



# On Cinema

Glauber Rocha

Edited by Ismail Xavier

B L O O M S B U R Y

**Glauber Rocha** (1939–1981) is Brazil's most important filmmaker and founder of the 1960s and '70s Cinema Novo movement. His films are landmarks of Brazilian and world film history. He was also a prolific writer and film critic, whose critical thought made a decisive contribution to the notion of Third Cinema.

**Ismail Xavier** is Professor of Film at the University of São Paulo. His book *Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Modern Brazilian Cinema* marks a milestone in Brazilian cinema studies.

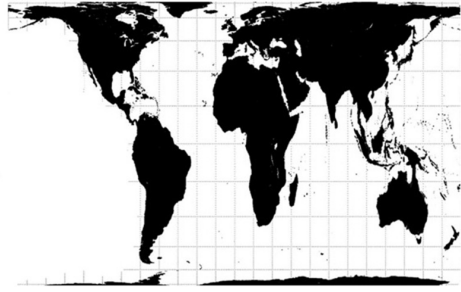
‘This book reveals to the world what Brazilian intellectuals already knew, that Glauber Rocha was not only a major filmmaker but also a major film theorist and an acute critic both of movements (the New Wave) and of individual directors, including mainstream American directors. His analyses are multi-faceted, bringing in industrial, production and aesthetic concerns.’

– Robert P. Stam, University Professor at New York University, USA

‘At long last, Glauber Rocha in English. An essential collection of essays for all those interested in Brazilian *cinema novo* and world cinema.’

– Darlene J. Sadlier, Professor at Indiana University, Bloomington, USA and author of *Nelson Pereira dos Santos*

# WORLD CINEMA SERIES



Series Editors:

Lúcia Nagib, Professor of Film at the University of Reading

Julian Ross, Research Fellow at Leiden University

Advisory Board: Laura Mulvey (UK), Robert Stam (USA),

Ismail Xavier (Brazil), Dudley Andrew (USA)

The World Cinema Series aims to reveal and celebrate the richness and complexity of film art across the globe, exploring a wide variety of cinemas set within their own cultures and as they interconnect in a global context. The books in the series will represent innovative scholarship, in tune with the multicultural character of contemporary audiences. Drawing upon an international authorship, they will challenge outdated conceptions of world cinema, and provide new ways of understanding a field at the centre of film studies in an era of transnational networks.

Published and forthcoming works in the World Cinema Series:

*Allegory in Iranian Cinema: The Aesthetics  
of Poetry and Resistance*

Michelle Langford

*Amharic Film Genres and Ethiopian  
Cinema*

Michael W. Thomas

*Animation in the Middle East: Practice and  
Aesthetics from Baghdad to  
Casablanca*

Edited by Stefanie Van de Peer

*Basque Cinema: A Cultural and Political  
History*

Rob Stone and María Pilar Rodríguez

*Brazil on Screen: Cinema Novo,  
New Cinema, Utopia*

Lúcia Nagib

*Brazilian Cinema and the Aesthetics of  
Ruins*

Guilherme Carréra

*Cinema in the Arab World: New Histories,  
New Approaches*

Edited by Philippe Meers, Daniel Biltereyst  
and Ifdal Elsaket

*Contemporary New Zealand Cinema*

Edited by Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray

*Cosmopolitan Cinema: Cross-cultural  
encounters in East Asian Film*

Felicia Chan

*Documentary Cinema of Chile: Confronting  
History, Memory, Trauma*

Antonio Traverso

*East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film*

Edited by Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai

*East Asian Film Noir: Transnational Encounters and Intercultural Dialogue*

Edited by Chi-Yun Shin and Mark Gallagher

*Eastern Approaches to Western Film: Asian Reception and Aesthetics in Cinema*

Stephen Teo

*Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural Approaches to Film*

Edited by Lúcia Nagib and Ann Jerslev

*Latin American Women Filmmakers: Production, Politics, Poetics*

Edited by Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw

*Lebanese Cinema:*

*Imagining the Civil War and Beyond*

Lina Khatib

*New Argentine Cinema*

Jens Andermann

*New Directions in German Cinema*

Edited by Paul Cooke and Chris Homewood

*New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory*

Asuman Suner

*On Cinema*

Glauber Rocha, Edited by Ismail Xavier

*Pablo Trapero and the Politics of Violence*

Douglas Mulliken

*Palestinian Filmmaking in Israel:*

*Narratives of Place and Identity*

Yael Freidman

*Performing Authorship: Self-inscription and Corporeality in the Cinema*

Cecilia Sayad

*Portugal's Global Cinema: Industry, History and Culture*

Edited by Mariana Liz

*Queer Masculinities in Latin American Cinema: Male Bodies and Narrative*

*Representations*

Gustavo Subero

*Realism in Greek Cinema:*

*From the Post-war Period to the Present*

Vrasidas Karalis

*Realism of the Senses in World Cinema:*

*The Experience of Physical Reality*

Tiago de Luca

*Stars in World Cinema: Screen Icons and Star Systems Across Cultures*

Edited by Andrea Bandhauer and Michelle Royer

*The Cinema of Jia Zhangke:*

*Realism and Memory in Chinese Film*

Cecilia Mello

*The Cinema of Sri Lanka: South Asian Film in Texts and Contexts*

Ian Conrich

*The New Generation in Chinese Animation*

Shaopeng Chen

*The Spanish Fantastic: Contemporary*

*Filmmaking in Horror, Fantasy and Sci-fi*

Shelagh-Rowan Legg

*Theorizing World Cinema*

Edited by Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah

Queries, ideas and submissions to :

Series Editor: Professor Lúcia Nagib -  
l.nagib@reading.ac.uk

Series Editor: Dr. Julian Ross -  
j.a.ross@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Publisher at Bloomsbury, Rebecca Barden -  
Rebecca.Barden@bloomsbury.com

# On Cinema

Glauber Rocha

Edited by Ismail Xavier

General Coordination by Lúcia Nagib

Final text and notes by Cecília Mello

Translation by Stephanie Dennison and  
Charlotte Smith

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC  
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC  
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc  
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK  
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA  
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo  
are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain by I.B. Tauris 2019  
Paperback edition published by Bloomsbury Academic 2022

Copyright © The Estate of Glauber Rocha 2019

The texts written by Glauber Rocha which comprise this anthology have  
been previously published in the following volumes:

*Revisão crítica do cinema brasileiro* © 2003 Cosac Naify, São Paulo, Brazil  
*Revolução do cinema novo* © 2004 Cosac Naify, São Paulo, Brazil  
*O século do cinema* © 2006 Cosac Naify, São Paulo, Brazil

This anthology is published with the permission of and by arrangement  
with the Glauber Rocha estate.

The right of Glauber Rocha to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted  
by the Glauber Rocha Estate in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Introduction copyright © Ismail Xavier 2019  
Preface copyright © Lúcia Nagib 2019

For legal purposes the Acknowledgements on pp. x-xiv constitute an  
extension of this copyright page.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or  
transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,  
including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval  
system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for,  
any third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given  
in this book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher  
regret any inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have  
ceased to exist, but can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-7807-6703-1  
PB: 978-1-3502-5317-9  
ePDF: 978-1-7867-3186-9  
ePub: 978-1-7867-2186-0

Series: World Cinema

Typeset in Minion Pro by OKS Prepress Services, Chennai, India

To find out more about our authors and books visit  
[www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com) and sign up for our newsletters.

# Contents

<b>List of Figures</b>	ix
<b>Preface and Acknowledgements by Lúcia Nagib</b>	x
<b>Introduction by Ismail Xavier</b>	1
Glauber Rocha's <i>On Cinema</i>	3
<b><i>Revisão Crítica do Cinema Brasileiro/</i></b>	
<b>Critical Review of Brazilian Cinema</b>	13
Introduction	13
Method	15
Humberto Mauro and the Historical Situation	19
<b><i>Revolução do Cinema Novo/The Cinema Novo</i></b>	
<b>Revolution</b>	30
The Cinema Process (1961)	30
<i>Barren Lives (Vidas secas)</i> (1964)	37
An Aesthetics of Hunger (1965)	41
Revolution is an Aesthetics (1967)	46
The Cinematographic Revolution (1967)	48
Tricontinental (1967)	51
<i>Positif</i> (1967)	58
<i>Cinema Novo</i> and the Adventure of Creation (1968)	75
Tropicalism, Anthropology, Myth, Ideography (1969)	100
<i>América Nuestra</i> (1969)	104
Discussion of the Concept of Aesthetics and its Political Function	106
This Is How the Revolution in Cinema Is Made (1970)	114
An Aesthetics of Dreams (1971)	121

## On Cinema

<b><i>O Século do Cinema/The Century of Cinema</i></b>	126
Chaplin	126
Welles	129
James Dean – Angel and Myth	132
David Lean	133
Juvenile Delinquency	136
John Huston – Physical Technique and Aesthetic Technique	142
Stanley Kubrick	144
Western – Introduction to the Genre and to the Hero <i>The Searchers</i>	150
The New Western	152
The 12 Commandments of Our Lord Buñuel	154
The Morality of a New Christ	159
The Neorealism of Rossellini	172
Filmic Dramaturgy: Visconti	178
Cinema's Form and Sense	187
Visconti and the Nerves of Rocco	192
Viscontian Baroque	193
The Splendour of a God	199
Antonioni	204
Funeral Space	209
Glauber Fellini	211
Pasolini	214
New Cinema in the World	235
<i>Alphaville</i>	241
Do You Like Jean-Luc Godard? (if not, you're out)	252
Godardean	257
<b>Notes</b>	265
<b>Index</b>	268

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 0.1</b> Facsimile hand-drawn cover for <i>O século do cinema</i>	xi
<b>Figure 0.2</b> Glauber Rocha in Jean-Luc Godard's <i>Wind from the East</i>	xii
<b>Figure 2.1</b> Glauber Rocha and Fritz Lang (Montreal, 1968)	112
<b>Figure 3.1</b> Glauber Rocha and Luis Buñuel (Montreal, 1967)	160
<b>Figure 3.2</b> Glauber Rocha and Roberto Rossellini (Venice, 1967)	180
<b>Figure 3.3</b> Glauber Rocha and Jean Renoir (Cannes, 1969)	244

## Preface and Acknowledgements

It is now eleven years since we first embarked, in 2007, on the project to bring for the first time to the English reader the key writings on cinema by Brazil's most iconic filmmaker and *cinema novo* leader, Glauber Rocha. The project coincided with the launch of the I.B.Tauris World Cinema Series, which includes among its aims to reveal to audiences around the world the diversity, creativity and originality of thought on cinema produced in languages other than English. A prolific and eloquent writer, Rocha left his thoughts and daily experiences minutely registered in thousands of press articles, letters, manifestoes, poems, novels and plays, many of them available in book form in the Portuguese language, collected in volumes prepared by Rocha himself or by dedicated scholars such as Ivana Bentes, who in 1997 edited *Cartas ao mundo* (Letters to the World),<sup>1</sup> a hefty and precious selection of his international correspondence.

The current collection of articles was facilitated by the fact that publisher CosacNaify, in São Paulo, had just launched, between 2003 and 2006, the most complete, entirely revised, superbly designed and richly illustrated editions of Rocha's three foundational books of film criticism he had himself organized: *Revisão crítica do cinema brasileiro* (Critical Review of Brazilian Cinema, first published in 1963); *Revolução do Cinema Novo* (The Cinema Novo Revolution, first published in 1981); and *O século do cinema* (The Century of Cinema, first published posthumously in 1983, two years after Rocha's untimely death at 42 years of age). Ismail Xavier, Rocha's greatest specialist and foremost Brazilian film scholar, having actively contributed to and introduced these new editions, graciously accepted to select and introduce writings extracted from them that would provide a concise but representative profile of Rocha as a film writer for the English reader. Because CosacNaify was in possession of all copyrights of the materials included in the three volumes, negotiations proceeded swiftly and cheaply, not least thanks to the goodwill and commitment on the part

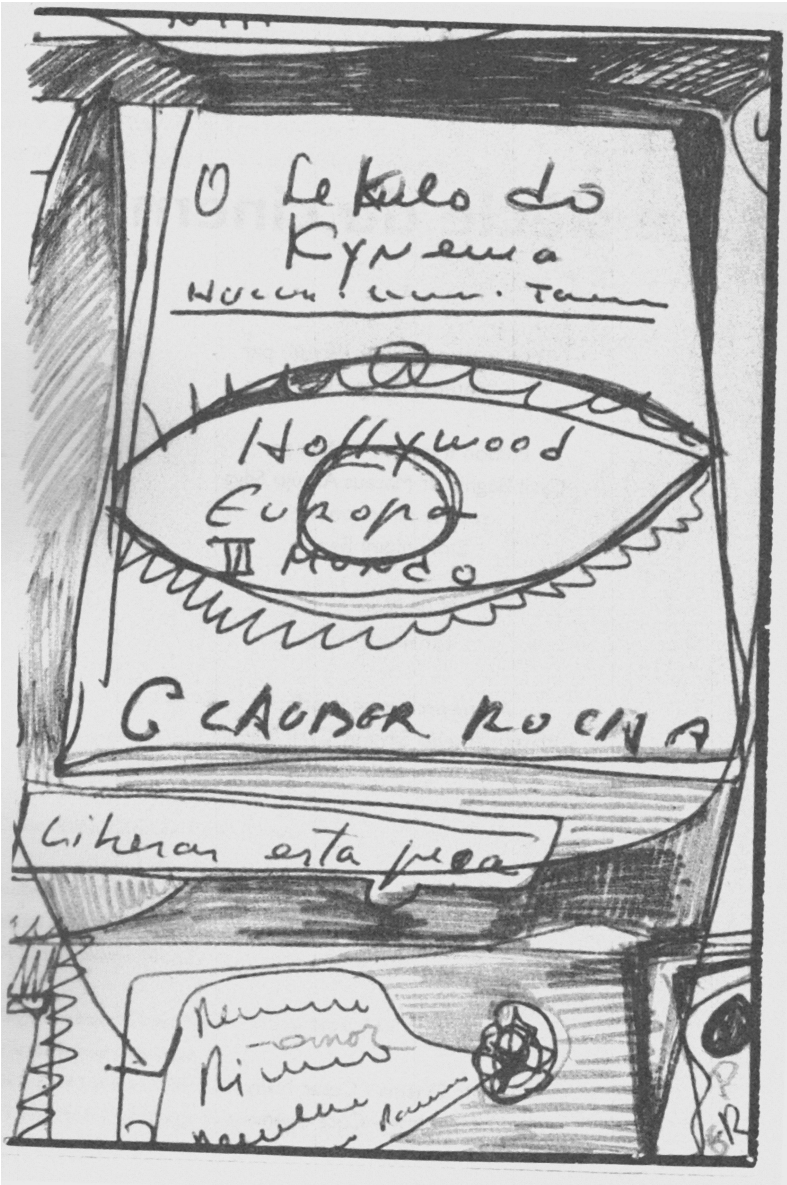


Figure 0.1 Facsimile hand-drawn cover for *O século do cinema*.

## On Cinema



**Figure 0.2** Glauber Rocha in Jean-Luc Godard's *Wind from the East*.

of CosacNaify's editorial director, Augusto Massi, and I.B.Tauris's visual culture editor, Philippa Brewster. Another key player was Leslie Bethell, the dynamic director of the then thriving Oxford Centre for Brazilian Studies who, on hearing about the project, did not hesitate to offer his support in the form of a grant from his Centre to fund the translation work.

Despite the backing of these cultural and scholarly heavy-weights, a major challenge remained, namely to do justice, in the English language, to Rocha's feverish, visionary and uniquely personal writing style. Rocha's ambition was not restricted to revolutionizing Brazilian and world cinema, but also language, to the extent that from the mid-1970s he started to use his own spelling of Portuguese, even revisiting and adapting to it some of his previous writings. Thus, for example, his groundbreaking 1965 manifesto, 'An Aesthetics of Hunger', or, in Portuguese, 'Estética da fome', was changed to 'Eztetyka da fome'; likewise, the title of one of his books utilised here, *O século do cinema*, was changed to *O Sekulo do Kynema*. Rather than based on a new, coherent linguistic code, Rocha's spelling testified, on the one hand, to his refusal to abide by any standardized practices and, on the other, to a strong visual element stemming from his talent as a draughtsman and visual artist, leading to a preference for the angular 'Y' and 'K' (nonexistent in the Portuguese spelling) and for the alphabet's last letter 'Z'. This, combined with his poetic verve – a ground of

## Preface and Acknowledgements

aesthetic communion with Eisenstein's ideographic montage and Pasolini's 'cinema of poetry' – inspired him to create synthetic and often hilarious neologisms and puns in his writings which are, however, in most cases, untranslatable into other languages.

Again, on the translation front, we were lucky to meet with the willingness of one of Britain's top Brazilian film scholars, Stephanie Dennison, and a competent professional translator, Charlotte Smith, whose work cut through the major linguistic stumbling blocks; but time and money were exhausted before the many lingering queries were resolved. So more time was spent with funding applications with a view to enabling the work to continue. This time it was the Brazilian Embassy in London and the Brazilian Foreign Office in Brasília (the Itamaraty) who came to our rescue with complementary funding. With this crucial but rather modest help, we managed to lure into the team the brilliant Brazilian world-cinema scholar Cecília Mello, whose magisterial work on this book cannot be praised highly enough. Mello went through the entire text with a magnifying lens that exposed minor mistakes, information gaps and a great number of details that could prove mystifying for a non-Brazilian readership. She then undertook exhaustive research in order to clarify them all in more than a hundred endnotes, in addition to those provided by editor Ismail Xavier for the Brazilian editions; a few extra notes were added by the translators and by myself. Unfortunately, Rocha's creative spelling had to go, but the reader will hopefully recognize in the English prose his particular humour and inventiveness, alongside his uncompromising critical eye, in dealing with the work of others as well as his own.

But this is not yet the end of the story. Quite unexpectedly, CosacNaify closed its doors a few years ago, and the copyrights they held for the Glauber Rocha writings and illustrations returned to the filmmaker's estate, and had to be renegotiated from scratch. Another protracted round of correspondence and funding applications took place until the new acquisition of the copyrights was completed, thanks to a funding contribution made by the Centre for Film Aesthetics and Cultures (CFAC), School of Art and Communication Design, University of Reading, and goodwill on the part of the Glauber Rocha estate. Credit is also due to the Cinemateca Brasileira, in São Paulo, current holder of the Glauber Rocha collection, which granted us cost-free use of the cover image.

## On Cinema

After this veritable saga, there are now, at long last, plenty of reasons to celebrate. In fact, this book is coming out as the world commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of May 1968 when politics ruled the day in cinema, and Rocha's work was being discovered and fêted in the United States and Europe for its revolutionary power. In particular in France, where he would go into exile in 1971 with the recrudescence of the Brazilian military dictatorship, Rocha's role as a trailblazer was hailed in unison by critics at the time and symbolically enshrined, in 1969, in a pivotal scene in Godard/Dziga Vertov group's film *Wind from the East* (*Le Vent d'est*). In it, Rocha appears standing on a crossroads with open arms, indicating the direction of political cinema to a heavily-pregnant passer-by and singing verses from Caetano Veloso's Tropicália song, 'Divino Maravilhoso' (Divine and Marvellous). As Godard had sensed, Rocha was himself an artistic and political event, and so is his film criticism, whether on the evolving *cinema novo* production, international idols such as Buñuel, Ford, Lang, Welles, Visconti, or direct interlocutors such as Pasolini and Godard. My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to all those who placed their trust in the risky and painstaking enterprise of translating to English this essential part of Glauber Rocha's unique, 'divine and marvellous' body of work.

**Lúcia Nagib**  
**General Coordinator of *On Cinema*, by Glauber Rocha**

# Introduction

*Ismail Xavier*

This collection brings together articles that reflect Glauber Rocha's thoughts at different stages of his life and career. Rocha's development as a filmmaker coincides with the rise and apogee of modern cinema, which found in the *Brazilian Cinema Novo* a privileged expression and in Rocha its uncontested leader. Before delving into his articles, a brief look at Rocha's biography is in order so as to offer a clearer insight into his development as a filmmaker.

Glauber Rocha (1939–1981) started to develop as an artist at the University of Bahia, in Salvador, where he was involved in theatrical performances and became acquainted with Bertolt Brecht's dramaturgy. His cinephilic initiation, enabled by the growth of cineclub activities in Salvador, dates from the same period. Still in his teens, and informed by the cineclub screenings and ensuing debates he regularly attended, Rocha started to contribute to magazines in 1956. He was soon established as a critic who combined cinephilic erudition in all kinds of cinema and engagement in the defence of a new cinema he called for in Brazil, inspired by Italian neorealism and the French *nouvelle vague*. He was soon travelling around the country, disseminating his militant ideas on cinema in Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and São Paulo.

In 1959, he made an experimental short film called *Pátio*, the first evidence of his commitment to a cinema of invention, a position he would further develop in his first feature-length film, *Barravento* (*The Turning Wind*, 1961). This film leaves no doubt as to Rocha's intention to combine his aesthetic sensibility with the imperatives of political cinema, a feature that became distinctive of his cinematic output as a whole. Even before his

## On Cinema

Cinema Novo masterpiece, *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* (*Black God, White Devil*), came to light in 1964, he had already launched his campaign for Cinema Novo in the book *Revisão crítica do cinema brasileiro* (*A Critical Review of Brazilian Cinema*), which consolidated his position as leader of the new generation of filmmakers in the early 1960s. It was, however, with *Black God, White Devil* that his method of articulating aesthetics and politics came into full effect. The film was very well received by Brazilian critics, going on to be screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1964 and to project Glauber Rocha's name internationally.

*Terra em transe* (*Entranced Earth*, 1967), another masterpiece, generated heated debates in Brazil, mobilizing artists from all branches (popular music, theatre, visual arts), as well as writers and political activists. The film's impact consolidated Rocha's cinema as the focus of attention for the Americas and Europe. It found particular resonance within the French cinematic context, bringing about the director's partnership with French producer Claude Antoine, who co-produced *O dragão da maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro* (*Antonio das Mortes*), the winner of the Best Director Award at the Cannes Festival in 1969.

Between 1969 and 1976, finding himself unable to return to Brazil given his opposition to the military regime, Rocha exercised his craft abroad. He wrote screenplays, some of which remained unfilmed, continued his militancy as a critic and shot films in different countries: *Der leone have sept cabeças* (*The Seven-Headed Lion*, 1970) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; *Cabezas Cortadas* (*Cutting Heads*, 1971) in Spain; *Claro* (1975) in Italy. During a stint in Cuba in 1972, he edited the film *Câncer* (*Cancer*), shot in Brazil in 1968, and started to make *História do Brasil* (co-directed by Marcos Medeiros), which he completed in Italy in 1974. He found in this constant wandering a way of carrying out his function as a 'tricontinental filmmaker', an idea he had elaborated on in several of his interviews and articles.

Having returned to Brazil in 1976, he shot, in 1977, his documentaries *Di Cavalcanti* and *Jorjamado no cinema*. In 1980, Rocha completed his last film, *A idade da terra* (*The Age of the Earth*), which was screened in the same year at the Venice Film Festival, where he became embroiled in some disastrous polemics with Italian and French critics.

This last battle sealed the trajectory of a filmmaker whose talent combined the vigour of the polemist and the cogency of the critic and

## Introduction

animated him until his death. His criticism was documented in two books he had prepared for publication before his departure for Venice in 1980: *Revolução do Cinema Novo* (*The Cinema Novo Revolution*) and *O século do cinema* (*The Century of Cinema*), both consisting of anthologies of his articles and interviews.

The last stop of his pilgrimage was Portugal, following his devastating experience at the Venice Film Festival. The excesses that had characterized his febrile and tireless confrontation with the world came to take their toll during his Portuguese sojourn, where he reeled from the accumulated tension of his convulsive career. In August 1981, at 42 years of age and in the last throes of a grave illness, he returned to Brazil to die in his home country.

### Glauber Rocha's *On Cinema*

This volume brings together articles extracted from the three Glauber Rocha books mentioned above: *Revisão crítica do cinema brasileiro* (*A Critical Review of Brazilian Cinema*, 1963), *Revolução do Cinema Novo* (*The Cinema Novo Revolution*, 1980) and *O século do cinema* (*The Century of Cinema*, 1983), which express, each in their own time, Rocha's combative verve and unique style in distributing praise and blows. The latter book only saw the light of day after Rocha's death; its first, heavily copy-edited edition was based on a manuscript he left behind when he went, in 1980, to the Venice Festival where his last film, *The Age of the Earth*, was screened.

The first section of this volume starts with the Introduction he wrote for *A Critical Review of Brazilian Cinema*, his first book, in which the very young critic calls upon his generation to create a new cinema, even before his cinematic masterpieces had started to give shape to his revolutionary ideas. As the Introduction announces and briefly anticipates, *A Critical Review* sums up the militancy of a filmmaker who, at the age of 24, was already an influential personality in the defence of an authorial political cinema, a modern style that made ample use of the handheld camera and jump cuts, in tune with the scarcity of resources then available in Brazil. His agenda was in line with the *politique des auteurs* promoted by the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, albeit inflected by his radical attack on Brazilian cinema's 'industrial illusions', along the lines of his very personal mode of

## On Cinema

confronting the film industry's regulating powers and marketing imperatives. For Rocha, already at this early stage, aesthetic expression was necessarily a response to and a struggle against historical conjunctures that created all kinds of economic obstacles for film production in Brazil.

Guided by this principle, Rocha evaluates in the successive chapters the experience of the previous decades of Brazilian cinema and gives his opinion on its most important phases and filmmakers. In terms of historical importance, his preference lies with Humberto Mauro, whose silent films were shot in his hometown of Cataguazes. In a chapter about him, reproduced in this collection, Rocha warrants Mauro the status of a predecessor of the new generation and of a key filmmaker who, his lack of formal training notwithstanding, was capable of expressing a worldview, of being authentic while making films with minimal resources. In Rocha's view, Mauro's intuitive power should inspire youngsters to overcome their inferiority complex and embrace artistic creation under the principle of 'an idea in mind and a camera in hand'. This historical survey allows Rocha to proclaim what should serve as the matrix of Cinema Novo and what should be discarded. *A Critical Review of Brazilian Cinema* is not a history of cinema, but an act of militancy aimed at establishing a new project and, as is usually the case with the leaders of new movements, 'inventing a tradition' that will be in the leader's interest to cherish.<sup>1</sup>

*The Cinema Novo Revolution* is a collection of articles and interviews in which the voice of the experienced filmmaker, enjoying an international profile, prevails. The pieces contained in the book focus on two periods of Rocha's artistic trajectory: the 1960s and the period between 1978 and 1980. Together, they offer what Rocha seems to consider the legitimate legacy of Cinema Novo and of his experience as a 'tricontinental filmmaker', forged during his travels around the world.<sup>2</sup>

The first two pieces selected from this book are 'The Cinema Process' (1961) and the article 'Barren Lives (*Vidas secas*)', written in 1964. They represent a first stage in the development of Rocha's ideas concerning auteur cinema and its particular predicaments in an underdeveloped country. The 1961 piece, more than a declaration of principles, is an expression of his anxieties towards the Hollywood film production that dominated the Brazilian market. Filmmakers have to face the permanent tension between the desire for undisturbed authorial expression and the inevitable economic and political constraints of their practice. The result is

## Introduction

frustration and a sense of sacrifice, felt most acutely in the Brazilian context up to the late 1950s. The article on *Barren Lives* is a good example of Rocha's enthusiastic support of auteur Nelson Pereira dos Santos, who was able to overcome all economic and industrial obstacles and make one of the first Cinema Novo masterpieces.

'An Aesthetics of Hunger', written in 1965, is the first Rocha manifesto of major impact abroad, containing a synthesis of his criticism of the Europeans. It consists of a paper presented at the Instituto Columbianum in Genoa, on the occasion of a Latin American Cinema Retrospective, in which Rocha coined the formula 'an aesthetics of hunger'. It proclaims that revolutionary filmmakers in Latin America, instead of struggling to gain access to a film industry out of reach, should forge their own aesthetics out of the very lack of resources, taking hunger not simply as its subject, but also as its formal principle. Rocha was engaged not only in defending the social and political content of the Cinema Novo works but also in resorting to the semantic space of hunger which was comparable to the actual situation of filmmakers in need of a new creative method. By confronting the industrial codes of practice, a stylistic difference would emerge which would necessarily constitute an act of aggression – an aesthetics of violence.

In his speech in Genoa, Rocha comments on the inevitable misunderstanding, on the part of the developed countries, of the Third World experience, emphasizing what he sees as Latin America's structural condition of alterity with regard to Europe. His arguments lie on a geopolitical axis of confrontation and estrangement in which the oppressed only become visible (and occasionally a subject) through violence. Drawing on Frantz Fanon, he points to the social, economic, cultural and psychological barriers separating the universe of hunger from the developed world.<sup>3</sup>

'An Aesthetics of Dreams' (1971) can be seen as a sequel to 'An Aesthetics of Hunger'. Like the 1965 manifesto read in Genoa, it had a significant repercussion when it came out in response to the critical reception of his film *Antonio das Mortes (O dragão da maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro, 1969)* in the United States.<sup>4</sup> The paper gives Rocha the opportunity to adjust his principles to the new stylistic options adopted in this film and radicalized in his subsequent films made in exile, such as *Der leone have sept cabeças (The Seven-Headed Lion, 1970)* and *Cabezas Cortadas (Cutting Heads, 1971)*.

## On Cinema

In his writings during the 1960s, Rocha had emphasized how art's revolutionary vocation emerges within a geopolitical confrontation involving ethnic, class and transnational conflicts. In 1971, 'An Aesthetics of Dreams' makes clear that if art is a human practice pertaining to the symbolic field, it is not enough to defend its political dimension of confrontation and risk. It is equally necessary to understand that any poetic intervention in the social sphere requires a rupture with common sense, a disregard of all limits and conventions. For him, art should express human experience in its totality. Free from the strict control of rationality, art embraces the magical moment, tunes in with the dreams of the oppressed, gives voice to unconscious drives. Art, like revolution itself, expresses rebellions unleashed by unbearable situations, giving shape to the unpredictable in the historical world. Art is 'surreal, expressive, delirious', though not as in the surrealist automatic writing, but in its power to reach deep into the popular imaginary in a way that only art can do. This sign language acquired from popular culture is made of condensations which work in the manner of ideograms – and here Rocha's reference is Eisenstein. This is the filmmaker's raw material and it cannot be evaluated through the parameters of aesthetic realism – particularly if it is a criticism inspired by Georg Lukács who attacked Franz Kafka and other twentieth-century writers for their allegorical tendencies.<sup>5</sup> His reiterated aim is the epic-didactic cinema conceived as a ritual against the dominant reason, against cinema as a bourgeois institution, and in favour of an art in tune with popular mythology, an art that performs a material appropriation (of body, gesture and word) which is liberating in the face of the consensual social order.

Together with these two seminal papers, a group of articles published between 1967 and 1970 and an interview for the magazine *Positif* (1967) were selected from *The Cinema Novo Revolution*. They provide a multifaceted picture of the way in which Rocha's ideas concerning the new auteur cinema from Latin America were presented alongside and in relation to his explanatory and polemical accounts of the Cinema Novo aesthetics and political militancy.

'Revolution is an Aesthetics' (1967) expresses his principles for a revolutionary cinema in the form of an exposition and defence of the epic-didactic form as opposed to a realist cinema, combined with commentaries on the film cultures of Mexico, Argentina, Cuba and Brazil.

## Introduction

'The Cinematographic Revolution' (1967) focuses on the social conditions and formal challenges faced by revolutionary cinema, commenting on the forms of organization that can provide a common denominator for politically engaged filmmakers. 'Tricontinental' (1967) is a provocative text, sometimes erratic and telegraphic, sometimes systematic in the development of Rocha's argument in defence of a tricontinental cinema: 'Tricontinental – auteur cinema, political cinema, *counter*-cinema, is a guerrilla cinema; in its origins it's brutal and imprecise, romantic and suicidal, but it will become epic/didactic'.

Why 'brutal and imprecise' in its origins? This question finds an indirect answer in his provocative comments on different experiences of Latin American cinema in its appropriation of national indigenous culture. It is a strategy he indeed supports but only when combined with that demand for the 'epic/didactic' which expresses his concern for the political effects provided by the incorporation of procedures taken from Bertolt Brecht's theatre. This demand for the dialogue with Brecht is yet another aspect of his concern for a productive interaction between Latin American cinema and different trends of the European modern cinema, a concern that he combines with his attack on filmmakers aligned with 'dogmatic socialism'. The following article brings the reader back to Brazil for a specific critical appraisal of Cinema Novo films, in 'Cinema Novo and the Adventure of Creation', a paper Rocha wrote after the filming of *Entranced Earth* (1967). This article conducts a broad review of Brazilian cinema history, with an emphasis on the major Cinema Novo films of the 1960s up to his own 1967 masterpiece, *Entranced Earth*, which launches a scathing criticism against the pedagogical premises of leftwing art and the strategies employed by Brazilian artists in general in their relationship with history. It is interesting to compare this historical appraisal with his interview with Michel Ciment published in *Positif* in 1967, where he clarifies many passages of *Entranced Earth* and its impact on Cinema Novo. The years 1967–1968 see the emergence of Tropicalismo, a new turn in Brazilian culture provoked by the veritable shockwave represented by *Entranced Earth*, ushering in a period of intense debate on the relationship between aesthetics and politics in which Rocha took centre stage. In 'Tropicalism, Anthropology, Myth, Ideography' (1969),<sup>6</sup> he refers to that 1967 cultural turn in order to take stock of auteur cinema's connection with traditions relating to both indigenous mythologies and the cultures of the European

## On Cinema

colonizers. Rocha's take includes an anthropological and linguistic interest, evident in his notion of 'ideography'.

In the two remaining pieces of this section, the reader will find examples of Rocha's informality in combining prosaic references to everyday life and conceptual remarks on cinema, culture and politics. The first contains his 1969 'untimely notes' for a never made film, the epic poem 'América Nuestra', written in a style which is at once affective and provocative. A mosaic of references describes his personal experiences in Brazil and abroad, including his relationship with filmmakers and writers (Eisenstein, Godard, Buñuel, Rossellini, Visconti, Brecht, Borges, Neruda, Guimarães Rosa, among others) whose works had inspired him and the major difficulties faced by Latin American artists in creating their masterpieces. The second, 'This Is How the Revolution in Cinema Is Made' (1970), reminisces about his encounters in Rome with Bernardo Bertolucci, Miklós Jancsó, Jean-Marie Straub and Pierre Clementi, rendering a friendly and erratic report on their personal experiences and thoughts concerning filmmaking and its predicaments, both in capitalist and socialist countries.

These two latter texts give us the basis for a better understanding of Rocha's articles and reviews selected from *The Century of Cinema*, the book collecting his criticism of American and European cinema, from his early days as a cinephile to the 1970s.

*The Century of Cinema* draws a retrospective of Rocha's encounters with his peers. On the one hand, it offers an enlightening summary of the evolution of Rocha's critical thought; on the other, it lays out the network of affinities and alliances he established in the international arena over the years. Once again, his aesthetic intuitions and political convictions gain expression in critical reviews where formal invention and ideological militancy are seen as a matter of style.

The articles and reviews from the 1950s and early 1960s show that Rocha the cinephile is a rigorous aesthete endowed with great intimacy with the film form and a passion for detail, be it in relation to American classical cinema or his favourite European films. At the same time, the way in which he expresses his judgement on film auteurs and their works is directly related to aspects of his own experience.

In our selection, the majority of the articles focus on filmmakers he admires. As we can see in those pieces, politics has always been a decisive

## Introduction

and all-pervading element for him, stretching from major social events to minor daily issues, from the career of the statesman to the life of the artist, from the letter of the law to the dramaturgy of the zoom lens, for example, in a film by Luchino Visconti. Rocha sees politics in Orson Welles's search for the imponderable – Welles knew how to 'dramatize power'. He sees politics in Eisenstein's taste for graphics and the 'geometry of temporal processes'. He also sees politics in Godard's nervous poetry which saturates image, text and sound, capturing the spectator in a fascinating apparatus which Rocha defines as a 'poetic form of despair' (the reference here is *Pierrot le fou*, 1965). Like Godard, Antonioni, for Rocha, is another driving force of modern cinema. *The Eclipse* (*L'eclisse*, 1962) is the great 'funeral space' (as the title of another selected article goes), the document of a dead bourgeois world, a work which illuminates man, a monument to lucidity. Antonioni is a great master of the cinematic language, which is evident in the way he creates a 'dialectic of alienation' by means of mise-en-scène and images.

Politics tend to complicate rather than simplify things, as soon as the critic turns away from dogmatism, and this is precisely what Rocha does in his film reviews included here, be it in relation to Westerns (three selected reviews),<sup>7</sup> gangster films or those by his favourite filmmakers Welles, Eisenstein, Godard and Antonioni. Not by accident, these were the auteurs accused of formalism by some leftwing critics adept of Italian neo-realism and social pedagogy, who failed to understand Welles, 'the main interpreter of imperialist tragedy', or Rossellini, who created a 'new method to capture the real in its flow' and understood that reality cannot be reduced to logic because it is full of surprises.

For Rocha, form and style take pride of place, but only if they interact with life and history. The films he is interested in are pervaded by sex, politics, ambitions, encounters, passion and deceptions. Art does not allow for the separation of these elements, hence his praise of Eisenstein as a filmmaker who promotes a synthesis of sensibility and intellect, emotion and reason. Although there is no piece specifically devoted to an Eisenstein film in *The Century of Cinema*, he is a key reference in Rocha's articles on his favourite modern European filmmakers, such as Godard, Visconti, Buñuel and Resnais (see, for example, 'The Splendour of a God', 'New Cinema in the World' and 'Viscontian Baroque'). Eisenstein is Rocha's reference when he discusses Alain Resnais' use of the interior monologue.

## On Cinema

For Rocha, Resnais has performed a revolution with which he has every reason to identify, given the nature of his own formal project regarding, for example, the complex sound-image relationship as seen in *Earth Enraptured*. He compares Eisenstein's procedures with William Faulkner's use of 'simultaneous and progressive accumulation of conflicts', as he says. The writer is a source of inspiration for him in his defence of modern cinema.

Distancing himself from realism, Rocha saw cinema as an art able to mobilize the great 'forms of culture', such as the myth, biblical narratives, the epic tale and tragedy. According to him, these genres are already cemented in the popular imagination and the collective unconscious. They are also rooted in national traditions, as is the case with opera in Italy, the ground on which Visconti's cinema thrived. Rocha is not worried about psychological realism and the trials of everyday life, but rather with ethical and political behaviours that establish a link between individual action and the movement of history, as the director of *Ossessione* (1943) and *Senso* (1954) did. For Rocha, Visconti is the most lucid of all the masters in his appropriation of melodrama.

Buñuel, in turn, is the filmmaker who has overcome the state of anguish which plagues twentieth-century artists. His cinematic strength derives from a single, primordial drive for freedom. The extraordinary force of his images comes from his particular ironical mode of unveiling an imaginary rooted in religious repression and of retrieving, on the symbolic level of experience, the 'creative' energy derived from the sublimation of desire.

Pasolini is the focus of a tense debate in Rocha's writings, as seen in the pieces about him included here. In them, Pasolini's films are the object of admiration and distance alternately, an ambivalence that reflects Rocha's own struggle with the commingling of politics, the body, sexuality and popular mythology, in particular Christian. Rocha finds in Pasolini's work the same popular Mediterranean imaginary brought into South America by the Iberian colonizers, which found fertile ground among the peasantry.

As for American cinema, aside from Welles, it is Charles Chaplin the filmmaker with whom Rocha identifies the most. In his words, Chaplin 'illuminates the twentieth century because through him the People are given Image'. He represents the underdog's ironic response to the

## Introduction

inequities of the century. Chaplin produced an art of resistance that prefigured the kind of political and popular cinema that would flourish in postwar Italy. Generally speaking, Rocha was attracted to the historical and national significance of the Hollywood genres of his preference. He drew lessons from American cinema from the outset, establishing an intense dialogue with the Western as a genre where conflicts find a direct mode of expression. The sublimation of massacre into *mise-en-scène* transfigures history into myth and captures the fascination of the young critic when the legend proves more complex in the hands of someone like John Ford. In a pre-urban world, the characters' imaginary expands to the point of heroism becoming life itself, a life imbued with pathos and free from bureaucratic rationalization, bourgeois routine and the comforts of civilization. In the realm of modernity, Rocha's attention veers towards the radical authenticity of James Dean, a preference that many may find surprising. However, for him, Dean embodied a sense of tragedy and desperation in the face of material wealth, a kind of non-complacent egocentrism. Dean was the myth who conflated nihilistic youth and the violence engendered by the American Empire and its material power. He added a new and impactful iconography to the 'cultural malaise' of the 1950s: fast cars, black jackets and facial nervousness.

Resorting to Rocha's figurative language, we could say that the century of cinema is the century of violence. In it, one lives between the American tragedy and the betrayed revolution, between the dream of cinema and monetary reality. Banned to exile by society, the artist has no alternative other than subversion. Nobody staged the tragedy of Capital better than Welles-Kane, in the film that Eisenstein would have liked to have made in the United States; and no one represented the betrayed revolution better than Eisenstein, the Russian genius whose *Ivan, The Terrible II* is a poetic criticism of the ways in which Marxism had been reduced to technopositivism in the Stalin era. For Rocha, many great auteurs should have incorporated the unconscious in the manner of Buñuel, who gave free rein to his transgressive imagination.

For Glauber Rocha, the century of cinema is a baroque drama which could have been conceived by a Shakespearean playwright. But it gave room to a heroic aesthetic whose best expression can be found in the Cinema Novo revolution. Rocha was part and parcel of it, not only as a filmmaker and critic, but also as the young author of a book which

## On Cinema

promotes a revision of Brazilian cinema and launches a new tradition, in Eric Hobsbawm's expression quoted above. Rocha's writings reframe art as an experimental laboratory of conflicts at all levels: formal, dramatic and thematic. His imperative has always been to stage experiences of great social resonance, combining collective destinies, the interests of power and the violence that forever postpones the utopian liberation of the oppressed.

# *Revisão Crítica do Cinema Brasileiro*

## **Critical Review of Brazilian Cinema**

### **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Brazilian film culture is precarious and marginal: we have film clubs and two film archives, but we do not have a publication of either informational, critical or theoretical importance. When it comes to bibliography, apart from books by Alberto Cavalcanti (*Filme e realidade*)<sup>2</sup> and Alex Viany (*Introdução ao cinema brasileiro*),<sup>3</sup> there are only two or three translations of the most famous works (Georges Sadoul<sup>4</sup> and Umberto Barbaro),<sup>5</sup> as well as essays by Salvyano Cavalcanti de Paiva (that deal with American cinema),<sup>6</sup> *The Cinema Primer* by Carlos Ortiz,<sup>7</sup> and other film-related works.

The effort required to educate oneself in theory or practice is inhuman: critics usually begin work on student papers and steadily progress to the literary supplements of large newspapers or specialist pages in magazines. They earn very little, even if they get their own column. Their salary is not enough to pay for subscriptions to essential periodicals such as *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Téléciné*, *Cinema Nuovo*, *Films and Filming* and *Sight and Sound*. Thus, critics, filmmakers and dilettantes are constantly behind the times when it comes to what's happening in the world of film. Ideas, when they reach us, are either old hat or obsolete.

Most critics are specialists in American cinema because it's easier to talk about these films without too much concern for cultural detail. If the critic is linked to foreign distributors, he suddenly becomes an expert in a given area: Japanese cinema, Russian cinema, French cinema; in most cases

## On Cinema

the critic has to survive by brokering publicity between his newspaper and a particular distributor. Every critic is an island; Brazilian film thought doesn't exist and it's for that very reason that the filmmakers, those sources that are isolated in intention and confusion, both genuine and dishonest, lack definition. Theoretically, the climate is one of 'everything goes'; after 1962, whatever was not considered *chanchada*<sup>8</sup> became *cinema novo*.

The novice director suffers more than the critic; the field in which he operates hasn't been professionalized, there's no training available in theory, and there aren't enough productions to sustain an uninterrupted and evolving practice. The novice is a suicide victim who is forced to abandon his commitments and suffer humiliation until, through pure chance, he is able to direct a film. In this process, the least pretentious among them, those who only want a career, and perhaps some money and success, will sooner or later find their feet: they'll dream up storylines with spurious narrative effects, and they'll show little interest in the ideological meaning of the films, or in the cultural significance of cinema. They'll make films despite cinema and without knowing the cinema. Meanwhile, the auteurs are easily defeated. While in Europe and the United States there are still opportunities to be had for directors blessed with intelligence, culture and sensitivity, in Brazil such qualities are synonymous with madness, irresponsibility and communism.

In our cinematographic environment a director is measured by the loudness of his voice; if he shouts in the studio or the dubbing suite he's a great director, respected by technicians, actors and producers. He's further measured by his so-called capacity to work, reflected in his willingness to carry the tripod to film some tale masquerading as a 'serious film'; he throws in naked women and pornography, he makes two films per year, and he acquires god-like status. On the other hand, there is the auteur director, who rejects the 'story', the 'studio', the 'star', the 'reflectors', 'box-office success'; the auteur who only needs an operator, a camera, some film stock and the basics for the lab; the auteur whose only demand is for freedom.

With the end of the *chanchada*, commercial cinema has appeared as the greatest and most complex enemy of cinema in Brazil. The auteur, in his creative obsession, will have to overcome incomprehension, bad faith, anti-professionalism, intellectual poverty within the field and a mean-spirited disrespect from the critics.

## Method

François Truffaut rightly pointed out that ‘... *il n’y a pas davantage ni bons ni mauvais films. Il y a seulement des auteurs de films et leur politique, par la force même des choses, irréprochable.*’<sup>9</sup>

Adapting the ‘auteur method’, first analysed by French critic André Bazin, the history of the cinema can no longer be divided into the silent and sound periods, according to which filmmakers are categorized as ‘those who spoke through pure images’ and ‘those who speak through sonorous images’. The history of cinema should now be seen, from Lumière to Jean Rouch, as ‘commercial cinema’ and ‘auteur cinema’. There are no limitations of sound and colour for auteurs such as Méliès, Eisenstein, Dreyer, Vigo, Flaherty, Rossellini, Bergman, Visconti, Antonioni, Resnais, Godard or Truffaut. Of course, with handcrafted composition, the quality of the editing, cinematography and sound is very important, but what makes these films eternal is the politics of their auteurs, the reality that, as much through the primitive lens of Tissé as the modern lens of Raoul Coutard, was captured on film as a vision of the world. In the timelessness of films such as *Breathless (À bout de souffle, Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)* or *Battleship Potemkin (Bronenosets Potyomkin, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925)*, there are no temporal limitations: it would be like dividing the history of literature into before and after Gutenberg.

The ‘auteur’ in the cinema is a term coined by new criticism to situate the filmmaker as a poet, a painter, a fiction writer, that is, auteurs who have specific objectives. The ‘director’ or ‘filmmaker’, within the contradictions of commercial cinema, has lost his meaning. ‘Director’, ‘filmmaker’ or ‘artisan’ – as Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes<sup>10</sup> observed,<sup>11</sup> can, in rare cases, achieve an auteurist status through his craft, as long as he’s not subjected to the mechanics of the studio, but instead is aiming to use his technical knowledge to fulfil an expressive ambition. It is then that he’ll have crossed the line: he’s an auteur. The advent of the ‘auteur’, as a noun meaning the creator of films, heralds a new kind of artist for our times.

In an attempt to situate Brazilian cinema as a cultural expression, I have adopted the ‘auteur method’ in order to analyse its history and contradictions. At any given moment in its universal history, cinema has attained greatness because of its auteurs. Thus, the conflict within a revolutionary communist like Eisenstein or within a surrealist poet like

## On Cinema

Jean Vigo contains all the economic and political contradictions of the social process. If commercial cinema equals tradition, auteur cinema is revolution. The politics of the modern auteur is a revolutionary politics: nowadays it's not even necessary to describe *an auteur as revolutionary*, because the condition of an auteur is a totalizing one. Saying that an auteur is reactionary, in the cinema, is the same as describing him as a commercial film director; it's situating him as an artisan; a non-auteur.

Is it an alienated category? No, it's a new order that imposes itself in a fierce dialogue with the world through the specific myth of the century. It's the auteur who is most responsible for the truth: his aesthetic is an ethics, his *mise-en-scène* is political. How, then, can an auteur look at the world covered in make-up, misled by the use of gigantic reflectors, faked with cardboard scenery, disciplined by automatic movements that are systemized in dramatic conventions that inform a bourgeois and conservative morality? How can an auteur forge organization from the chaos in which the capitalist world lives, denying dialectics and systemizing its process with the same formative elements of deceitful and intoxicating clichés? The politics of the auteur is a free, non-conformist, rebellious, violent and insolent vision. It's essential to fire a shot at the sun: the gesture of Belmondo at the beginning of *Breathless* defines well the new phase of cinema. Godard, when capturing cinema, captures reality: cinema is living and breathing, it's an object, a perspective. Cinema is not an instrument, it's an ontology.

What launches the auteur headlong into this great conflict is the fact that his instrument for this ontology belongs to the objective world against which he aims his criticism. Cinema is a culture of the capitalist superstructure. The auteur is an enemy of this culture: he preaches its destruction, if he is an anarchist like Buñuel, or he destroys it if he is an anarchist like Godard. He contemplates it in its own destruction, if he is a desperate bourgeois like Antonioni, or he is consumed within it, in passionate protest, if he is a mystic like Rossellini; or he preaches a new order, if he is a communist like Visconti or Armand Gatti.

In Brazil, where a capitalist structure is consolidated against the contradictions of an agrarian and metropolitan sub-world, cinema has been a disastrous alliance between immature auteurs and amateur capitalists. Until now, with few exceptions, cinema has been produced by a petit-bourgeoisie anxious for provincial promotion, or by financial groups

intent on patronage. In one or two cases in the last couple of years, we have seen a cinematographic conscience begin to appear within the producing class which, organically, is already converting amateurs into artisans. As a consequence, it's pushing the auteurs out to the margins of amateurism. Hence the creation of pockets of independent production as the only means of survival for auteurs.

Given the lack of professionalization in the past, the new generations in cinema were spurred on by an indispensable vocational motivation: in 1960 new film directors in Brazilian cinema were all 'auteurs'; in 1962 a new wave of impromptu directors appeared, from the theatre, television and the *chanchada*, who filled up the spaces created by the increase in production. What determined this growth was the mentality created by publicity (the public controversy) of the group of non-conformist auteurs who, in 1960, gathered at the office of Nelson Pereira dos Santos; the term *cinema novo*, born thus, was transformed into the promotional headline of the large production companies and the new financiers who were attracted to the film industry by the sudden novelty value of the business. The auteur, of course, was left with the crumbs; within his amateurism, with impossible resources, he was unable to make films that reached the public in a way that commercial films marketed as *cinema novo* could. The auteur lost ground and remained on the margins analysing the contradictions, exasperated and naturally weakened. Reorganized this year, together the auteurs have started over; now, with the death of the *chanchada*, they do battle with a much more powerful enemy, which has grown out of this death. The myths of Zé Trindade and Oscarito<sup>12</sup> have been replaced by the myths of the scandal of naked women and of the picturesque regionalism of *macumba*<sup>13</sup> and cowboy leather hats. The unsuspecting public was quickly overcome by films that imitate American cinema of the 1940s, especially Westerns (a cliché used spuriously in relation to *cangaço*)<sup>14</sup> and gangster films (here the same cliché is applied to metropolitan films). The public, unconsciously reacting against the poverty of the language of the copy, reacted primarily against these themes: both the *cangaço* and the *favela*, important thematic spaces in the Brazilian social process, are condemned before a cinematographic demonstration of greater stature. The Brazilian auteur is castrated in terms of such themes – ones that are popular, intrinsically expressed in their political aspects. He is castrated in relation to language, which is schematic, extrinsically prescribed as the

## On Cinema

grammar of American spectacle. The Brazilian auteur finds himself in what is practically a dead-end street. The industrial development of Brazilian cinema, which is half a century behind the times, can expect a cultural stagnation of thirty years. The mistakes affecting the industry, articulated by intellectuals divested of any modern concept of cinema, are helping to create a monster. The misguided intellectual stamps a false artistic seal on commercial cinema and imposes it as a truth that is praised by the critics who justify commercial cinema and give the public a false notion of culture.

The so-called artistic cinema produced within the industry is characterized precisely by neo-expressionist aestheticism and by the contemplative ideology of the bourgeoisie: humour, boredom and love are the grand themes of all the classes, while social problems are resolved by palliative reforms.

If class is identified by flesh and not by money, commercial cinema gains its ideal artistic form in melodrama: the pathological character, inherited from the standardized drama of American scriptwriters, is successfully opposed to the historical character: the historical character, like the auteur himself, is a conscious being, exposed, objective, strong and violent in practice. Thus, it needs to be exterminated.

André Bazin once said that the Western was American cinema par excellence: his words inspire us nowadays to consider the possibility that cinema is 'Brazilian culture par excellence'. With the destruction of the auteur, however, there will be no excellence at all about cinema in Brazil. It tends to fail, strangled as it is by the limits of the domestic market. The large foreign markets will not be conquered with sub-cultural production since, ironically, the world's greatest industries have already begun to be destroyed by auteur cinema, that is, the French *nouvelle vague*, the Italian auteurs, the American and English independents and even the new Soviet rebel generation, who shattered, in relentless battle, the myths planted by Hollywood. The auteur industry, a synthesis of this new dialectic of the history of the cinema, will be an important chapter in the future. In Brazil, stuck in pre-history, this dialectic has been precipitated. There's only one problem: while auteur cinema is political cinema and while commercial cinema reflects the evasive ideas of reformist capitalism, the problems of our industry, in the current historical period, are the same as all the others that the production and working classes experience in Brazil. Hence the