

Re-imagining “the Local” in Latin American Films since the Neo-Liberal Turn

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In the advent of the Neo-liberal world order, the cultural integrity of the societies has become under increasing attack by new means of international communication and consumption. Hence, each community, both on local and national level, has its own way of dealing with those developments in order to secure its sovereignty and unique cultural forms and modes of life. This paper questions the meaning of local/national consciousness in Latin America during the process of economic, political, and cultural globalization by interrogating cultural art forms such as music, performance, and dance in four films from Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, and Brazil. It raises questions such as: Is it merely economic expediency that leads individuals to transgress the familiar borders of the cultural and gender relations? And, what is the place of tradition, of memory, of community in shaping of a new cultural order that emerges out of global economic domain? My theoretical framework derives from the Third Cinema theory, which rejects the hegemony of Euro-American film theory and explores the aspirations of a post-colonial world in the throes of resisting Neocolonialism.¹ In this paper, I am not seeking to apply this theory to talk about the marginalization of Third Cinema, but rather to talk about marginalization of cultures in Latin America as a result of modernization and globalization, and thus how local transgressions towards these discourses are embedded in cultural nationalism(s).

I chose those films below because they mix national and global in ways that emphasize for the audience the complexity of culture in a transnational context. They all ask the questions: Do economic growth and social progress mean adoption of Western values? What kind of strategies do local communities develop against the crises of cultural identity? And how do those

communities situate themselves against the fast flow of cultural products? I would say that all four movies, depicting four different national communities, adapt to various models in order to transgress the homogenizing effects of so called “globalization.”

The first movie I analyze is *Bye Bye Brazil*, filmed in 1979 by Carlos José Fontes Diegues. Diegues portrays an affectionate picture of Brazil in the process of great changes. *Bye Bye Brazil* is a psychological inventory of a country on the verge of extraordinary economic and industrial development. This film is a travelogue through a modern nation that doesn't yet know how to deal with the complications of modernity. The main focus of the film is the struggle of two couples to find their dreams in a world that undergoes transformation faster than their caravan can travel. While crossing the country from one end to the other, the couples witness massive technological transformations and are shaken by social changes.

Carlos Diegues is one of the founding fathers of Brazil's “Cinema Novo”, which involves a group of young filmmakers who turned away from conventional film forms in the 1960s to start a cinema more responsive to the country's political and social needs. “Cinema Novo” is about telling Brazil to Brazilians. As Diegues explains in his interview with Dan Yakir, because of an intense form of cultural colonialism, a Brazilian image was appearing at the movie theater with the films made by Brazilian directors for the very first time (Yakir 172): Diegues tells Yakir how he developed his ideas on filming *Bye Bye Brazil* during the shooting of his film *Joanna* :

One day we returned to the tiny village where we were staying. There was a strange blue light in the village square. It was a television screen and the people – the sugarcane cutter, the small functionary, etc.—were watching a program from

Rio that featured elegantly dressed people with modern cars: the emblem of consumerism. I was completely amazed and I had to film it. (177)

Bye Bye Brazil is about the confrontation between the two Brazils, which exist simultaneously. On the one hand, there is the rural town, quiet and peaceful, where technology and progress have not had their disruptive effects on the lives of the four characters portrayed in the movie. On the other hand, the more modern villages, identified by the TV antennas, are too busy and snobbish to be attracted to the old-fashioned traveling theater with which Gypsy, Salome, Ciço, and Dasdô earn their living. A tiny troupe of performers, who call themselves the *Caravana Rolidei*, travel by an old truck from the poverty stricken Brazilian northeast to the seacoast in Belem, across the jungles on the trans-Amazonian highway to Brasilia and points in between. The travelers are a magician-mind reader, a rumba dancer who prostitutes on the side, a naive young man who plays the accordion, his pregnant wife, and a mute black man who drives the truck and picks up small change hand-wrestling in roadside cafes. Through their journey from one town to the other, the protagonists do not know how to react to all the contradictions of their “liminal” position: both constantly traveling and being exposed to modern and traditional Brazil at the same time.

Bye Bye Brazil shows the pains of an incipient democracy and underdevelopment caused by a dependent economy. The Brazilian people seem to be longing for two things: bread and circus. Yet, now the people of Brazil favor the illusions of electronic media over traveling carnival theaters. When the troupe comes across an entire town mesmerized by television, Gypsy Lord makes a poignant comment: “In the old days, politicians used to promise bridges; now they promise a television set”. In Brazil, modernity brought with it massive social changes, the new economic realities and advent of modern communications that leaves society in a state of cultural

and economic shock, with one foot in the present and another in the past. Throughout *Bye Bye Brazil*, residing in tradition and progression simultaneously is well portrayed. For example, the Indians in the film are left without land because of the modern urbanization; they are also purposeless and hopeless and traveling in search for jobs. In the evenings, they camp outside and prey to their ancestral spirits, while in the daytime they put on American blue jeans and sun glasses and listen to the American popular songs on the radio.

Bye Bye Brazil does not picture a future full of hope and promises for Brazilian society; on the contrary, it portrays the polluted rivers and ocean, unsanitary conditions of urban planning, destruction of Amazon forests and exploitation of workers and displacement of Indians. For many critics, Diegues achieves a highly entertaining film. I do not think that merely entertainment was his aim at all. Thinking of him in the context of “Cinema Nôvo”, one realizes that what he tries to do is to show Brazilians to themselves in a satirical way in order to wake them up from the illusions of false political promises.

With *Bye Bye Brazil*, Diegues asks the question: Are old traditions laid to rest while Brazil is under the occupation of foreign exploiters in the Amazon and of the media which occupies the conscious of Brazilian society with false hopes and dreams? Diegues shows little collective resistance to those developments; however, if carefully observed, his message is retained within the characters of the *Caravana Rolidei*. As the members of the troupe discover a Brazil in constant transformation, they question their own identities. Diegues, in my opinion, sends the message through these characters that Brazil has to discover its own identity and its place in the global developments of cultural and economic markets. In order to do that, Brazilian society has to get up from in front of the mesmerizing television screen, and hold on to their “own” creative pulse. It is certainly crucial for Brazil to discover “itself” in its own cultural

forms in order to recover from the materialist mutilation, environmental holocaust, and spiritual annihilation that the modernization projects under dependent economy brought with them.

Carnival theaters are unique Brazilian cultural forms that are having difficulties surviving against the digital entertainment. In the midst of the Amazon jungle, people who have never even seen an electric light before get electricity and television at the same time. In Diegues' film, the carnival theater becomes something else than a cultural remnant. It embodies the hopes and dreams of the members of *Caravana Rolidei* who are —just like the rest of the country— torn between the new world of pixilated communication and their traditional world of rumba. Diegues' proposal for the cultural survival of Brazil is to develop new relationships with cultural exports and new ways of interacting with modernization.

Fernando Solanas has observed his native land of Argentina and its political and social conditions by means of cinema for more than 30 years. Repressive measures of the military dictatorship in Argentina forced the director into exile in Paris in 1976 when Peron was usurped during a coup. In 1985 Solanas made *Tangos —The Exile of Gardel* based on his experiences in Paris. This film brought him a Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival the following year. Along with Octavio Getino, Solanas was the originator of Third Cinema theory, which, in the late 1960s, was the product of the worldwide insurrections. Solanas and Getino in their first declaration as the *Cine Liberacion* Group made it clear that their concern was social change, not film art: “Our commitment as cineastes in a dependent country is not with universal culture or art or abstract man; before anything else it is with the liberation of our country and the Latin American peoples” (Fusco 14).

In *Tangos*, Solanas questions the transformations of signs and artifacts of the national culture into global market through music and dance. The staged play in the movie, *Tango-Dy*, is

about speaking the cultural language of Argentine exiles, but both the players and the director of the play are aware of the essentialism of that language. Yet, they still think that tango best describes the Argentine soul in exile. One of the tangos sang says: “I dance the tango in search for my country, in search of my soul, a land where I can be myself, where I can vote freely. Dance the tango...Dance to tango with all your Argentine soul.”

Tangos reflects Solanas’ criticism towards the world market’s reductionism of Argentina’s culture to Tango. Marvin D’Luogo in “New Identity of Latin American Cinema” discusses that: “As his title indicates, Solanas intentionally positions his film within the history of the transnational scenario of local icons-Gardel and tango used as cultural capital for foreign markets” (D’Luogo 107). Solanas is underlining the unequal global exchanges of national cultural productions. By making tango “political”, Solanas takes it out of the context of how European culture market commodifies it as a “touristy artifact.”

Tangos deals with exile and loss; diaspora and power structures; and with the violent specter of Argentina’s military regimes, all framed within the context of Argentine tango. Tango, in international cultural markets, has long been associated with “love and passion”; yet, this movie looks to it in a very different perspective: tango as signifier of liminality and illegitimacy, of displacement and counter-culture.

Tangos has six parts and each one is told with a different tango music and dance. Each part narrates a different aspect of the lives of Argentine exiles in Paris. Although filmed in Paris, Solanas’ film gives almost no reference to Parisian life apart from the use of architecture. Living with the memories of their homeland Buenos Aires, the exiles seek solace and connection to their culture by staging a set of tangos. The film oscillates between their vibrant rehearsals of the play *Tango-Dy* and their circumscribed lives in low-rent apartments, underemployed, trying to find a

cheap way for communicating with families back home and trying to survive with what they hope are only temporary arrangements in a foreign land.

Tango culture and tango humanism could be said to be Buenos Aires phenomena. They emerged from the encounter of dance concepts from Congo with the city's cultural and social situation, involving African-born blacks, blacks born in Argentina, European migrants from Spain and Italy come to seek their fortune in the Americas, and Europeans born in Argentina looking for work (Thomson 8). Some suggest that tango encounters were a catalyst for racial and class tensions augmented by the European migration, proposing that tango helped to provoke these encounters and, at the same time, expressed their occurrence (Thomson 27).

In Solanas' movie this is reversed. Tango is now the expression of Argentine political émigrés to Europe. *Tangos* is more about feelings of exile than the stories of exile because there are no protagonist in the classical sense. Many characters are introduced with their nicknames or with no names at all. Solanas, while depicting a specific moment in Argentine history that is related to the Dirty War—the six-year military dictatorship that ran from 1976 to 1983 involving the plight of Argentine political exiles including himself—, he specifically refrains from any heroism against this dictatorship. The political exiles and the “missing people” remain nameless; hence, the audience is connected with their story through musical and bodily expressions. This, in my opinion, does not “anesthetize” politics as some post-modern critics argue, but “politicizes” the aesthetics.

Such writers as Jorge Luis Borges or Federico Garcia Lorca defined tango as the freest dance, the dance of transgression. It is a common view that tango must have been the natural soundtrack of violent and marginalized lives. In Solanas' movie, tango is not marketed as the “dance of transgression”, but it is used as a tool for telling the story of those “marginalized

lives.” Tango, in its history, has references to exile and displaced roots, the sadness of the ephemerality and the encounters with an “other” culture. This movie depicts that aspect of tango but also transcends it by placing tango in-between cultures and in-between cultural markets.

It seems to me that Tango is the dance of “liminality,” of “in-betweenness,” and thus its aesthetic language could achieve to be a history-teller of displacements and migrations. It is not the dance of a particular space or time that can be accurately named or defined. Desperate, like the immigrant, to trace its roots, tango, in this film, never seems to find its rightful place, residing at the borders of existence in the interlocking worlds between here and there (Thomson 48).

Therefore, tango, as an artistic expression, fits very well into Solanas’ desire to tell the history of displaced and exiled people. With this film, he proposes that transgressions against global neo-colonialism should not be directly associated with cultural nationalism. Hence, Solanas sees the danger that how easily cultural forms known as “authentic” are packaged and consumed by Neo-liberal global markets. Therefore, he saves tango from being “too Argentinean”, as the French critic in the movie comments and presents it as an artistic representation of a political language that speaks to everyone who has been repressed under dictatorial regimes. As one of the nameless protagonists in the movie says: “Latin American people have lived in exile inside as well as outside their countries under the hold of neo-colonial projects.” Although he portrays a moment in history of a particular nation, Solanas avoids any reductionist rhetoric of cultural nationalisms. Instead, he poses questions about the place of national culture within the world’s political system.

Karim Diridi’s film *Cuba Feliz* follows the wanderings of charismatic 76-year-old musician Miguel Del Morales, known as *El Gallo* (The Rooster) as he travels throughout Cuba, making music in the homes of friends, in bars and on street corners, in courtyards and stairwells.

Through the journey, his wonderful voice bespeaks the joys and sufferings of the Cuban society. In Cuba and internationally, Del Morales is known as “a living memory of Cuban bolero.” As *Cuba Feliz* shows, he makes music with the easygoing fluidity of a man whose life and music are all of one whole.

In the first scene, weary figure, *El Gallo*, wearing a black tank top and sombrero, is first glimpsed smoking a cigarette and gazing over the Havana harbor as a cargo ship leaves the port. He starts singing a song about the hardship of life and the passing of time. Soon, he leaves Havana armed only with his guitar. The Rooster begins traveling on the dusty roads from one end of the beautiful island to the other, playing with fellow musicians wherever he finds them. From Havana he travels to Santiago de Cuba, Guantánamo, Camaguey and Trinidad, ending up back in Havana in the same spot from which he started. In this travelogue there are no “interviews” or story line of the conventional sense. Instead, it is filled with heartfelt bravado and a charisma flows out of the instruments and vocal chords of Del Morales and the Cuban people he meets.

Born in 1961 in Algeria, Dridi has a solid festival record. All four of his feature films have been seen at major festivals: *Pigalle* (1994) at Venice, *Bye-Bye* (1995) at Cannes, *Hors Jeu* (1998) at Locarno, and *Cuba Feliz* in the Directors’ Fortnight. In addition, he has made a number of short films, plus documentaries for *Arte*, including *Citizen Ken Loach* (1997).² To shoot *Cuba Feliz* Dridi, only uses a hand-held camera and a single boom microphone. He paints a quite romantic picture of a nation whose songs spring directly from the lives of the people. Yet, within that romanticism, there is a kind of naked representation of the “everyday life” of the Cuban people.

Orthodox Marxist thought argues that in the societies of advanced capitalism, commodity exchange objectifies social relations to the point where they escape from conscious human control and regulate all human contact. Many unorthodox scholars criticize this concept and assert that certain social relationships (i.e biological reproduction, family and community relationships) are subjective and lived through “ the practice of everyday life” and thus they carve an “other” space within the dominating space of late-capitalism. *Cuba Feliz* is about that “other” place that resists to the commercialization of music, privatization of space and alienation of human beings.

In painting a romantic yet vibrant picture of a nation whose songs spring directly from the lives of the people, *Cuba Feliz* recalls the Marxist dream of honest working people living harmoniously and peacefully joined in music. Dridi explores relations of production and community relations in an unusual way. In all those cities that *El Gallo* travels, both private and public spaces accommodate friends, neighbors, and strangers who gather around to communicate, to share, and to love through music. It looks as if there is no difference between somebody’s private garden or a public alley. People share their time and space as if they are not the subject to private property.

Gallo’s presence in their town immediately promotes a kind of small gathering of the people, and the viewer observes that improvised music generates a kind of improvised fiesta where music creates community, leading to the possibility of understanding among total strangers. Music, stripped from all its commercial values, strengthens the roots and identity of the community. All those locales *Gallo* visits are of Afro-Cuban communities. The scenes of poverty are striking; yet, when the music starts, it is reduced to mere background picture. In the everyday life of these people it is, in fact, a communal practice and music is not something

reserved for leisure. They sing and make music when they are cooking, cleaning, playing soccer or walking.

In one scene, older musicians improvise songs with ease in a kind of musical cipher called a *changui*. When a younger rapper, Juan, tries to jump in the mix with a few lines, Papillo, a celebrated musician, reminds him that he is not really allowed to continue: in order for the younger generation to truly learn the music and how to improvise in a *changui*, they must listen first. This scene shows a generational continuity that is harder to come by in countries with a flourishing commercial music industry. Many times Dridi makes references to *The Buena Vista Social Club* the film and soundtrack album that put Cuban pop on the map of world music. But, although many of the songs performed by *El Gallo* and his friends date from the same period, the two films are pointedly different in spirit. In *Cuba Feliz*, Dridi aims to preserve the dignity of Cuban musicians who stayed after the Revolution of 1959.

There is much written about music's ability to create a virtual time, where one can escape the confines and limitations of the moment and find new vistas and solutions. Is this escape or distraction? Or is this a positive view of music's function? Does this film show us the means of escape of Cuban people from the poverty that surrounds them or do they hold on to their cultural roots with music they are transcending the difficulties of daily life? One thing that is certain is that this movie presents music as a powerful force, a force that speaks to the people that went through revolutionary changes, through hope of a new day. The new lyrics of Cuban music, while echoing past lyrics of nationalistic pride and cultural heritage, are shown as being sung in new ways with new messages. As Theodor Adorno aptly states, we must investigate the experience of the music in the "households of the masses" (39). *Cuba Feliz* seems to do this.

Adorno argues that the popular music causes distraction, to those who live in fear and are anxious about unemployment and alienation. The mode of production of the popular music of which Adorno writes is intertwined with the society's modes of production and thus relations of production. Yet, Adorno writes of the "culture industry" in the West where capitalism has thrived. If we take into account the everyday life of the Cuban people and the ways in which they utilize music in their lives, we observe that this is not the case. Although the Cuban government has longed for an industrialized economy since the days of the Revolution, Cuba had to have predominantly agrarian economy, relying most heavily on sugar as its main export. The Revolution had to struggle with the need to build an industrial base by diversifying the economy while maintaining a high output of sugar in order to accumulate capital. Nevertheless, the Cuban economy is still as highly dependent on sugar as it was thirty years ago. Remaining in this relatively pre-capitalist mode of existence, there are significant differences in consumption habits between the Cuban worker and those of the Western industrialized countries. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that, contrary to Adorno's theory, for the people of Cuba music is not a pastime.

Cuba Feliz shows the genuine relationship of the Cuban people to their cultural production and through that with each other. During the years of the Soviet Union's support of Cuba, basic items for living were easily satisfied. Being economically supported by the Soviet Union, Cuban artists could concentrate on their art without thinking of working in another job to subsidize themselves and their family. Since 1989, without the Soviet Union as the major trading partner, Cuba started to seek ways to partially opening up its economy to foreign investments especially in the tourism sector and culture industry. Thus, the production and marketing of Cuban culture globally has taken on unprecedented importance. As Dridi's film shows, in those

circumstances, Cubans rely on their social ties for not letting the co-modification of their music co-opt their everyday lives.

Through the Spanish colonial rule, the histories and lifestyles of African communities survived through music and dance that have been kept alive and handed down through generations. During Castro's government, the Cuban identity has evolved into the ideology of a revolutionary nation defined by the solidarity of its citizens. Thus, it seems that music carves an "alternative space" in the daily lives of the Cuban people, and their unique dialogue with each other and thus, plays a great role as a form of resistance to the pressures of global economic systems.

Many scholars in social sciences argue that globalization appears to disturb the link between people, place, and power encoded in national identities, turning the nation, as one scholar has put it, into an "empty shell." On the other hand, empirical research shows that, as a response to homogenization of culture that the process of Globalization brings, the link between people in a given society is renewed and replenished by the daily practice of the cultural forms and traditions that are unique to that society. The social networks in an era of jet-plane travels and online communications might not be the same as a hundred years ago; however, they exist as vibrantly and as powerfully as they did then.

Another film that depicts the importance of national culture in the daily lives of the people against the harsh realities of global economy is Hannah Weyer's documentary, *La Boda* (The Wedding). It tells the story of a Mexican-American immigrant family that constantly moves between Texas, California and Mexico. Weyer's camera follows Elizabeth Luis during the last week before her marriage to Artemio Guerrero and through the wedding.

La Boda has been screened at various film festivals, including the Human Rights Watch Film Festival and the New York and Los Angeles Latino Film festivals. Hannah Weyer received her Master's Degree in Film from New York University upon completion of her 1994 award-winning thesis film, *The Salesman and Other Adventure*.³ One of her major concerns is the women's role in transnational communities. Weyer has also shot her third internationally known film *Escuela* (school) with Elizabeth Luis two years after *La Boda* (2000). Weyer is mainly interested in documenting the often invisible and undocumented jobs migrant women perform in their workplaces and within their transnational community. Weyer also tries to discover how the flow of labor power in the neo-liberal global order turn women into breadwinners, while significantly reshape cultural and domestic landscapes of both sending and receiving countries. *La Boda* unfolds the challenges and sacrifices faced by Mexican-American young men and women who labor as seasonal agricultural workers. Although most of the reviews of this film look at it from the perspective of feminism and thus girl immigrants, in my opinion, this view restricts the overall aspects of Mexican border crossings, which this film tries to underline.

In *La Boda*, when the audience is introduced to the bride, the anticipation of the "big day" fills the air. We learn that Elizabeth is a high school drop-out who, along with her seven siblings, has contributed to the family income throughout her adolescence and young adulthood. She talks to the camera in English with an American accent but with a very bad grammar. The lively stories that Elizabeth and her sisters tell help us to explore the architecture of the Luis family and the Mexican-American community that surrounds them.

For the immigrants from Mexico making the dangerous crossing, the Mexican-U.S. border is not a matter of choice. Intense poverty due to Mexican economic conditions compels many poor workers and peasants to seek work on "el otro lado." In the present day, not only

immigrants contribute to the U.S.'s economy as a cheap labor and the source of accumulated surplus, but also their purchasing power sustains thousands of dollars in U.S. jobs. Immigration from Mexico to the U.S. is not a contemporary phenomenon. It has a long history dating from the late nineteenth century continuing to the present. Yet, after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed in 1994, the number of Mexican immigrants raised significantly. NAFTA is the phenomenon of the neo-liberal globalism. It aimed to bring benefits, like tripling of trade and investment among the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Yet, since it was signed, the statistics show that the wage disparity in Mexico is worsened and the poverty rate is risen which resulted in the growth of labor movement from the rural areas to the Mexican urban areas and to the U.S.

One thing immediately strikes the viewer during the conversations that Luis family, just like many other Mexican immigrant families, are essentially economic refugees. One of the consequences of globalization is that public subsidies for food and agriculture are being cut or eliminated, and small-scale farmers have been forced to compete with huge international agribusinesses. Every year, many people in Mexico are forced to leave their native land in search for better living conditions in the U.S.

Mexican immigrants often experience cultural shock and language barriers; therefore, most of them depend on support networks of their community. *La Boda* shows how these networks are established and maintained for generations to come. Among the first things that the viewer notices is that there are almost no funds that have been secured for the wedding. Almost everything is taken care of by Mexican immigrant relatives, friends, and neighbors. The wedding dress is sewn by the oldest aunt of the bride, the horse and carriage that will carry the bride and groom to the church is free-rented from a distant cousin, the cow that's going to be eaten during the

festivities belongs to the younger uncle, and the wedding band that will play mariachi is comprised of the bride's brother and his friends. On the wedding day, Elizabeth's relatives arrive from New Mexico, California, and northern Texas. The family members speak a mixture of Spanish and English—quite common in Mexican immigrant households. After the ceremony in the church, everyone proceeds to the very modest looking church hall. Mariachi music fills in the air and the celebration starts.

It is known that, in the 1930s, President Lázaro Cárdenas supported mariachi groups and even included them in political events. Mariachi music style is a popular way of marking a special occasion in Mexican culture. Daniel Sheehy analyzes that in Mexican culture, until the Revolution, mariachi music was associated with rural and working class peoples and is looked down by Mexican urban middle class (Sheehy 133). After the Revolution, the mariachi crossed deeply rooted geographic, class, and cultural lines emerging as the primary musical representation of Mexican cultural identity.

On the U.S. side of the border, mariachi music is a potent symbol of the immigrants deeply-felt identity. Moreover, it has literally been a cultural icon to anchor Mexican immigrants (Sheehy 132). Sheehy demonstrates that the Chicano movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, following the image of civil right movement for African Americans, intensified the meaning of mariachi music as cultural symbol and means of cultural pride and resistance (Sheehy 130). As *La Boda* shows, mariachi music has a special place in the hearts of the Mexican American immigrants who value it as their cultural heritage that sets them apart from the mainstream U.S. culture and connects them to their homeland. During Elizabeth's wedding, mariachi music acts like an invisible bond that ties the Luis family and the community together. During the interviews before the wedding, the bride, her sisters, and her mother try to explain the strong ties

of social networks among the Mexican American immigrants, yet with the wedding celebration, the phenomena becomes a real representation of their social existence, strongly felt with the tunes of Mariachi.

As anthropological studies show, national music forms come to the fore of the immigrant societies as a way of cultural resistance and community building. Much of contemporary music is global music or at least a fusion of diverse musical cultures. By embracing what is known as “national music,” Mexican immigrants insert their presence in the U.S. culture as a way of transgressing the homogenizing effects of being transnational immigrants.

In contemporary cultural dynamics dominated by fast global communication, particular regional traits are debated in the face of a worldwide homogenizing culture. While local societies accept outside influences, they strongly feel the need to assess their identity on the perseverance of the values, forms, rhythms that preceding generations established as their national culture. The revival of cultural nationalism, in many nations of the world, displays the pervasive impact of globalization and calls into question the role of any localized, national identity. All those four movies stress the resilient adaptation of local traditions to global challenges. In this adaptation, “local” and “global” factors are not separate, opposing forces, but forces that exist simultaneously and interdependently. I seek answer to questions such as: what is the place of tradition, of memory, of community in shaping of a new cultural order that emerges out of global economic domain? In my opinion, those films demonstrate that both transgression and conformism are developed simultaneously through the tensions between cosmopolitan and folkloric impulses of a given society as it becomes a part of the processes of globalization that permeates to every society on earth with the expansion of the neo-liberal order.

Notes

¹ Paradoxically it is the discursive practice of the West that gave rise to term “Third World.”

² For more information on these films visit:

<http://www.filmfestivals.com/cannes_2000/parallel/directors_cuba.htm>

³ For more information see Hanna Weyer, “Women Make Movies”

<<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/makers/fm450.shtml>>

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