

FILM NARRATIVES CROSSING TIME AND SPACE IN THE AMERICAS: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF *LA JAULA DE ORO* (2013) AND *EL NORTE* (1983); *RIO* (2011) AND *THE THREE CABALLEROS* (1944)

Anelise R. Corseuil*

¹Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brasil

Abstract

The essay discusses how frequent migratory currents of certain narratives and ideas within the Americas have formed clusters of knowledge and stimulated audiences' imagination about specific cultures or nations. The essay presents the process of narrative continuity and displacement in recent films about immigration and travel within the Americas, as they can be read in relation to earlier films on the same theme, *La Jaula de Oro* (Diego Queimada-Díez, 2013) vis à vis *El Norte* (Gregory Nava, 1983), and *Rio* (Carlos Saldanha, 2011) vis à vis *The Three Caballeros* (Walt Disney, 1944). *La Jaula de Oro* presents the same border crossing as *El Norte*, from Guatemala to Mexico to the USA, but thirty years apart, whereas in *Rio* the contemporary narrative of a migrating little blue macaw, Blu, who moves from the USA to Brazil, readdresses another culturally and politically invested symbolic icon from the mid-1940s and the good neighbor policy—a parrot named José Carioca, whose role in *The Three Caballeros* goes much beyond the frames of the film. The essay aims at an analysis of the narrative and aesthetic frameworks of the films and their ideological resonances and displacements in terms of American hemispheric relations.

Keywords: film studies; inter-American studies; comparative studies

* Anelise R. Corseuil is a Professor of Literatures in English and Film Studies in the Graduate Program in English and at the English Language and Literature Department at UFSC. She holds a PhD in Literatures in English from Wayne State University and she is currently the Editor-in-Chief of journal *Ilha do Desterro*. Her e-mail address is hcorseuil@terra.com.br. ORCID: 0000-0002-1129-3852.



Although travel to, and travel narratives about, the Americas are not new phenomena—they go back to colonial encounters between Europeans and native populations—recording the strangeness the Europeans found, and the adaptations they had to make to understand and survive such experiences (e.g. the largely adapted narrative of Hans Staden's experiences with cannibals in Brazil, 1557)—it is in our present moment that individuals and cultures have been more fluidly traveling from one place to another. Certain landscapes, places, routes and themes familiar within the Americas are more frequently rendered in films produced in the context of the Americas. Not only have specific destinations been more visited than others, but also certain narratives have traveled more widely, being more frequently adapted to different media within our American inter-hemispheric relations.

From the twentieth century on, two important inter-hemispheric processes that inspire travel narratives stand out, the Good Neighbor Policy and the massive migration from South to North which has been widely circulated in various media. The Good Neighbor policy was an attempt to foster cultural proximity between the US and Latin American countries for economic and political reasons, starting with the Roosevelt administration's efforts for a reinterpretation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1933 (Melgosa 2012, 4), partly due to the need of new markets for American products and to the threat represented by the Nazi regime in the pre-World War period and its close associations with some governments in Latin America.¹ With the creation of Nelson Rockefeller's office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs CIAA between the years of 1940–45 writers, intellectuals, film directors and producers were invited to give lectures in the US, and movies about Latin America were made and subsidized by the CIAA. As Darlene Sadlier (2012) points out, the Good Neighbor Policy and the CIAA “seem, at least in comparison to what followed, a remarkably enlightened example of the government's enthusiastic prioritization of modern and relatively progressive forms of public culture as a powerful mediating force for political and economic interests” (200). The cultural agency had in its agenda a “broad-based program of public information” which included “education through radio, print media, and the visual arts” (200).²

Whereas during the Good Neighbor period most travels had a touristic, educational and cultural relevance, approximating the US and various Latin American countries, in more recent decades another cluster of narratives about a different kind of traveling, which is immigration, mostly from South to North, has been highlighted in the media and in numerous films about the subject, as a subgenre also called border film.³ As Caren Kaplan (2000) points out, there is a rhetorical relationship between travel and displacement: “[t]ravel is very much a modern concept, signifying both commercial and leisure movement in an era of expanding Western capitalism, while displacement refers us to the more mass migration that modernity has engendered” (3). Furthermore, immigration is a topic that has been used as a political platform by diverse presidents such as Barack Obama and Donald Trump, an indication of these narratives' power to

mobilize people across nations.⁴ Although displacement, instead of travel, better expresses this migratory journey, as Latin Americans have been forced to move to the US in search of better living conditions, both terms imply an imaginary of change, newness and search for happiness as the character's journey leads to a change in perspective, a form of personal growth or transformation, which can be observed, for example, in Juan's transformation along his journey in *La Jaula de Oro* or in Blu, the little macaw in *Rio*.

Travel, dislocation and/or deterritorialization can thus be analyzed from the perspective of the traveler who moves from one place to another, as well as by the traveling narratives that are readapted and relocated in space and time across cultures and history. Within this context, the following travel narrative films can be seen in relational terms, in a dialogical way:⁵ *La Jaula de Oro* or *The Golden Dream* (official translation) (Diego Queimada-Díez, 2013) *vis à vis* *El Norte* (Gregory Nava, 1983), and *Rio* (Carlos Saldanha, 2011) *vis à vis* *The Three Caballeros* (Walt Disney, 1944). *La Jaula de Oro*, which literally could be translated as the golden cage, presents the same kind of border crossing as *El Norte*, from Guatemala to Mexico to the US, thirty years apart, whereas in *Rio* the contemporary narrative of a migrating little blue macaw, Blu, who moves from Brazil to the US and back to Brazil, readdresses another culturally and politically invested symbolic icon created in the 1940s with the Good Neighbor Policy—a parrot named José Carioca, also called Joe Carioca or Zé Carioca, whose role in *The Three Caballeros* goes much beyond the frames of the film, as it became a national popular symbol well known for its role in comic books.

This article aims at an analysis of traveling and displacement within the narrative and aesthetic frameworks of the films and their ideological resonances to American inter-hemispheric relations. From *The Three Caballeros* to *Rio* there is a changing process of identity affiliations, as we move from a national to a transnational politics of representation of gender, race and nation. Whereas *The Three Caballeros* presents a problematic politics of race and gender representation, but an emphasis on a national identity, in *Rio* the national gives way to a transnational representation of gender and race, alongside its environmental transnational plot. In the comparative analysis of *El Norte vis à vis La Jaula de Oro*, the national also gives way to a transnational perspective of inter-hemispheric relations, as the political plot and the Guatemalan *mise-en-scène* of *El Norte* are replaced by the unmarked and undifferentiated cultural and geographic landscape of *La Jaula de Oro*, in which there is no community affiliation and national, gender and ethnic identity marks are erased.

The Three Caballeros

The first film here analyzed—*The Three Caballeros*—was produced by Disney within the context of the Good Neighbor Policy in 1944, as a sequel to *Saludos Amigos* (1942) and the short documentary, *South of the Border*, also made in 1942, which presented Disney and the artists involved in the making of *Saludos*

Amigos in their journey through South America. In order to avoid mistakes made in previous films about Latin America as in *Down Argentine Way* (1941), whose portrayal of Argentines was inaccurate and ended up enraging local audiences [Kaufman 2009, cited in Goldman 2014, 29], Disney was invited by the CIAA office to travel to Latin America with the group of artists involved in the making of his “Good Neighbor” films. This field trip would allow Disney to know more about Latin American history, customs, music and geography (Goldman 29).⁶ Nonetheless, Goldman, among many other critics, has argued that Disney’s portrayal of Latin America as constituted by white people is not a blunder but an attempt to avoid the subject of racial differences across the hemisphere. In *South of the Border*, except for the natives in Bolivia and Guatemala, other visited countries are constituted by white people. Sadlier points out that “[h]umans interest Disney when they are quaint, picturesque, and colorful but not when they are black, which was in keeping with inter-American concerns about featuring blacks on screen” (Sadlier 51). As regards *The Three Caballeros*, a similar critique has been raised. Even in his visit to Bahia, where the population of afro-descendants is high, Donald Duck, who is being guided by the Brazilian parrot, Zé Carioca, never meets any black people. Such politics of race representation which is further problematized by politics of gender representation has been analyzed by Julianne Burton-Carvajal (1994) and Jean Franco (2001) among other critics. In the case of gender representation, the problem lies with what is shown rather than effaced, since Donald’s behavior verges on a sexual obsession that in the film is shown to have little to do with the cultural landscape of the visited Latin American countries. The film suggests that Donald Duck’s shortsighted view of Latin America as well as his constant cultural mistakes are revealing of his own ignorance, as Donald, metaphorically speaking, is a representative of the stereotype of the US traveler. By contrast, Zé Carioca, a Brazilian parrot, representative of Brazil, more specifically of Rio, is culturally presented as a sophisticated and articulated character.

The overall critique about the film targets its “gendered narrative of US masculine-identified hegemony vis à vis a highly feminized representation of Latin America” (Goldman 25). Nonetheless, within the diegesis, Donald is constantly being criticized and made fun of for his behavior by his companions Zé Carioca, Pachito, the Mexican rooster, and by the women at the beach in the Acapulco sequence. The sequence in which Donald is introduced to Zé Carioca exposes the differences between the two *caballeros*: whereas Donald can hardly communicate, Zé Carioca can sing, dance and perform, and it is his imagination that leads us through one of the most poetic sequences of the film, the Bahia sequence. Salvador, the capital of Bahia, is shown in the twilight, with a reddish sky and with the Lacerda elevator in the background. The camera pans through the city, showing its historical houses, hills, churches and idyllic images of nature with the song track “Na Baixa do Sapateiro” by Ary Barroso, (titled “Baia” in English)⁷ which is a poetic song, a lament for a missing love. As the lyrics go *Morena, eu ando louco de saudade. Meu Senhor do Bonfim, arranja outra morena*

igualzinha para mim, o amor ai, ai. The word *saudade* and the final expression *ai, ai* express a sentimental and nostalgic feeling. *Saudade*, or longing, which is known for its difficult translatability to other languages, is defined as being a unique word, a national “patrimony” to the Portuguese language and its speakers (Monteiro 2013). The poetry and the images of the lyrics, almost as if we were watching still frames of paintings of Salvador, end when Zé Carioca returns from his reverie. The elegance of Zé Carioca is highlighted in this sequence as he becomes completely absorbed by the beauty and the poetry of the scenery.

In the following sequence, we see Donald interacting with Aurora Miranda, who performs a well-known Bahian song “Os Quindins de Yayá”, also composed by Ary Barroso (1941).⁸ At this point Donald is already attempting to seduce the singer, in a rather insistent and disturbing way. He is constantly pulled off by Zé Carioca who asks him to “calm down”. This sexual crescendo becomes more problematic in the Acapulco beach sequence, as Zé Carioca says to Donald, “you are a wolf.” Zé Carioca’s advice—“take it easy Donald; Did you ever see such a fast worker? No, no, Donald. Take it easy”—and the hide and seek game played by the sunbathing ladies at the Acapulco beach, fooling Donald, the voyeuristic tourist—show his inability to understand Latin American culture. Furthermore, the self-reflexive language of Disney’s film exposes the fictional and cultural artifact distancing the audience from the film itself. The opening sequence, in which Donald receives the gifts from his Latin American friends—a film projector with many short films, a book about Latin America, which is visited by the three *caballeros*, and a rug used to fly over Mexico—is revealing of Donald’s imaginary about Latin America as a cultural construct.

The various reviews of the film suggest that Donald’s behavior is far from normative and seems to threaten US cultural hegemony. In *The New Yorker* in 1945, Wolcott Gibbs (1945) points out that “[...] a somewhat physical romance between a two-foot Duck and a full-sized woman [...] is one of those things that might disconcert less squeamish authorities than the Hays office.” For Sadlier, “[a] main concern of US reviewers at the time and a concern that continues to preoccupy critics is Donald Duck turned loathsome lothario, an image unlike any projected in his other films. Indeed, for a Disney picture, this one is unusually sex-obsessed” (54–55).

The veiled and contradictory messages in *The Three Caballeros* are suggestive of the dichotomies within the Good Neighbor Policy: its economic and political subtexts versus its good intentions. Adrián Peres Melgosa points out that the Good Neighbor Policy, with the lead of President Roosevelt, in 1933, was an attempt to reformulate “with a new rhetoric of mutual respect and collaboration” (4) the Monroe Doctrine regarding the relations between Latin America and the US. According to Melgosa, at the same time that “Latin American films mostly represented Anglo American characters as greedy simpletons, uncultured, vengeful, and socially unrefined, the opposite of Ariel, the spiritually refined and aesthetically inclined being that José Enrique Rodó had proposed in 1900 as the ideal Latin American citizen”, Hollywood films also provided a negative portrait

of Latin Americans as a “group of immoral vice-prone mostly violent and indolent people, a photographic negative of the ideal image the US was building of itself and its citizens” (Rodó cited in Melgosa 4). Within this context, Nelson Rockefeller’s “first action was to create a Motion Picture Division that would concentrate its efforts on seeing that Hollywood films, which had presented almost exclusively negative stereotypical images of Latin Americans, would now present positive ones” (Goldman 29).

Sadlier’s analysis of the Good Neighbor Policy concludes with “nostalgia” for its attempts at an inter-hemispheric approximation (195)—even if one considers the rather dichotomous policy of racial representations involved and the economic interest behind the scenes.⁹ Indeed, if one compares The United Fruit Company era, which popularized the term “Banana Republic”¹⁰ for Honduras and by extension all Latin American countries, or considering US’ disregard for Latin America after-World War II, the Good Neighbor Policy was an advance in terms of inter-hemispheric cultural relations. It seems possible to interpret the role of Zé Carioca as an articulate ambassador of goodwill, a projection of the cultural policies and representations involved in the Good Neighbor Policy.¹¹

Rio

In 2011, another *avis rara* (whose scientific name is *anodorhynchus glaucus*), a little blue macaw named Blu is created in the film *RIO*, a Blue Sky studio production directed by Carlos Saldanha. Like his predecessor, Zé Carioca, Blu is extremely articulate. Although Blu does not wear clothes or smoke a cigar or use an umbrella as Zé Carioca, Blu enjoys human accouterments, such as a toothbrush, books, and human food provided by Linda, his owner in Minnesota, where, after all, he ended up by accident after being smuggled by a gang from Rio de Janeiro. The environmentally oriented plot unites Linda and Tulio, a Brazilian ornithologist who is looking for Linda and Blu in order to save the little blue macaw species from extinction. After some reluctance, Linda agrees to take Blu to Rio so that the supposedly last male macaw on earth may mate with Jewel, a female macaw, and thus save the species. Although Blu does not know how to fly, once he falls in love with Jewel he learns to fly and to survive in Rio, raising a family of three little blue macaws. After a lot of action in the midst of Carnival, Blu, Jewel, Linda and Tulio defeat the gang of bird smugglers and free all the caged birds.

Except for a few critiques raised on the film’s representation of the smugglers (all black men and women living in the slum), *Rio*’s politics of representation is careful to underline inclusiveness and reject stereotypes. Unlike *The Three Caballeros*, *Rio* portrays the population of Rio de Janeiro as quite diverse and depicts female characters performing strong and independent roles. Jewel knows how to beat her opponents and is a courageous female bird, and Linda is an American culturally attuned to the understanding that her inability to dance the samba is more a matter of cultural habit than a genetic issue—as she says on the top of a Carnival float, which she ends riding on by accident: “we don’t shake

our tushies in Minnesota”. Along those lines, we can read the accidental meeting between Tulio and his Dentist, Dr. Barbosa (a dark-skinned woman who is dressed up for Carnival and who led Linda to think that she was a performer) as a stereotype in need of change. Carnival takes over Rio, its streets and the slums, without class or racial separation. It is a cultural happening that is welcome by all classes, races and genders.

Blu’s ease in adapting to a different culture, from an American to a Brazilian culture, is also associated with the transnational agenda of Saldanha’s film, as Blu is definitely a citizen of the world, a multicultural agent. The bird was born in Brazil, but lived in the US for most of his life. His cause is ecological and global—the survival of his species, thus going much beyond the national or the local. The film’s ecological claim, to save the little blue macaw, as well as its politics of racial and gender representation as inclusive of various groups in Brazil, corroborates its politically correct agenda. Even the smuggling gang is suggestive of an international alliance, otherwise the birds would not be sold in the US. Although *Rio* presents a conjunction of factors defined by local colours shown by its *mise-en-scène*, specific places of Rio de Janeiro, communal themes such as poverty and characters that are identified as national or regional, especially those living in the slum, its narrative is not a national or local one. Rather the ecological threat is a global concern. Furthermore, the major characters, Tulio and Jewel, whose marks of national identity can first be identified by their clothes, a yellow and green scarf for Tulio and by Jewel’s sombre and austere winter clothes, later to be erased as they become part of a globalized community, capable of adapting anywhere. By the end of the narrative, all differences are erased, as their story, as well as Linda and Blue’s, is easily understood everywhere around the Globe – a story that offers no resistance to any audience, since ecological issues are welcome by almost everyone.

In *Rio* cultural hybridization stands out as it erases binary oppositions—those found, for instance, in the interactions between Carioca vs. Donald Duck, which culminate in a polarization that, in *The Three Caballeros*, helps to define the national type as opposed to the other. Gender and racial identity politics as well as ecological concerns circulate freely in a globalized world regardless of national boundaries or frontiers and are in many ways “traversed” (Clifford, “Travelling Cultures”, 1997, 25) by different forms of association far beyond national bounds. Social and media networks and film, as a form of contact zone, can be more influential in forming identity bounds than national identification. As Appadurai points out, “the transformation of everyday subjectivities through electronic mediation [...] is not only a cultural fact. It is deeply connected to politics, through the new ways in which individual attachments, interests, and aspirations increasingly cross-cut those of the nation-state” (Appadurai 1996, 10).¹²

Whereas in *The Three Caballeros* and in *Rio* there is a celebratory tone—in Rio with the overtone of globalization and ecological concerns—in narratives of immigration from Latin American countries to the US, in which *El Norte* and *La Jaula de Oro* are inscribed, we have displacement and deterritorialization. If

The Three Caballeros and the Good Neighbor Policy were a celebration of US and Latin American friendship, and *Rio* was a preview for the “small world” sort of ideology involved in the World Cup (2014) and the Olympic Games (2016), in *El Norte* and *La Jaula de Oro*, produced thirty years apart, 1983 to 2013, there is no celebration, but only rupture and trauma. In spite of their differences in terms of genre, a cartoon versus a fictional drama, the comparative analysis of *The Three Caballeros* with *Rio* and *El Norte* with *La Jaula de Oro* indicates a move from a nationalistic to a transnational and globalized perspective that is revealed in *La Jaula* by the film’s *mise-en-scène* and the characters’ portrayal. If the transnational in *Rio* is celebratory of new identity affiliations, the transnational in *La Jaula de Oro* reveals the lack of family ties and national or identity connections for the Guatemalan immigrants, for whom the national project is shown to be a failure. At the same time, the endemic poverty of Guatemala is interrelated with the ways in which capital and labor are structured in a globalized world.

El Norte and La Jaula de Oro

Both films *La Jaula de Oro* and *El Norte*, which were awarded many prizes in various festivals, including an Oscar nomination for best original script for Nava’s film, portray the journey of Guatemalan immigrants to the US, looking for better living conditions. Their trajectories are revealing of the relations between the self and the other, the local, the national and the transnational within different historical contexts and different aesthetics.¹³ *La Jaula de Oro* does not appeal to melodrama or sentimentality but reveals subjectivity through the camera gaze that renders the characters in a contained narrative, a characteristic of Diego Quemada-Díez’s work, acknowledged for his realistic and socially conscious films.¹⁴ *El Norte* presents a personal tragedy and the dilacerating family losses in a dramatic tone, shown through the music and the characters’ gaze and feelings. Despite aesthetic differences, both films reveal in different scenarios the violence of the cultural and symbolic frontiers separating north and south, Guatemala (and by extension Central American countries) and the US. The films engage in a dialogue about travel, frontier and migration in the Americas, with a difference of thirty years, in a more degraded and deterritorialized Guatemala, as we move from a rural family society of native Guatemalans to an urban outskirts of Guatemala city, Zona 3, shown by the slum sequence which is followed by panoramic shots of a huge landfill site. Whereas *El Norte* presents a national, political conflict in which the characters are organically linked to the rural, *La Jaula de Oro* presents four young travelers, Sara (Karen Martínez), Juan (Brandon López) and Samuel (Carlos Chajon) (who will later be joined by a Tzotzil Indian, Chauk, played by Rodolfo Domínguez), as having no familiar, local, political or nationalist bonds, as if alienated from their own environment. In *El Norte*, the immigrant siblings Rosa (Zaide Silvia Gutierrez) and Enrique (Davi Villalpando) belong to a Mayan family whose father works at a coffee plantation in a small village and is quite involved with his community of workers, friends and relatives. In *La Jaula*, it is

the landfill and the slums of Guatemala city that are shot—a scenario of violent and endemic poverty which could be associated with any slum and landfill of the third world. This major change of scenario from *El Norte* to *La Jaula* is suggestive of an erasure of the national and the local within a transnational globalized world. Landfills have been discussed recently in important documentaries such as *Waste Land* (2010) which features Vik Muniz's photos of Rio de Janeiro's biggest landfill. The documentaries and the photos have circulated widely in our globalized world and have exposed its dark side as they denounce the results of consumerism; the landfill, as a sort of hidden backyard of the rich.

One of the central issues addressed by *El Norte* and *La Jaula* is the erasure of gender and race as the last reservoir of one's identity. In an attempt to hide her sex to survive the crossing of the Mexican/American frontier, Sara bandages her breasts and cuts her hair, dressing like a boy. In *El Norte*, Rosa ritualistically abandons the ethnic Quiche-Mayan clothing that defines her indigenous Guatemalan origin to be able to cross the border. There is a difference between Rosa's and Sara's gestures as with Rosa it is the ethnic/national identity that needs to be erased, whereas for Sara, who has no communal link, it is a gender mark that identifies her, as a national affiliation was never available to her. On the other hand, Chauk pretends to be deaf in order not to be rejected by his companions, as he does not speak Spanish, just Tzotzil. Even the drug dealer, Vitamina, also Guatemalan, rejects the Indian as "worthless" and considers their language and culture as cultural backwardness in relation to civilization. In Vitamina's association between the native and backwardness, the ideological force of the discourse of globalization and modernization goes a step further in the erasure of ethnic identities.¹⁵ Indigenous characters are thus forced to erase their identity marks, revealing the traumatic ruptures of the communal within the transnational discourse. Nonetheless, Vitamina's camaraderie with Juan, as he discovers that Juan, like him, is not only a Guatemalan but is also from Zone 3, is a bit ironic and once more shows how the nation as an identity marker is out of place and outdated, a project gone wrong, just like Vitamina, who stands for the nationalistic gangster.

In *La Jaula de Oro*, Guatemala City, the national capital, is a spent and outdated narrative with slums and landfills, whereas the global, as the US imagined territory which is idealized by Chauk's falling snow, is a dream. But between here and there, we have the border, as a space that marks the separation between the south and the north, revealing not only the forms of violence and oppression that cohabit the global and the national, but also the symbiotic relations and the tenuous separation between these worlds, which, because it is tenuous, needs to be strengthened. Thus, the only space granted to the migrant is his/her own body. Sandra Almeida (2002) points out that "the body can be seen as a discursive entity marked by gender, race and class, having the potential to evoke resistance in the very locus of its oppression" (261). The films analyzed reinforce this metaphor at the same time as they deconstruct this possibility.

Besides the erasure of Sara's identity marks and her disappearance in *La Jaula de Oro*, in *El Norte* it is in the escape between Mexico and the US that Rosa becomes a victim of typhus when she is bitten by the rats that live in the sewage tunnel that they are forced to cross. In both films, female characters do not survive the frontier, for their bodies are assaulted by sex, disease, and extermination unless they are transformed up to the point of becoming someone else. Disruption operates in the films as a key to our understanding of these bodies in national and transnational spaces of oppression, so that, after thirty years between one film and another, the oppression and aggressiveness towards the female body have become even more disruptive; after all, Rosa dies, but her identity is maintained, whereas Sara simply disappears.

Within this context, the space of the immigrants is one of marginality. Nava builds a Guatemalan peasant universe, where two brothers have an organized family and social structure but are victims of the violence of an overwhelming civil war. Nava's film shows a stable camera and well-marked sequences as a kind of canvas or tableau, where the characters are imbricated in the *mise-en-scène* that composes a Guatemala of idyllic nature. In *La Jaula de Oro*, which shows us a Guatemala framed by the unstable camera of Quemada-Díez, the family structure no longer exists: the children are cared for by other children, the open sewage and the houses are a heap of cardboard and cans, always recorded by an unstable, nervous shoulder camera with abrupt cuts and a narrative filled with images of violence and filth, of the anonymous territory (Zone 3). Extreme poverty repeats itself in a loop until Juan finally manages to arrive in the US: a cold, insensitive and lonely space. The first shot in the US is a Los Angeles filled with verticalized highways and lifeless concrete. The following sequence shows the meat factory, where the work takes place in a systematic, aseptic and solitary way. Juan collects the leftovers from the meats that remain on the ground, as his fellow workers look like Latin Americans, just like him. At the end of his shift, he goes out and the coolness of the refrigeration is replaced by an open shot, from a dimly lit street where the falling snow is visible through the faint light of a lamppost, an image repeated throughout the film, as a leitmotif or guiding image of Chauk's psyche, where snow would be the imagined paradise metaphor. A kind of respite given to the spectator in the middle of the violence, poverty and loneliness imposed on the young immigrants who are left behind. Only Juan arrives. On the other hand, in *El Norte*, the fate of Enrique is anonymity and the discovery that in the US life is very expensive for the clandestine ones. For being an "undocumented," Enrique is betrayed by a Chicano and enters the informal market of cheap labor, whereas Rosa dies from the typhus acquired from the rats during the border crossing. The Guatemalan *mise-en-scène*, consisting of its colorful houses, idyllic nature and impeccably woven traditional clothing, gives way to an anonymous and mechanized Los Angeles, where their family and local values lead to a frantic quest for survival.

I would like to conclude the comparison of both films with a brief analysis of the characters' image of the US as a kind of psychic hideaway from the reality

they inhabit in Guatemala. Soon after Rosa's father is killed and her mother is taken away by the military, Rosa is shown in her godmother's house hiding from the military, and the camera focuses on her looking at a pile of foreign magazines, where several images of a comfortable life with photographs of well-equipped houses and well-dressed women present themselves as desirable domestic scenes. Likewise, the media plays an important role in *La Jaula de Oro*, influencing the collective imaginary of the immigrants Juan, Sara, Samuel and Chauk, who are fascinated when they recognize their dreams in the scenarios arranged by a street photographer in a Mexican square—in what would be the America imagined by them with the painted images and props of American icons. They take photos with the chosen scenarios for a few pesos, the Statue of Liberty and the American flag are the scenery of Sara's and Samuel's photo; the snow composes the photo of Chauk, dressed in a large apache headdress; and the cowboy with his horse constitute the scenario for Juan. The images of a so much desired American space present themselves in scenarios immortalized by the media and the cinema, such as happy, fleeting, and isolated moments decontextualized from the places of origin or social and economic condition of the immigrants. In this sense, cultural production, as traveling cultures (Clifford, 1997, 25–29), not only contrasts with the real economic and historical conditions of the characters' trajectory, poor and destitute, but also inscribes them in pre-existing narratives, which keep on returning, as a sort of return of the repressed: Chauk dies just like the Indians of the old west, being killed by a bullet when crossing the border; Sara and Rosa are victims of tragedy and drama: the former is kidnapped by bandits and the latter contracts typhus; Enrique and Juan end up like the cowboys, lonely and without destiny. In this way, the films allow us to think not only about the historical, social and economic contexts in which they are inserted, but also about the web of stories and narratives they evoke: cinematographic genres, images and icons, which expose unequal historical inter-hemispheric relations.

Conclusion

In the interstices of these images and narratives in dialogue, we can imagine another place where subjects, cultures and spaces meet, be it the space of the films or of the characters that remain in our imaginary of a better world with more human and happier relations. *Rio* seems to project a better end, in which transnational identity affiliations and the crossing of the border from an unusual immigration route from North to South can conjure up a hybrid society in more equal terms.

In *Rio*, the valorization of nature, which is made possible by the environmental transnational discourse, and all that comes with it, forests to be taken care of and landscapes to be kept, is after all the better part of globalization, rather than the landfills inhabited by millions whose poverty obliges them to migrate North. The films here analyzed invite us to review the meaning of national borders within a world that belongs to us all—what we need, they seem to suggest, is a new world ethics: borderlands and rigid notions of national identities need to be

recontextualized just as the frames of the films have broadened to show that the local, the national and the transnational are more than ever intrinsically related in a hemisphere/world culturally and economically connected.

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Notes

1. According to Goldman, there was in the US a “fear that the Nazi communications machine was making inroads in Latin America” (28).
2. Writers such as Érico Veríssimo, film producers and directors like Walt Disney and Orson Welles, among others, were invited to participate in lectures and productions, all commissioned by the CIAA.
3. “Según la crítica, puede hablarse de un género cinematográfico específicamente relacionado con la problemática de la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos y en general con la experiencia y la condición de los migrantes (Hernández, Rafael. “La frontera como tema en el cine mexicano”. Ingler Susanne and Thomas Stauder (eds.). *Negociando identidades, traspasando fronteras: tendencias en la literatura y el cine mexicanos en torno al nuevo milenio*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert. 2008, p.25). Si por un lado se ha propuesto la categoría del border film, centrado en la representación de algún aspecto de La frontera (Iglesias, Norma. “Reconstructing the Border. Mexican Border Cinema and Its Relationships to Its Audience”. Johanne Hershfield and David R. Maciel (eds.). *Mexico’s Cinema. A Century of Film and Filmmakers*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources. 1999, p. 234. *La jaula de oro*. Pressbook. México (2013)), más recientemente se ha identificado también ‘a new sub-genre of migration films: Central American/Mexican/US migration films’ (Shaw, Deborah. “Migrant Identities in Film: Migrations from México and Central America to the United States”. *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture*, 3 (2012), 2, p. 229.), cuyos componentes básicos han sido resumidos en tres puntos: ‘the premigration context that triggers the decisions to depart one’s homeland; the journey or crossing; and the life of the immigrant in the new land’ (Deveny ix) [cited in Alessandro Rocco, “La representación de la migración de Centroamérica a los Estados Unidos en el film *La Jaula de Oro*, de Diego Quemada-Díez.” *Rivista Oltreoceano - Centro Internazionale Letterature Migranti - CILM*, vol. 9, 2015, p. 132]. David G. Gutiérrez’s statistics about immigration also help to understand the importance of the theme, as the population of Americans of Latin descent went from approximately 7 million in the 1960s to 20 million in the 1990s with the growth of undocumented flow of immigrants (Gutiérrez. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexicans Americans, Mexican immigrants and the politics of ethnicity*. U of California P, 1995, p. 1).
4. A third cluster of inter-hemispheric narratives happens in the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s with the fear of the Cold War in the US and the leftists’ governments in Latin America, when the US showed direct interest. The period is generally known for US military influence on Latin American state apparatus to repress leftist and revolutionary movements in countries like Chile, Brazil, Argentina, El Salvador among others. Such influence is shown in films like *Missing* (Costa Gavras, 1982), *Salvador* (Oliver Stone, 1986), *Walker* (Alex Cox, 1987), *State of Siege* (Costa Gavras, 1972).

5. For a definition of dialogism see Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis. *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Beyond*. Routledge, 1992, p. 208.
6. See also Kaufman. According to Kaufman (cited in Goldman 29), who was the official historian of Disney's company, "Walt was already on the right track with in-depth research on individual countries. (...) Let other Hollywood studios commit their careless cultural mistakes: the Disney studio would consistently strike a responsive chord with Latin American audiences by picturing their cultures in authentic detail.
7. *Baia*, as the song was translated in to English, was released in Brazil in 1938 and was a major hit in that year. Its translation to English (1945) was also a major hit. In Brazil *A Baixa do Sapateiro* was recorded by Odeon and interpreted by Carmen Miranda.
8. "Os Quindis de Yayá" became an international success as Aurora Miranda played Yaya in *The Three Caballeros* (1944). The song was performed by Charles Wolcott and his orchestra; vocals by Nestor Amaral and Bando da Lua.
9. Disney's erasure of Black people and the mixed racial component of Brazilian population is analyzed by Darlene Sadlier. According to her analysis of the racial politics of the Good Neighbor years, such erasure was an attempt to make all the Americas a sort of "Good Neighbor sameness" (55). In relation to Nelson Rockefeller, Melgosa points out that the CIAA's involvement with the film industry, with the production of *Flying Down to Rio* and the production of the Good Neighbor films, was also an attempt to control "the national film industries of Mexico and Argentina either directly through capital investment or indirectly through restrict access to film stock" (p.24).
10. O. Henry is known to have coined the term in his short-story "The Admiral" published in *Cabbages and Kings*, 1904.
11. Sadlier: "This will at least show what was lost when the CIAA closed its operation and what happened to some of its key players. In my own view it cannot help but make reasonable people feel a certain nostalgia for Good Neighbor policies" (p.195).
12. As Crystal Bartolovich states there is no nation-state as a "pure culture" ("*Global Capital and Transnationalism*". *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, edited by Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, Blackwell, 2000, p. 128).
13. For Clifford, contact is defined by its cultural strategies that function as answers to specific histories of domination and resistance to hierarchies (Clifford, 1997,p. 213).
14. It is worth remembering that Queimada-Díez also worked as camera operator in the film *Land and Freedom* (1995), by Ken Loach—recognized by his filmography on social issues, including films on Latin America. *Carla's Song* (1996) narrativizes the trajectory of George (Robert Carlyle), a bus driver in Glasgow who goes to Nicaragua in the company of Carla (Oyanka Cabezas), a Nicaraguan refugee, during an armed conflict between Sandinistas and Contras. In Nicaragua, George becomes conscious of the civil war atrocities—more specifically the armed conflict between Sandinistas and Contras (See Anelise R. Corseuil, "Canção de Carla e Salvador: representações da história latino americana". *Estudos de cinema: Socine II e III*. Annablume, 2000, p. 27).
15. In "Pathways of Migratory Experience in Latin America", Oscar Moralde compares the film *Un Cuento Chino* (*Chinese Take Out*, Sebastián Borensztein, 2011) and *La Jaula de Oro*, considering each work's migratory routes and linguistic choices. See Moralde, Oscar. "Pathways of Migratory Experience in Latin American Films." *Latin American Perspectives*, 196, vol. 41, n. 3 (May) 2014, pp. 237–39.

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