

Variations of realism in contemporary Chilean cinema. The movies of Alejandro Fernández Almendras.

Variaciones del realismo en el cine chileno contemporáneo. Las películas de Alejandro Fernández Almendras

Carolina Urrutia

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

caurruti@uc.cl

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze the variations that realism presents in current Chilean cinema, based on the observation of a renewal of the new (of the 'novísimo' or very latest, in this case) that has as its characteristic an emergence or clash with the real, in the context of the current social and political context of Chile. We recognize this, first, in the use of the expressive materials of realism in the cinema and, secondly, through the immediacy with which the films appeal to, question, and interpret the present. Based on the four films Alejandro Fernández Almendras has released to date, we will explore these deviations and variations of realism in contemporary Chilean cinema.

Keywords: Chilean cinema, realism, documentary, fiction, world cinema.

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las variaciones que presenta el realismo en el cine chileno actual, a partir de la observación de una renovación de lo nuevo (de lo novísimo, en este caso) que tiene como característica una emergencia o choque con lo real, en el ámbito del contexto social y político del Chile actual. Esto lo reconocemos, en primer lugar, en la utilización de los materiales expresivos propios del realismo en el cine y, en segundo lugar, a través de la inmediatez con la que los elementos relatados en las películas apelan, interpelan e interpretan el presente. A partir de los cuatro largometrajes de ficción dirigidos por Alejandro Fernández Almendras estrenados a la fecha, exploraremos estos desvíos y variaciones del realismo en el cine chileno contemporáneo.

Palabras clave: cine chileno, realismo, documental, ficción, cine global.

1. Introduction

We perceive, in certain contemporary Chilean cinema (of art and essay, in the terminology of Bordwell), an emergence of the realist forms in the construction of fiction films; a permanent gesture of fiction to modes that have been historically related with documentary cinema. In his book *Los límites de la ficción*, Aumont (2016) proposes that fiction does not mean deception, but rather fabrication or pretending. Both the title of the book and the modes in which the text is built seem intriguing and relevant to us; in the proposal of the image of a limit, between the real and the imaginary, between fiction and the documentary. In this liminal space we find a valid territory to consider an important tendency in contemporary Chilean cinema dedicated to exploring reality based on the forms of fiction and of its possibilities and inventions.

The initial proposal of this article is organized based on the observation of a deviation or transformation of the realist forms that Chilean *Novísimo Cinema* proposed, as the name associated to cinema (mainly fiction) carried out in Chile since 2005 that contemplates new techniques and ways of addressing the audiovisual. Said transformation has been made visible in the last 5 years in an important group of films that portray new conceptions and configurations of cinematographic realism, in which the stories approach in a complex and critical mode the elements of the social and political circumstances of present-day Chile. The stories that Chilean filmmakers create in the present stem from the deep contemplation and observation of the daily activities of a group of characters, towards the intention to focus on important events that have caught people's attention, leading to massive contemporary protests, and that involve an unsatisfied and resentful view of the social configurations and structures of the current political system.

The work of Alejandro Fernández, to this day comprised of four full-length films¹, allows us to see this shift. The feature films *Huacho* (2009), *Sentados frente al fuego* (2011), *Matar a un hombre* (2014) and *Aquí no ha pasado nada* (2016) are presented as a cinematographic set portraying the variations and deviations of contemporary cinema in regards to the modes in which they immediately approach the social and political context of the country. Based on

these films, we are interested in studying, firstly, the realist operations that the filmmaker uses in his films and, secondly, the themes that appear and that exhibit many of the current conflicts, related with inequality, injustice, daily violence and abuses of power.

2. Theoretical Framework

The realist operations –that which Aumont calls the realism of the materials of expression (2011, p.135)– are found in these films based on the following elements: on one hand, the use of long takes recorded on a camera that patiently pans the spaces, showing the audience wide landscapes, both urban and rural, that extend its references and details based on the permanence in the image. On the other hand, realism materializes based on the conformation of a group of people composed, largely, by figures or non-actors that “constitute, before anything, an accessory of humanity that serves as a frame to the main actions of the heroes, the real actors in the story” (Didi-Huberman, 2014, p. 156), which are the protagonists of the film. Finally, in relation to the sound of the films, in which the extradiegetic sound is barely perceived and, instead, a direct sound is used that captures the sound footprints of the scenery of the spaces. These elements, that will be present especially in the Fernández's first films, form the structural tissue of his stories, and are related to realism using minimum resources and multiple plastic possibilities that imply the distance of the staging effects and the use of long takes in organizing the sequences of the sequences. In the first films by Fernández, you can see the presence of an eye that tries to capture the world *just as it is*. It is not just any world, it is that which revolves around a group of characters recorded using long takes giving the film a spirit of observation of the topic of rural life in Chile during the new millennium².

Secondly, from the themes proposed in this filmography associated to a profound questioning of Chile's current economic and social order. In other words, we hypothesize that the filmography of Fernández follows a tendency of the feature fiction films released in the last years in which these works begin to dialogue more directly and urgently with the contemporary political scenario,

particularly in the field of stories and plotlines. In his initial full-length films, we can see the way in which realism is manifested in the exploration the filmmaker does of the dynamics (time, spatial flows, exploration of open spaces) that make up the countryside and rural spaces of central and southern Chile. Anonymous people, residents of the countryside, workers of the land; characters that, to some degree are marginalized from progress, from modernity and inhabit a space frozen in time. They comprise the protagonists of *Huacho* and *Sentados frente al fuego*. In the newer films, on the other hand, the filmmaker focuses on the representation of contingent events and representations of our local present, that have been widely commented on by communication media and public debate, showing the possibilities of the fiction at the time of problematizing the very conflicts of the contemporary period.

To refer to *Novísimo*, Pablo Corro began his text "Las poéticas débiles" by stating the following: "We note, in the development of Chilean cinema during this last decade, a progressive interest for the trivial arguments, of insignificant issues. A rejection of themes of historic nature with epic treatments (...)" (Corro, 2011, p.217). In dialogue with that text we observe, in reference to that period, a cinema in which "the landscape and the space seem to become independent from the story, they look to where the character becomes passive, or simply contemplates, they look to what is looked at by this same landscape" (Urrutia, 2013, p.16). Effectively, these references –to which those of Estévez will be added as dialoging perspectives (2017) and Barraza (2018)– were used to refer to the two first films by Fernández. We would venture to say, however, that since *Matar a un hombre* there has been a change, the filmmaker has become more political and, as we see, there are new topics: like justice, on one hand and that of marginality, in an environment full of hostility and violence.

3. On realism in the field of a world cinema

Thinking about Chilean cinema from the last decade requires considering a series of dispositives of representation related with problematizing the contemporary. We propose two lines of approach that go converging: firstly, the theoretical scheme

that realism in cinema proposes (from both the topics and the materials of expression) and, secondly, the perspective of a world cinema.

Current Chilean fiction is profoundly related to world cinema (distanced from commercial cinema) that preponderates particularly in film festivals³. To better understand the concept, we will use the definition of Galt and Shoonover, who suggest that it is a cinema with greater presence in circulation circuits alternative to commercial cinemas and could be described as: "cinema art films with international scope; full-length narratives, on the margins of conventional cinema, located in some place between totally experimental films and openly commercial products" (2016, p.6). As the authors indicate, there is a wide range of possibilities and, in their main characteristics, there is a novel aesthetic proposal and a mode of narration free from the classic structures and distances itself from its models of representation. The struggle between the international and the domestic in cinema will be addressed by Andermann and Fernández in relation to contemporary Argentine and Brazilian cinema based on "a level of contemporaneity with the 'world cinema' alternative that arises in counter-image to the audiovisual globality promoted by large mass media corporations" (2003, p.9). In the subtitle of his book: "Contemporary cinema and the return of the real", is the reference to the book by Hal Foster to review the problem of the real, in a cinema in which the "reflexive procedures jeopardize the legibility of that real" (p.12).

These shifts, from a Bazinian realism to the contemporary world proposals are present in the Chilean audiovisual, in permanent growth. Currently, "Novísimo" filmmakers premiere there fourth, fifth and sixth films; there is an evident internationalization on behalf of some of them (Sebastián Lelio, Pablo Larraín, Alicia Scherson, Sebastián Silva) and an idea of cinema industry that has become more and more visible. The aesthetic dispositives amplify and it is difficult to address cinematography based on a limited collection of characteristics. In this work, we observe that, formally speaking, the aesthetics established from 2005 remain: in the staging of a subjectivity, of the figuration of a personal imaginary that aims to become collective. However, the topics of the films will be those that go transforming, to directly allude to the very conflicts of our society.

In relation to realism, it is difficult to distance oneself from the complex debate that precedes this problem in cinema; given that it supposes a genealogy that applies to diverse disciplines (philosophy, art, humanities) and that in cinema it is built as a road between an "ontological interest for cinema like a prodigious description of the existences of the real life, to an analysis of filmic realism as of convention and aesthetic election" (Stam, 1999, p.211). In the framework of a current global cinema, what Elsaesser states is important regarding what he calls a "new realism", in the field of a "world cinema". The author suggests that certain movements like the New Iranian Cinema were received like the return of a neo-realism, just like other emerging cinematography styles from Africa, Latin America, and some areas in Asia, celebrated in the film festivals for "certain quasi-documentary qualities, ethnographically committed with the slow rhythm of the day to day, with the lives of the common people, the disappearance of natural environments, the desolation of the marginal urban neighborhoods, (...)" (2009). A sketch is made of the preponderance of the poetics present in world cinema in which the films tend to erase the geopolitical borders in order to situate itself in a contemporary cinema "of the world" that forms part of a circuit where the films are shown in specific circulation spaces, like film festivals. And although they aim to the telling of stories anchored in determined places, at the same time they are transportable to other cultures, traditions, and regions.

We find some similarities in the proposals of Luz Horne, in his book *Literaturas reales*. The author observes in contemporaneous realism (in literature, but also in cinema) a desire to offer a testimonial or a document, in which the aim is not to "represent the real, but instead indicate or include the real by way of indication or trace, meanwhile, producing an intervention in the real" (2011, p.13). Horne reflects on the need of realism in order to provide a mode of representation in line with the contemporary era (p.25). This is to say that there is a type of transfer, between 19th-century realism and that of the present, that adapts its materials of representation to that which is being represented. We propose here a type of malfunction regarding the historic materials of realism in the cinema. In the history of cinema in Chile, for example, the inscription of the real does not belong exclusively to these times. There is a trajectory that is made vis-

ible mainly in the 60s and early 70s, with New Chilean Cinema (framed in the widest project of New Latin American Cinema), that is related to the setting up of the record and reproduction of the social crises of the era. In that way, *Valparaíso mi amor* by Aldo Francia (1969) and *El chacal de Nahueltoro* by Miguel Littín (1969) dialogued, at the end of the 60s, directly with the poetics and aesthetics of Italian Neo-realism aimed at showing the social crises of Chile. We agree with the theoretical guidelines Xavier uses to define the realism of the post-war Italian cinema, based upon foundational thoughts developed by Zabattini, Bazin and Kracauer: "The Neo-realist strategy, upon having the banal event a starting point, establishes that the essential meaning of this small event will be captured by the exhaustive observation, by the patient and insisting perspective" (Xavier 2008, p.98). The author uses the texts of André Bazin and by Sigfried Kracauer for support, which together establish a good framework of interpretation of realism, in dialogue with the coming of the new cinemas of the mid 20th century. For both authors, the objective and mechanical character of the cinematographic record is what makes it an essentially realist dispositive. For the first, the problem of realism is presented as moral, like a mechanism that "involves the need to express the concrete and essential meaning of the world" (Bazin, 1996, p.16). For the author, reality is something elusive, something that escapes. Approaching it implies using the long take and maintain a certain depth of field in that take, like a mechanism untouched by the manipulations and devices supposedly used in film montage. Just as Xavier (2008) suggests, cinema for Bazin searches to bear witness to an existence. On the other hand, for the German theorist Sigfried Kracauer, the realist tendency transcends photography in two ways: first, for the mobility of the camera and the procedures of the montage; and secondly, for the possibilities of the scene setting, both in terms of action and environment (1989).

3. Analysis

In the films by Alejandro Fernández, part of that which is at risk is the trifle of daily life, of those moments that make up a day in which nothing important or transcendental occurs; just another day, that is observed and recorded without major intervention. That viewpoint is specifically present

in *Huacho* and in *Sentados frente al fuego*, which portrays the experience of an ordinary day, without extraordinary events or shocks. In both cases, the narrator observes and the approach to the characters has evidently documentary elements. This narrative is transformed –differs in the forms, in the approaches to a realism that is manifested in other way, in the later films *Matar a un hombre* and *Aquí no ha pasado nada*– in a type of story that, we note, is presented as less realist, more digitalized and manipulated by the possibilities of post-production and staging, although the intention of the filmmaker continues being associated to making manifest certain elements indicative of the present that circulate around an economic inequality that historically remains anchored to Chilean society.

In his four films released today, Fernández establishes a sort of inscription in the real, around contemporary Chile and its class conflicts, the prevailing social inequality, the inequality in resources, the total distrust in the institutions--all in an attempt to capture certain individual experiences that put these dilemmas on the scene. His work is a rigorous observation of current times, based on a record made using long takes where characters show their daily routines in dialogue with the space they inhabit. There are four full-length films where the rural landscape will play a fundamental role, like a predisposed scenario to situate the characters in an environment that calls on not only their perceptions, but also those that we might have as spectators, appealing to the offscreen from the system of meaning that are built around the dramas presented.

In this context, it is interesting that certain topics repeat in his cinematography. For example, in the first three feature films, the motif of the land is constantly present, via the taking care of the land of others, the property of others, as a recurring theme. Fernández films the countryside –particularly the landscapes of central and southern Chile – and he does it situating the camera in open, green spaces where men and women transit over long extensions of land. The camera focuses on their daily rhythms and routines and the way they carry on their shoulders the particular problems that the narration goes revealing from the beginning. The weight of said conflicts is substantial to the story given that from here the film's main plot is formed and the characters' motivations are de-

finied, fundamentally anchored to the climax presented to us. However, also interesting is the way in which these problems rotate centrifugally around the story, they border it without necessarily becoming central to it. They are situations that surround the characters that generate a determined atmosphere. Without going directly into the problem, they work via a portrayal of symptoms that appear in the narration.

Characters show a profound pessimism, immersed in times of exacerbated capitalism that will be exhibited in his first films, emotionally, empathetic, based on a group of characters, recorded in their daily spaces, telling the reality based on stories that do not take us directly to an end, but instead is maintained in a permanent and infinite present.

From *Huacho*, Fernández develops a poetic of characters trapped in a stifling net that asphyxiates them, although they always keep afloat and never rebel against the system. Their films go about documenting the ordinary lives of everyday people that, in the first 3 films, are connected upon being trapped in a system that surpasses them, despite none of them even being aware of it. In the text "Neoliberalism in Chilean Cinema", Page observes: "The film offers us a quite unromantic view of the countryside as a place that serves modernity, but is excluded from it" (p.237). In fact, in *Huacho* the countryside scenery appears like a space that is temporarily frozen, disassociated, separated from the accesses the city promises. The film is organized around a large contradiction between city and countryside, between globalization and country life. Fernández films the earth and the scenery as a place of work, despite the lush foliage, the southern Chilean landscapes are not shown idyllically, as it is in other Chilean films—such as in *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia* (José Luis Torres Leiva, 2008), *Turistas* (Alicia Scherson, 2009), *El verano de los peces voladores* (Marcela Said, 2013)–. In other words, it is not the mystic and sublime nature that is found in his films; the landscape is set up like a space that belongs to someone (to another person) and that is subject, therefore, to different monetary returns and efforts that people exercise over it. The land is worked, and protected (in terms of property). It is travelled over, it is harvested, it is exploited. It is full of fences. And signs are raised on it indicating that it is private property⁴.

The film focuses on the life (one particular day) of a family, that lives outside Chillán, in southern central Chile, and it tells the story of each one of the four characters (the grandmother and grandfather, a daughter and a 12-year-old grandson), to record their daily routines, through the countryside, city, school, addressing the daily activities and frustrations of each of them. As Jens Andermann suggests in his book "Tierras en Trance", in some Latin American films, there is "the presence of a real that insists and interrupts in the diegetic continuity of the landscape that dissipates any presence, meanwhile opening our eyes to the emergency of a precarious life" (2018). This shift, proposes the author, "responds (although not in mimetic form, not in form of representation or allegory) to the detriment that any form of life is susceptible to emerging as a result of the existential neo-liberation" (p.372). The crosses between landscape and neoliberalism in the films by Fernández are subtle and operate like a cloud that goes moving in, in a way that is invisible but palpable, territorially displacing its inhabitants, entrenching and expelling them from the life that they know until now. *Huachuco* is built with a quasi-documentary expressivity, supported with the use of amateur actors, brief dialogues and extremely long takes. It is able to document the daily life of a family that keeps afloat despite the difficulties the economic system places on them.

Two years later, Fernández directs *Sentados frente al fuego*, and in this film the conflict will have various points in common with the previous project, starting with the landscape, film scenario, and the patient and loving recording the filmmaker applies to country life. Here the main character has several jobs: he owns a taxi, although we never see him transporting passengers; takes care of the large tracts of land of a property owner who is soon to sell, leaving destitute the day workers and country people that have spent their lives working on it; he performs the domestic labors in the home; and takes care of his sick wife. The narration pauses temporarily on long shots, the camera records the characters in their daily spaces. Relationships are present in the film, making up the heart of it, the friendly and loving relationships of the characters, between them and their relationships with others. The narration keeps us on the margin of the hospital bureaucracies and focuses on the character's present, in the growing fatigue of the woman. The

story concentrates, above all, on the small moments of pleasure that bring them together: he builds a sled and they go use it in the snow; they visit the family; they cook and eat dinner, the converse while sitting naked in bed, telling each other of the dreams they just had. The camera, during the story, accompanies him and goes observing his routines, the time he takes to perform his daily activities, his work, teatime with his friends and the conversations he has. The realist elements can be observed, on one hand, by the permanent presence of amateur actors circulating around the main characters. The country people, the workers, the city dwellers, although they are few, go about making up the southern scenery. On the other hand, the animal life also has a real effect on this work. The cat they take in plays, eats on the table, and is recorded extensively using long takes, moments in which time is frozen: the animal becomes a main character even when the other characters are not watching it.

Everything is built based on melancholy. We associate the main character's state of mourning of his wife's sickness and, as a result, to the end of a life project they had built together. This is present and Fernández positions it as a weight on the main character's body, his movement, the weight in his movement, that converges with a poor social condition that surpasses the existence of Daniel and that has to do with the situation in which he finds himself (regarding his work and his family) with the fatigue and effort that economic survival implies for him and his environment. It's appropriate to call attention to the statement of Joanna Page in regards to Argentine cinema. She says:

Recent cinema often shows the countryside impacted by the neoliberal and globalizing economy. A renewed cinematographic interest for the landscapes and the societies of rural Argentina also reflects a broader repositioning and discourse of Argentine national identity in a closer relationship with the regional underdevelopment, than with the European cosmopolitanism, as result of the experience of the crisis (Page, 2009, p.116).

Barraza observes something similar in regards to a certain Chilean cinema that "uses the documentary record to create an indirect critique of the

social economic system". The author says: "Thus, what remains on the margin of the visual –the workforce, the impact of neo-liberalism on the rural economy– (...) acquires meaning via what is not said, in the interstice between truth and fiction" (Barraza, 2018, p.193).

Just as we will indicate, it is precisely in relation to this description that Chilean cinema experiences a change, one which Fernández seems to represent. Both in *Matar a un hombre* and the following film, the critique of the social-economic system is no longer tangential, it comes out of the shadows or the interstice and situates itself in the center of the narration.

The beginning of the third feature film by Fernández is interesting and presents at the beginning a distancing from the previous films, by portraying an atmosphere full of suspense that appears visually and in sound in the first scene. If we try to describe it, we can do it in this way: in the background music, a melody of threatening tones takes over the sound and the image shows a lush forest, dramatically illuminated by the sun that shines through the tree branches, creating a kaleidoscope of rays of light and surfaces in shade. In the middle of the landscape, we see the figure of a man that walks away with this back to the camera. The sequence is built based on a fixed shot, where the only movement is that of the man that walks, in slow motion, until he is out of sight among the dense foliage. Then the shot is interrupted and the credits roll in red, using the entire screen space, it announces: "Matar a un hombre". The music corresponds to the genre of suspense and the rolling of the beginning credits imply a deviation in regards to his previous films.

Fernández shows us Jorge (Daniel Candia), an adult male, married and father of two adolescent children. After the described sequence, the story goes into the daily dynamics of Jorge, based on a series of elements that define his existence: his medical kit to treat his diabetes, his long daily commute between work and home, his trip to the supermarket, his relationships with his wife and two children.

Contrary to a commercial film, there is no state of happiness that comes after a breakdown. It's a middle-class family whose routine is performed without great enthusiasm, but instead adapts its

existence to the basic and routine activities that make up their life. This way of life is that which is shown in the beginning minutes, to later stop after Jorge is attacked by a group of violent criminals that live in his same neighborhood. These are neighbors who commit crimes and do drugs, that intimidate and steal. The motive of the neighbors' attack is not clear, whether it is for money or fun. They are rowdy and over-stimulated, seeming to have nothing better to do (a panorama is seen in other Chilean films, made especially in the 90s, like *Caluga o menta* (Gonzalo Justiniano, 1990) and that respond at times to a cinema of gender, of crime stories and of revenge, of justice sought by other means).

This starting point will always affect the stories of Jorge and his family: their relationships, daily activity, their progression, submerging them in an absolute state of vulnerability where there are no institutions that can help them or protect them. Society abandons the protagonist and his family, leaving them totally defenseless, forgotten, in the permanent and endless expectation of a solution from both the justice system and the police, that will remove them from the harassment by criminals obsessed with the family. Some of that abandonment is already used in previous films. The absence of the protective State, that takes care of the elderly, the sick, that supports the working class. In some way, that is the central theme that is used in the filmography of Fernández.

Exceptionally, In *Matar a un hombre*, Fernández focuses on the social and physical violence in which protagonists find themselves. The narration amplifies the distress of the characters like no other. The film is violent, in some ways impossible to enjoy, but rather is a violence that we must endure. It is not a film in which violence is a spectacle, but rather the opposite. We cite Monguin who observes, in current cinema, a "anonymous and indifferent violence where the attacker and the victim, the attacker and the attacked, are less and less visible, in the sense that they no longer fight directly" (1999, p.31).

Although the filmmaker maintains his style and his concerns throughout his four films, we see how he goes distancing himself from a more purist realism that characterizes his opera prima and the ways in which he structured the film based on long takes

that followed real actors, fabricating their lives and their stories, submerging them in a type of social instantaneousness.

His last premiere, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* (2016) is a film based on real events made public via the press and social networks⁵. Contrary to his first films, here he works with professional actors, well-known in cinema, theater and Chilean television, and deviates the protagonism of the lower and middle classes towards Chile's wealthiest classes: an effective representation of the ABC1 socio-economic category, where he shows the way that the children go about repeating the same vices of their parents.

In *Aquí no ha pasado nada*, Fernández seems to change his tone. He changes place and also social class (he travels to the seaside town of *Zapallar* located on Chile's central coast, to the summer homes of the richest sector of society). Together with Marcela Said (*El verano de los peces voladores* and *Los perros*) he is able to resent like no one the country's political and social aristocracy. In this case, from the perspective of a privileged and education youth, at the same time superficial and drunken.

The spatial representation, in regards to the preceding films, changes: the houses, the beaches, the highways are different. There is no public transportation, but rather cars that belong to the main character's parents. There are housemaids cleaning, while the kids watch *YouTube* videos, there is abuse of alcohol being passed around in bottles and jugs during parties, there are luxurious, expensive second homes in exclusive beach towns where the parents are never present. There are lawyers that threaten and subtly harass victims that are also victims to a certain degree. The graveness of adulthood and old age, in the context of a situation of economic hardship, is replaced in this last film by the superficiality of a group of youth with access to everything. The territorial landscape changes as well as that of the human; the protagonists of *Aquí no ha pasado nada* have access to everything that seems to be restricted from the characters of previous films.

At the end of the film, when the young people leave one party to go to another, the maid (the housekeeper), cleans up after the "party" and makes

sure everything is left in order, without evidence or fingerprints. Here, together with the credits, appear certain ironic *tweets* referring to the real event, that go from laughing at to the frustration of whose who comment. These texts that begin to appear on screen, give the film a layer of reality (the direct allusion to a real event) and at the same time, a superficial layer. The aesthetic of the contemporary world, of the light, of the empty, where the things that were important one day, the next day are not. What Horne says about this aspect is interesting, when he speaks of "a fragment of reality before the meaning". He says: "It is from this need to provide first something from the order of the referential that can interpret the performative and indicative rhetoric that is portrayed in these fictions" (p.115). In these *tweets* we can find a testimonial of event, information that does not necessarily belong to original or real messages, and that, however, allow the real to enter in the fiction, such as a photograph or the archive material of a documentary film.

4. Conclusion

The filmography made by the Chilean filmmaker is together, a work dedicated to the reflection on social problems of the present century in a country marked by class conflict. All of his films present an interesting correlation to the "real" via the representation of contingent events, politicizing the forms, tightening the reality from the staging of a society that cannot escape its problems. In this manner, it seems to be a cinema that goes hand in hand with the appearance of movements and protests that redesign the social powers, portraying this renewed interest for the real that we observe in Chilean cinema from 2013 to the present.

The deviation towards the subjective (in regards to cinema of the transition to democracy⁶) that occurs in the context of Chilean Novísimo Cinema starting in 2005, in which nihilism and melancholy reign, evolve into a new shift that begins to manifest itself as of 2014⁷ (approximately) based on what we can call a return to realism, not necessarily in the sense how cinema theory has historically understood it, but rather in relation to a reintegration towards a real comprised of news events, by TV reports, by public debates and by that which mani-

festivals in the citizens in the change from a condition of discontent to a strong degree of indignation, infinitely broadcast via social networks. At first, we observe that these narrations do not totally distance themselves from disenchantment of the first Novísimo, of that poetic identified as centrifuge, but rather distance themselves based on the plots, the arguments that comprise the massive discourses, reviewing the historic conflicts of Chilean society (also Latin American, in many cases), however, persisting in a decentralized articulation in terms of aesthetics and narrations.

Currently, there is an important corpus of films in which the categories of interpretation proposed for centrifuge or Novísimo cinema, seem to be insufficient. Current fiction cinema finds a strong echo with the social real, beyond being inspired in current themes (facts, events), it is related to the ways in which it reflects on the present: in other words, it studies the present but it also reflects it, without abandoning the very subjectivity of the filmography beginning in 2005.

Aquí no ha pasado nada relates to films like *Rara* (María José San Martín, 2016), *Jesús* (Fernando Guzonni, 2017), *El Tila, fragmentos de un psicópata* (Alejandro Torres, 2015) and *Mala Junta* (Claudia Huaquimilla, 2017). In every case, it is a contingent issue that operates as the starting point. In every case, that news event known by the spectator, shifts the role of the protagonist of the event, to one that differs and that allows for establishing a distance and also a perspective; a subjective of the conflict that questions the audience from a different perspective. It is not the truth or the real event that the filmmaker is interested in portraying, but rather a "state of circumstance" built based on a staging of certain relevant events that go about marking the different agendas (political, journalistic). We find in this work the idea of cinema as testimony to a time and the fictions as traces or signs of a particular moment.

Notes

1 Se suma el estreno de *Mi amigo Alexis*, en junio de 2019.

2 It is interesting that all filmography by Fernández avoids Santiago. Even in the last case, where it is explicit that Santiago is the nucleus where all the political ties meet, and which go about organizing the context of the film, this appears only partially at certain times, from inside law firm offices or the backyards of homes in the eastside of the capital city.

3 Regarding the field of Chilean cinema and information about its internationalization and film festivals, see studies by María Paz Peirano, in particular her article : "Festivales de cine y procesos de internacionalización del cine chileno reciente".

4 Sobre este filme, nos extendimos in the book "Un cine centrífugo. Chilean fictions, 2005 to 2010", in which we dedicate one chapter to the poéticas that the film proposes in regards to the space, the rural environment, documented and ficcionado by Fernández.

5 The film *Aquí no ha pasado nada* is based on real events. The case of the son of the senator of the Republic, Carlos Larraín who, while drunk, commits a hit and run of a pedestrian. The son of the politician is declared innocent of all charges. The pedestrian was poor, the driver powerful.

6 Chilean cinema of the 90s will be analyzed in depth by Ascanio Cavallo, Paula Douzet and Cecilia Rodríguez in the book "Huérfanos y perdidos: Reinterpretations of Chilean Cinema of the Transition".

7 En ese año se estrenan, además de *Matar a un hombre*, las películas *Aurora* (Rodrigo Sepúlveda, 2014), *Volantín Cortao* (Diego Ayala y Aníbal Jofré, 2014), entre otras, que apuntan a diversos conflictos reales del Chile actual.

References

- Andermann, J. & Fernandez, A. (2003). *The Scene and the Screen. Contemporary Cinema and the return to the real*. Buenos Aires, Colihue.
- Andermann, J. (2018). *Lands in Trance. Art and Nature After the Landscape*. Ediciones Metales Pesados.
- Aumont, J. & Marie, M. (2011). *Aesthetics of Cinema*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Aumont, J. (2016). *The Limits of Fiction*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Barraza, V. (2018). *Cinema in Chile 2005 to 2015. Politics and poetics of the new century*. Santiago: Cuarto Propio.
- Bazin, A. (1966). *What is cinema?* Madrid: Rialp.
- Bordwell, D. (1996). *The Narration in Fiction Cinema*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Cavallo, A. & Maza, G. (2011). *Chilean Novísimo Cinema*. Santiago: Uqbar.
- Cavallo A. Douzet P. & Rodriguez, C. (2007). *Orphans and the Lost. Reinterpretation of Chilean cinema of the Transition*. Santiago: Uqbar.
- Corro, P. (2012). *Chilean Cinema Rhetorics. Essays on Realism*. Santiago: Cuarto Propio.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (2014). *Pueblos expuestos, pueblos figurantes*. Buenos Aires: Manantial.
- Elsaesser, T. (2009). "World cinema: Realism, Evidence, Presence". En Realism and the audiovisual media. Nagib, Lucia. Mello, Cecília. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Estévez, A. (2017). *A Grammar of Cinematographic Melancholy*. Santiago: Ediciones Radio Universidad de Chile.
- Horne, L. (2011). *Real Literatures. Transformations of the Realism in the Contemporary Latin American Narrative*. Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo Editora.
- Galt, R. & Shoonover, K. (2010). *Global Art Cinema. New Theories and Histories*. Oxford: Oxford university Press.
- Kracauer, S. (1989). *Cinema Theory. The redemption of the physical reality*. Madrid: Paidós.
- Maza, G. & Cavallo, A. (2011). *Chilean Novísimo Cinema*. Santiago Uqbar.
- Monguin, O. (1999). *Violence and Contemporary Cinema. Essay on ethics and image*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Page, J. (2017). "Neoliberalism and the Politics of Affect and Self Authorship in Contemporary Chilean Cinema", en Delgado, M, Hart, S. y Johnson, R. *A companion to Latin American Cinema*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Page, J. (2009). *Crisis and Capitalism in Contemporary Argentine Cinema*. London: Duke University Press.

Peirano, MP. (2018). "Film festivals and internationalization processes of recent Chilean cinema" en *Cuadernos.info* (43), 57-69.

Urrutia, C. (2011). *Centrifuge Cinema. Chilean Fictions 2005 - 2010*. Santiago: Cuarto propio.

Xavier, I. (2008). *The cinematographic discourse, the opaqueness and the transparency*. Buenos Aires: Manantial.

- About the author:

Carolina Urrutia Neno es profesor asistente de la Facultad de Comunicaciones de la Universidad Católica de Chile, Doctora en Filosofía con mención en Estética y Teoría del Arte de la Universidad de Chile y Magíster en Teoría del Arte. Directora de la revista de cine *laFuga.cl* y autora del libro *Un cine centrífugo: ficciones chilenas 2005 a 2010*.

- How to cite:

Urrutia, C. (2019). Variations of realism in contemporary Chilean cinema. The movies of Alejandro Fernandez Almendras. *Comunicación y Medios*, (39), 98-108.