

a history teacher, Alicia Marnet de Ibáñez, who discovers that her adopted daughter is in fact the child of one of the *desaparecidas* kidnapped and murdered by agents of the military dictatorship. The film is in particular an indictment against the many Argentines who had at least some inkling of the horrors going on around them, yet did not try to protest or combat them.

The last essay in the book, by Robert M. Levine, focuses on Héctor Babenco's *Pixote* (1980). Levine not only discusses the film itself, which "depicts the violent world of abandoned and outlaw children in Brazil's cities and the failure of the system to offer any remedies" (p. 201), but he also tells the tragic story of the film's main protagonist: after the boy's moment of fame passed, he drifted into petty crime, was arrested twice for minor offences, and finally, in August, 1987, at the age of 19, he was shot to death by the police. The essay examines social and political conditions in Brazil during the 1980s, and shows how the film faithfully depicts the harsh, cruel side of urban life there. Nonetheless, Levine, like other critics before him, emphasizes that "Babenco's film avoids making any global statement about Brazilian society" (p. 212) —an omission that may have lessened the film's effectiveness as a means of arousing the spectator to critical self-examination.

Other films discussed in the book are Ridley Scott's *1492: The Conquest of Paradise*, Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, María Luisa Bemberg's *I, the Worst of All*, Sergio Giral's *The Other Francisco*, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *The Last Supper*, Humberto Solás's *Lucía*, Bruno Barreto's *Gabriela*, and Alfonso Arau's *Like Water for Chocolate*. In short, this collection of essays offers an invitation to make greater, if cautious and critical, use of films in Latin American history courses.

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SERGIO RAMÍREZ: *Hatful of Tigers. Reflections on Art, Culture and Politics*. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1995.

Hatful of Tigers is a series of memories and reflections about literature and revolution linked by the emblematic figure of Julio Cortázar. The epigraph—a poem by Cortázar, *Notice to Travellers*, followed by an *Envoi* describing Roberto Armijo's little apartment with its overflow of books—triggers Ramírez's memories of his journey of apprenticeship into literature and the Nicaraguan revolution. This narrative account, divided into a BEFORE and an AFTER (the revolution), starts and concludes on February 17, 1985, in Paris, at the cemetery of Montparnasse, where Sergio visits Cortázar's tombstone, a few days after the first anniversary of Julio's death.

The work starts in 1965, BEFORE the revolution, in San José, Costa Rica, where Sergio discovered the brand-new name of Cortázar, as he was just emerging from his methodical reading of Borges. Cortázar, with his hat full of tigers (Oh, the skilfulness of the translator, as Borges would have exclaimed! Ramírez's *Hatful of Tigers* seems much closer to the idea of the definitive text than the Spanish title, *Aquí Nicaragua*.) And the discovery of *Hopscotch* on a rainy day in San José; its tremendous impact when one was twenty years of age, and twenty years later, when Cortázar himself pulled it out from Sergio's own bookshelf in Nicaragua!

Hopscotch, the book that inspired so many of Ramírez's friends: "a sort of antidote or universal cure-all for snakebite (22)." It was a joy not only to read *Hopscotch* but to be free in the reading of it, and to learn the function of the "connecting rods (22)." *Hopscotch* in the hands of Carlos Fonseca while discussing the rural reality of Nicaragua, while organizing the FSLN's work with the peasants, and while studying also Sandino and, naturally, Rubén Darío. *Hopscotch* led the way to the discovery of the Central America of September 15 —Independence Day —, also the Central America of the colonels trained at Fort Gulic, of the "disappeared" writers, poets ("and what about Roque Dalton?") (27). For Ramírez, "it was definitely worthwhile being a writer in Central America, and that was the essence of the ludic" (27) which he learnt from Cortázar.

The year 1967 constituted a landmark; the University became the springboard for the armed struggle. On the same day, about thirty students from León and Managua had registered in the seminar on *Hopscotch* and the literary boom, while the FSLN was going through its greatest test in the Mountains (it was the year of Pancasán). But 1967 was also the hundredth anniversary of Rubén Darío's birth, and the year of the massacre in the streets of Managua, under the electoral trap of the conservative Fernando Agüero, while Che Guevara fell in Bolivia. What a year!

Apart from the clandestine entry from Costa Rica in April of 1976, AFTER the revolution recalls Cortázar's five trips to Nicaragua. Those were the days of triumph and revolutionary processions. In the University auditorium, the students crowd the doorways, carrying flags. And, once again, Sergio is in the same hall with Jaime Armijo where they had taught the students about the "boom," about the new novel, about *Hopscotch*. Who was going to deny that "we had triumphed and from now on there would be a 19th of July, 1979" (81), a new Independence Day?

October, 1979: the day of the nationalization of the Siuna mines. Ramírez calls Julio unexpectedly to invite him to celebrate that historic event.

March, 1982: Julio makes two trips to Managua, for the third and fourth anniversaries of the revolution. Since the beginning of the year, the CIA has

been pulling out all the stops on its organ of terror, blowing up bridges, and declaring an open war. Once again "Cortázar is among us" plucking the eagles; he is the intellectual who represents the best of us and the one who most seriously saw and understood the Sandinista revolution as a Latin American phenomenon; and, as a Latin American himself, he knew how to accept the consequences of this commitment. Cortázar knew how to resolve that intellectual dilemma of the man with two worlds: the European world and the Latin American, between which he must choose. And he knew "dammed well the other two dilemmas": that of East and West, presented as a trap; and the other, that refers to the US, and that he resolved by concentrating on Nicaragua, because in Nicaragua freedom had been born as a new phenomenon for thousands of people.

May, 1983: in Poneloya, an exclusive beach resort of private houses, most of which are now abandoned, since most of their owners have fled to Miami. Julio receives the Rubén Darío medal at the meeting of the Permanent Committee of Intellectuals for the Sovereignty of the Peoples of Our America. Julio and Carol unexpectedly have to go back to Paris.

Carol soon dies, and Julio follows in 1984.

Sunday, February 17, 1985, at Montparnasse: back to the beginning of this book. A year since Julio's death. Sergio and his friends are leaving the cemetery and returning to Nicaragua. Once again, Roberto Armijo is telling Sergio the last episode of Julio's life, in his hospital bed. Roberto trying to get a picture of Julio. Beside him, on the night table, the last book he had been reading: a book by Rubén Darío, "We have seen this photograph before. In Blowup, wasn't it?" (135). And all of a sudden it is getting late and Sergio has to return: "The mothers of Belén are waiting for me" (135). Managua, March/June, 1985.

In Ramírez's memories, Cortázar's works and life are crucial to understanding Ramírez's own passion for politics and writing. This emotive account, written in the nineteen eighties, during the fervour of the Nicaraguan revolution, produces a very disquieting sensation at the end of the nineties. These chronological boundaries produce all sorts of images. Let me evoke one that emerged while reading *Hatful of Tigers*: 1989, the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the year of Nicaragua's approaching the end of its revolutionary trajectory. Symbolically, *Hatful of Tigers* closes this historical and literary cycle. Much has happened since then. A new world order has embraced us all with its overpowering global market. The culture industry appropriates all spaces in the social realm. What is the role of the intellectual in this new world order? How can the intellectual now effect social change? This century of burning experiences and catastrophic visions, of human abuse of nature and humanity, compels us to rethink the "strategic" position of

Central America in the new order. How can literature help to shape new imaginative ways to overcome the homogenizing effect of so many global predators?

Sergio Ramírez still seems to believe strongly in the power of literature and is teaching it once again at the Catholic University in Managua. His main concern is to give form to a new Nicaraguan narrative. And contrary to his expectations, instead of twenty students, over a hundred have registered in his seminar. Perhaps, in these efforts, Cortázar's greatest humanistic contribution will be to have inspired the younger generations to envision a future still inhabited by *famas* and *cronopios*.

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MARJORIE BECKER: *Setting the Virgin on Fire. Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

El libro de Marjorie Becker es un nuevo intento de comprender a Cárdenas y clasificar la Revolución Mexicana. Se trata de un esfuerzo particularmente difícil, dada la polarización existente en la historiografía que trata estos temas. Su objetivo es intentar salvar las brechas y examinar el período de actividad de Cárdenas como gobernador de Michoacán (1928-1932) y como presidente de la República (1934-1940), desde el punto de vista de la población a la que estaba destinada su política social: campesinos mestizos e indígenas del noroeste michoacano. Para ello propone ópticas culturales y genéricas, la utilización del lenguaje lírico (metáforas, símbolos e imágenes) y un estilo dramático (creando suspenso en el relato, con contrastes agudos, un apogeo fantástico y un final sorpresivo). Asimismo, emplea una metodología de investigación de las culturas (investigación de las conductas manifiestas, los valores, las auto-percepciones y las cosmovisiones, los mensajes latentes y expresos).

La primera de las tres partes que componen el libro analiza las vías de intervención cardenista en las aldeas del noroeste michoacano. La segunda se ocupa del despertar de los campesinos al exponerse al carácter de la intervención y la tercera trata de la reacción de los campesinos ante las intervenciones desde fuera. Entrelazadas en el relato, se revelan las mentiras ocultas del cardenismo: su carácter liberal-conservador aprendido de Plutarco Elías Calles, su deslumbramiento ante la fuerza, su soberbia y profundísimo odio hacia la religión, su intento de imponer a la sociedad michoacana una integración "desde arriba".