



Image by: Belgica Olmedo,
Joselyne Albán,
Maite Pacheco,
Daniela Perez

Contemporary realism, and modernity in the northern mexican border cinema.

Realismo contemporáneo y modernidad en el cine de la frontera norte de México.

Abstract

Based on the review of the strategies of realism and modern cinema, and from the analysis of the film *La Paloma y el Lobo* (2019) directed by Carlos Lenin, this essay seeks to investigate the role played by the cinema of Mexico's northern border in understanding both the current contextual conditions of the region, as well as the historical evolution to which the border has been subjected since the establishment of neoliberalism in the country.

Keywords:

Border cinema; mexican cinema; modern cinema; neoliberalism.

Resumen

Partiendo de la revisión de las estrategias del realismo y del cine moderno, y analizando la película *La Paloma y el Lobo* (2019) dirigida por Carlos Lenin, este ensayo busca indagar en el papel desempeñado por el cine de la frontera norte de México en la comprensión tanto de las condiciones contextuales actuales de la región, como del devenir histórico al que se ha sometido la franja fronteriza a partir de la instauración del neoliberalismo en el país.

Palabras claves:

Cine fronterizo; cine mexicano; cine moderno; neoliberalismo.

Alba Nidia Sánchez Baltazar

Universidad Autónoma de Baja California,
Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana
Unidad Cuajimalpa

Mexicali, México

albanidias08@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6677-7478>

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1. Introduction

Although cinema is recognized for its potential as a medium for recording reality, it still generates diverse points of view regarding the discussion and questioning of its commitment to representations and the idea of truth. With modern and postmodern trends in film production, the boundaries between genres and narratives, as well as the influences of the avant-garde, cause the rules established by classical cinema, attached to certain standards and a certain linearity, to the clear delimitation between genres and styles, to be broken at different levels or impacts.

The documentary has gradually lost its exclusivity with the real and true, while fiction has lost its exclusivity with the false or the imaginative. Nowadays, it is much more common to find proposals that deviate from tradition and focus on the intersection of genres, temporal leaps and breaks, the juxtaposition of styles, the invention of time, self-reference, the meta-cinematic, hybridization, etc. The real and the fictional, the present and the past, relate in different ways as part of the same plane, no longer as oppositions or contradictions but as constitutive of one another.

In this sense, it might be risky to venture into the analysis of the social aspects of cinematic products, to enter the real from fiction, or to try to understand our present from the invention of history. But as Marc Auge describes it, stories are always “the fruit of memory and forgetting, of a work of composition and recomposition that reflects the tension exerted by the expectation of the future on the interpretation of the past” (1998, 47).

Thus, this paper — which is extracted from the advances of the research for the postgraduate course in which I find myself and, therefore, which is conceived as a project still under construction and reformulation, in constant dialogue —through the review and analysis of the film *La Paloma y el Lobo* (Lenin, 2019), is interested in exploring the way in which cinema allows us to investigate, not only in the testimonies and ruins of a distant past, nor in its contribution to the analysis of representations or historical records, but rather, from some proposals of the most current cinema in which the boundaries between times and layers of reality have blurred, we can approach the findings of the present from “a kind of simultaneous reality to ours, which allows us to figure and interpret the world in which we live, to approach it from other perspectives, to adopt a new perspective, to reconfigure the testimony and memory that they leave on the present” (Urrutia & Fernández, 2020).

In short, we hope, through traces and vestiges that remain in the images of the present, to enter into the historical future of regions such as the northern border of Mexico that is recorded in the most current cinematography to allow us, then to know our own present, which would otherwise seem understandable only at a distance in time. For this, it explores the strategies this cinema has taken from realism in its attempt to approach, understand, and interpret the reality of these spaces.

2. Recording and invention of the real in cinema

The filmic and photographic images are developed as record documents and support the research, initially in anthropology and sociology. The first forms of mechanical image recording were considered “neutral” artifacts, a tool for visualizing and documenting events. As stated by Baer and Schnettler (2009, 151), the origins of audiovisual production, based on its research possibilities, also derived from the technical process of recording light in chemical emulsions. It reinforced the postulates of the positivist paradigm by fitting with the scientific and objectivist notions of the nineteenth century.

These notions or qualities attributed to media like film have changed with technological improvements, mass production, and resource access. But the evolution of film as a tool for approaching, preserving, and understanding reality also has to do with changes in our own perception of that reality, the relationship we have established over time with concepts like truth, the imaginary, fiction, and of course, reality.

In this sense, when transiting and experimenting with cinema understood as a tool for the recording of the real to one understood as a tool for artistic narrative expression, we can identify three moments —which are all-encompassing and ultimately never fixed or immovable— in the way in which cinema can be defined from its structures, forms, and language, which I will describe in broad strokes: a classic Hollywood cinema that spans the beginnings in the 1900s and up to, more or less, the 1950s; a post-war European modern cinema, from 1940 until the 1970s; and a postmodern cinema from the 1960s onwards that develops as a product of massification and global consumerism (Gutiérrez, 2014; Zavala, 2005).

Classic cinema is identified with what Noël Burch has identified as a Mode of Institutional Representation. It is characterized by well-defined and differentiated forms, which we can “see” and “read” because it is through which we have been educated cinematographically. As the author explains, this is what we understand by Cinematic Language, the language taught in schools and the language we have internationalized over the years through our experiences with films (Burch, 1987, 17).

Classical cinema intends to correspond to reality, not to distort it, conventions, and aspirations; its handling of time is linear and sequential; its narrative is close, that is, it leaves no room for speculation or alternate or open endings; the stories told are “dreamlike where the protagonists achieve their desired goals” (Gutiérrez, 2014, 6); it poses character, likewise, well delimited and delineated under ethical and moral standards we can accept and interpret.

With the cultural shift brought about by the postwar years, these optimistic and well-directed stories no longer fit with the way viewers viewed their daily lives; thus, modern cinema developed as a break from classical cinema and established conventions. Like all trends and avant-garde movements, it emerged as a response to its time, as a confrontation with the consequences of

industrialization and the devastation left by the war. According to Martha Gutiérrez, modern cinema developed under “[two] aesthetic and ideological mottos: to show an objective reality of the human being, and there is nothing more objective than the subject, its condition as a dissatisfied subject, since human beings do not always achieve the desired objective” (2014, 7). Through modern cinema, reality is perceived through small, individual stories in everyday life, in the day-to-day life of what remains when everything else is in crisis or corroded.

The second motto of the cinema, as Gutiérrez (2014, 7) explains, is the concept of auteur cinema. It is positioned as part of the work and the reality to which it tries to refer; modern cinema, in this sense, is a way to show the particular vision of the world the author has. With the reflexive turn on social sciences, the objectivity and the neutrality of audiovisual images are questioned, and authors are understood as creators of realities and images as different forms of objectivity and subjectivity, realism, and reflexivity (Baer & Schnettler, 2009, 155). So that the correspondence of cinema with representation is relative, rather than trying to show or be a mirror of reality, its motive is to reconstruct reality and offer with all its faces, from rupture with its structures and through experimentation.

Postmodern cinema begins to develop in a sort of juxtaposition between the aforementioned forms of cinema. This cinema, for its part, does not seek to show reality to reconstruct it. It simply does not believe this is possible. Rather, it seeks new ways of explaining “relativizing in partial truths according to points of view” (Gutiérrez, 2014, 13), according to the subjectivities of those who intervene and those who are presented in the film. With the entry into crisis of the concept of representation, the possibilities of knowing or “giving voice” to others is questioned, which gives even greater importance to the figure and positioning of the gaze as “deconstructive or reflexive that places in the foreground the need to contextualize producer and text” (Baer & Schnettler, 2009, 156), to the film and its creators.

Lauro Zavala (2005) explains that postmodern cinema does not have a linear or sequential structure; it does not necessarily respect the characters or stories, but the way they are presented matters. As cinema owns its time, reality is proposed in scales and levels, sometimes labyrinthine, spirals and fragments where one can navigate and get lost, as an uncertain entity in permanent questioning and from the diversity of ways we can interpret the world and ourselves in it; as Gerard Imbert (2010, 18) explains, starts from a distrust of absolute truths or grand narratives, and find spaces and times and their characters in constant tension, oscillating between extremes and defying limits.

Although we can find these qualities clearly in some productions, and they can be associated with some particular ways of thinking and particular moments in our historical and social evolution, it is common that we account for all of them (and many more that escape this text) in the same production, in a hybridization of forms and proposals. And, of course, it refers to

how the real and the every day are experienced today: from multiple places, from the virtual, the referred, the infinite screens on which we express ourselves, and the infinite forms and materialities in which we do so.

And in these intersections and juxtapositions, much of today's cinema is found, including that made in the northern regions of Mexico. These are films that view reality from their own individual perspectives but with concerns that transcend the region and become part of global cinema, which Urrutia, through Galt and Shoonover (2019, 100), defines as a cinema situated between the most independent and experimental tendencies and those oriented toward mass commercial consumption. Unafraid of subjectivity or breaking with conventional structures, these films propose more diverse visions and, in many cases —especially through the use of realism as a narrative strategy, explored later— also position themselves from ethically committed perspectives.

Today, the idea of truth and reality, as opposed to fiction and the imaginary, is no longer a determining factor in approaching the stories shown to us. Cinema recognizes its relationship and its attachment to the contextual circumstances in which it is produced; even classic or industrial Hollywood cinema maintains its relevance through the exploration of current events or historical revisionism and memory, which allows it, precisely, to be the most industrialized cinema on the planet. The more independent or experimental cinema —with all its attachment to the figure of the author and experimentation— can also show a strong relationship with its own production conditions: from the subjectivity of its creators who intervene in the work, its condition as a cultural product inserted in the market, but also, on some occasions, because of the political commitments and self-representation that it may imply.

Since the French New Wave and European *cinema vérité*, and other trends such as direct cinema in the United States, define the idea of no obvious intervention, in which events seem to be captured “as they happened, without prior rehearsals and with minimal editing,” in which free discourse is privileged in search of the motivations, attitudes and psychology of the participants to be revealed from their own possibilities (Konigsberg, 2004, 99), from these trends, we said, which are distinguished by their concern and commitment to approaching and understanding reality, experimentation and the intersection of genres and positions regarding the forms of recording and interacting with reality continue. Without a doubt, globalizing processes are decisive, not only because of the demands of integration into the market but also because of the possibilities of knowing other proposals of having access to other technologies and other forms of narration that allow for more diverse visions and positions.

Although films continue to be produced based on the qualities determined by each genre, it is increasingly common, and in some cases a desirable and pertinent resource, to go beyond these boundaries. For example, some directors have combined documentary filmmaking with

animation, as in the 2021 documentary *Flee*, in which director Jonas Poher Rasmussen uses this technique to protect the identity of his protagonist, an Afghan refugee (as announced in its synopsis); while in *Waltz with Bashir* from 2008, Ari Folman—director and protagonist—allows himself to explore dreamlike figures and discover his own memory of his participation in a massacre of Palestinian refugees, drawing on the visual possibilities offered by animation; Paola Ovalle and Alfonso Díaz Tovar use stop motion to bring to life objects from the memories of people who disappeared due to violence in northern Mexico in the short film *Puntos Suspensivos*¹.

Likewise, cinema, defined as “fiction,” also makes use of documentary resources. To mention a couple of examples of permanent validity: the Cuban film *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), by Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, resorts to the documentary image (use of black and white, hand-held camera, and testimonial narratives), as well as to the superimposition of times to explore the Cuban reality of the revolutionary years. While some productions, such as the 2010 Chilean *Post Mortem* by Pablo Larraín, resort to the construction of the historical past of his country, but based not on history itself but on “the illustration of certain media events” that are part of the memory of the viewers (Urrutia & Fernández, 2020) and to which he resorts from the review of media and archives to, in the case of this particular film, develop an individual story from the collective memory of contextual historical events such as the 1973 coup d’état.

Thus, in summary, from a classical cinema of defined forms and merely representational function, in which it is assumed before narration there pre-exists a reality that can be narrated, there was a transition towards a cinema that tried to be the opposite, the modern cinema, that from the authorial, recognizes the ambiguity of reality and questions the attempt to represent it; with this, the postmodern cinema tries to relate narrative and technical aspects of both trends, recognizes the possibility of moving away from representational and trying to build more independent universes (Zavala, 2005); a cinema that allows itself to and assumes its role of reconstruction and interpretation of realities instead of trying to reproduce them.

3. Modern becomings and realism as a strategy

Although it is difficult to explore the complexities of “the present” that remain current and unattainable only through the passage of time, Urrutia and Fernández (2020) explain that certain films connect in a critical way with the social and political events of the present; they indicate that they are “transversal to urgent problems of our society” that are installed as living and current testimonies, as archives that preserve and show our own time. The authors conceive cinema as “an archive of the present time” by organizing, recording, and depicting the panorama of the present from the references that fill it from the media, for example, which propitiates the conformation of an index for the reading of the contemporary.

1 Available at: <https://vimeo.com/134689061>

In this sense, many proposals have explored historical events beyond labeling themselves as “based on real events” or reproducing specific events from stories of their contexts but rather recognizing the particular realities of specific contexts manifested through everyday life. These are productions that investigate the state of the environment and the relationships and circumstances that develop within it. Through alternative expressions, the exploration of space, and the relationships between individuals, these projects put on the table the current conditions under which we develop and relate.

In recent years, northern Mexican cinema has undergone significant changes in technical quality and visual quality issues and its approach to everyday life, social dynamics, and processes. And, even though topics such as violence and crime are still part of the daily life of the northern regions so many times taken up by cinema, its approach has diversified, allowing us to explore deeper levels of its dynamics.

These changes are due to several factors. Among the most evident are the processes of globalization that allow the exchange of technologies and ways of approaching narratives; in addition, the possibility of professionalization of creators is increasingly common in the country's border regions with new schools and spaces for film production. But, in addition to these factors, the concern of young filmmakers for self-representation is what has generated stories that are much more committed to the social processes that each context harbors, as the researchers and creators Norma Iglesias-Prieto, Itzel Martínez, and Adriana Trujillo (2021) point out.

Border cities —and just as occurs with others in what we could call the global periphery— have been constituted from the exploration of the social processes they harbor. As Edith Mora explains, these cities condense and project the problematics derived from the “failure of the utopias of globalization” (2016, 122), so their organization, the shifting boundaries of these urban spaces, as she points out, propitiate multiple discourses, texts, and approaches. The spaces that host border cities, besides framing a certain relationship and state of affairs, are the vestige of the repercussions of modernity.

In this sense, much of the cinema from the north of the country finds in realism technical and narrative strategies to explore and manifest these conditions, to approach in a more critical and self-reflective way the reality to which they refer. According to Ángel Quintana (2003, 163), realist theories allow us to study contemporaneity itself; they bring us closer to knowing the moment in which society, from the audiovisual, relates to the physical world. In this sense, he points out the following:

This reality, which has served as a referent, can be shown in its raw state; it can be integrated into a documentary discourse that aims to establish a reflection on the physical world, or it can end up giving rise to a strong presence of truth effects within fiction. In all these cases, realism ceases to be a merely formal aspect, and it ends up becoming the reflection of an ethical attitude towards reality that awakens a feeling of adherence to an impossible ideal of truth. (Quintana, 2003, 107).

Beyond these qualities of realism as a form of expression of certain conditions of existence, it also manifests through several characteristics. For example, for the use of long shots, that is, long takes that include by not including cuts, allow the description, characterization, and definition of spaces, generally exteriors, extending their referential power and, as Bazin, Konigsberg explains, open the image to the spectator and involve him or her deeply in its “reality” (2004, 425); the use of direct sound, captured from the same recording of the film, which allows a fuller constitution of the environment and a possible immersion in it; as well as the inclusion of non-professional actors and actresses to play the characters (often members of the community in which the film is being shot), considered as an accessory of naturalness and humanity to the image (Urrutia & Fernández, 2020).

In addition to this list of qualities or tendencies of realism, we must not forget that the author’s vision of reality will be decisive. The intentions and decisions they make regarding the narration—what they leave out of frame, the angles, heights, and camera movements they favor, and so on—will define both the identification of the work as their own and their ethical concerns and positioning in relation to what is being represented. In turn, this will shape the spectator’s ability to situate themselves in relation to the work. As Quintana (2003, 241) explains, in some productions, the way of capturing reality reflects on the very act of capturing it, like a concave mirror in which the image is enlarged or deepened. Thus, the film not only shows the author’s vision but also allows us, as spectators, to see beyond, towards the self-representations and positions that led to its production.

Regarding the themes to which realism refers, Luz Horne (2011, 10-11) explains that in the current artistic trends (she focuses on the literature), the representation of real is no longer pursued, but to include and point out reality through hints or traces, while at the same time intervening in the real, she explains that it is from this transformation in realist strategies that its political potentiality is allowed to be maintained. In today’s cinema, we can trace the historical becoming anchored in the present through the forms and strategies with which the narration is proposed.

Even without having a basis in real facts, in the absence of testimonies, from dreamlike figures, from fragmentations and tracks, and from fiction, the most current cinema leaves out reminiscences of what Urrutia calls “state of situation” of the contexts addressed, “build from the staging of certain relevant events that are marking the various agendas” (2019, 106), and that allows to frame the concerns from where each work is produced.

4. *La Paloma y el Lobo*: realism and modernity

An example of the application of realistic strategies to approach exploring the state of affairs in Mexico’s northern border regions is the 2019 production of *La Paloma y el Lobo* by Carlos Lenin. The production was awarded the Swatch Art Peace Hotel Award at the 72nd edition of the

Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland in 2019 and the Mexico First Award and has been presented at festivals such as the Los Cabos International Film Festival, Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano de La Habana and the Morelia International Film Festival (FICUNAM, 2021). It is an innovative proposal for films made in these regions, both in form and content; the film proposes a narrative anchored in local and current events but with reminiscences of the historical evolution of globalization disseminated, in the first instance, from the presence of geopolitical borders such as the one shared by Mexico and the United States.

In the director's words, his debut feature, *La Paloma y el Lobo*, is

basically a love story. Our film is the love story between Paloma [Paloma Petra] and Lobo [Armando Hernández], a working-class couple in Monterrey, Nuevo León, who are there in the middle of the sea of violence that is usually the country's norm, trying to continue loving each other (SENSACINE México, 2019).

Monterrey is the capital of Nuevo León. It is located in the northeast of Mexico and is known for being an industrial and business city, like many of the cities located in the country's border region. Although Monterrey does not directly border the United States, the state shares a border with San Antonio, Texas. Thus, Paloma and Lobo have left their home in Linares (a town located 130 km southeast of the state capital), displaced by the violence, for Monterrey, where they will try to keep their relationship afloat.

Lenin is part of the new filmmakers who have contributed to the changes in narratives and techniques in the cinema of northern Mexico. As a professional filmmaker and as a native of Linares, he manifests the relevance of self-representation, not only for the treatment of the story but explicitly pointed out when he states that

We are indeed looking for certain types of images, certain types of visual constructions that genuinely relate to me; I made them without trying to please, but rather to share my mood and the political moment through the reality we are experiencing, but using the camera, light, and sound, beyond putting a character on screen to express what I think. In this genuine search, I am trying to find images that relate to my reality, my contradictions as a Mexican, and the social struggles I perceive (Caballero, 2021).

The context, form, and content that Lenin examines from fragments of Paloma and Lobo's everyday life contain aspects that refer directly to social processes and the reconstruction of the memory of the border regions. Although many of the social conditions and processes are shared with the rest of the country, phenomena such as migration, the dichotomy generated by neighboring the United States, labor as a way of life and as a detonator of chaotic mobilities, local and transnational organized crime, are practically inherent to the border.

These contextual conditions in which this film is produced inscribe it in a cinema that has been increasingly recurrent in the north of the country in the last decade. They explore unrest that has simmered for several decades and that has become more radicalized since the establishment of the neoliberal project in the country in the 1980s under the administration of Miguel de la Madrid. This model would (officially) extend for more than three decades and six

presidential terms, integrating the country into the modernizing capitalist processes prevailing throughout the rest of the world.

In cinema, the transformations deriving from the neoliberal project are manifested, among some other topics, through narratives of violent themes associated with the demand for commercial and political exchange between Mexico and the United States, as Ignacio Sánchez Prado (2016, 11), points out, despite the diverse aesthetics in cinema, the encounter “between capitalism and community, between Mexico and modernity” can only be represented as an outbreak of violence.

In technical matters and broad strokes, the film presents certain characteristics that distinguish its structure: very long shots for certain circumstances that allow us to contemplate the space and the situations in which the characters are involved; its expressionist intention is reiterated through recurring still frames of faces and spaces that allow us to understand the emotions and sensations that fill the environment; the voice-over— equally loaded with expressions, both for the intonations and for what they narrate— is proposed as the guide through the images from one sequence to another; the incorporation of characteristic contextual elements (very specific and well-described locations, equally relevant social dynamics, regional language, among others); the integration of actors and actresses from the locality and, mostly, non-professionals; likewise, it is developed from fragmentation and temporal and spatial jumps.

For this essay, it is impossible to explore every aspect, so we will limit ourselves to four essential characteristics in the structure of *La Paloma y El Lobo*, those that manifest in a more determinant and evident way, the conditions of the time in which the characters are immersed (from their working, environmental and security conditions) and that account for the density of the reality and the submission for it: as for the more technical aspects, we observe a camera movement called *slow traveling of approaching depth* and with it, the subtle but effective presence of a type of sound identified as *primordial noise*; while, from Gilles Deleuze, two figures are explored that also determine the structure of the film from a modern and realistic aesthetic and that allow us to understand better its approach to reality: that of the *seer* and that of the *wanderer*.

The slow traveling of approaching depth is a stable camera movement that moves us as spectators towards the front, towards a certain circumstance or image that, slowly but in the case of this film, in a worrying way, seems to take us towards something we do not want to see but what we are irremediably approaching. Not only as spectators, it recurrently confronts both characters with situations of tension they cannot avoid, putting them before the images they cannot look away from and which they must approach without any option.

Likewise, these camera movements are accompanied by a subtle but effective sound: the primordial noise that refers to an enveloping sound that does not come from the environment

but corresponds to what Žižek describes as a sinister noise “that arises when we approach the real” (2015, 132) and that, moreover, is difficult to find in reality itself. The philosopher explains that this is conceived as constitutive of empty space itself before being “occupied” by anything: “It is not a noise in space, but a noise that keeps space open as such” (Žižek, 2015, 133). This generates a dense environment where the characters must subsist, accounting for the acceleration and intensification of the rhythms and times in which they develop their relationships, encounters, and misencounters. Still, with it, the feeling of impossibility of joining these rhythms and times is propitiated.

Both resources of modern cinema are presented throughout the film to emphasize very particular moments that the figures proposed by Deleuze complement. Thus, the figure of the seer becomes relevant, which arises from the breakdown of the characters’ sensorimotor system, a breakdown of the links between individuals and the world. In this sense, Martin-Jones (2006, 22) explains that the individual no longer has power over the situations he faces; this breakdown or suspension renders him “incapable of reacting to influence his physical context.” And he quotes Deleuze when he explains that “this is a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent” (2006, 21).

The seer we are referring to in this text is Lobo, who has lost his ability to act, a fact he explicitly expresses through his inability to communicate in a sequence where Paloma confronts him: “No...we’re not okay...you look dead...you don’t give a damn about anything”, and insists “come on...talk to me, dude”. Meanwhile, Lobo, in a fixed shot of his face, seems trapped in a sustained impulse to say something, but the only words that come out of him are: “What do you want me to say if I don’t know how to speak if don’t know how to say anything?”

Let us remember that the couple moved from Linares to Monterrey, displaced by the violence. However, Lobo is unable —he lacks the ability— to tell Paloma what he has witnessed at some point in a past that remains present and manifest in his nightmares, which make him wake up crying and, in his memory, are the reason why he cannot return to Linares. It is not until the final sequence that (in voice-over) Lobo can finally speak, share his testimony, and allow us to understand his true motives and fears:

knew your dad, Chango; I saw him die. They mistook him for me, and I didn’t say anything...they were burning him alive, and I broke free and ran, I ran, I ran Paloma...I left him there...Sometimes, I wake up at night, and there’s Chango, looking at me without legs, without arms, with his head to the side, with his stump, and a pile of burning stones...I don’t know...last night I dreamed I was dead...”

The terrible image that Lobo describes, between sobs and remorse, serves as the emotional climax, ending with his heartfelt crying and a final “I love you.” Paloma also, in voice-over, responds

I love you too...I want to stay...I just wanted to say goodbye...but you never came...I found you, you were all alone, you had a small hole in your forehead, there was no blood...you saw me, I feel like you saw me...Lobo...love...

The immobility, then, is manifested in Lobo witnessing what would be his own torture and murder, but that happened to another person in his place before he could do anything. In several

situations, we see him framed in fixed shots looking in front or towards the floor, static like a photograph with ruined and blurred backgrounds; he is unable to change things, even when he is finally able to speak and confess his fear, Lobo's fate reveals itself as inevitable in his death.

This inability to act is emphasized through his journeys through spaces that appear disconnected or abandoned by society, as we will see later, and which are directly related to the consequences of the confrontation with "the intolerable and the unthinkable" (Bogue, 2003, 170), to which, on several occasions, we are brought closer by slow-zoom tracking shots accompanied by primordial noise. While Deleuze points out that this unthinkable does not necessarily involve horror scenes—even though it may include bodies or blood—it refers us to an image of violence that is not present and is not explicit but manifests itself in the optical and the sonic (1989, 170).

Thus, at some point we hear *on the air* (from a technological but indistinguishable source, like the horn of a telephone that we do not see but can identify) the audio of the subjugation and torture of the man Lobo refers to in his description: we hear the screams of threat of the perpetrator and those of pain of the victim more and more resonant and torn, while again a tracking shot positions us dangerously before an image that is densified by the presence of the primordial noise; this sound that refers us to an image that is not seen, is heard over the figure against the light of a squatting man (Lobo) in the middle of a kind of tunnel, who observes, in turn, an indeterminate and amorphous figure, hanging and burning in fire in the background, as the only source of light. The rupture or break makes the individual a "seer shaken by something intolerable in the world, and confronted with something unthinkable in thought" (Deleuze, 1989, 169-170), makes the individual no longer able to think or think himself in the world while it is irremediably imposed on him.

Although these types of descriptions do not come from the actual testimony of those are part of Nuevo León society—in the case of *La Paloma y el Lobo*—they do give an account of very particular situations that both the local and national media have reported as part of the border reality and that has come to account with greater emphasis since the 1980s in which, Sassen explains, the form of capitalism took on new forms around the globe, an advanced capitalism that "reinvented the mechanisms of original accumulation" and continues to do so:

Después de treinta años de estos tipos de desarrollo, enfrentamos economías en contracción en buena parte del mundo, la escalada de la destrucción de la biósfera en todo el globo y el resurgimiento de formas extremas de pobreza y brutalización donde pensábamos que habían sido eliminadas o estaban en vías de desaparición (Sassen, 2015, 23).

Estas formas extremas que se manifiestan en la realidad y que vemos en historias como la de Paloma y Lobo, este capitalismo avanzado de Sassen es lo que, por su parte, Sayak Valencia define como un *capitalismo gore*, una forma radicalizada y, en palabras de la autora, el lado B del capitalismo que entiende como consecuencia de una reinterpretación de los procesos económicos globales hegemónicos en los contextos fronterizos que deriva en el

derramamiento de sangre explícito e injustificado (como precio a pagar por el tercer mundo que se aferra a seguir las lógicas del capitalismo, cada vez más exigentes), al altísimo porcentaje de vísceras y desmembramientos, frecuentemente mezclados con el crimen organizado, el género y los usos predatorios de los cuerpos, todo esto por medio de la violencia más explícita como herramienta de necroempoderamiento (Valencia, 2020, 25).

She explains that this reinterpretation derives precisely from the imposition of the neoliberal discourse on regions such as the northern border of Mexico, which cannot join the dynamics (times and speeds) demanded by the first world. These demands generate a series of conditions that propitiate the incursions of the regions into the market of violence, and as Valencia explains, are radicalized “with the advent of globalization, given that it is based on predatory logics that, along with *spectralization* and *speculation* in financial markets, develop and execute practices of radical violence” (2020, 138).

Thus, organized crime and all its practices are also integrated into the commercial processes as an alternative way of accessing the capitalist dynamics on the globe: “They make the violence a way of life, work, socialization, and culture. They reconvert the culture of work into a kind of dystopian Protestantism, where work and life form a single unit” (Valencia, 2020, 103). As Valencia explains, the new entrepreneurs who participate in these alternative market practices make violence both a tool for work, empowerment, and capital acquisition and a commodity to be directed to different market niches.

These forms of advanced radical, *gore*, and extreme capitalism have infiltrated all forms of reality, “subsumes and consumes all previous stories” (Fisher, 2018, 25). It is what Mark Fisher calls *capitalist realism* for globalized societies, from which he explains capitalism as that “which remains standing when beliefs collapse at the level of ritual or symbolic elaboration, leaving as a remainder only the consumer-spectator who gropes among relics and ruins” (2018, 26).

Capitalist realism, as Fisher understands it, no longer sees citizens or political agents but consumers and spectators; capitalism generates a “post-political” order in which all social processes take place with the same dynamics that commercial exchanges would demand (as Sassen and Valencia point out). And, in this sense, he points out, effects are propitiated on all our forms of coexistence - now equivalent to practices of consumption and hyper-consumption - but which are blurred by a kind of naturalness by “erasing any sentimental illusion” that lets us see the world as it is, and which is sustained from an “all against all, every man for himself, a system of perpetual exploitation and generalized criminality” (Fisher, 2018, 33), as part of the logics of capitalism. Realism is for current capitalism a strategy that allows it to naturalize the conditions of exploitation, competitiveness, and individualism, including predatory practices and extreme violence that have been integrated into business practices as a way of joining the speeds and dynamics demanded by current global events and that subsumes the possibilities of action or alternatives, as Fisher points out, capitalist realism tells us that things can only be as they are.

Following these postulates, it is understood that spaces, particularly those of the regions

located on the northern border of Mexico, are equally subjected to the accelerated modernity that is imposed and to which it is not always possible to respond. Jungwon Park (2018) explains that, as a consequence of this phenomenon, there is a spatial reorganization from an uneven geographical development that favors uncontrolled urbanization processes. The incursion of the maquiladora industry into these regions, as much as it attempts to symbolize progress and development, also refers to “a scenario of global ruins: factories, favelas, and abandoned fields” (Park, 2018, 1119) and, in turn, generates mobilities in the transits that go from the peripheries to the work centers and that is manifested through visual effects and symbolic forms that refer, as developed by Mora (2016, 122), to an aesthetic of ruin or garbage and waste that is complemented by a neo-baroque order, and that defines spaces as fractal, labyrinthine, chaotic and overflowing.

In this sense, Park explains that the phenomenon of migration, in recent decades, has begun to propose spaces that are no longer just a passage or transit, the establishment of urban life through characters who try to adapt to the frontier from the peripheries where industrial buildings are installed. Thus, the maquila and other industrializing processes in the regions not only participate in the formation of fragmented and degraded geography but also the excessive development of marginal peripheries that, following Park again (2018, 1119), has an impact on the daily lives of those who work in these spaces and on their own bodies, who are subjected to lack of services, insecurity and disciplinary processes practiced in their workplaces, in addition to the pollution and environmental devastation that undoubtedly generates other problems in an endless list.

In this way, besides the forced displacement by violence of which Paloma and Lobo are victims, other triggers for the discomfort in which their daily lives are perceived: on the one hand, the lack of water, which Paloma reports on more than one occasion as part of the ecological crisis; the heat that is not said but is seen through various elements present as fans always on and the sweat on their bodies even in a sequence we see the couple holding an ice in their hands to mitigate the heat, and she refers to lack of water as a factor for returning to Linares, to mention some examples.

On the other hand, the working conditions of both also accentuate their difficulty in being and existing in this environment: both Paloma and Lobo lose their jobs due to violent events against other co-workers resulting from restrictive and disinterested management; she in the maquila and he in construction; at several moments, we see them in their workplaces, interacting at various levels, but never satisfied and, although Paloma maintains ties with her coworkers, Lobo seems always disconnected from the rest of the world; we also witness the dismissal and rejection of a woman because of her age as an employee in the maquila, we can perceive the degree of concern that this implies from her close-up framing in which we witness the decomposition of her face that goes from a smile and kindness to a cry of anguish and worry when she realizes that she will not be hired for the position she applied for, and perhaps for any position at all.

Through these examples, it is possible to identify how the figure of the seer is manifested through these repercussions on the space and the social, labor, and mobility dynamics in the border regions imposed due to the transnational industrialization, before which it is observed the break of the sensory-motor scheme in those characters that as Lobo were constituted as pure seers, stunned, abandoned to something intolerable that is now their own everyday life (Deleuze, 1989, 41).

Finally, through the technical resources already mentioned and complementing the seer, the figure of the wanderer is also manifested. This is proposed in some sequences for the exploration of spaces that, through panning, fixed shots, and contemplative cross-cuts, highlight a particular aesthetic: vandalized or fallen walls, abandoned factories, and dark places invaded by vegetation and garbage.

Both characters make several journeys, allowing us to see the landscape, which, as announced above, refers to the saturation, abandonment, and ruin and the vestiges of other times. What we see is what the industrialization process has left behind, spaces taken now by nature itself and by other characters (for example, a group of high school teenagers who, apparently, spend their afternoons in an abandoned factory, frighten Paloma and Lobo so that they do not return to this space), even the place where Paloma works seems that it has not been renovated and remains as it was built in the first moment but with the years visible on its back.

This wandering, although recurrent, does not allow us to describe the precise cartography of Monterrey because the spaces are fragmented into unconnected postcards and still images or long shots that prioritize contemplation. However, in their constitution and configuration (with the sounds and the inherent conditions of the space), they bring us closer to scenarios and sensations of uncertainty and insecurity that also accompany the characters. In this sense, in modern and realistic productions such as *La Paloma y el Lobo*, it is possible to tour and describe these ruins and vestiges of the past but, at the same time, to see the current conditions of existence that are proposed and updated in the contemporary future.

5. Conclusions

Moral Martin observes: "The current debate on the confrontation of our present with the past places cinema as a privileged medium in the construction of our memory and, therefore, points it out as a decisive instrument in the definition of our contemporary identity" (2020, 206). Current cinema contains elements in its narrative and technical resources that allow us to explore not only the past but also our own conditions of existence. We can visualize this technical and narrative process through the example of *La Paloma y el Lobo*. Through his cinematographic resources and the subject matter he addresses, Lenin takes us from the everyday life of a couple, from their memories and fictitious personal testimonies to the depths of the reality of border life, to a historical and collective memory that is installed in its spaces and dynamics in relation to the globalizing processes.

Some of the proposals of border cinema from the last decade, through the strategies of contemporary realism, do not refer to history itself, nor do they aim to reconstruct events; on the contrary, they attempt to condense, in individual and everyday narratives, a state of affairs, a reality in which we are all addressed, both at a national level and for those who specifically inhabit the region explored through events that, although found throughout the country —and others considered part of the global periphery—, undoubtedly have a direct connection to the unique conditions of the border strip between Mexico and the United States, which stems from a long history of contradictions and confrontations. Thus, it is not about being an archive or documentary cinema but rather a cinema about the complexities of the moment in which it is produced.

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Curricular Overview

She holds a Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences from the Autonomous University of Baja California, Mexico. She also holds a Master's degree in Sociocultural Studies from the UABC and a Master's degree in Education from the Center for University Studies of Baja California. She is currently a professor at the UABC and a doctoral candidate in the Social Sciences and Humanities program at the Autonomous Metropolitan University-Cuajimalpa. Her research interests include discourse, power and representation, film, and literature.



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