

History in Chilean Fiction Films: Strategies for an Audiovisual Common Sense Production*

La historia en el cine de ficción chileno: estrategias de producción de un sentido común audiovisual

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Abstract

The text reports the conclusions of a study that aims to identify the characteristics of the historical discourses produced by Chilean fiction cinema, assuming that Chilean cinema has not properly developed "historical" genres. Therefore, how does Chilean cinema represent history? We argue that Chilean fiction films representations produce a *historical verisimilar*, that is, an aesthetic-narrative device that resorts to present-day social imaginaries, with which an 'effect of reality' in representation is achieved. On the grounds that this device would not be primarily historical discourses, but an 'audiovisual common sense' that gives familiarity and verifies the "historical reality" in the films, it means: in their correspondence with the field of knowledge and common experiences of the spectators. Under this frame, we explain some operations Chilean fiction movies display to build up such historical verisimilar.

Keywords: Chilean cinema, historical discourse, verisimilar, audiovisual common sense.

Resumen

El texto da cuenta de los resultados de una investigación, cuyo propósito fue establecer las características de los discursos históricos vehiculizados por el cine chileno de ficción, bajo la premisa de que no se han desarrollado propiamente géneros que podamos llamar "históricos". ¿Cómo representa entonces el cine chileno la historia? Nuestra hipótesis es que las representaciones cinematográficas producen un *verosímil histórico*, es decir, un mecanismo estético-narrativo que recurre a imaginarios sociales del presente y con los que se consigue un efecto de realidad en la representación. En su base no se encontrarían principalmente discursos históricos, sino un *sentido común audiovisual*, que dota de familiaridad a la representación histórica movilizada en los filmes y verifica la realidad histórica de las películas en su correspondencia con el campo de conocimientos y experiencias comunes de los espectadores. A partir de este planteamiento, se explican algunas estrategias mediante las cuales las películas chilenas de ficción construyen este verosímil.

Palabras clave: Cine chileno, discurso histórico, verosímil, sentido común audiovisual.

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1. Introduction

The investigation aimed to answer the question *What discourses does Chilean cinema produce on events we consider "historical"?*, to understand both the functions that we can attribute to cinema, in terms of space of social representation, as well as the eventual expectations of the audiences that are going to see on-screen projections of their own identity, time, and memory. This is a problem that has received little attention in the field of Chilean cinema studies (Del Alcázar, 2013), while in other parts of the world the attention to the cinema-history relation is more prolific (as shown by, for example, Montero & Paz, 2013).

On this topic, it should be highlighted the groundbreaking contributions of three key authors: Sorlin (1985), Rosenstone (1997) and Ferró (2008). Other recognized authors like White (2010), among others, have also built up their discussions and analysis based on that ground. Sorlin, Rosenstone, and Ferró have insisted that the desire to find an "informative" and "objective" text in cinematographic discourse that would accurately transmit the meaning of historic events is as inappropriate as the expectation that the very historiographic discourse does not affect the nature of the events that it portrays.

Cinema studies mainly concentrate their attention on the analysis of narrative structures –that suggest causes, valuations, outline individual and collective personalities and psychologies at the service of the historic interpretation– and of the emotional components of the cinematographic story, that are found, on the contrary, protected and subordinated in the historiographic field. The gestures of the characters, the precise dialogues given to them, the emotions portrayed, the location where the actions take place, the personal and social relationships that are presented, but also the position of the camera, the length of the shoots, the causal order suggested by the script, the justifications and condemnations to the human dimensions of the characters, the moral values and the passions put at risk, in addition, of course, to the music, wardrobe and the setting. All these elements are resources with which cinema builds its verisimilar and produces an *effect of reality*, at times so powerful that it cannot be refuted by any historiographic discourse.

In that sense, outlined as a hypothesis is that the cinematographic representation of Chilean history is generally employed as a medium of comprehension and representation of social conflicts of the present, in the sense that the cinematographic discourse refers to the past like a verisimilar way of imagining, reinforcing or dislocating the meaning of present time. This hypothesis portrays a combination of comprehensive principles of cinematographic representation of the historic:

- Cinema does not have as object the representation of the historic events, but rather the production of *verisimilar* interpretations on its social meaning.
- Cinema combines historic elements with elements of the dominating *common senses* in an era and society to give verisimilitude to its stories.
- The cinema uses *aesthetic and narrative* elements of *present* social imaginaries on the past to produce an effect of reality in its productions.

2. Theoretical Framework. The absence of a historic genre in Chilean fiction cinema

The cinematographic discourse is part of the *discursive systems of representation*, "those systems of meaning via which we represent the world before us and before the rest" (Hall, 1998, p.45), in which we openly dispute for the interpretative hegemony of reality, but not in its dimension of containing a specific idea or concept, but rather understanding that "the discourse is not just what translates the struggles or the systems of domination, but rather that for which, and through which one struggles, that power which one wants to own" (Foucault, 1992, p.12).

The representation also operates as a substitute of that which it refers; in other words, it is in place of another thing, marks the presence of an absence that, in its own portrayal, generates a supplement or an increase of the convention of reality of that thing, framed in a specific moment in time:

As is known, the concept of representation, from an etymological point of view, has a double meaning: that of absence (the representation is the object that substitutes that represented) and that of presence (an image substituted with

symbolic meaning). Cinema by definition doubly expresses this character. Firstly, as filmed scenes. Secondly, as a representation of social practices and uses external to the film. Under a historical perspective, many times, we have to talk about, even, a third level of representation, given that the film expresses events that have already occurred (Rueda & Chicharro, 2004, p.429)

Along this line, we ask ourselves if Chilean films relative to history would fit Ferró's classifications, for example. Indeed, Ferró organizes the historic genre, in one hand, as *historical fictions* in which the aesthetic prevails over the «veracity» of the events and, in the other hand, the *historical reconstructions* in which discourse about the past is explicitly portrayed (2008, pp. 6-33). Perhaps, it would be enlightening to analyze this type of movies under Rosenstone's perspective (1997, pp. 48-49) of *history as drama*, that defines a concrete historic period through the narrative fictionality, and *history as experimentation*, where the intentional discourse of a filmmaker provokes ruptures, at the same time, with the forms of representation of the historic cinematographic and with the common senses regarding a character, event or period.

In another sense, maybe we would find those key examples among the films with *historical/sociological value*, as José María Caparrós suggests, that is, films that turn into testimonials of the mentalities of the period of its production; those of *historic genre*, that is, movies that evoke real events and people that were more or less relevant in the past, or those of *historic intentionality*, in which what is relevant would be embedded in the discourse itself that attempt to make history on the past (2007, pp. 25 y ss). Finally, we could also attempt to classify this corpus of films then in what Monterde, Selva and Solá have proposed as *time period fictions*, where periods of the past are backdrops for a narration that would occur, substantially, in any context, historical fictions-as-documentaries where the events and/or historic characters are those structuring the story, and finally, the *fictional historical essay* in which, once again, what appears is the individuality proposing a whole historic discourse, one causing audiences to acquire historical knowledge (2002, pp.136-46).

Therefore, is it possible to consider a set of categories like *bio-pic*, «cinema of historic setting» or «cinema of historic facts/events» under which to classify Chilean productions?

Based on this, what happens with historical cinematographic genres? In general, in the field of cinema a genre responds to what Wittgenstein has called "family resemblance" in the field of language (2008). In other words, a series of concepts, phrases, sentences and words, that are understood within a same class of objects, concepts or problems even though they not necessarily share the same nature. Then, it is all about to shift the focus of the question from the essential to the relational.

The genres establish a relational map that results in defining its identity, which ensures that not all of them share the same traits. For instance, three or more films may not share any traits at all: Film A has two shared characteristics with Film B, but at the same time Film B has two other features shared with Film C that both doesn't share with Film A, while Films A and C share one that is not found in Film B. Finally, an additional category is created that allow to link all the traits displayed and to identify the "family resemblance" of such a group and to determine a genre.

3. Methodology

In general terms, we defined some elements to analyse Chilean fiction cinema: 1) a shared referential world or a shared contextual world, 2) a form or a way of aesthetically address such contextual world, 3) a rituality or basic narrative scheme, 4) an object-aesthetic fetishization in psychoanalytical terms. Based on these, a combination of identifiers of genre are built, which allowed us to pinpoint some aspects that could fall outside of these broad categories. An identifier of genre would be, for example, the use of certain types of music or construction of the soundtrack at key narrative moments. In the case of the American *western*, for instance, at the moment of a duel.

The problem is, precisely, that we cannot think of Chilean cinema, at least for the moment, as a platform of construction of cinematographic genres

and/or subgenres related to history. The fact that there is just a handful of films that can be interrogated about their relationship to history does not mean, in itself, the configuration of a genre. So, can Chilean cinema take on the historic verisimilitude without having been able to itself build historic cinematographic genres? If this is not the case, how do «discursive systems of representation» of cinema confront, suffer from and relate with the historic discourse, conceived like that heterogeneous group of social knowledge on the past?

Between 1900 and 2015 around 700 fiction features films have been made in Chile, including also films made outside the country by Chilean filmmakers during what is known as “cinema of the exile” (1973-1985). For the purpose of our analysis, we defined a corpus of 70 films that explicitly use the presentation of historic discourses. The movies are listed below:

A corpus like this can lead to the idea that effectively Chilean cinema addresses history.. However, it is possible to problematize the fact that representing past events and characters does not necessarily imply the production of some type of historic discursivity. Regarding such difference, we develop a methodological perspective to show the mechanisms of production of plausible cinematographic representations, via the parameters for a discourse analysis as proposed by Jäger (2003) and the semiotic perspectives developed by Verón (1993), from which the correspondences between the inherent features of cinematography strategies and the main sense-making proposals of the social context of discourses are established. The periods of time and types of conflicts were examined, as well as the historical figures represented and their relation to their dramatic representations, the

Table 1. Film Corpus

1917 <i>La agonía de Arauco</i> , Gabriela Bussenius	1992 <i>Archipiélago</i> , Pablo Perelman
1918 <i>Todo por la patria</i> (o <i>El girón de la bandera</i>), Arturo Mario, María Padín	1994 <i>Amnesia</i> , Gonzalo Justiniano
	1996 <i>Cicatriz</i> , Sebastián Alarcón
1920 <i>Manuel Rodríguez</i> , Arturo Mario	1998 <i>Cautiverio feliz</i> , Cristián Sánchez
1923 <i>El odio nada engendra</i> , Alberto Santana	1999 <i>El desquite</i> , Andrés Wood
1925 <i>El húsar de la Muerte</i> , Pedro Sienna	2000 <i>Tierra del fuego</i> , Miguel Littin
1926 <i>Bajo dos banderas</i> , Alberto Santana	2002 <i>El fotógrafo</i> , Sebastián Alarcón
1927/1934 <i>A las armas</i> , Nicanor de la Sotta	2003 <i>Subterra</i> , Marcelo Ferrari
1944 <i>Romance de medio siglo</i> , Luis MogliaBarth	2004 <i>Machuca</i> , Andrés Wood
1947 <i>Si mis campos hablaran</i> , José Bohr	2005 <i>La última luna</i> , Miguel Littin
1968 <i>Tierra quemada</i> , Alejo Álvarez	2005 <i>El baño</i> , Gregory Cohen
1969 <i>Caliche sangriento</i> , Helvio Soto	2005 <i>Mi mejor enemigo</i> , Alex Bowen
1970 <i>La Araucana</i> , Julio Coli	2006/2011 <i>Gente mala del norte</i> , Patricio Riquelme
1970 <i>La casa en que vivimos</i> , Patricio Kaulen	2007 <i>Casa de remolienda</i> , Joaquín Eyzaguirre
1971 <i>El afuerino</i> , Alejo Álvarez	2007 <i>Un salto al vacío</i> , Pablo Lavín
1971 <i>Frontera sin ley</i> , Luis Margas	2008 <i>Tony Manero</i> , Pablo Larraín
1971 <i>Voto + fusil</i> , Helvio Soto	2009 <i>Teresa</i> , Tatiana Gaviola
1973 <i>La tierra prometida</i> , Miguel Littin	2009 <i>Dawson, Isla 10</i> , Miguel Littin
1974 <i>A la sombra del sol</i> , Silvio Caiozzi, Pablo Perelman	2009 <i>Grita</i> , Paulo Avilés, Marcelo Leonart
1979 <i>Julio comienza en Julio</i> , Silvio Caiozzi	2009 <i>Monvoisin</i> , Mario Velasco C.
1983 <i>Ardiente paciencia</i> , Antonio Skarmeta	2010 <i>Post Mortem</i> , Pablo Larraín
1990 <i>La niña en la palomera</i> , Alfredo Rates	2010 <i>La Esmeralda 1879</i> , Elías Llanos Canales
1991 <i>La frontera</i> , Ricardo Larraín	2010 <i>Cuatro hombres de ley</i> , Sergio GonzalezClaveria

Source: the authors

2010 <i>Pinochet boys</i> , Claudio del Valle	2013 <i>Las niñas Quispe</i> , Sebastián Sepúlveda
2010 <i>El Inquisidor</i> , Joaquín Eyzaguirre	2013 <i>Videoclub</i> , Pablo Illanes
2011 <i>La lección de pintura</i> , Pablo Perelman	2013 <i>Circo</i> , Orlando Lübbert
2011 <i>Bonsai</i> , Cristián Jiménez	2013 <i>El tío</i> , Mateo Iribarren
2011 <i>Violeta se fue a los cielos</i> , Andrés Wood	2014 <i>Allende en su laberinto</i> , Miguel Littin
2011 <i>El tesoro del cráneo</i> , Raúl Peralta Moris	2014 <i>Neruda</i> , Manuel Basoalto
2011 <i>Bombal</i> , Marcelo Ferrari	2014 <i>El niño rojo</i> , la película, Ricardo Larraín
2011 <i>Tiempos menos modernos</i> , Simón Franco	2014 <i>María Graham</i> , Valeria Sarmiento
2012 <i>La pasión de Michelangelo</i> , Esteban Larraín	2015 <i>El bosque de Karadima</i> , Matías Lira
2012 <i>Miguel San Miguel</i> , Matías Cruz	2016 <i>Pinochet boys</i> , Claudio del Valle
2012 <i>No</i> , Pablo Larraín	2016 <i>Neruda</i> , Pablo Larraín
2013 <i>La danza de la realidad</i> , Alejandro Jodorowsky	2016 <i>Poesía sin fin</i> , Alejandro Jodorowsky
2013 <i>Patagonia sin sueños</i> , Jorge López Sotomayor	2016 <i>Fuego, en la Federación Obrera de Magallanes</i> , Jorge Grez

Source: the authors

valuations of the historical facts, and the imaging, among others, were analysed. Together with this, we identified the conditions of production, exhibition and recognition of the films in relation to the very historic and social frames that give meaning to them.

These perspectives were complemented by the methodological tools developed by Aguilar (2010) regarding the reconstruction of the cinematographic operations in historical films; Zunzunequi (1989) based on the analysis of exemplary film sequences within a film; Burke (2003 and 2005) to identify the cracks between the historic and the cinematographic, and Gauthier (2008), in relation to the forms of audiovisual construction. Based upon these frames, we situated those films in their historical and cultural frames and their modes of production and we characterized their aesthetic and narratives aspects through the underlying elements of the social order: taste, style, ideology, formats, etc. (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007; Genette, 2009, Aumont *et al.*, 1996). Finally, we aimed to make visible the traces of the imaginaries in dispute that a society produces (Taylor, 2006; Castoriadis, 2007). Following such methodology, there are two key dimensions to understand the copus: a) the discussion of the mechanisms of historic representation in these films, via the concept of "strategy of the filmic form"; and b) the reflection on the meaning of such representations, via the concept of "audiovisual common sense". The result of the analysis

was addressed later, in a second phase, via *exemplary* films, that must not be understood as isolated cases but rather as symptoms of general features present throughout the entire corpus. The following sections develop both issues.

4. Cinema, common sense and social discourse

If the way of representing the past in Chilean fiction cinema is via the production of an aesthetic-narrative likeness, the source of this likeness is not precisely in the body of historic discourses of society, but rather in a heterogeneous mix of certain historical notions disseminated on the social discourse, together with other discursive elements like prejudices, stereotypical images, collective memories, public commemoration, elementary education, the ephemerides, daily conversation, mediatic relations, and images from popular culture.

The most fundamental trait of common sense is being a conception of a fragmentary and incoherent world, in conformity with the social and cultural position of the mass, and therefore constitutes its unique philosophy of life (Gramsci, 1975). Common sense is not unitary, either, it is rather composed of various different common senses on display, manifesting itself in the language, the customs, the su-

perstitutions, the proverbs, the histories, and in an extensive range of representations.

On the other hand, the verisimilitude is related to the representation of what is plausible and not to the veracity of the facts: it refers to the construction of a *possible world* (Alsina, 1976). The *possible world* is a verification of a state of things expected by the audience, in contraposition to the idea of representation in relation to a mirror image of reality or as pure invention of the individual's or team's production and it supposes a conciliation between what is represented and what is known. The likeness is not just *similar* to its reference, but rather is *the usual*, what occurs on most occasions (Metz, 1970).

The central exercise of the cinematographic is transforming a series of audiovisual narrative, stylistic and formal conventions, in a *historical cinematographic likeness*. Thus, the filmic form lies on a woven tissue of shared conventions, both by audiences and filmmakers, a discursive and representational background that configures what could be defined as an *audiovisual common sense*:

perhaps it should be stated that the idea that the collective historical culture that would be (...) the resulting negotiation between given proposals derived from the academic historiography and certain media content, that circulate in the social space in the form of popular history vulgarized and condensed (Rueda & Chicharro, 2004, p. 62).

Although fiction film production on national history has not been able to construct interpretative lines that sustain a solid discourse on the past, in any way, the existence of three types of films of historic content is noted: the first, of biographical character, that have proliferated in the last years, although especially centered on the development of subjectivity of the characters; others, referring to particular episodes and in this case we note that on many events there are very few films and there are periods or situations of national history, that have not had any treatment, like the case of the Civil War of 1891, for example.

Finally, past eras have served to build an environment and a referential framework for narrative development of fictitious histories. Some of these

films have been rather faithful adaptations of literary texts or plays.

A rather lateral tendency is the production of films referred to as "its present", that interpret the reality of its historical context, many times attempting to influence from some discursive or ideological position and, perhaps for that same reason, after some time they become documentary testimonials of an era, helping to understand the dominant common senses in them.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that national cinema should be analyzed in relation to the evolution of the cultural field, given that in the different periods and contexts, diverse articulations, powers and relationships are established with the press (newspapers and magazines), radio, television and, in the 21st century, digital networks. To understand the links between common senses and hegemonies of each era and audiovisual and cinematographic fiction, the isolated study that converts each film into a self-sufficient object must be avoided.

5. Strategies of the film form on history in Chilean cinema

Our purpose has been to identify how Chilean films have built their discourses on the past in different moments based on an analysis of the present. The analysis of the very material operations of the films allowed us to depict what we have defined as three *general aesthetic strategies* that have been carried out when Chilean cinema has imagined the past. This categorization is not exclusive: In a single film, there may be two or three combined strategies:

5.1 The contextual commentary

Cinema combines historic elements with elements of dominating common senses of an era and society to give likeness to its stories on a current phenomenon. Thus, a current affair issue is given historical «density».

The film *La tierra prometida*, directed by Miguel Littin in 1972, is a good example of such strategy.

The movie portrays a historic event that occurred in Chile in the early '30s, when «El traje cruzado» (Marcelo Gaete), one of the many workers displaced by the saltpeter crisis in the north, arrives in Palmilla, a poor agricultural area in central-southern Chile, where he meets José Durán (Nelson Villagra), an uneducated farm worker with a deeply-rooted social conscience. «El traje cruzado» tells him that in the capital the socialist revolution led by Marmaduke Grove and, from now on, society will be organized collectively and without differences between rich and poor. When Durán convinces his landless fellow workers to «invade» the city hall of El Huique, a local town, in attempting to promote and ensure the socialist revolution, the conflict between the town's most powerful and those of the farm is waged. When, after several months, news point out that the socialist republic was defeated in only 12 days, the group of farm workers are stuck and a police brigade puts an end to their egalitarian «utopia».

The film shows the scene of a real historic event: the revolt led by Marmaduke Grove, a brief political adventure in a very turbulent time for the country, that experienced a succession of short-lived governments, while it dealt with the struggles of the global economic crisis, that delivered a fatal blow to the saltpeter industry, being the principal source of national wealth. This event is interpreted, at the beginning of the '70s, as a precursor to the socialist process led by the government of Salvador Allende and the Unidad Popular. In this sense, many of the film's discourses are, by analogy, possible and contemporary comments on the political process which frames the making of the film: the restitution of the popular sovereignty, the collectivization of the agricultural and industrial means of production, the political responsibility of the people in regards to influencing and playing a main role in their own history, are important elements in which the narrative construction questions the audience of the '70s in regards to the present, not to educate them or instruct them didactically about a past event.

A series of symbolic references in the film show this «destiny»: the biblical allusion to a promised land, the references to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and to Sandino, the tutelar presence of the Virgin Mary, object of popular devotion that leads and «protects» the march to Palmilla and El

Huique. Even at the end of the story –the annihilation of the popular collective adventure– would seem to be enlightening as to the journey of the Unidad Popular and how this could result if power is given to the revolutionary forces. The narrator, in voiceover, is presented as a surviving witness that tells the circumstances of the story 40 years later, which accentuates the present timing of the film. The soundtrack by Luis Advis, which includes music by Inti Illimani and Ángel Parra, reinforces the contemporary interpretation that is desired to be made of the historical event.

The film could not be released in Chile due to the military coup that took over Allende's government in 1973. The film was finished in Cuba, nominated for a special award at the Moscow Film Festival the following year and was not shown in Chile until 1991. This course resulted in connecting the film with its immediate present, turning its historical tale into a political commentary about its present day.

Another example of this direction is related to the War of the Pacific as topic. There are only five fiction feature films made on it, contrary to what happened throughout the past century and until now, with other aspects of the cultural field like the publishing industry, broadcasting, that generated numerous productions on the issue in various languages, genres and formats. During the era of silent films three fiction films were produced. The first was *Todo por la patria* or *El jirón de la bandera* (1918). A few years later, in 1923 *El odio nada engendra* premiered. The third production of this era was *Bajo dos banderas* (1926). The three productions were made in a cultural context, in which a combination of discursive strategies circulated that pointed towards building up a common sense and an imaginary of a country and a society, increasingly shaped by crisis and the decline of the development model based on saltpeter. As Rinke states: "Via the heroic representation of the glorious eras of the past (...) they sought to create a founding myth that would not go too far into the confusing details of the historic reality" (Rinke, 2010, p.24).

Over 40 years later there came another national production centered on the War of the Pacific and it is done in the particular context of the decade of the '60s. Directed by Helvio Soto, *Caliche Sangriento* premiered in 1969. At that time, the magazine *Telecran* highlighted the film as "a mature work

of 'cinema of opinion', showing how the precision and clear-cut definition of an issue are more beneficial than the grandiloquent collection of ideas" (*Telecrán* in López, 1997, p.134). Rinke establishes a comparative perspective between this film and those mentioned before, produced at the turn of the century:

The film shows how in a situation that extreme, the discipline and the hierarchies disappear and the men are finally taken to their deaths. On the contrary, the film "Todo por la Patria" by Mario, glorifies the war for its supposed ability of national integration, Helvio Soto shows the senselessness of death in a process that the soldiers are incapable of seeing (Rinke, 2010, p.16-17).

Caliche Sangriento had a significant impact and connotation, given that national context at the time of its release, as well as the reaction produced in conservative and military sectors, for which it was considered an attack against national traditions (Cortínez & Engelbert, 2014; Horta, 2015). Beyond the possible interpretations as to the film's content, *Caliche Sangriento* constitutes an exceptional case in the treatment of the War of the Pacific and of national history in general, in terms of its repercussions in the public sphere, triggering debates, position-takings, and passionate statements, among others.

5.2 The hegemonic and counter hegemonic reinforcement

Cinema legitimizes or discredits different versions of historic discourse, aiming to represent the present following ideological and identity interests. The historic component of the film integrates to or reinforces the imaginary of a social or generational collective, or fuels a political myth.

El Húsar de la Muerte (1925), by Pedro Sienna, exemplifies such strategy as a case study. The film shows the adventures of Manuel Rodríguez who assembles the last patriots, after the restoration of the monarchic government in 1814, to fight the royal forces in guerilla combat. Rodríguez always manages to ridicule his persecutors, been able to destabilize them by robbing secret documents from the house of Governor Marcó del Pont, which

results in a full-on chase of the guerrilla fighter, who is finally arrested. However, thanks to his faithful colleagues, among them the boy called *el Guacho Pela'o*, he manages to escape to Mendoza to give strategic information to José de San Martín, that will serve to win the battles that will define the independence of the region.

In Chilean society in the '20s, in which the feature film is produced and premiered, there is a constant manifestation of unrest and unhappiness in an important part of the population. Therefore, political-intellectual sectors carry out different efforts in pursuit of social cohesion, one of which will be the resurging and use of the figure of Manuel Rodríguez in cinema, presented with a clear nationalist intention, that shows homogenizing aims, who has the mission to reunite people around the mythology of a popular freedom fighter, with which audiences can identify. This is complemented with the cinematographic value related to the proto-industry of the era, in which the *entertainment* factor, under certain norms of cinema itself, in this case in particular, the cinematographic genres of the melodrama and the comedy, give guidelines to which the characters and the history ascribe (Rinke, 2002). They are elements that promote the cultural and emotional identification that allow the transmission and impression of ideologies and identities linked to the national cohesion in audiences.

Another example in this perspective is *Allende en su laberinto*, by Miguel Littin (2014). We argue that Allende's representation in Littin's film does not use historic discursivity (although it aims to "tell" the true story of the hours previous to the 1973 military coup), but rather a collection of emotional and moral elements that are disseminated in the post-dictatorship common sense found in Chile since 1990. The film does not represent the story of Allende, but rather would review a myth in which Littin's generation and many of those who built their political identity out of the experience of Popular Unity (UP) acknowledges.

The reason for building up a myth around the figure of Allende and "taking out of history" would be in the political consensus cultivated by the governments of the Concertación since the late '80s. Indeed, in order to recover a democracy agreed with the dictatorship that carried on the neoliberal model of development assuming as cost a growing

and structural social inequality and rejecting the previous socialist project of social transformation (Moulian, 1997), Allende is an upsetting political figure that could strongly question the established political consensus. Therefore, Allende's figure should be reduced to small, barely commemorative gestures. One of the most interesting aspects of the mythification of Allende is the distance between his image and people's representation. In the sense that the myth presents him as a dignified and responsible individual, but solitary, like a martyr in La Moneda, and not like a member of a political conglomerate, like a party member, owner of a personality and not a destiny. Allende is not linked to the popular political process and, therefore, his figure is reduced to the space of memory of his inner circle and followers; memories, in the end, that do not appear in the territory of politics and history. These considerations, with different mindsets, did not go unnoticed for the cinematographic critique. The film by Littin received a lot of attention and the comments –except for those referring to its cinematographic quality –tended to be similar. Critiques insisted on the same point various times: the figure of Allende in the film is idealized, separated from its context, in other words, “not historical”.

Critical reception of the film is mixed regarding its artistic merits –some hail the acting or emotional elements; others chastise the failed digital effects or the defects of the script –, but it is coherent in noting that the film does not present the paths and circumstances of a historic Allende. Instead, and in correspondence with the social imaginary reviewed, we could propose that *Allende en su laberinto* constructs a mythical history of Allende and the UP, whose historical likeness is jeopardized in its recognition of the common senses built around the defeated president from September 1973 on. In that vein, we would be in the presence of the second of the strategies of verisimilitude that Chilean fiction cinema portrays to address the historical, and that we referred to previously: the strategy of the hegemonic or counter-hegemonic reinforcement (we incline, in this case, for the first). *Allende en su laberinto* would stage the weaving of narratives and memories that, both the generation of Littin and that of the governments of the Concertación have managed, and that is centered on the myth of Allende as a moral individual sacrificed by the military overthrow.

We say myth, because the film is an antinomic, binary, synthetic story: us and them, the righteous and the traitors, the constitutionalists and the overthrowers. It is simplistic, because it does not show the political-social process, but there is a “speech” about this process, in such a way that the film offers a meaning on the military coup and the death of Allende from such mythic imaginary. However, upon not presenting the combination of complexities and circumstances of the relevant context, such representation will not constitute a historical meaning. Allende, all alone in La Moneda, in transit to his self-sacrifice, outside of history and politics –other characteristic of the myth– is purely represented like a martyr, not like a leader; like a dignified human being, but without the ability to shape political processes; in the end, like a man totally alone, in which the people's representation fades away.

The strategy of representation used in these films builds a historic likeness whose core is not the historical characters or events, but rather a myth: the post-dictatorial myth of Salvador Allende like a martyr of dignity and moral integrity. This construction has various consequences, one of which is Allende's inexpugnability as a historical subject. His political biography, with many points in common with other politicians of his time, his career as a minister and senator, his role in the political circumstances between the decades of the 1940s and 1970s, the meaning and context of his public discourses and interventions, are eclipsed by the *mythic* scope of his last words in La Moneda. His personal circumstances, his personal defects, his more mundane features, are revamped by the myth, that make him a “true Chilean”, a lover, a “revolutionary of empanadas and red wine”, more a character than an individual (Del Pozo, 2017).

5.3 The narrative subordination

In this type of film, the historic discourse is completely subordinated to the cinematographic discursive, significantly decreasing the importance of the effect of verisimilitude, whose «historic contents» are also subordinated to the social knowledge about what is cinematographic.

These traits are shown abundantly in *Tony Manero* (2008), by Pablo Larraín. The narration is set in Santiago, Chile, in 1979, and it focuses on the psychological description of Raúl Peralta, a sort of serial killer who, at 52 age, is obsessed with the character of Anthony T. Manero from the film *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), by John Badham. Raúl is part of a struggling dance studio and his only goal is to win an imitation dance contest on TV. We could state that the whole cinematographic composition is organized in a performance of an urban *flâneur* of the post-military coup decadence.

What is important for Larraín is to establish a climate of structural violence, where Raúl's behavior embodies what the dictatorship did to civil society. In his murder spree, Raúl kills an elderly woman to rob her television set, a junk salesman to steal some glass bricks and two workers at a movie theater to take a copy of the film by Badham. All these murders are associated to a series of economic exchanges that Raúl establishes to improve his performance as Anthony Manero. The film's social environment is one of decadence and desolation. Santiago is shown empty and when people appear, they are amoral survivors, trash, remains. Raúl's wanderings describe an existentially oppressive space, where areas are dark, poorly lit, dirty, residences are old, people are poorly fed, where anyone who resists the dictatorship is killed.

All these features are at the service of thinking about the cinematographic. Larraín, for example, used the original host of the television program to play himself, using the same decorations on the set and TVN studios: an exercise of audiovisual anachronism that would supposedly break the spell of fiction, an eruption of the materiality of reality that tear the narrative-fictitious tissue to build up a state of ambiguity of what is possible: Indeed, that could have occurred. But, at the same time, it reinforces the fictitious dimension of the cinematographic, this overlapping of the present with the past can only occur in the world of the images.

In *Tony Manero*, the dictatorship is an atmosphere, a naturalized emotional-symbolic landscape, it is that murky swamp of contemplation, although what is contemplated is terror. It is a viewpoint that does not provoke cracks or gaps in the representational tissue of the historical story, because it does not give any element to comprehend how it has

come to this. Cinematographic experimentation is not focused on generating new maps of the visible and spoken in regards to the dictatorship: it is an experimentation that does not have the object of giving meaning to the past.

6. Conclusions

As we have insisted, Chilean cinema lacks a productive volume of films supporting the development of a historical genre. Although there are some films that can be examined under the scope of the relationship between cinema and history, that does not constitute, in itself, a genre. Although during the era of silent cinema a relatively small number of historic films can be an excuse to such lack of a historical genre, in other periods, like the '40s, there is no such movies either and the effort focuses on the then urgent problem of discursively elaborate a national identity, that would address phenomena like the accelerated country-city migration or the constitution of a popular urban subject in the modernizer-industrializer process. Likewise, during the '60s, the discursive effort of the called *New Chilean Cinema* also concentrated on the present, in terms of playing a role in the ongoing social structural change processes.

Neither does it occur with films about the dictatorship (1973-1990), for example, attempting a comparison to German *Ostalgie film* on the recent past of the RDA. Even when there is a profusion of films on the topic, there is an excessive deliberation of the aesthetic presentism associated to discursive strategies of "hegemonic or counter-hegemonic reinforcement", of certain discourses that organize the outcome of the present. To name some examples: *Machuca* (2004), by Andrés Wood, or the trilogy on the dictatorship of Pablo Larraín. It seems evident, after the contributions of Rosenstone (1997) that all response to a question on the past has a density of present, but it also has a vocation of past that, in some way, tries to show the *eye of the time* (Baxandall, 2000). In Chilean cinema, this is summarized in a series of objectual references and mediatic cultural heritage.

This presentism is built in the structural impossibility of a nostalgic exercise. Nostalgia is sustained in the emotional claim of something lost that can never be recovered and, in the context of late capi-

talism, nostalgia has been one of the aesthetic forms of making history outside the historiography. The cultural presentism on which the Chilean production has been focused on has its roots in the structural violence of the military coup, where the present was shaken by the blunt force of the historic-epistemic event. This rupture makes it impossible to remember and think about forms that occurred before the coup. This deep fracture makes it impossible to reclaim what was lost, because that object has been locked from view, to the memory and the senses. Chilean memory practic-

es are on the forgotten of the devastating effects of event and not of that which was there before, of the past in any of its forms.

That same effect occurs in the present and detaches from the cinematographic and audiovisual productions in general. Therefore, any past event is also an excuse for the "contextual comment" on the present. Thus, in the full absence of an aesthetic of nostalgia, we lose the possibility to configure a historical cinematographic genre.

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