coming here to say 'present' to Perón, as on 18 of September, but rather we'll go and do it in justice by our own hands […] and those who sell the country from within, who sell themselves for 4 cents, are also on the lookout to give the blow at any moment. But we are the people, and I know that if the people remain alert, we are invincible, because we are the nation itself.

5 See Chapter 1 in this book.
6 See Chapter 10 in this book.

Chapter 10

Solanas' Recent Documentaries

Magalí Mariano and María Emilia Zarini

The Hour of the Furnaces (Solanas and Getino, 1968) emerges, undoubtedly, as a turning point for documentary cinema in Argentina and, maybe, marks the initial point of political cinema in the country. It is also quite reasonable to nominate the film as the pinnacle of what became known as the New Latin American Cinema at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. The solid theoretical argumentation that supported it (*Towards a Third Cinema* [1969]) operated as a watershed moment for the conceptual elaborations of the emerging filmic tendencies at the time. As a political collage, the film articulated and indissolubly connected its experimental language to a political project fused to the historical context from which it arose. As a film essay, it managed to generate a critical, reflexive, ideological, sociological, and historical discourse in tune with the intellectual landscape of the time and in tune with the cinematic tendencies emerging all over the world.

50 years later, we propose this chapter along two different lines. On the one hand, it re-examines previous analysis of the theoretical and political influences that can be detected in the film in order to identify whether certain ideological positions are updated in Solanas' later films. On the other hand, the chapter aims to detect the aesthetic influences the film adheres to and those that are original to the film to, following from this, detect their continuation throughout the director's work in later years. In this sense, we consider the influence of the logic of production, distribution, and exhibition of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in the film's theoretical and aesthetic formulations and to what extent they have been replicated or not in Solanas' documentary films of the new millennium. We are well aware that probably, both lines of enquiry are not independent from one another and that probably, they constitute a single theoretical/aesthetic platform.

Preliminary considerations on the theoretical and political influences in *The Hour of the Furnaces*

In 1979, on the tenth anniversary of *Towards a Third Cinema,* Octavio Getino published an article offering an in-depth reflexion on the emblematic manifesto – that rather than as "manifesto" was distributed with the subheading "Notes and experiences for the development of a cinema of liberation in the Third World." He also commented on *The Hour of the Furnaces* and its committed and important relation to the manifesto. Getino wrote then that the film and the materials elaborated by Grupo Cine Liberación (Liberation Cinema Group) must be analyzed within the specific context in which they were conceived, that of

> a middle class intellectuality, influenced by the struggles of the national proletariat, determined to create alliances – and, in the best case scenario, to achieve a synthesis – with them but restricted by contradictions and limitations inherited from the long period on neocolonization of the country.
>
> (Getino 1979: 4)[1]

In *Towards a Third Cinema,* Solanas and Getino warned about the fact that the manifesto proposed the "sketch of a hypothesis" born out of a generative experience, and therefore, it was not an attempt to offer it as a "single or exclusive model or alternative but as a useful proposal to deepen the debate on the new perspectives to instrumentalise film in non-liberated nations" (Getino and Solanas 1997: 19). The manifesto, published in 1969 – a year after the premiere of *The Hour of the Furnaces* – in the magazine *Tricontinental* (published in Havana, Cuba) condenses the multiple and specific arguments, rigorously formulated and problematized, in the film.

As Mestman (2008: 3) points out "*The Hour of the Furnaces*, debut of the group Cine Liberación, enters the world cinemascape in tumultuous times": May 68 and the emergence of a European militant cinema alongside it; the Vietnam War, the advent of the new African cinemas; the consolidation of the movement of the New Latin American Cinema; the appearance in Argentina of a left-wing intellectuality – with intellectuals adhering, or in the process of adhering, to Peronism – among others. The film establishes a dialogue with all other Third World countries while concentrating primarily on an intellectual and critical revision of the history of Argentina.

The ideological influence of Frantz Fanon – primarily in relation to the concepts developed in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* – in *The Hour of the Furnaces* and therefore also in *Towards a Third Cinema,* is decisive and has been widely studied.[2] We must briefly go over some of the most significant concepts and arguments to reflect on how they are articulated in the first instance, in the formal aspects of this monumental film and, in a second movement, in those documentaries directed by Solanas in the period 2004–16: *Memoria del saqueo* (*Social Genocide*) (2004); *La dignidad de los nadies* (*The Dignity of the Nobodies*) (2005); *Argentina latente* (*Latent Argentine*) (2007); *La próxima estación* (*The Next Station*) (2008); *Tierra sublevada. Parte I: Oro impuro* (*Land in Revolt. Part 1: Impure Gold*) (2009)*; Tierra sublevada. Parte II: Oro negro* (*Land in Revolt. Part 2: Black Gold*) (2010)*; La guerra del fracking* (*The Fracking War*) (2013), and *El legado estratégico de Juan Perón* (*The Strategic Legacy of Juan Perón*) (2016).[3]

It is worth noting that after *The Hour of the Furnaces,* to be precise in 1971, the Group Cine Liberación was called by Juan Domingo Perón to shoot in Madrid his two filmic testimonies: *Perón: La revolución justicialista* (*The Justicialist Revolution*) (1971), and *Actualización política y doctrinaria para la toma del poder* (*Political and Doctrinary Actualization for the Taking of Power*) (1971).

With these works Solanas puts an end to his first phase as documentary filmmaker and he did not come back to documentary filmmaking until the new millennium. Between 1975 and 2001, he directed five fiction films[4] and left a sixth one unfinished.[5] He returned to

documentary filmmaking with *Memoria del saqueo*, the film that inaugurates his second, and prolific, phase as documentary filmmaker.

Quite possibly, it is the logics of production and exhibition that affect and limit the films under study where the most significant differences are more evident. *The Hour of the Furnaces* was made in absolute clandestine conditions between 1965 and 1968, years in which Solanas and Getino (and later on Vallejo) compiled archive material and shot testimonies from militants, political figures, intellectuals, and student leaders. The film was premiered during la Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Nuovo, 1968 in Pesaro, Italy where it took the Critics Prize.[6] The same year, it wins the public award, the Federación Internacional de la Prensa Cinematográfica (FIPRESCI) and the Ecumenical prize at the International Festival in Mannheim and it is considered the best film at the Merida Festival, Venezuela. The clandestine or semi-clandestine exhibition of the film in Argentina starts also in the same year and according to Mariano Mestman,

> in its initial stages, it took place primarily in relation with the space created around the Argentine CGT (Workers General Confederation) [where] different political and intellectual groupings and formations and student movements came together with a sector of the combative movements opposed to the dictatorship of General Onganía.
>
> (2008: 6)

On the other hand, the documentaries of the period 2004–13 are thought, made, edited, and exhibited in an entirely different context. First, Solanas is in a solid position as a great Argentine filmmaker (with a long career as fictional filmmaker with international recognition) and he is in the process of securing his status as political leader. Second, the filmmaker re-took the documentary camera at a time when the continuity of the national state, as an entity with the capacity to rule itself and to guarantee basic material conditions, was in danger. That was also the time when the people went into action and had reached the highest level of mistrust in politics, in its institutions, and in the judiciary. A people that hit its pans and pots in the squares and the balconies of their homes while claiming "¡Que se vayan todos!" ("Out with the lot of them!").[7] Solanas returns to documentary to denounce the causes and consequences of the political, economic, and social crisis that in the first years of the new millennium left almost half of the Argentine population sliding below the breadline.[8] The new context of production and circulation of the films, far from being "hostile" as it had been with *The Hour of the Furnaces,* was propitious and it legitimated the films: the documentaries of the period 2004–13 (primarily the first three) reinforced the denunciations the population was making and aimed to explain the causes that led the country to one of its most terrible crisis. *Memoria del saqueo, La dignidad de los nadies,* and *Argentina latente* succeeded as catalysts of a general will and received the *establishing* force of the context that saw them appear. For their part, *La próxima estación, Tierra sublevada Part I* and *Part II,* and *La guerra del fracking* were produced in a context of greater stability and with Solanas more interested in political leadership and somehow, more "conservative" in his methods and topics. The critique was not aimed at the recent history but at the most immediate present. However, and paradoxically, these last documentaries "lose"

their urgency and contingency, their character of rupture that the first three had (more consistent with *The Hour of the Furnaces*), and take on a more "didactic" tone and a new function: to condense the political program of the Movimiento Proyecto Sur (Movement Project South) and to reinforce the "image" of Solanas as the political leader of that movement.

The return to documentary: "Either we invent or we make mistakes"

Solanas arrives in Argentina on December 19, 2001, after a trip to Europe. Tired, he goes to sleep early without knowing that the following day the government of Fernando de la Rúa will fall.

> On 20 December Solanas switched on the television and was confronted by that terrible scene in Plaza de Mayo, transformed into a space for repression by the police. Then […] he did not hesitate to put the camera on his shoulder and, together with his sons, went to the square to share in the popular resistance and to walk with the people. Those images taken in the heat of the events will remain for posterity in *Memoria del Saqueo,* a film that signalled the beginning of a saga (he followed it with *La Dignidad de los Nadies* and will continue with *Argentina Latente*) and his return to documentary filmmaking.
>
> (Ranzani 2006)

Having said that, how are the thematic threats, formal characteristics, and the conditions of production and exhibition of *The Hour of the Furnaces* renewed, dissolved, or brought up to date in these first documentaries at the beginning of the new century?

Renewing the thematic threats in the documentaries of the period 2004–13

Historical revisionism, decolonization, reflection on the role of intellectuals, violence as a "passage to a liberating action," spontaneity, liberation, dependency, and the dialogue between the national and the Latin American are the themes that articulate and structure *The Hour of the Furnaces*. However, not all of them remain or retain the same importance in Solanas' documentary works of the period 2004–13.

Historical revisionism

The interest in a critical and sharp revision of the history of Argentina is one of the recurrent topics that still sustain Solanas' filmography. He continues to structure his ideas with that notable premise that at one point gave form to *The Hour of the Furnaces*: "we go out to shoot as if the film was a notebook and the camera a pencil" (Norris 1988: 71). In the same way as "Neocolonialism and Violence," "Act for Liberation," and "Violence and Liberation," the

three parts of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* ideas still gain clarity with praxis; thesis and antithesis reach a synthesis; notes are interwoven in chapters and paragraphs with secondary themes and different objectives but all belonging to a same revision.

Memoria del saqueo, La dignidad de los nadies, and *Argentina latente* form a trilogy, in the words of Solanas (2007) "about Argentina" – he had the project of a tetralogy with *Los hombres que están solos y esperan* (*The Men that Are Alone and Wait*), a film he started but never finished shooting. The 2001 crisis is the starting point of these three films to reread the decade of the 1990s (even going further back, up to the last military dictatorship in 1976, particularly in *Memoria del saqueo*). The revision is done in three large dimensions: one is macro-structural and analyzes power politics, focusing on a denunciation of the causes of the crisis (*Memoria del saqueo*). The second is micro-structural, intimate, and focusing on daily life. It is constructed around the evidence given by the protagonists of the social resistance that testifies to the consequences of the crisis *(La dignidad de los nadies).* This dimension is perfectly consistent with the development of the concept of the film-act elaborated by Solanas and Getino in *Towards a Third Cinema:* "it is the synthesising of the data provided by the sensations; their ordering and elaboration; the stage of concepts, judgements, opinions, and deductions (in the film the announcer, the reporting, the captions or the narrator who leads the projection act)" (1997: 50). The last dimension is the more projective one. Again, it is aimed towards the macro-structural, built as a *road movie-essay-testimonial* that accounts for Argentina's potential to be reborn and thus, accounts for the possible ways of exiting the crisis (*Argentina latente*). Here, the dialogue with the third part of *The Hour of the Furnaces* and with the 1969 manifesto is clear: the premise lies in the passage from rational knowledge to "revolutionary practice," demonstrating irrefutably, empirically, and theoretically the great potential of Argentina to grow. The only thing left is to act and, with it, the verification of the materialist dialectic theory of the unity of knowledge and action.

It is then possible to note the obvious common ground shared between the three first films of Solanas' new era of documentary filmmaking and the structural backbone of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (in relation to the dialectic organization between the parts and the whole). As with the first film, it is possible to argue that in the first three films of the twenty-first century Solanas also took risks producing dialectical, exposed, and open-ended works that projected themselves toward horizons of liberation and, therefore, capable of being modified by the historical circumstances of a given moment or by the expressive necessities of their protagonists. From this also emerges their character of films for discussion, with spaces dedicated to the exclusive participation of their protagonist-spectators.

The big fresco of the country drawn by Solanas in his return to documentary does not exhaust itself with *Memoria del saqueo, La dignidad de los nadies,* and *Argentina latente.* It may be seen as a sweeping generalization but it is possible to suggest that all his documentaries revisit the history of the devastation the liberal model caused in Argentina. However, the first three establish between them very similar relations to those established between the three parts of *The Hour of the Furnaces* while the films that followed *(La próxima estación, Tierra sublevada. Parte I: Oro impuro, Tierra sublevada. Parte II: Oro negro,* and *La guerra*

del fracking), without leaving aside the historical revisionism, took on a more projective tone (already present in *Argentina latente*), road movies in search of a rediscovery and re-signification of the potentialities of Argentina.[9]

Between those first three films, and the last three (they can also be read together according to a single logic), lies *La próxima estación* (2008) that shares some common ground with the first triad (particularly with *Argentina latente*) but that stands on its own. It is not anymore a film "about Argentina," as the director proposed to read the first three documentaries mentioned, but a film that very specifically tells the history (of the dismantling) of the Argentine railways. It is obviously traversed by the "pillaging party" denounced in the previous work but treated differently.

Solanas travels through Argentina as if following the vestiges of the old and exemplary rail map that once laid for people the tracks for liberation. He stops in all the stations that allow him to learn about the public assets plundered by privatizations: natural resources (mining, water, gas, oil); rail stock, scientific and technological wealth, aeronautic and aerospace industries; educational patrimony, etc. He does this to persist in a process of consciousness-raising and memory of the anticolonial struggles that forged our present, to account for the multiple fronts of popular liberation one can participate in, what he calls "*patriadas*" (popular revolts), like the one in 2001, like the one incarnated by the Mapuche community fighting against fracking or the citizens' assemblies that opposed mega-mining exploitation.

Tierra sublevada. Parte I: Oro impuro, Tierra sublevada. Parte II: Oro negro, and *La guerra del fracking* (2013) can be read following a single non-dialectic thematic key. Consequently, Solanas advances even more into the logic of focalism and deepening started with *La próxima estación.* He concentrates (also in the form of a journey) on a historical revision of the way in which the neoliberal policies of the 1990s intensified the pillaging and plundering of Argentine mineral, metal, oil, and gas resources. The first of these three films – shot in the provinces of Catamarca, San Juan, la Rioja, Tucumán, and Salta – focuses on the ravages caused by corporations engaged in mega-mining, bringing to the fore the voices of the victim-protagonists. The second film, touring the main oil fields in the country: Cerro Dragón, Loma la Lata, and Cutral Co, in Patagonia; General Mosconi, Campamento Vespucio, and Campo Durán in Salta, narrates the epic story of oil extraction and the terrible consequences brought about by its privatization. The third one – *La guerra del fracking* – explores the catastrophic effects of fracking in a trip to Vaca Muerta, one of the most important deposits in the country and located in the province of Neuquén. Solanas starts his journey accompanied by Félix Herrero (lawyer and economist specializing in energy) and Maristella Svampa (sociologist). Together, they gather witness accounts from inhabitants and professionals warning over the disaster in progress, explaining the gravity of the issue and enlightening on how fracking actualizes colonialism.

It is worth noting that it is important to see these films, taking into account the context of Solanas' political activity.[10] And in this revision, there are some details that are interesting to highlight, as Pablo Piedras explains:

> […] the permeability between his work and his political and social trajectory is so deep that the political utopia Solanas imagined in fictional form in *Sur/South* (1988), through the characters of the intellectual Emilio and the colonel Rasatti in charge of Pronasur (National Project Sur), is expressed with curious exactitude in the name of the political party he leads, supporting the same concepts the characters in *Sur/South* defended. (2009: 665)

A project that, according to Solanas, was committed to national independence, the democratic process, the fair distribution of wealth, the freeing of the nation from multinationals, etc.

In those "long 1960s," Solanas and Getino identified Peronism as something more than a political party with a classic structure (a popular movement for the masses that around 1945 started a process of liberation unfinished after the coup d'état of 1955) that could, on those days, restart the emancipatory initiative expressing this political diagnosis in filmic format. Now, in his contemporary work, Solanas returns to this dynamic and accounts for a *political platform* sufficiently firm and, at the same time, malleable as to include his legislative interests and his cinematic projects and both are not foreign to the parliamentary potential resulting from his investigations. Several of his most recent films consist of the incessant dialogue between the active political operator and the filmmaker that Solanas is since *The Hour of the Furnaces* and until today.

Dependency, violence, and liberation

In a similar vein, another of the recurrent themes of the documentaries of the period 2004–13 is the call for decolonization as an imperative necessity. The denunciation of dependency and the urgent need for liberation that, in these documentaries of the new millennium, is possible to achieve by means other than violence, the only path conceived in *The Hour of the Furnaces*. In his book Javier Campo (2012) re-examines the ideological influences in *The Hour of the Furnaces* and accounts for the ideological inspiration of Fanon's theory of decolonization through revolutionary violence and of Latin American Dependency Theory. He also acknowledges the impact in the thesis the film presents of the intellectual climate at the time emphasizing the concepts of dependency, violence, and liberation. Campo explains that Fanon's call to "change skin," to develop a new way of thinking, to invent a New Man resonated in Latin America "in a context in which it was not possible to apply the classic concept of colonialism [but yes dependency], it became a reflexive focal point to gather resolves with the aim of achieving a thought apt to 'change skin' as Fanon said" (2012: 97).

In the documentaries of the new millennium, this denunciation is proclaimed again. This continuum from revision to focalism that we highlight renews the necessity for liberation but not in the same manner. There is no doubt that something is "lost" in these new documentaries when compared to *The Hour of the Furnaces* – something related to

strength, innovation, or total rupture. Without a doubt, the differences with the current situation are the reasons that help us understand that elements, mechanisms, and the urgent experimentation with them were pushed aside. The hypertelic decade that led them toward a political and aesthetic confrontation had been left behind and the clandestine circuit too. For these new documentaries, the footprints of the neoliberal decade were fresh and its damage could be still felt in the flesh. Over this sticky slime, Solanas wrote his new "notes." Perhaps *Memoria del saqueo* and *La dignidad de los nadies* (to a lesser extent also *Argentina latente*) are the films that with a clearer fervor managed to intervene with a more committed force, rather than spectacular, in the reality of the country. They propose (particularly *La dignidad de los nadies*) a more open dialogue with the spectator geared toward the development of militant meetings, interpellations, mobilizations, and debates. Put into context, this makes sense: *The Hour of the Furnaces* and these first three films of the new millennium (above all, the first two "by chance" the thesis and antithesis – at least from the perspective we are adopting) are the product of very tumultuous and critical times. In such times, to resort to counter-information, agit-prop tactics, and to work with archive material result in a sort of reformulation of Direct cinema that functions as a truly important agent of change.

Solanas' last four documentaries under study renew discursively the denunciation of dependency, stressing in each and every one of the examples the way in which Argentina has been looted by big corporations and by public policies historically at the service of the devastation of the country. However, and probably as a consequence of being produced during more stable times in a clearly growing Argentina, and also because maybe the topics are "less urgent" than those tackled in the first three films of the period (hunger, unemployment, and poverty), the films of the period 2008–13 seem "less" striking, "less" necessary, and "less" revolutionary.

Another critical concept for Fanon and also for Solanas and Getino, a necessary key to reading these films too, is *violence* as "it is the one that unifies, in both essays [film and manifesto], the balance between a political situation and the passage to a liberating action" (Campo 2012: 109). The documentaries of the new millennium reconfigure this idea or, at least, they do not promote it with the same justifying rigor. Running as an undercurrent is the necessity for action but lacking the clear call for revolution present in *The Hour of the Furnaces*.

Closely linked to the idea of violence appears the resulting notion of spontaneity, another of the points of contact between *The Wretched of the Earth* and *The Hour of the Furnaces*. It is a clear indication that somehow, in both cases, the conceptions arose from the same thinking mold about the revolution. For Fanon the value of spontaneity can be measured by insurrectional courage while "adventurism, disorganization and ingenuity" turns against it. Consequently, the voice-over narration in *The Hour of the Furnaces* affirms "when spontaneity in not channelled in a revolutionary way, the initiative belong to the enemy" (Campo 2012: 112–13).

In *Towards a Third Cinema* Solanas and Getino affirmed:

> The anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. Third Cinema is, on our opinion, the cinema that recognises in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point – in a word, the decolonisation of culture. The culture, including the cinema, of a neocolonialised country is just the expression of an overall dependence that generates models and values born from the needs of imperialist expansion.
>
> (1997: 49)

This statement to revolt is neither lost with the changes in the re-edited version of 1973 nor does it disappear in Solanas' contemporary films. Furthermore, it is a theme that is actualized in an original manner and surprises us with its proximity. Multiple examples of spontaneity are alive among us: in the streets we walk daily, in the neighborhoods, in factories, schools, universities, and hospitals, in research institutes, and in many other collective initiatives (sometimes even if they are born individually) of resistance and struggle for liberation (perhaps the strongest example was the spontaneous revolt of December 2001 in Argentina as a consequence of the social crisis). If these are still happening, and if Solanas recuperates expressions of spontaneity, it is because economic dependency has not stopped and, therefore, neither has the necessity for a popular struggle for liberation.

The consciousness the 1960s called for went through a deep crisis that forced it to reformulate itself in different terms, mainly non-clandestine terms. And this is the resistance Solanas brings us in his most recent works. He identifies the re-organization of this awareness of resistance that becomes memory: memory that goes from the first fights for independence, through those that *The Hour of the Furnaces* crystallized to arrive to the struggles defended by the culture of solidarity and participation ignored in the 1990s.

Renewing formal aspects in the documentaries of the period 2004–13

In relation to form, it is possible to note that some of the most important formal aspects of *The Hour of the Furnaces* are renewed in the documentaries of the period 2004–13. For example: the use of archive material, the importance of the testimony, the division into chapters, the use of intertitles, the use of one type of font, the inclusion of quotes, in some cases – as mentioned before – the use of agit-prop tactics, the notion of urgency, the obviously unfinished character, the letters to the spectators, and, to a lesser degree, the use of collage.

In the skeleton of this structure, editing is the bone marrow. It is a gesture of structural and linguistic rupture with the cinemas of Hollywood and Europe – the cinematographies

on which Argentine cinema depended. In *The Hour of the Furnaces,* the filmmakers articulated a new audio-visual grammar with disparate materials. It was a singular aesthetic operation that constructed a dialogue between an experimental language and a political project to narrate an epic story about the struggle for Latin American emancipation. The editing played with "the breaks with the traditional ways of thinking about the relation with the real" (Oubiña 2016: 67). It also built bridges to connect the work with the act, the associations that made possible for the film to spill out in such a way as to seep into the world or, better put, with the world, to become one, because the fight was only one: the fight for people's liberation.

The "cell-like" organization of the first part of *The Hour of the Furnaces* demonstrates the intention to reach a synthesis and to achieve it. Solanas used his well-known bag of tricks borrowed from his experience in publicity. He took advantage of the enemy resources for ideological ends completely opposed to the logic of capitalism.

The editing was arranged – as Koestler (2002: 189) suggested in relation to the creative act – to facilitate the "coming together of dissociated reference points that are perceived simultaneously or that lead abruptly one into the other." In this way, the authors succeeded in creating a sarcastic synthesis that, with the language of the enemy's trench, resulted in a sharp critique of the economic, political, artistic, and intellectual establishment.

In this cross-fire, Solanas' musical education also contributed. The result was a complex sonic structure that encouraged the dialogue of multiple voices – on occasions incongruent – with the music to achieve a double referential plane close to humor and, at the same time, tenacious in its political conclusion.[11]

However, in Solanas' recent films, the editing loses the categorical value that reached its zenith with *The Hour of the Furnaces* maybe because, among other decisions, he modifies the treatment of space. Before, he only referenced it when it was inhabited by the people, it was public space. Now, he includes intimate, familial, private space through the use of multiple testimonies about a variety of subjective experiences gathered from workers, members of cooperatives, protesters, etc.

One of the formal aspects that stand out in *The Hour of the Furnaces* is the political collage, as Clara Garavelli shows in her chapter in this book. However, it loses substance in the documentaries of the new century. It is a compositional line that is not continued. The use of this technique, born as a consequence of the consumer society, loses meaning and potentiality when this society, at the beginning of the new millennium, is in total collapse.[12]

Something that is quite paradoxical is the way in which Solanas remains "anchored" to the more characteristic formal aspects of his filmography: the use of the same typography (font, size, and color in all cases except *The Dignity of the Nobodies*), the use of chapters (even the number of chapters, almost always ten), and the use of intertitles. We describe this as paradoxical because it seems that all the creative force of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* later on conceptualized in *Towards a Third Cinema*, is exhausted in a sort of repetition that threatens, for starters, the "feeling" of contemporary actuality. Obviously, there is a Solanas' "authorial seal," a blatant intention of making films that are formally his own but,

it is strange that he had not searched for – or found – a newer form or maybe even a better one, of updating the accusations. It may be that it is precisely the contemporary relevance of his denunciations, that is, "the continuity" of their content that makes it inappropriate to renovate the form.

Oubiña explains that "in *The Hour of the Furnaces* space is always the people: it is not constructed as a locus unless it is appropriate […] for the people […] being a vertical domain of the institutions […] or the democratic horizontality of the streets conquered by the masses" (2016: 82). This work on space is not lost. In fact, it is how Solanas' new documentary phase starts: the burning streets in 2001 as a consequence of the neoliberal forge. But what happens now is that the director fills the streets, the popular locus, and the revolts with the intimate and personal accounts of people that recuperate the heritage of those "that for decades had defied dictatorships and persecutions" (Solanas' words in *Memoria del saqueo,* 2004). These were, partially, in *The Hour of the Furnaces* "the comrades, workers, peasants, revolutionary militants, intellectuals and popular and trade union organisations" that gave voice to the debate that the directors wanted to put in place and leave open to the sum of opinions and wills of resistance. The film collected (the search for) a collective memory resting in the oral transmission of history. This is why this mechanism is so prevalent. Although the accounts of the experiences were made difficult by the infighting at the time, Solanas and Getino managed to reunite the testimonies of those representing collective political alignments. For example, Martiniano Martín (leader of the mechanics union), Ángel Taborda (political activist and trade unionist), Ángel Perelman (one of the founders of Steel Workers Union), Raimundo José Ongaro (General Secretary of the Confederación General del Trabajo [CGT]), Roberto Grabois (student leader), Cirilo Ramallo (worker occupying a Factory), or Rudy Taborda (female worker of the first textile factory under worker's administration), among others. With the voices of these experiences, the directors exemplified the distance between the Argentine intellectuals and their people that led to the consideration that only delegates, trade union leaders, and students were the "single intellectual and effective vanguard the movement (the Peronist proletariat) gave itself." These descriptions represented many others beyond the particular circumstances of each individual (many were fired from factories – factories that were later on dismantled. Others were added to employers' "black lists," and others were persecuted and stopped from finding work). Articulate "individual" witnesses that derivate toward a collective phenomenon: the fight for popular liberation. These witness accounts that were one and many more at the same time, are now, in Solanas' recent works, others: Rodolfo López "Chiru," José Fernández "Pepino," Félix Herrero, Víctor Bravo, María Acosta "La Lucy," Juan Carlos Fernández "Hippie," Mara Puntano; all are the voices of those resisting in *Tierra sublevada II: Oro negro*. Or Martín, the writer; Toba, the teacher; Antonia, Chipi, and Rufino, from the soup kitchen; Margarita and Colinche; Carola and Silvia, from the public hospital; Lucy, the rural fighter; Darío Santillán. The nobodies that fight a noble war against the new forms of colonialism. Resistance fighters then, resistance fighters now. They are not included in black lists, but many of them did shape spontaneous experiences of resistance from adverse experiences at work. Many tell of experiences they instigated: organization, discussion, and collective, communal and territorial

alternatives in the face of the ill-fated landscape left by neoliberalism. In the testimonies of *The Hour of the Furnaces,* the possibility of revenge beats strong. In those included in the recent works, this possibility is diluted or considerably minimized. Yet, both the former and the latter are testimonies that we can consider as present and of (d)enunciation from the margins.

In the construction of an identitary fabric, the testimonies fulfill a fundamental role. They arise as a characteristic mechanism that sketches a line of continuity between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and the recent works of Solanas. This mechanism is renewed, re-elaborated, and repositioned in relation to other elements of the film, with the objective of rescuing a social and collective memory. The memory of the people assimilates the experiences of struggle and in its search Solanas went and goes wanting "the tale (to be) possible, when one resists" (Solanas' words in the film *La próxima estación,* 2008).

Each of the new films tries to be an exercise in "big memory" that ends up facilitating the perception of Solanas' contemporary work as a big "permeable membrane that makes present what is outside and inside; what is collective and individual, a porous limit between private and public. [Where, furthermore, memory becomes] something for a minority because in it, private becomes immediately political" (Ciancio 2012). In Solanas' recent work, testimony is omnipresent. It is, to a large extent, the element that sustains the structure of the director's contemporary tales or it fulfills – largely – a narrative function internal to the structure.

These testimonies reach another dimension, a different power by being interwoven in a collective social expression constructed while the narrative evolves. In *The Hour of the Furnaces* this also happened but the directors already started from a collective framework, from an organization (trade union, guild, student union, a factory) that was represented by each account. Now, the collective rises from the reading of the film as whole, from the succession of testimonies that structure the whole. *La dignidad de los nadies* is the clearest example of this series of documentaries since the narrative in this film advances as the experiences of the "nadies" (nobodies) – "those who suffered the pillage" (Solanas' words in the film *La dignidad de los nadies,* 2005) – follow each other. A collective social framework consolidates the narrative constructed from the allusions made by these personal speeches. "The testimonies are the links that close in on a perspective through the gaze of the director" (Aprea 2010) that in this film, as in the rest of his recent work, becomes one more character among the many in the narrative. In a similar sense, in his new documentaries, Solanas begins to shape himself as the leader of a political movement capable of freeing the Argentine people (acquiring more and more physical presence within the frame, showing himself injured by the four shots in 1991; or showing empathy and affection with those giving testimony – for example with the workers of the shipyard in *Argentina latente*). As Clara Garavelli explains:

> what is distinctive in all six films, unlike his 1960s and 1970s militant productions, is Solanas's own constant in-frame presence, denoting not only the shift of the documentary genre towards first-person narration, but also how Solanas has become a character himself, a public persona perceived as the embodiment of the old-school 1960s revolutionary.
>
> (2014: 35–36)

That is why the testimonies he records are characterized by a high degree of intimacy, a peculiar emotive feeling that contributes to an important degree of reflexivity inside the work since it introduces a tension in relation to where the testimony takes place and the potency it can achieve within the documentary image. The director's voice-over – clarifying and interpreting the events he records – is another element that nourishes this direct record in which documentary, as image of the real, is questioned.

The interviews help to construct an image of the people as different subjects. A collective political identity that will be used to generate a social memory that is also collective. This perspective is fed not only by the testimonies but also, and in opposition, by the negative interviews – those that embody the voice of the new forms of colonialism, as he did in *The Hour of the Furnaces* with the cases of Manuel Mujica Lainez and the Di Tella Institute that are presented as archetypes of a Eurocentric literary and artistic intellectuality, uninterested in the political tensions of the time and uninterested in a Latin American reading of the situation.[13] In his recent works, Solanas shifts this function onto the representatives of mining and oil corporations for example, or to representatives of the government that, in connivance with transnational powers, have supported (and carry on supporting) the emptying of the Argentine state, the usufruct of its patrimony in detriment of the welfare of the Argentine society.

The Hour of the Furnaces displays an "ample variety of strategies to establish a 'cosmogony' of revolutionary Peronism and from it defines a form of struggle that allows the film to achieve its objectives" (Aprea 2010). In the same way, in his contemporary works Solanas sketches the "cosmogony" of popular experiences of resistance born after the "pillaging party" in the 1990s (Solanas' words in *La dignidad de los nadies,* 2005). Spontaneous, solidary, and participative, Solanas shows them in their different typology: communal, in neighborhoods; regional, in pickets, cooperatives, and assemblies, etc. In this way, Solanas realizes a collective and social memory that permits the outlining of a horizon of alternatives founded in an awareness of the popular struggles that every testimony accounts for. In *La guerra del fracking*, Lonko Cristina Lincopan gives testimony of the resistance by the Mapuche community in the face of the advances of the oil company in Puelmapu; in *Tierra sublevada II: Oro negro*, José Fernández Pepino of the Unemployed Workers Union and his account of an initiative of popular fighters that resist oil-dependency; the inhabitants of Estación Patricios in Buenos Aires Province that claimed to "resist their own disappearance" (Solanas in *La próxima estación* 2008) and "recuperated" a space for a community theatre; in *Argentina latente*, the recuperated (by workers) company Industrias Metalúrgicas y Plásticas Argentina (IMPA) as a popular testimony of how to defend employment that also managed to articulate artistic activities and generate a "factory of ideas"; in *La dignidad de los nadies,* Lucy, "a woman from Winifreda [that] gave birth to hope" (Solanas' words in the film) by resisting her eviction from her mortgaged land and "infected" with her action other women in the same situation.

Other significant aspects are the rhetoric and the poetic character of the titles of his films, the reiterated letters to the spectators, and the dedications inscribed over a black background. A first point to start is *The Hour of the Furnaces* and his well-known quote of the verses by the Cuban politician, thinker, and writer José Martí. According to Getino, just as the project

was entering its final stage, a little before the assassination of Che in Bolivia, the directors agreed upon the title of the film "as an homage to a heading in his last message when Che resorted to the verses of José Martí to exclaim: 'is the hour of the furnaces and only the light will be seen'" (Getino 2011). While *The Hour of the Furnaces* was not accompanied by a letter to spectators (as the documentaries of the period 2004–13 systematically are) it is possible to think that the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* worked in a similar way.[14]

In relation to the titles of Solanas' recent films,[15] we highlight only some as examples: *Memoria del saqueo* (*Social Genocide*)[16] crystallizes the context of production as well as the systematic desecration of the patrimony of Argentina directed by the political and economic leadership that devastated the country and led to the social genocide of millions of Argentines. *La dignidad de los nadies* (*The Dignity of the Nobodies*) was also a powerful and controversial expression: as an indefinite pronoun, *nobody* denotes by definition the non-identity, the total absence, the non-existence. *Dignity,* on the other hand, is a quality of someone who makes himself worthy (someone who exists) and does not allow humiliation or degradation. Solanas, in this way, rescues all *nobodies* and by showing their negated identity, he *dignifies* them. In this way, members of pickets, small savers and producers, workers, teachers, and laborers are rescued from oblivion, valued and shown as great men and women who resist, from their exclusion, the ravages of the neoliberal model. *Argentina latente* (*Latent Argentina*) also carries a strong poetic force consequent with what the film is trying to narrate: the potential, the capacity, the wait for something to come. Thus, the spaces registered are factories, universities, and laboratories. The testimonies are from professionals, creative people, and researchers. Although the spaces and personal testimonies account for a system that has neglected them for years, a possibility still beats strong, the chance for Argentina to capitalize on the infrastructures and the human resources at its disposal.

The rhetoric intention of the titles is inscribed in the treatment that textual materials are given by Solanas in his work, from *The Hour of the Furnaces* to the documentaries under study. The use of black frames to separate and organize the content into chapters or the use of sequences or titles to separate sections is a recurrent motif. To narratives that included a great amount of information (no matter how redacted they are), it was necessary to oppose "constant [mechanisms] of continuity that gave stylistic unity." This is where all the graphism used by Solanas operated. They also functioned as homage to silent cinema, as Solanas declared (Solanas n.d.). The titles and intertitles also contribute to the process of essayistic writing and reading of these films, organizing the "evolution" of the images-sound-thought, making hypothesis explicit, providing evidence to the denunciations, interpellating the spectator. All this is reinforced by the use of a typography that does not change in style, color, size, or quality of its movement-animation with the exception of *La dignidad de los nadies.* In this film, it abandons the characteristic white and takes on color, stressing the permanence of a "thread" running through all his documentaries as if we were in the presence of a large and single text-film with different chapters structured, in its formal aspects, in a coherent and cohesive manner.

The detail (the homage), as well as the letters to spectators, the quotes from writers, politicians, and intellectuals, the titles that mention words by others, fragments from other films among other strategies, leads us to think finally, about the notion of palimpsest. *The Hour*

of the Furnaces sketches out a palimpsest: "a text superimposed on another without obscuring it completely but that is possible to see by transparency" (Genette 1989: 495). This monumental film, essay film, political collage can be seen as a hypertext that establishes multiple relations with other texts and also between its parts. Parts Two and Three are inserted in the preceding part(s), creating a relation that is not just a mere commentary.[17] In *The Hour of the Furnaces* hypertextuality becomes evident. It is highlighted by the directors in the initial intertitles when they account for some of the materials used: *Tire dié* (*Throw Us a Dime*) (Birri, 1960), *Mayoría absoluta* (*Absolute Majority*) (Hirszman, 1964), *El cielo y la tierra* (*The Threatening Sky*) (Ivens, 1965), *Faena* (*Work*) (Ríos, 1960), Grupo Teatro Frankenstein; when they quote and mention Aimé Césaire, Fanon, Sartre, San Martín, Hernández Arregui, Scalabrini Ortiz, Guevara, Perón, etc.; or when they clarify the precedence of the statistical information given (CGT, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO-ONU], Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo [BID], newspapers, and publications of the time). The insertion of these intertitles that precede the film (according to Genette's classification they would be hypotexts) generates a more complex "artifact" that is, in a way, related to the notion of collage, with the making "the new with the old." Thus, the film proposes, a constant circulation of texts not exhausted in the orbit of decisions taken by the directors. Furthermore, *The Hour of the Furnaces* also articulates a paratextual relation with its "readers" to the extent that it is an open film, dialogic, that orientates and defines the horizon of reception of the work. Given its strong connection to a political framework that contains it, this architextuality is one of the more prevailing relations in the film. However, these last two relations of textual transcendence are the ones that subsist to a lesser degree in Solanas' most recent work. Now, perhaps, it is possible to focus on the metatextuality that inhabits them, in the critical relation that binds each of these films (texts) together, without invoking them or explicitly naming then. A relation that is strengthened when identifying "sequences" (by theme for example) or dialectic progressions between films, for example: *Tierra sublevada. Parte I: Oro impuro, Tierra sublevada. Parte II: Oro negro,* and *La guerra del fracking; Memoria del saqueo, Argentina latente,* and *La dignidad de los nadies.* In these last films mentioned the "letters to the spectators" update the architextuality that *The Hour of the Furnaces* lays down through its character as an open film.[18]

"… and only the light will be seen"

We could affirm that we attempted a palimpsestuous[19] reading between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and the documentaries of the period 2004–13 directed by Fernando "Pino" Solanas. This relational reading between the 1968 film and the documentaries of the new millennium allows us to find the internal structures of each film and from there, them being porous structures, discover those aspects that function as communicating vessels between one text and the other(s). Therefore, we also identified the elements and processes when this does not happen and those in which it happens in an innovative way.

To delve into the theoretical, narrative, thematic, and aesthetic influences in each of the documentaries of the period 2004–13 in dialogue with *The Hour of the Furnaces* and with

the different context of production and exhibition in which they originated, gave us the chance to gain a better understanding of Solanas' work not only in its filmic aspects but also in its political facets. The attempted reading forced us to write and rewrite in a similar manner, finding answers to questions we had not formulated initially. We had to get rid of preconceptions that we thought were solid and revisit the filmic, literary, and political discourses in each of these documentaries, with the aim of finding out, in a first moment, continuities rather than discontinuities.

In this way, we found that the historical revisionism, and the organization of the discourse according to it, is an evident constant in Solanas' documentaries. He delved into the memory that resides in the oral transmission of history and, in this sense, dependency, decolonization, and liberation are the great themes that criss-cross and preserve their validity throughout his filmography. To a lesser extent, revolutionary violence, spontaneity, the role of the intellectual, and the dialogue between the national and the Latin American continue to stitch together the storyline of these films, although it is not anymore at the forefront. They are brought into the narrative to reinforce the problems tackled in each film of the period 2004–13 but they are not problematized in themselves.

In relation to the formal aspects, we discovered that some of the aspects of *The Hour of the Furnaces* that remain – reformulated to a greater or lesser degree – in the recent documentaries are: the use of archive material, testimonies, chapters, intertitles, and a similar typography; the inclusion of quotes, the character of the "unfinished" that each film has, the letters to spectators or the notes of intention (and consequently, the double enunciation of what is expressed), and the essayistic treatment. On the other hand, what loses potency is the agit-prop, the "urgent" character, the use of collage, and the possibility of reading these new documentaries as palimpsests. A reading that was possible and inevitable in *The Hour of the Furnaces* and, as we mention above, it was a constitutive element of the film (in its relation to other "texts," in its character as open film, in the "open spaces for dialogue" – *living* palimpsest). In practice, the recent documentaries are not established as texts over texts. The communicating links with other texts are less frequent and with it comes the weakening of the "ludic" infection that gave vigor to *The Hour of the Furnaces.* The essential game that allowed Solanas and Getino to recycle pre-existent structures to be used "incorrectly," to "take risks" in favor of counter-hegemony, revolution, and liberation, is almost completely lost in Solanas' recent works. As he moved forward, his aesthetic offering became more stable. Maybe this is why his new documentaries have enjoyed significantly lesser repercussions.

Moreover, it is also worth noting that the documentaries of the period 2004–13, made with the – economic – support of the National Institute of Film and Audiovisual Arts of Argentina (INCAA) (and in some cases in co-production with other countries) were screened commercially in national and international cinema chains but did not enjoy the same repercussion, nationally or internationally, that *The Hour of the Furnaces* enjoyed. Perhaps because they lack the taste of the "forbidden fruit," and because they did not shed light on issues that were rarely and fearfully spoken or perhaps because they do not "discover" the reality they denounced. The first three documentaries echo the voice of the people (and of the mass media that showed the ravages

of a crisis that was impossible to hide). The last four documentaries analyzed have constructed a counter-informative and counter-hegemonic discourse in close proximity with the political platform of the movement/party Solanas represents. The topics dealt with in these films (trains, energy, the environment) are those more commonly tackled in his political offerings.

The construction of a collective memory is a search that intersects Solanas' work. Toward the end of *Memoria del saqueo* he affirms: "Perhaps the feeling remains that reality cannot be changed […] but reality was different." The stories that resisted that feeling are the ones that have (pre)occupied his filmography. Memory as a fight for independence; as organization of the proletariat; as clandestine resistance; as democratic struggle; as spontaneous popular struggles or specific women's struggles; as working initiative; as soup kitchen or neighborhood assembly; as organized territory; as a picket, land occupation, or settlement; as demonstration or strike; as trade union fight, recovered factory, or pensioners' protest; as peasant women, student, or artist, "[…] the fight is a single one": as people.

As a last mention, it is worth highlighting that maybe what distinguishes, to a greater degree, Solanas' latest films from his productions in the 1960s and 1970s is his increased presence in the new films. He constitutes himself as another character, with a first person narration and clearly building bridges toward his role as people's representative and therefore toward his political and social trajectory.

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Notes

1 See Chapters 7 and 8, and the "Afterthoughts" in this book.
2 See Chapter 2 in this book.
3 *The Strategic Legacy of Juan Perón* will be left out of this analysis.
4 *Los hijos de Fierro* (*Sons of Fierro*) (1975); *El exilio de Gardel (Tangos)* (*Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*) (1985); *Sur* (*South*) (1988); *El viaje* (*The Voyage*) (1992); *La nube* (*The Cloud*) (1998).
5 *Afrodita, el sabor del amor* (*Aphrodite, The Taste of Love*) (2001).
6 See Chapter 6 in this book.
7 "Out with the lot of them!" was a chant that arose spontaneously during the popular protests that characterized the crisis of December 2001 in Argentina to express the crisis of representativity and demand the resignation en mass of political leaders. Polls and political analysis concluded that in those days, 70 per cent of the population supported the slogan "que se vayan todos" (Kollmann [2005]).
8 From http://www.cepal.org/prensa/noticias/comunicados/8/45168/tabla-pobreza-indigencia-18paises-es.pdf. Accessed June 28, 2018.
9 It is worth noting that until 2007 Solanas had a fairly close and empathetic relationship with Kirchnerism and, consequently, a new closeness to Peronism (from which he had distanced

himself during the "menemism" of the 1990s). This is easy to note in the first three documentaries of the twenty-first century. In these, the critique is aimed at the neoliberal policies implemented during the last military-civic dictatorship and intensified by the government of Carlos Menem and not so much toward the contemporary public policies. That is, although there is a look toward the present (condition *sine qua non* of all political cinema), the critique is aimed at the policies and the rulers that plundered Argentina during its history and its most recent past. Solanas founded Proyecto Sur (Project South) in 2002; the project supported the candidacy of Néstor Kirchner in 2003 (a year before the premiere of *Memoria del saqueo)* and maintained with him a sort of "flirtation" that ended in 2007 when Proyecto Sur, in alliance with el Authentic Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Movement, the Work and People party – Revolutionary Communist Party and the Buenos Aires for All Party (now Popular Union) formed the "Movimiento Proyecto Sur" to concur with the presidential election won by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. From then on, Solanas moved further and further away from "Kirchnerism," and this distance begins to become visible in his documentaries. Through them, he constructs even more solid critiques of governmental policies (paralyzation of the railways, the need to nationalize oil, marine, and mining resources, and the defense of the environment "as conditions to achieve real social justice and to guarantee national sovereignty") (Self-definition by Movimiento Proyecto Sur, http://infosur.info/quienes-somos/. Accessed October 7, 2016).

10 In May 1991, Solanas was shot in the legs by two unknown men three days after criticizing in a Buenos Aires' newspaper the then president, Carlos Saúl Menem, who denounced him on an accusation of falsehood and slandering. From that moment, Solanas "started" his political militancy (becoming a candidate in elections). In 1992 he was a candidate to the national senate for the city of Buenos Aires winning 7% of the vote. In 1993 he was elected legislator for the Frente Grande (Grand Front) and also member of the constituent assembly for the reform of the Argentine constitution in 1994. His participation in that party lasted only one year and he moved away due to differences with the leadership. In 1994, he proposed to broaden the Frente Grande to incorporate social referents (such as the bishop Jaime de Nevares) as candidates, gaining 17.6% in the province of Buenos Aires and ending ahead of the Unión Cívica Radical. In 2007 Solanas was candidate to the presidency of the Argentine republic for Proyecto Sur and achieved 1.6% of the votes. The nationalization of the oil and gas industries and of other mineral deposits was part of his electoral program. In 2009, Proyecto Sur entered the elections for legislators for the Federal Capital; he was head of the list and was elected legislator. In 2010 he was candidate to the presidency of the nation again and in 2011 he was candidate to first minister of the government of the city of Buenos Aires. In the general elections of 2003, he was elected senator with almost 28% of the vote. As a senator, he was behind a number of proposed bills to foster the economy of the regions, workers, and small entrepreneurs; pushed the creation of a committee to investigate the payment of the foreign debt, incorporating the payment of the internal debt; he introduced a package of bills called "zero hunger" to guarantee the universal access to food; another projected bill on national sovereignty of energy resources, the protection of native woodlands, and established for the first time a debate in the Senate on the rights of nature with an innovative bill written by him.

11 See Chapter 4 in this book.

12 In García López and Gómez Vaquero (2009), it is possible to find an extensive account of the history of collage, in general, and on documentary film, in particular.

13 See Chapter 5 in this book.

14 On the occasion of the re-release of the film in 1989, the directors wrote a letter where they summarized the reasons to show the documentary again, exposing also the reasons that led them to make the film two decades before:

> […] Today the democratic process is consolidated although, unfortunately, a good number of the problems denounced in the film are still current or are now so serious than those back then are a pale reflection. They are present as a mirror of inequality and injustice in an Argentina alien and subdued that still waits to realise its project "[…] for the happiness of the people and the glory of the nation." For all these reasons and for the knowledge of how those epic 19660s were is that we re-issue *The Hour of the Furnaces.*

This is a fragment of the letter to the spectators on the occasion of the re-releasing of the film in May 1989.

15 In all cases, Solanas writes letters to the spectators or notes of intent in which he includes questions and gives explanations: "[…] this film was born to add to the memory against oblivion, to reconstruct the history of one of the gravest times in Argentina inciting to denounce the causes that provoked the economic emptying and the social genocide […]" (*Memoria del saqueo);* "[…] With *La Dignidad…* I wanted to reveal the small victories and daily feats of the 'nobodies', alternative and solidary proposals that show how this world can be changed […]" (*La dignidad de los nadies);*

> […] Is the epic tale of 150 years of scientific and technological development that took the latent knowledge and knew how to deepen it. The history of our national industry, science and technology, is another of the heroic stories that showed that it was possible and it is possible. The film is dedicated "to the young scientists and workers ready to recuperate the Latent Argentina".
>
> (*Argentina latente*)

16 The film is known in English as *Social Genocide*. The direct translation of the Spanish title is *Memory of a Pillage* or *Memory of a Plunder* (translator's note).

17 See Chapter 12 in this book. Also see Chapter 3.

18 Palimpsests, metatextuality, architextuality, hypertextuality, and textual transcendence are concepts studied by Gérard Genette. For more, see Genette (1989).

19 In *Palimpsests,* Genette mentions this term as the "new adjective invented some time ago by Philippe Lejeune" (1989: 495).

Chapter 11

Experimenting with TV: *The Hour of the Furnaces* at the Crossroads of Cinematic Experimentalism and Video Art

Clara Garavelli

> One afternoon […] an acquaintance of Caldini took him to a church in Lomas de Zamora, where a semi-clandestine screening of *The Hour of the Furnaces* was organized. Pino Solanas' monumental plea of four hours embodied, for some critics, the synthesis of the "two avant-gardes" of the moment: The aesthetic and the political. In the midst of the surrounding militant euphoria, Caldini remained silent. The often brutal images of repression and misery, combined with the dramatic effect of publicity, were altered with signs in big white letters on a black screen which proffered political slogans. One of them sharply announced: "Every spectator is either a coward or a traitor." Caldini thought he was watching television.
>
> (Di Tella 2011: 62)[1]

In Andrés Di Tella's book *Hachazos* (*Axe Blows*) (2011) on Claudio Caldini, the Argentine documentarian and scholar recalls a conversation held with the pioneer experimental filmmaker with regards to the film *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Solanas and Getino, 1968). As can be appreciated in the epigraph, Caldini thought at the time that watching this film was "like watching TV." Unlike his contemporaries, who were flabbergasted by the film's editing and mixture of the varied nature of the film's sonoric and visual form, imbued with political radicalism, the iconic figure of the Argentine experimental film circuit of the 1960s and 1970s interpreted *The Hour*'s narrative development as inherently televised rather than cinematographic. Coming from one of the key representatives of the experimental film movement of those years, this statement brings to the fore the complexities of defining the essence of this pillar of Third Cinema primarily within the realm of film experimentalism and avant-gardism, as it has been the tendency in most of the writings to date.

The notions of "experimental" and "avant-garde" cinema tend to vary according to different cultural backgrounds. As many critics have explained, both terms – including also other related cases such as "underground," "marginal," or even "new" and "modern" – are historically determined (Sánchez-Biosca 2004: 13) and depend on a political stance taken within each field of study (Albera 2009: 13). In the Anglo-Saxon literature they were often treated as synonyms, giving privilege to the latter when referring to productions that were "new," "alternative," and "aesthetically different" in comparison with mainstream or classical films, regardless of the political connotations those productions may or may not have. This is not entirely the case in the bibliography found in Spanish-speaking academia, where the concept of "avant-garde" bore specific historical and political implications, while that of "experimental" was associated mostly with formal/aesthetic explorations.

In recent years, both terms have acquired more ambiguous connotations (Sánchez-Biosca 2004: 13; Albera 2009: 11–12), which granted them an a-historical meaning that expresses – although it does not precisely comply with – "originality," "non-conformity," and a certain "independence" from the industrial and/or institutionalized channels of production, distribution, and consumption.[2] This is mainly due to the exhaustion suffered by the overuse of the words, the constant absorption on the part of institutions of productions that aim to break with the status quo, and by the usage done by publicity of those discourses with a taste for rupture (Albera 2009: 14), all of which end up stripping these terms of their anti-systemic power.[3] In my own research on contemporary experimental Argentine videos, I arrived at the conclusion that the concept of "the experimental" is the one that should prevail today for its all-embracing capacity. Yet, it should be considered that it does not refer exclusively to works that break with tradition, or that are "new," unfinished, or amateur. Rather, its meaning is extended and generalized, because it can move from an exploration of the object in itself and the objectifiable, to the examination of the networks that give rise to it, or in which it situates itself, and which, at the same time, give it its position. Hence, conceptualizing the experimental in this polyphonic way requires that we analyze works not only in their formal aspects, but also as inseparable from – and even inherent to – the channels of production, distribution, and consumption. In other words, the term "experimental" implies a questioning of the processes that give visibility to audio-visual creations (Garavelli 2014: 19).[4]

Accordingly, in this chapter I propose to read Solanas and Getino's film through this more contemporary conception of the experimental, although bearing in mind the historical particularities that associated this film with other analogous terminologies. In this vein, Robert Stam's seminal essay on *The Hour of the Furnaces* presents a crucial theoretical framework. It begins by questioning the existence of "two avant-gardes" when the author declared that:

> If there are two avant-gardes – the formal and the theoretico-political – then *La hora de los hornos* (*Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968) surely marks one of the high points of their convergence. Fusing Third World radicalism with artistic innovation, the Solanas-Getino film revives the historical sense of avant-garde as connoting political as well as cultural militancy.
>
> (1990: 251)

By fusing together artistic innovation with political militancy – one that was openly against *auteur* productions, the national intellectual elite, and the coetaneous groundbreaking artistic responses – Stam unwittingly reaffirms the need for a new conceptual approach to the film that goes beyond the scope of the "avant-garde." He then goes on to state: "while reawakening the military metaphor dormant in 'avant-garde', *The Hour* also literalizes the notion of the 'underground'" (1990: 253), for its clandestine/marginal mode of production, distribution, and visualization. This notion of the "underground" adds an extra layer of

complexity to both terms under review, since specialized press and researchers tended to categorize – in spite of their differences – the "experimental" and "contestatory" cinemas as "underground" (Wolkowicz 2015: 46). However, as the Argentine scholar Paula Wolkowicz explained, despite their rejection of commercial cinema and its traditional mechanisms, the two groups associated with those terms in Argentina at the time moved in different circuits and seldom converged (2015: 47) – which is evident in Caldini's perception of *The Hour* as not "properly" within film experimentalism, his area of action and expertise.[5]

The concepts mentioned in Stam's text are not the only ones that are commonly used with reference to this film that question its location within the realm of cinematic experimentalism. The filmmakers themselves coined the term "Third Cinema" as opposed to the "first"/commercial – i.e., Hollywood – and the "second"/*auteur* – mainly European – cinema, creating a new category that subtly moves away from the experimental and avant-garde.[6] Moreover, according to the Argentine film scholar David Oubiña, "the disparity between political and experimental, as opposed to commercial, cinema can be summed up by the fact that whereas the first offered *a different mission for cinema*, the second presented itself as *a different cinema*" (2010: 36). When analyzing the productions of those years, he continued:

> The pursuits of experimental cinema did not point toward a new type of representation, but rather called into question the very foundations upon which the mechanism of cinema, in a narrative sense, had been built. The term *Cuarto*, or Fourth, Cinema even came to be used to describe experimental film as an autonomous space and to differentiate it from the alternative proposed by political cinema.
>
> (2010: 37–38, original emphasis)

Oubiña's concept of Fourth Cinema was inspired by another key Argentine experimental filmmaker of the 1960s–70s, Silvestre Byrón, who belonged to the Goethe Group together with Caldini.[7] Although acute in the delineation of the nuances that separate the so-called "political" cinema from the "experimental," this definition fails to acknowledge the theorizations that defined the experimental as the essence of cinema itself. In this respect, the experimental would point not just to the questioning of the foundations of narrative cinema, but to the actual consolidation of foundations in the first place – a stance that is also political and that endeavors as well toward a "different mission for cinema."

As mentioned briefly above, Solanas and Getino's film paved the way toward Third Cinema Theory and practice and problematized the notion of experimental and avant-garde cinema. The Latin American Film "movement" that experienced its heyday in the 1960s – of which *The Hour* is a prime example – was imbued with the countercultural, experimental, and socio-political radicalism of that decade.[8] This is also the case for Video Art, which was developed during this period. Following the premises of Guy Debord's "society of spectacle" (1967) and Marshall McLuhan's famous premise "the medium is the message" (1967), video artists aimed to challenge the artistic establishment while carrying out an act of social

criticism toward the mass-mediatization of culture and the passivity effect on spectators of broadcast television – acts that were also the objective of *The Hour*.

Accordingly, this chapter will explore the intrinsic relationship between the film and its counterparts in the art world, with the aim of reflecting on the synergies that exist among two distinct fields of study that have marked a decade in Latin American culture and history, but that have run parallel to each other in spite of their mutual concerns. By doing so, it aspires to provide a renewed perspective that situates this film for the first time at the crossroads of cinematic experimentalism and Video Art, one that will contribute to a better comprehension of this era. In this sense, this chapter will follow the steps of scholars who questioned the traditional assumption that *The Hour* was an "entirely unprecedented filmic achievement" (such as Podalsky 2004: 210), but on this occasion it will focus on the film's engagement with coexisting productions and debates taking place within the arts with regards to the popularization of television and its effect at a mass scale.

"Shedding the utopian moment": "VT is not TV"

"VT ≠ TV" was the acronym written in 1977 at the entrance of *documenta*'s[9] video library, which insinuated that the video tape was not equal to television. As media scholar Valentina Valentini (2010: 10) explained, this statement signaled the awareness of the existence of an independent artistic domain that used the technology that captured electrical signals and transformed them into visual images, but which remained separated from – and even against – the commercial television infrastructure that it generated; this domain received the name of Video Art.

The emergence of video as a medium of artistic expression in the early 1960s responded not only to the development of new technological devices but also to the counter-cultural imperatives of the time (Elwes 2005: 2). Many art historians have also pointed out that Video Art precedes the actual use of video technology by artists and traced the origin of this art form to works that were actually created in film, such as the seminal work by Wolf Vostell *Sun in your Head* (1963), which consists of single-frame sequences of images taken from a TV set that suffer periodic distortions while captured with a 16mm and Super 8 camera. Accordingly, Video Art originated as a conceptual artistic form that had a love–hate relationship with television and its mass-mediatization of culture and everyday life.[10]

When analyzing the early period of development of Video Art as a "utopian moment," Martha Rosler explained that "video posed a challenge to the sites of art production in society, to the forms and 'channels' of delivery, and to the passivity of reception built into them" (1990: 31). Albeit in a different field of action than the "sites of art," this was precisely the aim of the militant cinema of the time in Latin America, and *The Hour* is the epitome of that. The film pointed to a different mode of production, challenging the system in place in the commercial film industry. In this respect, the Spanish scholar Vicente Sánchez-Biosca explained that

> *The Hour of the Furnaces* does not define itself as a single-author film, nor as an embodiment of a personal world; it is, on the contrary, a collective work. Solanas and Getino participate in the film as political leaders, but also Edgardo Pallero and Gerardo Vallejo take part and, most importantly, dozens of workers, intellectuals, left-wing militants and trade unionists.
>
> (2004: 244)[11]

Relatedly, this mode of production was incorporated in those years by other "militant" filmmakers, such as the group Realizadores de Mayo – connected to some members of Cine Liberación (Mestman 2008) – or Grupo Cine de la Base, which was associated with Raymundo Gleyzer and the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT-ERP). This collective way of working, as Rosler suggested, took place as well among many video artists around the world. A notable example of this is the Guerrilla Television, formed by several groups of North American artists/activists that aimed to create "people's television" (Boyle 1992: 67). In Argentina, one of the first artworks to include electronic images and, thus, to be linked to Video Art, was *La menesunda* (1965), which was an installation created not only by Marta Minujín and Rubén Santantonin, but also by the mutual collaboration of several artists who contributed to the project at the famous Instituto Di Tella (Alonso 2005).

Notwithstanding their mutual interest in community work and counter-cultural practices, it seems that Cine Liberación only acknowledged the work of the first Argentine video artists in a negative way, in their open rejection of the activities held at the Instituto Di Tella.[12] From its foundation in 1958, this institute was the bastion of avant-garde artists in Argentina. It was there where the first actions recognized as belonging to the realm of Video Art took place, such as the previously mentioned *La menesunda*, *simultaneidad en simultaneidad* (Minujín 1966) – an artistic event inspired by Marshall McLuhan's theories that involved the recording and ultimate visualization of the participants' own images on a TV set – or David Lamelas's classic *Situación de tiempo* (1967), which consisted of several TV sets lighting and sounding a room with their distorted sounds and images (Alonso 2005).[13]

All these works that consolidated video's independent artistic domain in Argentina were tightly knitted to the Instituto Di Tella, and that venue was precisely the object of Solanas and Getino's main critique of the local artistic establishment in the film. Toward the end of *The Hour*'s Part One, there is a distinctive sequence that starts with the intertitles: "Artists and intellectuals are integrated into the system," followed by the flashing of single-word signposts that bring to the audience the idea that "[v]iolence, crime, destruction, go on to become peace, order, normality," suggesting that the national culture and its artists and intellectuals are subdued and neocolonized, and, thus, they are the spreading cancer of the foreign conquest that has to be eradicated in order to be "liberated" from oppression – *The Hour*'s ultimate goal, as seen in the opening sequence.[14] In order to illustrate this idea, a shot of the entrance of the Instituto Di Tella on an opening evening is included right after these words, accompanied by a subjective travelling-shot that mingles with the participants of a performance that is taking place in the form of a ludic party, implying the institute's

superficial approach to reality that switches "violence" to "normality." On this criticism it is pertinent to call attention again to Sánchez-Biosca's words:

> The Latin American filmmakers subdued the author to the collective and, to be more precise, to its leading avant-garde, although not forgetting the formal endeavour, but rejecting an artist that would re-create a personal world that was considered an expression of the *petit-bourgeois deviationisms*.
>
> (Sánchez-Biosca 2004: 238, original emphasis)[15]

These words echo those of Robert Stam's essay when he affirmed that "*La Hora* eludes what it sees as the vacuity of a certain avant-garde by politicizing what might have been purely formalistic exercises" (1990: 261). In this regard, it is pertinent to question where the limits of the "petit-bourgeois" superfluous contestation end and where the "accepted" counter-cultural activities begin, as the boundaries appear to fluctuate in both cases under review according to subjective personal interests and political alliances.

Despite the fact that in *The Hour of the Furnaces* we perceive everything happening at the Instituto Di Tella as an aberration to the true revolutionary spirit, one of the pioneer Argentine video-artists, Margarita Paksa, explained that toward the end of the 1960s the art practice was in crisis and artists moved from one site to another. Thus, projects like *Tucumán Arde* emerged, in which, as part of the activities, Paksa herself, who had a few exhibitions at the Instituto Di Tella, included a showing of *The Hour of the Furnaces* with the filmmakers' permission (Longoni and Mestman 2008: 205, 369–76), proving the ambiguous relationship between the film and the local artists – ambiguity that was also highlighted by Stam when decrying that the film betrays a cultivated familiarity with the entire spectrum of highbrow culture that the filmmakers so vehemently denigrate (1990: 261). Curiously, even though they remained apart at the time, both these kinds of collective Video Art productions and the militant cinema of those years served as the main influences/antecedents of the video-activist groups that emerged in the early twenty-first century in response to the economic and institutional collapse of December 2001 in Argentina (see Chapter 10 in this book).[16] This current convergence demonstrates how these conflicting practices had common ideas on how the artistic process should be done in order to tackle mainstream and institutionalized artistic forms.

This mode of production analyzed is also intimately connected to the love–hate relationship that Video Art established with television in its inception. When re-examining the origin of this art form, John Hanhardt said, in tune with *documenta*'s acronym, that "[…] artists working with video in the early 1960s were engaged in a utopian impulse to refashion television into a dialogue of visual and auditory experiences that would allow them to reconstitute themselves as an ever-renewing community of artists" (1991: 73). Using examples from the Fluxus movement in the United States, the American art historian analyzed the techniques of collage and *dé-collage* as inherent strategies of Video Art, particularly the overlapping of media technology that highlights the materiality of consumer

culture (1991: 73). Such overlapping reminds us as well of several sequences and techniques employed in *The Hour*.

Even though their actions ran parallel to each other, both video artists and the members of Grupo Cine Liberación[17] operated under – or, rather, against – the aegis of the effects mass media and the advertising industry had on society. Since the first public television broadcast took place in Argentina on the Peronist "loyalty day" on October 17, 1951, the technological enchantment of transmitting images from a distance, praised by only a few, became a popular object sought-after by the masses. In her analysis of the origin of television in Argentina, Mirta Varela called this period that goes from 1960 to 1969 "the second decade," because a passage from the TV set to what is known as "television" – in other words, to the creation of a mass communication medium, a spectacle, an audience, a language – took place (Varela 2005: 14–16). The advent of this new urban way of spending free time was worshipped by those who saw it as a modern way of life, in harmony with the most progressive societies. However, at the same time, it was heavily criticized for its power to commodify the everyday and subjugate the masses. As Rosler commented:

> Television was like an animated mass magazine and more. As commentators from Dwight Macdonald and Marshall McLuhan to Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard have observed, the totalizing, ever-whirling and – spinning microcosm of television supplanted the more ambiguous experience of the real world.
>
> (1990: 40)

These discourses that denounced the capability of television to put a veil on reality and shape our world-views were translated by video artists and militant filmmakers into provocative media juxtapositions and effects of estrangement operated on television's language and apparatus – operations that, ironically, were created by television itself and, more precisely, by the advertising industry, which flourished in those years with the impulse of the new media at hand. Regarding this boom of the advertising industry, Laura Podalsky specified that "the growth of television from 850,000 TV sets in Argentina around 1961–62 to 2,480,000 in 1967–68 clearly contributed to the expansion of the industry as advertising pesos spent on TV increased rapidly" (2004: 215). She continued asserting that "the particular brilliance of *La hora*'s critique emerges from the way the film uses the techniques of advertising against itself to denounce commodity fetishism" (2004: 222). And she gave as a clear example the sequence of the slaughterhouse that takes place in Part One. Stam made a similar remark when he referred to the "Models" sequence of that same part, where "the most cherished monuments of Western culture are implicitly equated with the commercialized fetishes of consumer society. [Accordingly], the pretended 'universality' of European culture is exposed as a myth masking the fact of domination" (1990: 261).

As previously mentioned, John Hanhardt explored these techniques employed in *The Hour of the Furnaces* in different renowned video artists, such as Wolf Vostell and Nam June Paik, and described those techniques mainly as collage and *dé-collage*. At the beginning of

this section, one of Vostell's works was introduced to explain how Video Art was created as a conceptual art form that goes beyond the medium used. The same piece, *Sun in your Head* (Vostell 1963), which is one of the foundational pieces of Video Art, serves also as a perfect example of this re-use of various media images to reveal television's violent spreading of neocolonial structures.[18] In Hanhardt's words, "Vostell articulated a powerful critique of the medium as ideology, seeking to undermine the political assumptions of social discourse and the commodity definitions of high-art culture" (1991: 76–77), which brings Vostell's work closer to Solanas and Getino's film. Notably, Vostell's video included as part of the televised-intervened images – intervention that he defined himself as *dé-collage* – a sequence of the Plaza de Mayo square seized by Peronist supporters, precisely at a time when Peronism was proscribed in Argentina. Accordingly, it can be inferred from this video's content that Vostell's intention to subvert the institution of television and expose its co-optive power by removing it from its usual setting and by manipulating the formal qualities of electromagnetic images (Hanhardt 1991: 72) faced similar demons of censorship as *The Hour* when it came to bringing it closer to the Argentine audience.

Regarding the form and content of the videos produced at national level, unlike the development of this artistic domain that Hanhardt examined in the United States and Europe, there is scarce production during this decade. Video Art was slowly starting, so single-channel videos were created mostly toward the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, when the appropriate technology became available in the country. Nonetheless, an early example that can be located in the same period of *The Hour* is Jaime Davidovich, an Argentine artist living in the United States, who produced in those years his series called *tape projects* (1968–75). The videos of this series followed a technique comparable to that of Vostell's piece, in the sense that the artist adopted the image of TVs whose reception had been distorted, and applied cello tape on the screen of the apparatus in a performative way in order to negate the image's existence. In his analysis of this work, Rodrigo Alonso stated that "Davidovich choses an analytical route that enquires into the specificity of the medium, into its properties and aesthetic limitations, into its formal possibilities and its conceptual implications, into its visibility and its semantic diversions" (2010: 29). Hence, paraphrasing Hanhardt on Vostell, we can also affirm that Davidovich's work takes "art out of the art world in order to help us understand the real function of television within society" (1991: 77).

It is actually in the 1980s, when the so-called "video-artist generation" was consolidated (Alonso and Taquini 1999: 16–17), where we find more Video Art pieces in the country that employed resembling aesthetic techniques such as *The Hour*'s violent juxtaposition of images taken from multiple media sources. A paradigmatic example of the use of television's own language to parody, as Podalsky stated for the use of advertising in *The Hour*, "the triviality of mass media and its devastating power to distract from 'reality'" (2004: 222), is *The Man of the Week* (Hermida and Olmi, 1988). Applying typical procedures of false documentaries and following the narrative line of several testimonial TV shows of the time, the video humorously questions, alongside its counterparts in the United States and Europe, television's economic and ideological power. Another later iconic example of this

multi-layer media aesthetic is from the artist quoted in the epigraph, Andrés Di Tella, who started his audio-visual career as a video artist at the beginning of the 1990s before moving into filmmaking. Together with Diego Lascano they created *Reconstruyen crimen de la modelo* (1990), in which they deconstruct television's language, by altering the time, space, sound, and what is understood as true or false (Alonso and Taquini 1999: 24) of a news report on the murder crime of a model – thus, exposing the artificiality of television's discourse and its alienating effect.

Referring back again to Martha Rosler's remark on Video Art, we can also trace similarities between video's "utopian moment" and *The Hour* in the fact that it was shown clandestinely; hence, the so-called "channels of delivery" mentioned by Rosler were also put into question by both this film and video artworks. The former had to do so in a clandestine way because of the oppression of a dictatorship that forbade any reference to Peronism or left-wing ideologies.[19] However, the latter ones, besides the repression of the time, challenged those channels of delivery by removing themselves willingly from the institutionalized circuits and, as Rosler specified, by attempting to "redefine the system […] by merging art with social life and making audience and producer interchangeable" (1990: 31). Moreover, as these last words suggest, the way of operating that delivery aimed to tackle as well the passivity of reception: in the case of *The Hour*, by stopping the projection to allow the audience to discuss and to have an effect on the film's outcome – the famous *film acto* analyzed by many scholars and defined by Solanas and Getino (1969) in their manifesto. Alternatively, for video artists the attack on passivity was achieved via the active inclusion of the audience in the process of deconstruction of media effects – either through the creation of performative interactions with TV sets and live recording and broadcasting of the public's own images, or by altering the formal qualities of the televised image and sound, causing an estrangement reaction.[20]

On a different note, Stam asserts that the film "prolongs the work of Eisenstein, Vertov, Joris Ivens, Glauber Rocha, Fernando Birri, Resnais, Buñuel, and Godard" (1990: 253). However, he failed to properly acknowledge the influence of TV and the mass-mediatization of culture. Indeed, he clarifies that the film weaves TV commercials and advertising, but it actually should go beyond that initial analysis and highlight as another clear source of inspiration those productions and visual artists that arose in this decade with the spreading of electronic technology and mass-telecommunications. Therefore, it should be stated as well that the film "prolongs" the work of Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, David Lamelas, or Jaime Davidovich, to name some of the key names of this period, who embraced the anti-establishment spirit that the emerging artistic domain of Video Art had in the 1960s and 1970s.[21] In this vein, according to Stam, *The Hour* also "voices the concerns of a mass movement" (1990: 264), and indicates that:

> By allying itself with a concrete movement, which however "impure" has at least the virtue of being real, it practices a cinematic politics of "dirty hands". If its politics are at times populist, its filmic strategies are not. It assumes that the mass of people are quite

> capable of grasping the exact meaning of an association of images or of a sound montage: that it is ready, in short, for linguistic experimentation. It respects the people by offering quality, proposing a cinema which is simultaneously a tool for consciousness-raising, an instrument for analysis, and a catalyst for action.
>
> (1990: 264–65)

This statement also points to, although it is not really acknowledged, the power that television had on the masses. If "the people" were capable of grasping the meaning of those juxtapositions it was precisely because they became accustomed to a particular language learnt from the television. The politics could not have been entirely "populist," as Stam noted, but the strategies were "popular" at the time, and a great deal of that is due to the effect of television and advertising.

Constanza Burucúa also challenges Stam's notion when she declared that:

> what it is difficult to understand is the idea of *La hora de los hornos* being populist and theoretico-politically avangardist at the same time, or in other words, either the film gets its "hands dirty," or it is a utopian text.
>
> (2008: 62)

As seen in the previous study, it is both – and we can even suggest that it is more "utopian" for this inclusion within the contested origin of Video Art. This ambiguity is an aspect that was also pointed out by Craig Epplin when analyzing how the film's sound delineates spaces of resistance. In his words: "The sound of the machine gun coupled to the ammunition of images from popular culture shows how multinational capitalism relies not only on mass communication but directly on napalm as well" (2014: 38). This is why, as demonstrated, both *The Hour* and the video artists of this period attempted to tackle not only the manipulation of mass communication by multinational capitalism, but also the reality that this capital generated. How they did so fluctuated between fields of study, between the artistic, cinematographic, and mass communication domains. This fluctuation was intimately connected to how television and its audience were rendered conscious of their function in society, in this case: at the crossroads of cinematic experimentalism and Video Art.

"The revolution will (not) be televised"

As a way of conclusion, this last subheading, which is a well-known 1960s popular slogan of the Black Power movements in the United States, alludes to the reticent feeling against television on the part of many experimental filmmakers and even on the part of Solanas and Getino themselves. Nonetheless, as this chapter aimed to demonstrate, the power and language of television was used to subvert its assumed unidirectionality and challenge the effects of the transnational capital in the local spheres. As the French media scholar Jean

Paul Fargier (2010) stated, "Video Art was used as television's self-consciousness." As previously argued, this is also the same usage that *The Hour* made of this medium. Hence, the revolution might "not be televised" in broadcast television in the 1960s, but it was inherently "televisual" according to these artists and filmmakers' works.

As can be perceived from the various works that comprise this compilation, *The Hour of the Furnaces* received multiple categorizations over time. Besides the abovementioned "experimental" and "avant-garde" cinema, other recurrent denominations include "political" or "militant" cinema, "underground," "subversive," "essay film," etc. However, its relationship with Video Art was never really explored. It is widely known that Solanas and Getino's film sparked an overwhelming amount of research and literature that spans from film studies, to sociology, anthropology, politics, art history, among others. On its 50th anniversary it seems pertinent to explore a relationship that was not fully grasped on that array of written work on the topic; namely, its connection to television, to the mass-mediatization of culture, and to the art form that embraced all those aspects at the time: Video Art. Along these lines, this work attempted to shed new light on both Video Art's "utopian moment" and militant cinema's scope, in order to provide a new perspective on a period of upheaval in Latin America and worldwide.

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Notes

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2 These terms associated with "experimental" and "avant-garde" productions have been challenged over the years. A well-known critique on the idea of "originality" is Rosalind Krauss' book (1984).

3 In his history of experimental film and video, the British scholar A. L. Rees said that the "avant-garde has traded under many other names: experimental, absolute, pure, non-narrative, underground, expanded, abstract; none of them satisfactory or generally accepted. This lack of agreement points to inherent differences and even conflicts within the avant-garde […]" (1999: 2).

4 This conceptualization of the experimental was, to a certain extent, at a gestational stage at the beginning of the 1970s, as can be inferred from Amos Vogel's breakthrough book ([1974] 2005), which defined productions like *The Hour* as "subversive art." In his final conclusions, he moved away from an analysis of form and content that dominated the volume, "towards a new consciousness" of these works that was achieved by exploring the channels of distribution and consumption as well.

5 We can even mention the existence of "three" different groups associated with these terms in Argentina in the 1960s: the so-called "experimental," formed by Caldini, Byrón, Hirsch, Alemann, Vallereggio, etc.; the "political/militant," constituted by groups such as Solanas and Getino's *Cine Liberación* or Raymundo Gleyzer's *Cine de la Base*, among others; and the "underground," consisting of Fischerman, Ludueña, Kamin, Kleinman, Cozarinsky, etc. – for more information on this latter group, see Wolkowicz (2015). For further details on these different groups, see also Oubiña (2016).

6 The idea of "Third Cinema" was developed in Solanas and Getino's manifesto written in 1969 entitled *Towards a Third Cinema*. As Mestman (2008) explained, it is in a later version of 1971 called "Cine militante: una categoría interna del Tercer Cine" ("Militant Cinema: An internal category of Third Cinema") when they took a step further and specified the need to connect militant cinema to the revolutionary political forces.

7 For more information on the Goethe Group, their activities, artists and productions, see Denegri (2012). On Silvestre Byrón's work, refer to Guzmán Cerdio (2015).

8 The 1960s decade is understood in the following chapter not in its calendar/natural years but, as Mariano Mestman (2016) pointed out when reviewing the "ruptures" of 1968 in Latin American Cinema, as following a periodization that goes from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, taking into consideration several historical events that marked what we could call an "extended" decade of socio-political and aesthetic radicalization around the world, sparked by the Cuban Revolution and the May 1968 protests in France, among others.

9 *documenta* is one of the most famous art exhibitions in the world that has been taking place in Kassel, Germany, since 1955.

10 A further analysis on this relationship in contemporary Argentine video, focusing mainly on the appropriated material reused by artists, can be read in Garavelli (2015).

11 The original quote in Spanish reads as follows: "*La hora de los hornos* no se propone como una película de autor único, menos aún como la encarnación de un mundo personal; es, por el contrario, una obra colectiva, grupal. En ella intervienen, como dirigentes, Solanas y Getino, pero también participan Edgardo Pallero y Gerardo Vallejo y, lo que es más importante, multitud de obreros, intelectuales, militantes de izquierda y sindicalistas" – my own translation.

12 On the complex relationship between *The Hour* and the activities at the Di Tella Institute, read Oubiña (2016).

13 On David Lamelas work, refer to Katzenstein (2006).

14 See Chapter 1 in this book.

15 The original quote in Spanish reads as follows: "[…] los cineastas latinoamericanos sometieron al autor a la colectividad y, más concretamente, a su vanguardia dirigente, sin por ello olvidar la aventura formal, pero rechazando un artista que recreara un mundo personal que se consideraba expresión de los *desviacionismos pequeño-burgueses*" – my own translation.

16 On the concept of video-activism and the groups that emerged at the beginning of the new millennium in Argentina, refer to Sel (2007), Bustos (2006), or Garavelli (2014), among many others.

17 Founded by Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, and Gerardo Vallejo.

18 For an in-depth analysis of this video's use of media materials, refer to Garavelli (2015).
19 See Chapter 7 in this book.
20 See Chapter 4 in this book.
21 It has to be said that Jean-Luc Godard, who was mentioned by Stam, started working with video and television in the early 1970s, particularly with the creation of Sonimage laboratory (Valentini 2010: 11). So we can understand this reference as a borderline case between the different fields of action under review. Refer to Godard and Solanas' (1969) interview for further details on this relationship.

Chapter 12

The Hour of the Furnaces as an Essay Film

Humberto Pérez-Blanco

> Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.
>
> (Bacon 1597)

Over the last 30 years or so, the notion of the essay film is one of the most used and debated in film theory. Even those who have studied the topic at length, like Timothy Corrigan or Laura Rascaroli, acknowledge the difficulty of pinning down a precise definition, a specific set of characteristics that define the essay film and differentiate it from other forms of non-fiction film. In some cases, following a common path in film theory, the essay film is presented as closely following its literary counterpart (both Corrigan and Català use Montaigne in the title of their books). Others, like Rascaroli or Provitina, search for a more specifically cinematic account of the essay film without denying the usefulness of the literary model. In all cases, the essay film is incorporated within a wider category, the non-fiction film, where, more or less explicitly and lurking in the background, is a very narrow – and perhaps anachronistic – conception of documentary as a form that aims for objectivity and illustrates, illuminates and informs the audience on a specific issue following an expository mode of address.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine at length the notion of the essay film, its pertinence and characteristics. For this reason, the next section will provide a necessarily brief and schematic account of some of the key characteristics that are more often associated with the essay film, its origins and evolution. The main body of the chapter will focus on an analysis of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Solanas and Getino, 1968) highlighting those characteristics that bring it close to the concept of the essay film. The objective is not to assert a fixed position that defines the Argentine film as an essay film but to incite the viewer/reader to think and dialogue with the film in a different way (see Chapter 8 in this volume). The flexibility, self-reflexivity, and fragmentation associated with the essay film, when applied to *The Hour of the Furnaces*, allows perceiving the work as less dogmatic, inflexible and uni-directional than many conventional accounts of the film suggest.

The utopia of the exact language

I am borrowing this sentence from Provitina (*La mirada que piensa* [2014]) who uses it in the section of his book occupied with describing the attempts at defining the essay film. The exact phrase in Spanish is: "la utopía del lenguage justo". The slippery nature of the essay film, a form

that mutates, changes, and metamorphoses almost with each new film, makes it very difficult to define: Català titles a section of his book (*Estética del ensayo* [2014]) "the impossible definition of the essay film", while Provitina considers the enterprise almost utopian (2014: 68), and Rascaroli writes that the essayistic experience is "hazy and difficult to locate" (2009: 1). And yet

> a variety of definitions and descriptions of the essay film have circulated in recent years, including those in the important work of Nora Alter, Paul Arthur, Laura Rascaroli, and Michael Renov. […][M] any of these positions foreground the role of the subjective voice or perspective in these films: some the mixing and matching of styles, genres and aesthetic materials and still others a documentary heritage refashioned through a contemporary reflexivity on the epistemological assumptions of that heritage.
>
> (Corrigan 2011: 30)

To make matters more confusing, for some, like Lebow, the essay film is a form of first person documentary (in its articulation of the position of the filmmaker). For others, it is a specific genre and for authors like Chanan, it is simply a documentary. However, one of the most common positions is the one that locates the essay film as different (even opposed to documentary). At best, some like Provitina locate the essay film, together with documentary, within the even looser category of the non-fiction film (2014: 81). Corrigan implies the essay film is different from a documentary because the essay film often takes the look of documentary (2011: 4), while Papazian and Eades make explicit that the essay film is clearly "distinct from both narrative and documentary filmmaking" (2016: 1).

At the core of these positions lies, as mentioned above, a problematic understanding of documentary. The explicit inclusion of the subjective element in the essay film appears to separate it from the documentary but this is not the case. For Chanan, documentary is "a highly permissive form" (2012: 27). Documentaries are documentaries because of the way they bring about the concreteness of the historical document, but in all cases this is done through the filmmaker's subjectivity. Both objectivity and subjectivity are in operation here, what tends to happen when discussing the essay film is a wrong perception of documentary: "documentary is misconstrued when objectivity and subjectivity are opposed […] the voice [in documentary] is individual, even subjective, the film is the objective rendering of what it tells" (Chanan 2012: 27). What the essay film does is to highlight and bring to the front the subject present in all documentary films. As Michael Renov has famously put it, "the subject *in* documentary has, to a surprising degree, become the subject *of* documentary." (2004: xxiv, original emphasis). As it will be shown below, *The Hour of the Furnaces* makes explicit the ideological position of the filmmakers. This is fundamental for the film and for all essay films and other forms of first-person documentary. By making explicit their own subjective interpretation, the filmmakers present us with *a* truth, never to be confused with *the* truth and thus, implicitly open a space for the audience to question the film's arguments. And from

this point, any consideration of the film as dogmatic or propagandistic is highly debatable.

This shift that Renov, at the time of writing, considered surprising has been coming for some time and has, arguably, become the most popular form of the non-fiction film in recent times. The essay film appears to be the perfect form to think about our contemporary world. The turn to the subjective is crucial to understand the contemporary relevance of the essay film and other forms of first person film. Robert Stam points out that for Lyotard, "the essay genre is the quintessential and aesthetically liberating form of postmodern thought" (2015: 215). This position is shared by Josep Maria Català for whom the essay occupies and essential and necessary space in our times (2014: 23). The loss of grand-narratives, of all certainties saw, from the late 1960s and early 1970s, a turn to the subjective and to identity politics where totalizing truths and ideas are to be mistrusted. From here, fragmentation, openness, and the subjective experience as entry point to articulate the world become the characteristics of our time, the essay (and the essay film), characterized by the same fragmentation, openness and highlighting of the subjective, appears as the most adequate form (see for example Rascaroli 2009: 4). In our fragmented world, the ethical stand the essay film takes becomes the explanation for its success because it "establish[es] each time the ground rules of its own coming into being, and of its relationship with both subjectivity and with the world […] This constant re-establishing of its own conditions is a deeply moral gesture" (Rascaroli 2016: 300). As the following section will try to demonstrate, the subjective elements in *The Hour of the Furnaces,* together with its self-reflexive elements and its character as a film that "thinks," advances the film towards the moral gesture noted by Rascaroli.

This ethical stance of the essay film is closely associated to a different form of doing politics. The essayist filmmaker is not a producer of expressions but "the product of changing experiential expressions" (Corrigan 2011: 31). This is expressed in many essay films by the subject taking on a number of different positions, and different subjectivities (see Garavelli in this volume). This subversion of coherent subjectivities "may not always be an easily decipherable and clear politics but is, perhaps always, a politics whose core is ideological instability" (Corrigan 2011: 33). Again, instability, lack of closure and fragmentation are the key characteristics of the essay film. The expression of ideas originating from everyday life experiences filtered through the subjective gives the essay its character. Georg Lukács wrote of the essay as "thoughts occasioned by…" but at the same time, the "essayist must now become conscious of his own self" (2017: 37). These ideas imply a looser form and a lack of a rigid structure. But, these appreciations have reduced the essay to the category of a minor genre (in the Deleuzian sense). The consideration of the essay as a lower form is criticized by Adorno in "The essay as form." "The essay's character as speculation, its lack of universal and enduring claims relegates it to the margins. The essay generates resistance because 'it evokes intellectual freedom'" (1991: 3). In a similar vein, Robert Stam notes how the essay film can be seen as a double minor: for being a documentary, lesser form of filmmaking, and for being the filmic counterpart of a minor literary genre, the essay (2015: 215).

The essay film may not offer certainties but it does deal with ideas. This conception appears in Català's book, in Godard ("a form that thinks" in *Histoires du Cinéma* [1998]), and in Corrigan ("it elicits, if not demands, thought" [2011: 33]) among others. For his part, Provitina seems to echo Lukács' quote included above about a loose engaging with a particular topic: the essay film is about the "willingness to think about a theme and to subject that process to the mechanisms of the audiovisual language" (2014: 87). However, unlike other authors he is highly aware that this emphasis on the act of thinking is not exclusive to the essay film. For Provitina what characterizes the thinking process of the essay film is its refusal to negate the emotional and sensuous, its lack of certainties and the foregrounding of the author (2014: 89). As shown below, *The Hour of the Furnaces* is not opposed to emotional appeals. Not just the shocking images of police brutality but also, for example, in the ways the narration takes on a sorrowful tone when describing the fall of Perón in the second part of the film.

This notion of essay film as a thinking process is already present in what is generally regarded as the first articulation of the essay film: André Bazin's (2003) acutely perceptive piece on Chris Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1958). Confronted with Marker's radically innovative film ("it resembles absolutely nothing we have ever seen before in films with a documentary basis"; "unprecedented enterprise"), Bazin is obliged, at least tentatively, to find a new concept to describe the film: "*Letter from Siberia* is an essay on the reality of Siberia past and present in the form of a filmed report". Bazin goes on to articulate some of the key characteristics of this essay film. Characteristics that remain essential to the essay film until today: the primary material is intelligence (the essay film is a film that thinks); the use of a collage of different techniques and materials; the image at the service of the "verbal intelligence" and from here, the dependency of the essay film on its literary counterpart ("an essay documented by film. The important word is 'essay', understood in the same sense that it has in literature"). Bazin's stressing of the supremacy of the verbal over the image, accepted by many contemporary authors, is highly debatable. In truth, a point that critics tend to miss, is that Bazin was more nuanced, and his statement on the importance of the narration is tempered by his awareness of the innovative relation between image and soundtrack *Letter from Siberia* proposes. In a similar manner, *The Hour of the Furnaces* proposes a highly innovative use of the narration, particularly in the first part of the film as the analysis below will show.

Writers on the essay film tend to refer to the writings of Alexander Astruc as a precursor to the idea of the essay film in his call for a personal style in the cinema (this is the key idea behind his famous article on the camera-stylo/camera as pen). His insistence on a personal style of filmmaking, on using the camera as a writer uses the pen is perceived as an antecedent to the explicit subjective presence in the essay film. Some authors, like Català, see this as bringing the essay film closer to its literary counterpart (2014: 28). However, Rick Warner puts a note of caution – to put it mildly – to this common reading of Astruc, noting that the French critic was thinking about fictional directors and the "scriptural metaphor he employs has primarily to do with dramaturgy and with aesthetic devices common to the fiction film" (2016: 29).

The discussion thus far has tried to point out some of the key characteristics and the nature of the essay film and noted how the next section will apply these ideas to *The Hour of the Furnaces*. The essay film is always in flux, always debated and highly inclusive of other forms. Warner provides an excellent summary of some of the key elements and characteristics of the essay film. But even he must acknowledge this is not universally accepted:

> To be an audiovisual essayist, most discussions imply, is to be a particular kind of unorthodox documentarian who brazenly puts forward a "first-person" viewpoint, delights in self-reflexivity and produces works that are more or less in accordance with a model set by Chris Marker, the director most frequently singled out as the quintessential essayist of audiovisual media. These accounts often hinge on a limited sense of what an essay composed in the medium of cinema must look and sound like, even as they stress that the practice is characterised by considerable variation. We come to expect a certain combination of structural traits: a contrapuntal voice-over commentary, the creative reuse of already existing images and sounds through montage, a digressive course of reflection, gestures of self-inscription on the part of the essayist-filmmaker.
>
> (Warner 2016: 28)

Three caveats must be added to this. The first one, from Warner himself is that the essay film is not, as it is often assumed, antagonistic to popular cinema. In fact, it quite often nourishes itself from popular forms (2016: 30). Second, for Arsenjuk formalist self-reflexivity is the crucial element (2016: 277), but sees Corrigan's (and others) stressing of the subjective as dangerous because "we often mistakenly understand the reflexive or the refractive operations of the essay form as marking the presence of a personal or authorial intention" (Arsenjuk 2016: 279). For him, the presence of the subjective in the essay form is an impossibility: "the subject of reflection to which the essay form gives shape is one of constant attempts at self-positing that however get displaced and thwarted by the intervention of formal operations" (2016: 279). At best, we can only imagine the presence of a personal vision. Third, the description of the essayist as a documentarian (albeit unorthodox), seems at odds with the insistence on locating the essay film as form somewhere in-between the fiction and the traditional documentary. For example, Laura Rascaroli, perhaps the scholar that most satisfactory has approached the essay film, writes that the essay film suggests "a hybrid form that crosses boundaries and rests somewhere in between fiction and non-fiction cinema" (2009: 21). While Rascaroli has studied the essayistic qualities of fiction filmmakers (like Antonioni), most studies of the essay film continue to focus on non-fiction films.

The essay film saw its watershed moment between the years 1940 and 1945 (Corrigan 2011: 33), particularly in France where Chanan recalls Franju's *Le Sang des bêtes* (*Blood of the Beast*) (1949). For his part, Corrigan focuses on the work of Humphrey Jennings in the UK and its documentary, even propagandistic impulse being constantly reshaped and re-articulated by a poetic *élan*. But it is possible to see antecedents well before that, from

Vertov to Joris Ivens, and other city symphony filmmakers. The same author mentions Jean Vigo's own description of his *À propos de Nice* (1930) ("a documented point of view") as an antecedent to the idea of the essay film. However, while popular in certain nations, the notion of the essay film was not, until very recently, a common concept. This explains why Laura Mulvey writes that at the time of her making *Riddle of the Sphynx* (1977), she and co-director Peter Wollen thought of "theoretical films" and she does not recall, at the time, having come across the term essay film (Mulvey 2016: 314).

From the above discussion, it should be clear that perhaps the fundamental characteristic of the essay film is its subjective nature. Alongside it, self-reflexivity also plays a fundamental role (different authors stress the importance of one or the other). This is the position taken by Rascaroli but, as we have seen for many other authors, the essay film is foremost a film of ideas, a film that thinks. Now we need to analyze the ways in which *The Hour of the Furnaces* tackles these three primary characteristics of the essay film.

The Hour of the Furnaces as an essay film

In the context of an analysis of the Cuban documentary short *Coffea Arábiga* (*Arabica Coffee*) (Landrián, 1968), Ernesto Livon-Grosman points out how Latin American documentaries in the 1960s – and in general around the world too – were exploring new formal strategies moving away from the strong links to neorealism that, according to him, have characterised Latin American production at the time (2016: 243). He explicitly mentions *The Hour of the Furnaces* as a film that "is more willing to explore the relation between formal experimentation and political content" (Livon-Grosman 2016: 243). Here we can see two of the three aspects of the essay film, the self-reflexive element (through formal experimentation) and the act of thinking a topic (the political content). Michael Chanan, expressing a similar idea, notes how "Latin American documentary became involved in the creation of an alternative audiovisual public sphere at the level of the community and its popular organisations" (2007: 203). This intervention in an alternative public sphere, as we will see, is articulated via the highlighting of the subjective nature of the work. The author is explicitly political, militant even, and it is as much singular as collective and social. Chanan also highlights how these new films appeared under a number of different names including *cine ensayo* (essay film). These different labels and guises under which the films can appear is also present in the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema*. Without naming it, Solanas and Getino appear to be acknowledging the flexibility of the essay film – that takes many forms – by refusing to provide specific guidelines for the films: "it will be absurd to lay down a set of aesthetic work norms" (1983: 23).

As we can see, in the context of explicit political films in Latin America in the late 1960s, the notion of the essay film is not only common but it is perceived as pertinent. To a greater or lesser degree, all the films commonly included under the label 'Third Cinema' are essay films. *The Hour of the Furnaces* is not commonly conceived as such, but there is no reason

why it should not be considered an essay film, particularly since Fernando Solanas starts his famous conversation with Godard by defining *The Hour of the Furnaces* as an ideological and political film essay (1969).

Subjectivity in *The Hour of the Furnaces*

As Laura Rascaroli notes, the essay film is almost unanimously characterized by its subjective "almost autobiographical" nature (2009: 23), but the author warns about taking this in a literal sense. Subjectivity in the essay film is not subjectivity in the films of Federico Fellini (her example). Along similar lines, what the essay film does according to Corrigan is to "renegotiate assumptions about documentary objectivity, narrative epistemology and authorial expressivity" (Corrigan 2011: 6). What becomes essential in the essay film then "is the performative presentation of self as a kind of self-negation in which narrative or experimental structures are subsumed within the process of thinking through a public experience" (Corrigan 2011: 6).

The 'I' presented in the essay film – the subjective figure – is not necessarily a first person singular. The encounter between the individual and the public sphere can take the form of a plurality. The singular voice is representative of a plural voice, of a larger collective that produces the film and to whom the film is addressed.

The Hour of the Furnaces constantly oscillates between a singular author (albeit there are two figures here, Solanas and Getino) and a plural author. The film makes constant appeals for the film to be completed by its audiences as evidenced towards the end of the film where the filmmakers add some final thoughts for consideration. The grammatical structure of the narration is symptomatic of the strategies of the film. Solanas starts with the I of the filmmaker ("as authors of these notes"); moves to a first person plural ("we all have the answers"); and finishes with a direct address to the audience as differentiated but more important than the filmmakers ("We all have the answer but in particular you, the protagonists of the debate"). The strategy here is clear; the filmmakers want to highlight their intervention, the constructed nature of the film, but do not want to take the position of "authors" since the idea of the author as authoritative figure is ideologically suspect (see Chapter 1 in this volume). In the conversation with Godard, Solanas asks him if the author-oriented film is a bourgeois category and Godard answers "exactly" (Solanas and Godard 1969).

Català names one of the sections of his book "the visualization of the author". He sees the essay film as the culmination of a process the avant-garde pointed towards: the return of the author to the centre of the work. According to him, with the realist novel the author is just a "narrating machine" and the avant-garde represented a will to make art subjective (2014: 130–31). But the process is more complex: the author reappears *through* and as a product of the avant-garde techniques (Català 2014: 132). For Català, in the essay film "the complex rhetoric framework of realism, aimed at taking the place of the author, is combined with the visual power of the image through which the image loses its proverbial invisibility. In this

way, the avant-gardist's expressive and subjective capacity is recovered directly, clearly and without contradictions" (2014: 133).

The Hour of the Furnaces, according to Solanas in the film, "must be completed by its protagonists". If it needs to be completed, the protagonists are also authors and Solanas and Getino are only facilitators, subjects that assemble the different parts that make up the film. This is objective reality but filtered through the subjectivity of the filmmaker. Throughout the film, there are numerous calls for the audience to "complete" the film. The filmmakers repeatedly note that they are just exposing some ideas and suggestions for the consideration of the audience. Solanas, at the beginning of the second part, explains through an intertitle that the film "was made with the collaboration of laborers and workers, country folk, militant revolutionaries, intellectuals, labour unions and popular organisations", again denying the sole authorship of the film. This is followed by a commentary by Solanas which denies his (and Getino's) status as authors: "the film is for the authors of the process the film is trying, somehow, to testify and deepen". Furthermore, at the beginning of the second section of the second part of the film, "Resistance", Solanas and Getino explicitly acknowledge their own position as subjects within the film. First, the images we see correspond to some of the interviews we will see later, but what we see are "pre-rolls", those parts that are generally left out such as the filmmakers getting ready to shoot (clipboards are visible, clapping hands to synchronize image and sound, etc.). They are acknowledging the constructed nature of what will follow and acknowledging their position as facilitators not as authors. This is further stressed by a narration, by Solanas, where he acknowledges his and Getino's position as intellectuals, the misgivings this generated among the interviewees and the efforts they had to go through to convince them of the filmmakers' good will (rhetorically and in passing, they mention their work is being carried out clandestinely). The ending is even more revealing of the lack of importance they attach to themselves: "if this information serves to make the action more effective, then it fulfils its objective. There is no other reason for the film". Here we are far from the bourgeois author but very close to the subjective acknowledgement of the essay film. The real authors are the masses; the filmmakers are only documenting their actions. There is clearly a subjective element on the part of the filmmakers in the formal strategies they adopt (Català's idea of subjectivity revealed through formal techniques) but, these are always acknowledged and in some cases, the director's intervention is minimised as much as possible.

Another way in which the filmmakers try to avoid becoming the authors, suggesting a plural creator, can be seen in the second half of the second part of the film during the testimonies and interviews. Here, all those appearing on the screen are part of a group. These are not isolated opinions since the viewer is reasonably certain those next to the person speaking are in agreement with what is being said. At times we see Getino with a microphone or hear his voice asking questions. During the segment on the student movement, the camera incessantly moves around the room, focusing on all the people present and different opinions from different student organizations are heard but all are working together towards a common objective and the filmmaker that asks questions is part

of this social, collective process. The interview with the two female workers uses a different tactic. Again, two interlocutors are present; Getino asks questions, and the narration intervenes in-between testimonies. The overall impression is that this is a conversation between different agents, in different positions (worker, filmmaker), but all with a common objective and constructing the film together. Corrigan stresses that the "essay and essay film do not create new forms of subjectivity, realism, or narrative; they rethink existing ones as a dialogue of ideas" (2010: 219).

Many interviewees and witnesses offer an opinion that is clearly in accordance with that of the filmmakers, the subjective expression of the filmmakers is carried and expressed by the words of others. This is exactly what the essay film can do: "the enunciator quite declaredly represents the author's views, and is his/her spokesperson (even when hiding behind different or even multiple names or personas" (Rascaroli 2009: 33). In his book *The Essay Film,* Tim Corrigan quotes Lopate recalling Walter Benjamin's hyperbolic idea of an essay made entirely out of quotes (2011: 31). Corrigan sees this use of quotes (and it is possible to include here the opinions and testimonies of those appearing in the film) as "implying a form of subjective expression that inhabits and reformulates itself constantly as the expressions of another or an other" (2011: 31).

Two further ways in which the film acknowledges the subjectivity of the filmmakers are the use of intertitles and the voice-over commentary. The intertitles are an obvious way for the filmmakers to remind the audience of their presence in the film. Their speed, movement and different organization on the screen are clearly designed to demand an active spectator, but they also are a way for the filmmakers to highlight their presence in the film. The intertitles are clearly the voice of the two directors that becomes visual and therefore explicit for the audience. The information contained can be highly subjective and at times can be questioned severely (for example, my own experience of screening the film sees general audiences and students jumping at the claim in an intertitle during the first part of the film that all information outlets and mass media are controlled by the CIA).

The narration is also very important throughout the film and utilizes different strategies to reduce its impact. By 1968, and in the context of political filmmaking, there is a general mistrust of the voice of God narration. It was, and still is, perceived as domineering and overpowering, leaving little room for the agency of the spectator. This view, most famously presented by Bill Nichols is challenged by Stella Bruzzi for whom this perception of the voice of God narration is only the consequence of having been "'taught' how to interpret the narrational voice as distortive" (Bruzzi 2006: 47). This is why since the coming of sound, filmmakers have devised rhetoric techniques to reduce the power of the narration, to bring it closer to a conversation or commentary of limited power. American New Deal documentaries are exemplary in this respect: Pare Lorentz's films abound in rhythmical, repetitive and poetic language to minimize (perhaps it would be better to say hide) the power of the narration (see also Crowder-Taraborrelli's chapter in this volume). Similar strategies where used at times by Grierson's GPO film unit in Great Britain. In *The Hour of the Furnaces* the narration constantly oscillates between different positions. Again, my own

experience of screening the film has shown me that this is sometimes difficult to perceive by non-Spanish speakers. In the first part of the film, the chapter "the Port City" utilizes a highly ironic narration that contrasts clearly with the neutral and informative voice-over, for example in the chapter "The Nation". And these two types of narration are very different from the solemn and more dramatic tone used by the narration in the chapter "Neo-racism" when describing the appalling living conditions of indigenous people or in the final chapter "The Option". And again, these are also different from the dramatic and poetic tone of the narration when, in the second part of the film, the voice-over describes the fall of Perón ("one bleak, grey, desolate day, the army – national yesterday, today 'gorilla' – occupies the city"). The effort here is clearly to acknowledge the presence of the filmmakers, but to minimize as much as possible their impact and perceived control over the film.

Self-reflexivity in *The Hour of the Furnaces*

Many definitions of the essay film highlight its hybrid nature lying as it does somewhere between fiction and documentary. What lies at the heart of this thinking is a particular concern with form. This concern is implicit in a number of quotes used by Rascaroli: for Georg Lukács "the essay has to create from within itself all the preconditions for the effectiveness and solidity of its vision" (Lukács in Rascaroli 2009: 22). Also, Adorno considers that "in the essay, concepts do not build a continuum of operation, thought does not advance in a single direction, rather the aspects of the argument interweave as in a carpet" (in Rascaroli 2009: 23). Finally, Renov highlights the "tendency of the essay towards complication (digression, fragmentation, repetition, and dispersion) rather than composition" (Renov 2004: 70; Rascaroli 2009).

But reflexivity can take two different forms. All essays are concerned with their own construction, involving themselves in a process of self-reflexivity but at the same time, this thinking can be directed towards the form itself: an essay film about essay films or films in general (in the manner in which literary essay can focus on questions of art). For Corrigan

> essay films about films distil, I want to argue, the fundamental inadequacy and triumph of the essayistic, asserting that, even in the experience of the essay film "as like" an aesthetic experience, its essential aim is anti-aesthetic, in a way that aims to return the film to the world and ideas about the world.
>
> (2011: 182)

The idea expressed here by Corrigan, that form is not an end in itself but only a vehicle to return to ideas about the world, can be seen also in Solanas' conversation with Godard: "it is a film absolutely free in its form and its language: we have used everything that was necessary or useful for our educational ends" (1969).

In *The Hour of the Furnaces* the most obvious moment of reflexion on cinema and its role occurs in the first part of the film. In the chapter on neo-racism, the filmmakers visit

an indigenous settlement. The camera follows a number of individuals while the narration acknowledges that these people negate the camera, and refuse the gaze of the white man. And yet, the camera keeps on recording in spite of the obvious rejection by those being filmed. This is taken to the extreme when the camera focuses on a close up of a young man. The camera is very close to him but he ostensibly ignores it (or appears to ignore it because he cannot but realize it is there). The sequence continues showing more indigenous people and all negate the camera with the exception of a young girl who looks into the lens and smiles. The sequence ends with the camera focusing on a very young girl who, in seeing the camera starts to cry and runs towards her mother. Hugging her legs, the little girl cries while the insistent camera keeps on recording her. The sequence is complex and opens itself to the interpretation of the audience (at least up to a point, as we will see in the final section). Clearly there is a meditation on the white gaze that reduces the other to an object to be observed (see also Chapter 5 in this volume). The defiance of the young man towards the filmmakers shows us their contempt for the film (at the expense of the filmmakers) but at the same time, the insistence on recording the crying girl makes audiences uncomfortable. Where are the limits to the right to record the other? What is the ethical position to be taken? What is the role of the filmmaker? The film seems to produce a critique of the ethnological travelogue because this sequence is clearly in opposition to the dignified staging of the interview with the old indigenous man. The camera remains still why he sits and talks. His family is next to him, arranged for the camera in a sort of dignified family portrait.

As mentioned in the initial quotes that start this section, form in the essay operates to organise the material in particular ways. The essay film uses form not for its own sake but in relation to the theme of the film. In *The Hour of the Furnaces,* one of the key ways in which the film explores the form of documentary, not for its own sake but at the service of the overall aims of the film, is by the complex relation between image and narration. As we have seen, starting from Bazin, many authors have characterized the essay film by the importance of the verbal commentary (or interviews) over the images. While this is generally true also of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (most notably, for example, in the first half of the second part, the "History of Peronism"), right from the start the film proposes a more complex relationship. There is not a simple subordination of the image to the spoken word. While we are used to seeing images only as illustrations of what is being spoken, *The Hour of the Furnaces* very often demands its audience to work out the relation between image and narration. In most cases this is not a difficult task because it is not meant to pose a riddle, but to ask the audience to be an active spectator in the construction of the film, to complete it.

One of these moments takes place right at the beginning of the film. The narration is explaining how "the Argentine central bank was made over to the British merchants, their manufactures invading the internal market". What we see in the image track is men playing golf. The narration continues: "the country sent out meat and leather, and received grand pianos" over images, among other things, of more men playing golf. "Neo-colonialism was born" continues the narration while we continue to see the game of golf. For some audience members the relation may be obvious, for others not so much. The point is that the film asks

us to realise the connection between image and narration. Golf is part of the imports that neocolonialism sent to Argentina alongside grand pianos. The image is directly illustrating the narration, but this is done in less than straightforward ways.

At other times, the film will end up making clear the relation between image and narration even if at first this may not appear that obvious. In the second part of the film, while discussing the consequences of the coup against Perón, the image track is composed of images of state violence and repression. Only after a couple of minutes will the voice-over refer explicitly to this repression. Now the image directly illustrates the commentary, before the spectator needed to work out the relation. The point of this dialectical relation between image track and soundtrack is not to be a formal exercise in itself, it is to generate an active spectator that completes the film (the filmmakers constantly refer to the film as open, unfinished). It is not about how difficult or easy is to find the synthesis to the dialectical relationship between sound and image. The key is that it is up to the audience to complete the process and in this way finishing the film, and making it their own.

The Hour of the Furnaces as a thinking film

The essay film is a film about ideas. The third aspect of Corrigan tripartite articulation of the essay film stresses the "figuration of thinking or thought as a cinematic address and a spectatorial response" (2011: 30). For example, Philip Lopate, quoted by Corrigan suggests that the essay film "tracks a person's thoughts […] An essay is a search to find out what one thinks about something" (2011: 33). Corrigan stresses not only the thinking process involved in the essay itself but crucially the ways in which the essay is a communal experience inasmuch as "one of the chief defining features of the essay film and its history become an active intellectual response to the questions and provocation that an unsettled subjectivity directs at its public" (2010: 222). As we have seen in the previous section, this necessity of reflexion on the part of the audience is present in *The Hour of the Furnaces.* Provitina notes how the thinking that the essay film invokes is of a particular nature.

The thinking demanded of the essay film is not the Cartesian thinking. One of the appeals of the essay film, perhaps explaining its contemporary prominence in this postmodern time, is the fragmentary nature of its thinking. Provitina highlights how the essay film is a collection of open processes, with overlaps, fissures, and ambiguities (2014: 94). But he also warns against assuming that these characteristics will lead to confusion, arbitrariness, or unnecessary complexity (95). Furthermore, for him the essay film is infused with a Brechtian spirit. Distantiation with its dialectical charge is assumed and absorbed by the audience becoming central to the essay film (97).

These characteristics of the essay film are implicit in Solanas and Getino's manifesto: the man of the Third Cinema, be it guerrilla cinema or a film act, with the infinite categories that they contain (film letter, film poem, essay film, film pamphlet, film report, etc.), above all counters the film industry of a cinema of characters with one of themes" (1983: 27). A film

of themes then becomes a film that will think about those themes. This strategic thinking is essential for *The Hour of the Furnaces*. Solanas explains it perfectly, so it is worth quoting him at length:

> The film contains highlighted pauses and interruptions, so that the film and its topics can travel from the screen to the audience; that is, to life, to the present. The old spectator – the one who just sat there passively, according to the traditional cinema that developed the bourgeois concepts of nineteenth-century art – this *non-participant* becomes a live *protagonist*, a real *actor* in the story of the film and in history itself, since the film is about our contemporary history. And a film about liberation, about an unfinished period in our history, must by definition be an *unfinished* film, a film that is *open* to the present and to the future of this liberation. That is why the film has to be completed and developed by the protagonists.
>
> (1969, original emphasis)

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Lukács defined the essay as "thoughts occasioned by…;" this seemingly a-systematic way of thinking is reflected in the actual title of the film: "*Notes and Testimonies on Neocolonialism, Violence and Liberation*". The reference to notes and testimonies is not casual. It reflects on the intention of the filmmakers to produce a work that is not entirely scientific in its presentation, more of a collection of different ideas not entirely organized. However, it is also clear that the film is less open than what contemporary articulations of the essay film will suggest. But this is to be expected. We need to think of *The Hour of the Furnaces* as a "situated utterance". The term, defined by Mikhail Bakhtin, refers to the ways in which a communicative event is shaped by history and power and because of this, it will be read differently in different locations. In the context of the 1960s in Latin America, it is almost impossible to expect the film to be less ideological, less tied to the grand narratives contemporary scholars on the essay film tend to see as finished. But this, in no way should detract from the possibility of reading the film as an essay film.

As already shown above, the film makes constant references to the fact that it is an open act that needs to be completed by the audience. The filmmakers constantly ask its audience to evaluate and discuss the arguments and ideas put forward. This is done throughout the second and third parts (at the beginning and at the end of the two parts). "Spaces for debates", "to add to the debate", etc., are constant calls for the audience to complete the film. However, it is true that at times, these calls to discussion can be thought of more as rhetoric than actual. A particular interesting moment happens at the end of the first section of the second part, "Chronicle of Peronism".

While discussing the reasons for the fall of Perón, the narration includes a number of open questions to the audience: "why did Perón abandon power?" "Why did he refuse to arm the people?" It is reasonable to assume that any audience member would have thought of these pertinent questions many times. The narration leaves the questions unanswered. Shortly afterwards, the film includes some "reflections for discussion" and then an "open

space for discussion." The assumption is that the film will be stopped so the audience can discuss this section of the film on the history of Peronism. It is reasonable to assume that some would have debated the open questions posed by the film. What becomes interesting is to see what follows this moment. The film continues with an interview with Perón.[1] In this interview, Perón answers pretty much directly the questions the narration asked before. His answers express regret for the decisions he took, commenting that if he could do it all over again, he would arm the masses, it is a call to violence. Although the film does open spaces for dialogue with the film, opening spaces for reflection, the film is also far too preoccupied with providing "the correct answer" to the questions. In this part of the film particularly, the audience is invited to think for themselves *but only* if they arrive to the right conclusions. It is clear that audience members that discussed these questions would not necessarily have reached the right conclusions or they may not be convinced by Perón's argument, but the personal prestige of the general and his quasi-mythical status at the time do provide a weighty relevance to his arguments. While the film clearly opens spaces for honest debate and discussion of the thesis it presents, there is clearly a forceful presentation of arguments. There is an invitation to think "the right way." But this does not equate to dogma (Wayne 2001: 13) or to the impossibility to think differently. The profusion of debates generated by the film over the last fifty years testifies to this.

Conclusion

In 1981, Steve Neale wrote a famous article on *The Hour of the Furnaces* and Godard's *Ici et ailleurs* (*Here and Elsewhere*) (1976). In the article, he criticises Solanas and Getino's film:

> Although certainly the film, in the kind of exhibition context it was given, would function to provoke important political debate, it is by no mean the case that that debate follows from the structure and the textual conventions that govern the film itself.
>
> (1984: 439)

He adds, "the images [archive footage] then function merely to legitimate what the commentary has to say" (1984: 441); the position the film takes is "unchallenged, unquestioned, within the film itself" (1984). Finally, and very tendentiously (since Neale picks up on one specific moment, leaving aside many other moments when the film asks for the participation of the audience), "there is no conceptual space left for a consideration of the mode of spectatorship inscribed in the structure of the film itself" (Neale 1984). He finishes considering that *Ici et ailleurs,* unlike *The Hour of the Furnaces* offers "a questioning of the role of sound and commentary in their relations with the image, a division of the narrating instance into a set of distinct voices" (Neale 1984: 442).

What is revealed by Neale is a failure to read the film as flexible and open, as an interrogation – not for that reason less explicitly political. This is reflected in Mike Wayne's considerations when sustaining a different view to Neale's about the film. Without using

the term essay film, Wayne realises that "the film does not attempt to weave a seamless web of arguments to which the viewer must simply assent. Rather it constructs a patchwork of arguments, some of which are more compelling than others. Nor does it construct a linear chronology, a complete history of Argentina" (2001: 128–29). Wayne is thinking of *The Hour of the Furnaces* as an essay film.

It is quite possible to disagree with the reading of *The Hour of the Furnaces* as an essay film; it is also possible to disagree with the notion of the essay film altogether. *The Hour of the Furnaces* is a complex film that allows multiple readings and points of entrance. But, whatever formulation we chose to follow, it must allow us to read the film as a much more flexible and open-ended film than it has been given credit for in the last 50 years, Steve Neale's reading being only one perfect example. *The Hour of the Furnaces* forcefully gives us a view of the world, its problems and, in offering us a clearly defined alternative, the film opens itself to greater criticism. The film is honest and opens itself up to be debated. It may be perceived as outdated and far from perfect, for some even a failure, but if that is the case, it clearly shows how the film can be resisted and it is far from authoritarian. And in any event, humanity has always learned much more from failure than from success.

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Note

1 The short interview with Perón was not part of the original release of the film. It was added some time later. It appears on the film in the DVD's special edition on two discs.

Afterthoughts on *The Hour of the Furnaces*

Michael Chanan

Why celebrate the 50th anniversary of a militant documentary that preaches an outdated ideology of revolutionary violence? A film described, when it was screened in a New York art space a few years ago, as "a relic of a long-since-passed *Zeitgeist*"? (Williams 2015: 315, original emphasis). Is there anything at stake in this celebration beyond the recognition due to a work that made such a strong mark in film history?

To be sure, *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968) is an extraordinary film, a sprawling three-part four-hour epic of radical poetics, weaving together disparate styles and materials that range from didactic historical essay to operatic stylization, composed of Eisensteinian montage, testimonial interviews, and direct filming, incorporating photographs, newsreel, and film clips from avant-garde and mainstream, fiction, and documentary. This avant-garde aesthetic is inseparable from its political project – each is grounded in the other. One of the reasons it became an emblematic film is that, as Robert Stam put it, "[i]f there are two avant-gardes – the formal and the theoretico-political – then *La hora de los hornos* surely marks one of the high points of their convergence" (Stam 1990: 251). With one caveat, as we shall see.

The film had enormous impact in its moment. You sometimes hear stories about people fighting to get into the cinema to see a new film. How many films have the effect of sending their audience out of the cinema to take up the fight on the streets? In that extraordinary year of 1968, it happened more than once. It happened in July in Uruguay, at the premiere in Montevideo of a short film by Mario Handler. *Me gustan los estudiantes* ("I like students") (1968) documented the demonstrations of the previous year against the conference of the Organization of American States (OAS) at Punta del Este, where US President Johnson presided over a gathering of Latin American leaders, including dictators like Argentina's Juan Carlos Onganía and Paraguay's Alfredo Stroessner. Juxtaposing scenes of the conference with student demonstrations, the film takes its title from the song on the soundtrack, written by the Chilean singer-songwriter Violeta Parra and sung by Daniel Viglietti, a song in praise of students. At the end of the screening, Handler later recalled, the audience reacted spontaneously to the police repression depicted in the film, got very heated and went out into the street breaking things up.[1]

If that was Latin America, the same thing happened a few weeks later in Italy when *La hora de los hornos* received its premiere at the Pesaro Film Festival, which echoed with the resonance of the May events in Paris that had already led to the disruption of the Cannes Film Festival. But Pesaro was a very different kind of event, a left-wing alternative to the big jamborees, whether commercial as in Western Europe, or state-sponsored as in Eastern Europe. Pesaro in 1968 included a focus on radical cinema from Latin America. Another new film was *Memorias de subdesarrollo* ("Memories of underdevelopment") by the Cuban director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, who later recalled the political turn that was taken by the debates at the festival, as different groups, he said, vied to see who was furthest to the left (Alea 1990: 199). *La hora de los hornos* was greeted with a standing ovation; the exalted crowd carried the directors outside on their shoulders and a spontaneous demonstration ended up in a confrontation with the police and several arrests.[2] As the French journal *CinémAction* put it a decade later, it had the "effect of a bomb" (CinémAction 1979), and was promptly embraced by European critics and festival organizers.

In Argentina, according to Mariano Mestman in Chapter 7 of this book, the international reception of the film brought useful publicity in the local media, but for five years, until democracy returned to Argentina in 1973, it could only be shown clandestinely. Other reports speak of 50 prints in circulation and an estimated 100,000 viewers (Anon. 1978: 61). It was not necessarily shown complete. These were difficult times. By the end of the 1960s, resistance to the military dictatorship was hardening and urban guerrilla groups were active. Octavio Getino, one of the filmmakers, once told me how in order to escape detection, a team of people would each smuggle one reel of the film into the venue.

But the filmmakers had anticipated what this kind of dissemination would mean for the way the film was used in the spaces where it would be seen. They described it as a "film act," rather than a film in the conventional sense: "an unfinished work, open in order to incorporate dialogue and for the meeting of revolutionary wills" (quoted in López 1987: 67).[3] Both spoken commentary and written titles addressed the audience directly and included explicit call-outs to the audience to debate the film. In short, it was aimed at an audience of the politically engaged, and while it might seem at times to be lecturing at them, it offers a quite different relationship to the anticipated viewer than the normal passive spectatorial experience, prompting the viewer by posing questions like "why did Perón fall without a struggle? Should he have armed the people?"; and even at one point, perhaps aware of its own preachiness, "our opinions are worth as much as yours." It is conceived, in other words, as a didactic intervention in the formation of popular political consciousness.[4]

The direct and intentional mode of address, and the idea of a film opening to discussion, derived from the filmmakers' experience in the organization of political debates around the screening of films from Cuba or by documentarists like Joris Ivens:

> We realised that the most important thing was not the film and the information in it so much as the way this information was debated. One of the aims of such films is to provide the occasion for people to find themselves and talk about their own problems.

> The projection becomes a place where people speak out and develop their awareness. We learnt the importance of this space: cinema here becomes humanly useful.
>
> (Anon. 1978: 60)

And the caveat I mentioned? Stam pointed out the paradox the film presented: where "openness" in art is usually understood in terms of plurisignification, polysemy, the possibility of a plurality of equally legitimate readings of the film on the screen, *Hour of the Furnaces* "is not open in this sense: its messages are stridently unequivocal" (Stam 1990: 253). The openness of the film lies elsewhere: in the political relationship between the film and the viewer – at least, in the clandestine circumstances in which the film was necessarily originally seen in Argentina. Stam again: "Rather than a mass hero *on the screen*, the protagonists of history are *in the audience*" (Stam 1990: 254, original emphasis).

La hora de los hornos makes demanding viewing, not only because of its length but also its density. This includes all sorts of references to Argentine politics and Peronism that remained obscure to foreign audiences beyond Latin America almost as much back then as 50 years later, but which Latin American audiences could relate to in a general way, as a variation on familiar themes. In the version initially distributed in France, as we learn in these pages from Mestman, some of these sequences were dropped.[5] Today they function differently, however, wherever the film is seen, because in rehearsing the historical rationale of Peronism they also problematize it. While they instruct us in a largely forgotten history, they confront us with the question of its interpretation that inevitably arises with historical distance. Suffice it to say that the filmmakers are Marxists on the left wing of a populist movement (which also included other tendencies), although their Marxism is hardly orthodox but drew inspiration from the Cuban Revolution, the national liberation struggle in Vietnam, the thinking of Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, Franz Fanon – figures who also inspired the rebellious generation of the 1960s in the imperialist north and succoured the New Left.

The three parts of the film appear to represent a dialectical argument. The thesis is presented in the first part, "Neocolonialism and Violence," in the form of an analysis of the existing power structure. The second part, "Act for Liberation," presents the antithesis as represented by the Peronist struggle. Part Three, "Violence and Liberation," strongly influenced by Fanon, posits the transformative synthesis to be achieved through the revolutionary violence that is taken to be the only effective way to combat the violence of imperialism and achieve liberation.

Each part has a different formal treatment. Part One is a narrated montage-driven political tract, organized in numerous chapters, employing a wide range of cinematic techniques and resources (newsreel sequences, interviews, documentary film clips, still photographs, intertitles, advertising images, etc.). The rhetoric of the spoken commentary is dominant, amplified by the written texts appearing on the screen, but Stam speaks astutely of "the contrast between the poverty of the original materials and the power of the final result" (Stam 1990: 259), and in this respect the film remains exemplary.[6]

Part Two, divided into two sections, is more reflective and investigative, built around interviews with militants and direct filming of events. There are many valuable lessons to be learnt, but today one notices the relative lack of women and absence of feminist positions that marks the historical period (let alone any kind of identity politics). There are women in the film who give their testimony, but historical distance presents us with a picture of the political culture they belong to as defined by machismo.[7] On the other hand, the film's analysis of the limits of the spontaneism of the masses is thoroughly relevant to the present day, a time of mass global protest movements and occupations etc., limited by lack of staying power.[8]

Part Three, although the shortest, is perhaps the most uncomfortable for the present day viewer, with its insistence, following Fanon and his defence – based on his experiences in Algeria – of anticolonial counter-violence, or revolutionary violence, as the only possible solution to imperialist oppression. The appeal to Fanon depends on recognizing the parallel between Algeria's subjugation to French colonialism and the pseudo-independence of Latin American states, on seeing that the history of Latin America is that of exchanging one colonizer for the next, one type of colonization for another, call it neocolonialism or economic imperialism. But this is not an issue for the twenty-first-century viewer, when neocolonialism has been transformed into neoliberalism and the Cold War has given way to globalization. The difficulty lies in the concomitant transformation of what the New Yorkers quoted at the outset called the Zeitgeist. Is it not the film's stance on violence as a legitimate form of liberation that most clearly divides the ideology of *La hora* from the perspective of its 50th anniversary? This surely challenges us to ask what has brought about the turn away from ideas about the violent seizure of state power, a shift that began, perhaps, with the Zapatistas in Mexico in the 1990s, and the emergence by the turn of the millennium of a new mass politics of non-violent civil disobedience?

We're not just talking about a film, however, even a political film, but also a theory of political cinema, because the film engendered a manifesto written by two of the filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, *Hacia un tercer cine* (*Towards a Third Cinema*), which proffered a theory of film as revolutionary politics (Solanas and Getino 1983). As Getino commented some years later, the manifesto was not a formulaic speculation but the product of a concrete experience: "It is difficult to imagine the subsequent international exposure of these theories had the film not existed. It was only through the existence of the film that we were able to refute the opposition of critics to our theories" (1986: 102; the text quoted here is excerpted from a 1984 piece by Getino and published in Barnard in 1986). It is probably also true to say that without the manifesto, the film would have remained rather more obscure than it is.

Nevertheless, 50 years later, when the Zeitgeist has radically shifted, the debate occasioned by the manifesto has been lost in the fogs of time – all the more so because of the amnesia of our hyper-mediatized culture – and likewise the context, which today, when interest in the political cinema of the 1960s is reviving in academic and film activist circles, must be reconstructed (hence the present volume). The first problem is the referent of the very term

"Third Cinema." There is an assumption that "Third Cinema" equals "Third World," but this is a simplification that misses the metaphorical quality of the geography described by the two Argentines, in which they were speaking of the virtual universe of the screen. Third Cinema, in concept and in practice, involved a redefinition of cinematic space: a virtual mapping of the world of cinema, modeled on the Three Worlds' theory adopted at the founding conference of the Non-Aligned movement in Bandung in 1955, but it was not isomorphic with it, the one not directly mappable on the other. (First World: the advanced capitalist countries, the "West." Second world: their Cold War enemy, the Communist countries. Third World: the rest, i.e., the underdeveloped world.) In the filmic universe, first cinema is the Hollywood model of commercial or industrial movie production that can also be found in places like Bollywood. Second cinema – roughly speaking, auteur and art cinema on the European model – which became the mode of independent filmmaking around the world. Third Cinema can also crop up everywhere: it consists in films that challenge the system, which the system cannot assimilate and that "directly and explicitly set out to fight the system." Made outside the system, it is militant, collective in its mode of production, and de-emphasized auteurship. In one variant, it seeks to deconstruct the stereotypes of mainstream cinema as much as official propaganda, an aim shared by the contemporaneous call by Julio García Espinosa for an "imperfect cinema," which shares the same revolutionary ethos (Espinosa 1983). It is indifferent to style and means, but informed by an aesthetic of urgency, agility, and impecuniousness. In another term much heard in those days, it was *cine pobre*, cinema of poverty. Solanas and Getino identified this kind of political film praxis not only in Latin America but also in films shown alongside their own in Pesaro that year, including the work of the US New Left film group Newsreel and the Italian *cinegiornali*. In the manifesto they also mention the films of the French Etats Généraux du Cinéma and the British and Japanese student movements, not forgetting the experiments carried out by Chris Marker in France giving groups of workers 8mm cameras and basic instruction in their use.

Seen in this way, there is something prescient about the idea of Third Cinema. These are all examples of the subversive potential of the art of small media, which has come into its own in the age of digital media and the Internet. The cybersphere, however, radically alters the conditions of both production and consumption. Digital video encourages small-scale filmmaking outside the industry, which thereby also escapes the norms and constraints of commercial production. It means that nowadays almost anyone can own the means of production and have access to global dissemination (you can even shoot, minimally edit, and upload to the net with a smartphone). There's no recipe or formula that can tell you how to make a viral video, but new genres have appeared that range from citizen journalism to satirical mash-ups, not to mention, since these lines are being written during a general election campaign in the United Kingdom, partisan political campaign videos.

But the mobile screens and earphones of consumer electronics also transform the conditions of viewing and the situation of the viewer, who acquires a new displacement,

dislocation, and isolation. She could be a Palestinian refugee, for example, in the cold dark night of a northern European city watching a video in her kitchen about her home village. To be sure, the Internet also allows the creation of virtual communities, which sometimes manifest huge potential for social intervention, and citizen journalism and activist video becomes part of this effort, but this only forces new questions on us. Do activist videos amount to something more than symptoms of political disempowerment and disaffection? What determines or limits their potential for challenging power? What kind of documentary would become a real political force in this setting? Can this question even still be posed in this way? Is an oppositional film as political act like *La hora de los hornos* still possible? Perhaps the answer is only if it goes viral. But this would mean that the aesthetic form would be rather different – condensed, nimble, limited in scope by short duration, imputation rather than analysis. In a fragmented culture of sound bites and attention deficit, a sustained political argument is difficult. However, this still leaves room for the so-called alt-right to exploit the same potential with racist and sexist rants, conspiracy theory films, and plain falsehood posing as documentary, thus defining the ideological battleground of the social media.

On the other hand, the same digital small media technology also allows the practice of the film debate to flourish in venues ranging from lecture theatres to pub meeting rooms, anywhere you can set up a screen and projector, even (in my own experience) a tent in the English countryside at an activist summer camp. The numbers are small, but just as Solanas and Getino argued, it's in the direct encounter with an audience that elicits collective dialogue that the political film comes alive.

The Zeitgeist does not repress the political, of course, not. Along with the return of documentary to the big screen, which gathered pace in the 1990s, political films have occupied a prominent position, but it isn't the same politics as before, the parameters have altered. This too is part of the context in which any political film from 50 years ago is seen in the twenty-first century. As Clara Kriger writes in these pages, *La hora de los hornos* became synonymous with an Argentine cinema that had shifted from the exoticism of the tango to the exoticism of the revolution, but in the present day, political documentaries have discarded agitation and often veer toward a subjective take. Or else they become single-issue campaign films with reformist politics. A blog post reflecting on the New York screening of *La hora,* mentioned at the outset, reported that participants in the discussions "frequently lamented the dearth of contemporary political films, arguing that filmmakers had abandoned their social charge." Certainly in comparison with *La hora*, there seemed to be something lacking in them. "Missing today is not just *The Hour of Furnaces*' revolutionary ardor, but its glorious unification of theory and praxis" (Beckett 2010).

If this is more than a blunt response to the film's visceral impact, then again it reflects the altered Zeitgeist, and the effect bequeathed to the twenty-first century by the moment of postmodernism, in which all grand narratives, Marxist or otherwise, were discredited by their own failures. The same ethos likely spells an end to the promise of bringing the two avant-gardes together, because both are robbed of their historical authenticity. The

political vanguard lost its bearings even before the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. In the First World, class struggle as the defining category of socialist politics was already being displaced by the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s – if not earlier – with its sustained attack on all forms of social solidarity. In Latin America, where neoliberalism arrived with Pinochet, revolutionary ardor was subdued by the return to parliamentary democracy in the 1980s, including, eventually, Chile, although it wasn't long before a new left began to make fresh democratic inroads (especially in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador). At the same time, the paradigmatic stance of the aesthetic avant-garde that belonged to high modernism, its quintessentially rebellious iconoclasm, disappears when postmodernism – as the driving ethos of globalization – takes over the expanding media, and cultural creation is overwhelmed by sheer commodification, a process in which every subversive gesture is recuperated, and it becomes easier, as Fredric Jameson famously remarked, to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism (Jameson 2003).

Bluntly put, wouldn't all this mean that Third Cinema has dissolved away and is now little more than an iconic historical reference in the repertoire of the cultural marketplace – like the famous image of Che Guevara that was purloined for an advertisement for Smirnoff vodka? Can there still be such a thing as Third Cinema in this hyper-modern arena? And yet, have first and second cinema ceased to exist? Do they not, on the contrary, thrive under globalization? And are there not, likewise, plenty of video makers of all sorts almost everywhere whose work is dedicated to anti-capitalist opposition, from the emergence of Indymedia around the turn of the millennium to dissenting individuals who nowadays post stuff up on YouTube? Let's not exaggerate their impact. Do they not operate, just as before, in the margins and interstices? But does it not make sense to see video activism as a new form of Third Cinema?

More questions crowd in: what then is the difference – politically and ideologically – between the local and geographical communities in which Third Cinema took root, and the loose virtual communities dispersed across cyberspace where video activism belongs? It is true that the political underpinnings of Third Cinema have been drastically transformed – the original formulation was premised on a militant politics rooted in class consciousness of a kind that has evaporated, and upon ideologies that have taken a decisive historical beating. But the historical presence of the masses is again in evidence, transformed into digitally fed mass popular civil disobedience, overwhelmingly youthful, not seeking the violent seizure of state power, but vehement in defence and pursuit of democratic rights, social justice, and the planet. There is a small but steady stream of films and videos inscribed with the same implacably anti-capitalist oppositional spirit, although I repeat, still only in the margins and interstices, just like before. Because the Internet may be offered at minimal cost, but it remains structured by the globalized capitalism that provides it, whose values it inevitably promotes.

This is not to argue that the social media are causative agents of politics in themselves, because people are. What matters is the persistence in the web's interstices of a free and radical poetics that challenges the perverse logic of globalized power. The social media

are incomparable at rapid mobilization and the horizontal transmission of solidarity, but political change needs physical forms of social action to gain traction, and even then, success is not guaranteed. This, however, need not discourage the video activist. The gap between political aspiration and reality has always been there in all forms of agitational art, and bridging it is the object, for which *The Hour of the Furnaces* stands as a model endeavor.

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Notes

1 Mario Handler interviewed in *New Cinemas of Latin America* (Chanan, 1983).
2 See Chapter 6 in this book.
3 Originally in Solanas, Fernando and Getino, Octavio (1973), *Cine, cultura y descolonización*, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, p. 10.

4 See Chapters 2 and 8 in this book.
5 Chapter 7 in this book, citing Guy Hennebelle.
6 See Chapter 1 in this book.
7 See Chapter 5 in this book.
8 See Chapter 10 in this book.

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