

Writing Cinema: The Communicating Vessels of Literature and Film

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Mexican cinema has long borrowed from literary sources – so much so that Emilio García Riera, in his survey of Mexican film, decried this tendency as a lamentable phenomenon that bespoke lack of originality and creative inspiration. This chapter will reconsider his judgment, looking to these adaptations as lively sources for critical analysis and part of a creative dialogue between filmmakers and authors. A small number of the novels adapted were written before the invention of cinema, which means that the authors wrote without recourse to any of its audiovisual tropes, but most were written after its inception. This creative flow takes many forms, and the source novel can have multiple resonances for the filmmakers, producers, or viewers; it can bring with it literary respectability and commercial success but also have political resonances that complicate readings. This chapter will have Mexican creative production at its center and consider the interrelationship between literature and film, the borrowings and influences that one has had on the other. Although mostly circumscribed by what has been created within Mexican national boundaries, the conversation will nonetheless draw on the

literary output of non-Mexican authors whose works have been adapted by filmmakers in Mexico.

I draw on recent research into adaptation studies, which is “[a]lways a ‘hybrid’ subject, . . . too literary for film studies and too film-based for literary studies, and has tended to occupy an uneasy place between the two” (Cartmell and Whelehan, 2007: 1). It has generally come from English or literary studies departments and has found itself in an interstitial place between or even outside of disciplines, where film scholars often ignore it. Up to the 2000s, the tendency was to focus on mapping out a value-laden taxonomy in which faithfulness to the literary source text is an indicator of merit and hierarchy bedeviled the field. This penchant can still be found in some theoretical analyses (see, for example, Desmond and Hawkes, 2006), but the more fruitful approach is to move the focus from “literary texts not as primary sources but as ‘intertexts,’ one (albeit dominant) of a multiplicity of perspectives, thereby freeing adaptation from unprofitable ‘eye for an eye’ comparisons” (Cartmell and Whelehan, 2007: 3). This is a productive approach in a global overview of cinema’s relationship with literature, as it moves from the particularities of privileging one text over another and allows for a more productive teasing out of the multifaceted interrelationship between the two.

Necessarily, this chapter will be a selective survey. Because Mexico is a country with an extensive filmic output, it would be impossible to exhaustively cover all instances and traces where literature and film meet. The chapter will provide an overview of the patterns and recurrences where literature and film can be evidenced in creative outputs. Films mentioned are to be understood as

exemplary samples, with the full awareness that other films could prove valuable replacements, exemplifying other facets of a sample trace. Through the choice of case studies, this chapter will consider the following issues: dynamic generic developments; politics and adaptation; transnational flows; the influences of film on literature; and, underpinning all of this, a discussion of auteurism, authorship, and collaboration.

Three adaptations that reveal the dynamic development of generic borrowings are *Santa* (Antonio Moreno, 1931), *Let's Go with Pancho Villa* (Fernando de Fuentes, 1935), and two versions of *The Underdogs* (Chano Urueta, 1940; Servando González, 1976). The first sound film in Mexico, *Santa* was an adaptation by Carlos Noriega Hope of the Federico Gamboa novel of the same name. It foregrounds its source in the title sequence, in which the cast and crew names appear on screen as if on the open pages of a book. The film is a melodrama, its plot concerned with the story of the eponymous Santa (Lupita Tovar), a village girl who is seduced by an army general and falls into a life of prostitution when her family rejects her (see González, 1996: 43–61). Such narratives would have frequent iterations and reiterations in the *cabaretera* genre, as well as in the multiple remakes of the *Santa* story in film and on TV. The narrative contains lessons about proper behavior and the consequences of what was deemed improper in a conservative society dominated by Catholic morality, while simultaneously indulging in multiple scenes of lightly clad young women in provocative poses and performances. The development of this film genre, as well as the recurrence of this

character, is a flow from literature to film that was particularly fruitful for Mexican studio filmmakers.

Another adaptation from the 1930s that has had a notable trajectory and served to establish generic conventions is Rafael F. Muñoz's *Let's Go with Pancho Villa* (Fernando de Fuentes, 1935), adapted by the director alongside poet and playwright Xavier Villaurrutia. Poorly received by critics on its original release, it nonetheless was the first in a trilogy and has gained canonical status as a foundational film set during the revolution. The novel was originally serialized in *El Universal* in 1928 and later published as book in 1931. It follows the story of a group of soldiers from a small village who join the revolution, pledging to protect one another. This film is episodic in structure as it recounts the incidents and battles that result in all but one of the men's deaths, occurring, variously, in armed struggle, in a game of Russian roulette, and under Villa's orders when it is discovered that he has smallpox, to prevent an epidemic. It is a tragic film, which could go some way toward explaining its lack of success on its original release. Of the twenty chapters in the novel, nine were dramatized on film (see Serrano, 1978: 58). However, although the novel was a best seller because of its "appeal to the reading public's craving for morbidly violent anecdotes" (Parra, 2005: 10), the film was a commercial failure (O'Malley, 1986: 110), disappearing for years – only for interest to be revived in the 1970s by the Nuevo Cine group, an association of filmmakers, critics, and intellectuals. For them, *Let's Go with Pancho Villa* "was an exemplary alternative to the celebratory Revolutionary studio films. They could signal it as their historical predecessor, yet reject much of its aesthetic as well as the

melodramatic elements of the plot” (Thornton, 2013: 33). From a retrospective lens through its recuperation, its adaptation marked the post-1970s approaches to the revolution on film, especially in the somber tone and negative ending.

Another film set during the revolution, Mariano Azuela’s *The Underdogs*, was the first novel of the revolution. It was first adapted in 1940 by Aurelio Manrique and director Chano Urueta, and later, in 1976, by Vicente Leñero and director Servando González. The early film was Manrique’s only adaptation (he is credited with the dialogue), but it is one of many attributed to Urueta in this practice of crediting the director. In its use of an orchestral nondiegetic score to set the mood and tone; the familiar framing, lighting, and stylistic techniques employed by the director of photography, Gabriel Figueroa; and the melodramatic performances, with the attendant fast-paced delivery of dialogue by the principals (Miguel Ángel Ferriz as the protagonist, Demetrio Macías), the film has many of the characteristics of studio-era prestige films. The privileging of the originary text is evident in the pretitle credit, which tells us that Ferriz, Esther Fernández, Isabel Corona, and Domingo Soler are starring in “the immortal work of Dr. Mariano Azuela.”¹ This is a mix of studio-era hierarchies that places stars above all else, while acknowledging the authority of the text and asserting value in the film as a consequence of this association. In this interplay of codes, audiences are primed to expect recognizable stars in a film that has a respectable source.

¹ “la obra inmortal del doctor Don Mariano Azuela.” Unless otherwise indicated, translations mine.

The narrative of *The Underdogs* is concerned with Demetrio Macías, a peasant farmer who first gathers a band of unlikely soldiers from among his neighbors – until, inspired by his leadership, the force eventually builds to a considerable size as they move through the countryside and go on to join a larger troop en route to the infamous and bloody Battle of Zacatecas, where they will fight against Pancho Villa and Venustiano Carranza’s army. After their success at Zacatecas, Macías and his army become excessive in their behavior: holding debauched celebrations, killing aimlessly, looting the houses of the wealthy, and raping women, with little sense of the purpose of the revolution. The 1940s film deals with this behavior coyly, which is consistent with the codes of the time. However, as a film released in the late-1970s, with its relaxed approach to the visualization of such excesses, the later film does show much of this. However, in comparison with other films of its day, it does not indulge in the gratuitousness of such conduct. Women’s bodies are not dwelled upon as an end in itself. When they are nude, it is (not unproblematically) as a sign of excess revelry.

The 1976 version is more complicated in origin and associations. In a DVD extra entitled “13 random notes on the reconstruction of the past,”² the lead actor, Erick (credited in the film as Eric) del Castillo, discusses the origins and development of the film from novel to stage to screen. As part of a cooperative of actors, he asserts that they were successful in getting the Azuela family’s approval for the adaptation, first to stage and then to screen. As a significant agent in these discussions, he describes how he was instrumental in the decision to bring Servando

² “13 apuntes dispersos para la reconstrucción del pasado.”

González on board as director. The framing of this story has a particular function. With his assertion of the family's approval, his inclusion of the success on stage and the cultural capital attached to that success, and his foregrounding of the actors' cooperative, his remarks are designed to lift some of the dubious political associations that have been attached to the film as a result of its director. González began his film career as the coordinator of the Departamento de Documentales de Gobierno (Government Department of Documentaries), a kind of government propaganda wing. There, he was responsible for innocuous films such as *Expo 59* (1959), a film for the World's Fair held in Brussels, Belgium. It was his later involvement in filming the Student Movement on behalf of the military on October 2, 1968, in Tlatelolco, Mexico City – when an as-yet unconfirmed number of students were killed and disappeared – that looms large in his biography. González claims that the fourteen film rolls he shot were confiscated, but this compromised action alienated him from many of his contemporaries and marked his career and the consequent reception of his films. The fact that Del Castillo chose to highlight his own credentials and that of the ur-text(s) is an indicator of his concern and eagerness to place González's auteurial role as secondary to that of Azuela and the dramatic text.

It would require a longer chapter to explore the full implications of González's politics in a reading of the film, but it is worth considering Vicente Leñero, who is credited alongside González as having adapted the novel. A contemporary of José Revueltas and José Agustín, whom I will discuss later, he was involved in a variety of projects, including an adaptation of his own novel, *Estudio Q*

(1965) as *Misterio* (Marcela Fernández Violante, 1980), set in the television industry (see Langford, 1971: 159–161); the adaptation of a novel by Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz, *Midaq Alley* (Jorge Fons, 1995); and, more recently, the melodrama *The Crime of Father Amaro* (Carlos Carrera, 2002). Like Emilio Carballido, who I shall also discuss later, his multifaceted career is often ignored by critics, who tend to emphasize his literary output and overlook his film work. Leñero, Carballido, Revueltas, and Agustín were part of an energetic, experimental period in Mexican writing that was often reflected in the choices and variety of cinematic projects they undertook.

Like Leñero, Revueltas was one of many writers involved in the adaptation of his own work as well as that of others. His twenty-four screenwriting credits testify to an author who did both (Rocco, 2011). These diverse films range from adaptations of U.S. writer Jack London's *The Mexican* (Agustín P. Delgado, 1944); to studio classics such as Miguel N. Lira's 1948 novel *The Hidden One* (Roberto Gavaldón, 1956); right up to his last, *El apando/The Heist* (Felipe Cazals, 1976), an adaptation of his own 1969 novel, translated as *The Isolation Cell*. A politically engaged Marxist all his life, he spent much time in prison and was accused of being the intellectual author of the 1968 Student Movement (see Poniatowska, 1999). This adaptation was a collaboration with his contemporary José Agustín, one of the leading figures in the 1960s Onda movement, which made recourse to popular and filmic language in its writing.

The novel was written during Revueltas's last stint in prison in 1968. It is narrated in first person in the form of a single unbroken paragraph; in this way, and

through “its manipulation of point of view . . . [and] cinematographic narrator’s eye,” it emphasizes the enclosure of the prison space (Slick, 1983: 90). The narrative centers on a group of common criminals in the prison – Polonio (Manuel Ojeda), Albino (Salvador Sánchez), and El Carajo (José Carlos Ruiz) – as well as on El Carajo’s septuagenarian mother (Luz Cortázar), whom they get to smuggle drugs into the prison, and La Chata (Delia Casanova) and Meche (María Rojas), the girlfriends of Polonio and Albino, respectively. The novel presents prison as a brutal space in which death and suffering are constants. Both novel and film involve the threat and actualization of sexual violence with a homophobic overlay. Francisco Manzo-Robledo has analyzed this aspect in the novel, finding the eroticization – particularly the sequence in which Meche attains orgasm on being vaginally searched by a female guard – to be reflective of a pattern of culturally bound anxieties around homosexuality (2000: 356–365). The realization of this scene on screen is consistent with the original’s tone and style, but is also deeply imbricated within the history of a troubling representation of women’s bodies on screen. Meche’s fantasy that Albino is the one pleasuring her in her moment of sexual release is shown through cross-cutting editing that visualizes the couple intercut with the guard penetrating her. This scene’s pornographic explicitness is consistent with a seedy, debased representation of humanity in prison where the only liberation, as Manzo-Robledo articulates it, is through drug taking and “transgressive” sexual acts (2000: 347). It is a deeply disturbing scene not least because it represents rape as a source of pleasure for Meche, but it is also indicative

of a turn in filmmaking in Mexico toward a greater eroticization of the female body purely as an object of pleasure for the male gaze.

Political engagement and films set against a charged political context is a constant in adaptations. One popular, successful adaptation marked a major turning point in contemporary Mexican cinema: *Like Water for Chocolate* (Alfonso Arau, 1992). Having been in the doldrums for a number of years during the 1980s – for multiple national and international reasons that resulted in a decline in the investment in and distribution of Mexican cinema – *Like Water for Chocolate* (adapted by its author, Laura Esquivel) was a success on a global scale. It brought much-needed investment that led to transnational coproductions as well as a renewed interest in adaptation. As with many of the other adaptations considered here, *Like Water for Chocolate* is set during the Mexican Revolution, a period that has considerable national significance and also allows for period settings with heritage prestige; it can also run the risk of being stultifying if it forms part of the “preservation of a desirable past” (Voigts-Virchow, 2007: 124) that can “avoid dissonance in favouring the past utopia” (130). This is the case with *Like Water for Chocolate*: while its primary innovation has been the foregrounding of the female experience in the Mexican Revolution, its feminism has been asserted and contested in almost equal measure (Sánchez Prado, 2014). Unlike many of the other films set during the revolution, it avoids dissonance in favor of nostalgia and “a crystallized past” (Voigts-Virchow, 2007: 124).

There are points of difference between the text and film that have been explored elsewhere. However, as evidenced by the fact that the film was adapted by

Esquivel and her then-husband, Arau (its director), with whom there was a close working relationship, the author had a great deal of control over the end product. It is possible to trace a certain consistency in tone, style, and plotting between the film and the book. In addition, the preservation of the magical realist conceit in both as a key mode of storytelling, albeit differently realized, provides further evidence of a consistent approach to both texts. This outcome contrasts with that of *Arráncame la vida* (Roberto Sneider, 2008), based on the 1986 bestselling novel by Ángeles Mastretta that was adapted by the director.

Sneider had earlier (1995) adapted another popular (comic) novel, *Dos crímenes* by Jorge Ibarguengoitia, originally published in 1979. Despite the distinct period setting and locations, the two Sneider adaptations bear comparison because of a crucial narrative decision. Both novels have first-person narrators – one in *Arráncame la vida* and two different ones, each of whom relates half the narrative, in *Dos crímenes* – who supply reported speech where it serves the narrative development or provides detail about their own or others' character traits. The reliability of these narrators is under question because a central conceit of both novels is centered on criminal acts, more explicitly foregrounded in *Dos crímenes* than in *Arráncame la vida*. This is not closely replicated in the films. Sneider opts for the conventions of genre films: *Dos crímenes* has much in common with the urban professional comedies, sexual farce, and dark humor of the 1990s (Sánchez Prado, 2014), and *Arráncame la vida* is a revolutionary melodrama (see Mistrón, 1984; Thornton, 2013) that draws much from films of the golden age. Apart from partial use of voiceover in the films, particularly in the opening sequence of both, there is

little recourse to the multiple audiovisual techniques available to establish point of view and to create the sense of ambiguity that is so integral to the original narrative.

Political critique is fundamental to the novel *Dos crímenes*. It falls within a pattern of Ibarguengoitia's experiments with genre conventions, an "irreverent, ludic affiliation with the detective novel" in this instance, evident in many of his novels (Stavans, 1997: 138). Marcos (played by Damián Alcázar in the film), the protagonist and narrator for the first half of the novel, is a political activist who is consequently falsely accused of murder. In the novel, this is made explicit; in the film, it is merely alluded to through the poncho he is often seen wearing, some images of revolutionaries (including Che Guevara) hanging on his apartment wall, and the folk songs he and his friends sing at a party. Politics is referenced through these objects and audiovisual cues but never fully foregrounded. Where the novel has been read as a darkly comic exploration of political corruption, the film foregrounds the sexual liaisons and the resulting farce, only briefly touching on the corruption it presents as integral to the justice system. The consequence of these aesthetic and narrative choices in both adaptations makes *Arráncame la vida* a film that eschews the critique of the present through the legacy of past actions and succumbs to the dangers of period adaptations, positioning the past as distant to and separate from the present, whereas *Dos crímenes* smooths out political critique in favor of entertainment.

Mexican cinema did not simply draw on local novels as source texts; it has also looked abroad. A fascinating example of these foreign sources is the writer B. Traven, an enigmatic pen name for someone who may have been one of the

following individuals: Ret Marut, Traven Torsvan, or Hal Croves (Contreras, 2011). There are contradictory accounts of his life story, given that there is a lack of certainty about who he actually was. But there is some agreement that he lived most of his life in Mexico. He wrote the novel on which *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (John Houston, 1948) was based, and the most notable films attached to his name are *The Rebellion of the Hanged* (Alfredo B. Crevenna and Emilio Fernández, 1948, remade in 1986 by Juan Luis Buñuel), *The White Rose* (Roberto Gavaldón, 1961), and *Macario* (Roberto Gavaldón, 1960). With no evidence of having collaborated on the making of the films insofar as he is not credited as scriptwriter, the last two of these films reveal an interesting pattern in Mexican filmmaking: the director is credited alongside the name of a well-known author. In this case it is prominent playwright and critic Emilio Carballido. *The Rebellion of the Hanged* was adapted by uncredited scriptwriters, which reveals another pattern exposed both by Carballido's biography and by the critical attention paid to him – that is, the paltry cultural prestige attached to the skill of scriptwriting and adaptation.

Carballido is credited with the adaptation of thirty screenplays. These included two very distinct films that were highly significant for different reasons: *Nazarín* (Luis Buñuel, 1959), adapted from the novel by the Spanish novelist Benito Pérez Galdós (1895); and *Reed, Insurgent Mexico* (Paul Leduc, 1970), adapted from the reportage text *Insurgent Mexico* (1914) by U.S. journalist John Reed. To isolate Carballido is not to ignore either the other writers who also worked on these films or the collaborative nature of filmmaking; rather, it is to highlight the nature of adaptation as a hidden task often carried out by writers whose more valued work

lies elsewhere – in Carballido’s case, the theater. His obituary in the cultural magazine *Letras Libres* by Sabina Berman (2008) – his friend, a fellow playwright, a scriptwriter, and a director – emphasizes his theatrical successes (which are many) but does not mention his writing for film. This oversight provides a telling account of where his legacy is seen to matter – and also of the low value given to an art that can be seen to be derivative. Working with a source text rather than an original idea is not deemed sufficiently creative, although both of the above films have attracted considerable critical attention, which is credited to the directors as auteurs rather than other members of the cast or crew.

To highlight Carballido in the making of *Nazarín* complicates the auteurist view through which much of Buñuel’s cinematic output is read, in addition to the essentializing Spanishness and “centrifugal tendencies” that are attached to his films (Faulkner, 2003: 75). Shot and set in Mexico, starring Spanish and Mexican actors, it transposes a Spanish story to a Mexican context; a similar transposition took place with the Portuguese 1875 novel by José Maria de Eça de Queiroz in the film of the same name, *The Crime of Father Amaro*. Like *Nazarín*, the film *Reed, Insurgent Mexico* is not a straightforward adaptation; by this I mean that it does not merely take key plot points and build a narrative around them, and it is collaborative in its approach. The original book by Reed, *Insurgent Mexico*, is a journalistic account of Reed’s entry into Mexico during the revolution (1910–1920) and his battle reports, interviews with key figures and ordinary foot soldiers, and reportage of public and private events. This is reflected in the film, but there is a move from the subjective first-person narrative of the book to a third-person point of view (see Peters, 2010:

207). The film has Reed at its center as the camera follows his experiences, but it is not told from his point of view. As well as cowriters Carlos Castañón and Juan Tovar, the director, Leduc, gets a scriptwriting credit. In addition, there was some uncredited dialogue improvised by poet and actor Eraclio Zepeda in his performance as the revolutionary leader Pancho Villa (León Hoyos, 1981: 20; Pick, 2010: 188). This fact complicates the role of scriptwriter and adaptation because Zepeda is uncredited, and it also draws attention to the complicated nexus of source text, script, direction, and performance that allows for much slippage. It is an apt example of the impossibility of asserting an ur-text in this relationship between book and film, and further undermines concerns around fidelity as a primary optic through which adaptation should be viewed.

Non-Mexican source texts have also been localized. This can be seen in the films of Arturo Ripstein, a filmmaker with distinctively auteurist traces in his work who has repeatedly turned to literature for inspiration. He draws on generic and aesthetic tropes of the 1930s–1950s studio era (see Paranaguá, 1997: 217), while also attending to contemporary concerns and techniques of international art cinema evident in the work of his contemporaries. Since *The Realm of Fortune* in 1986, having previously collaborated closely with writers – such as José Emilio Pacheco on *The Holy Inquisition* (1974), *Lecumberri* (1977), and *Place without Limits* (1978) – he has consistently worked alongside scriptwriter Paz Alicia Garciadiego. These working relationships complicate a purely auteurist reading of his work. Of their collaborative projects, *No One Writes to the Colonel* (1999) makes for a compelling case study. It originated in the novel of the same name by the Colombian author

Gabriel García Márquez, who himself spent some time working in the Mexican film and television industry as a scriptwriter. Notable films he wrote include a collaboration with Carlos Fuentes and director Roberto Gavaldón on the adaptation of the Juan Rulfo script *The Golden Cockerel* (1964); another project with critic and writer Emilio García Riera and director Alberto Isaac on *There Are No Thieves in This Village* (1965); and the adaptation of his own novel *Eréndira* (Ruy Guerra, 1983). His writing is often dialogue-led, using a cross-generic style that owes much to the structures of oral narrative, journalism, and film, which lends itself to adaptation. However, it was Garciadiego, not García Márquez, who adapted *No One Writes to the Colonel*.

The Colombian setting, historical referents, and lexicon of the novel *No One Writes to the Colonel* are all transposed to Mexico. The narrative is still constructed around the Colonel (Fernando Luján), who awaits a letter confirming his army pension. His rank results from his involvement in the Cristero Rebellion (1926–1929), a religious conflict in which the Colonel fought on the side of the government forces against the conservative supporters of the Catholic Church. Consistent with the original novel, his wife, Lola, is ailing, but the decision to cast Marisa Paredes in this role means that her Spanish origins are alluded to. Their son is dead in the film and novel, and his fighting rooster is another important element in both.

Two characters who are more fully realized in the film are significant: the son's girlfriend, Julia (Salma Hayek), and a local criminal, Nogales (Daniel Giménez Cacho). Julia, a prostitute, is an opportunity to tease out the contradictions between Lola's delight in watching stories of fallen women on screen against her judgmental

attitude toward Julia in real life. Such attitudes are fueled by her religious beliefs and the normative hypocritical attitude of the villagers, which are implicitly critiqued in the film. Nogales, a former ally of the son, is blamed for his murder but claims to have been at his side when another man killed him. He is the means through which the Colonel is made to confront the truth about his son's death and the company he was keeping, as well as to decide whether he will compromise himself and take up Nogales's offer to pull strings and help sort out his pension. As someone who claims to have the power to obtain the Colonel's entitlement, Nogales is an agent of the government and an implicit indicator of the corruption of the Mexican state. This is evidently a critique of governance and a sign of corruption attached to what is intended to be read as a particularly Mexican form of clientelism. Another detail in the film that indicates an auteurist trope is the homosexuality of Dr. Pardo (Odiseo Bichir), serving as a nod to a queerness that is frequently present in Ripstein's films. Otherwise, this character has the same function in the novel as the Colonel's confidante: intellectual equal and – politically – fellow traveler.

The dialogue draws on the original text but is transformed in many ways to conform to the lexis and inflections of Mexican Spanish and the local geographic, historical, and political referents. As a shadow text, there are moments when the dialogue from the novel can be heard. The most important of these words can be found in the final explosive *mierda* (shit) uttered by the Colonel. It is the point when the film echoes the novel linguistically as well as structurally: the couple find themselves once again at a point of crisis, faced with imminent homelessness, poverty, and starvation. This word is an expression of the Colonel's frustration,

anger, and powerlessness that, in the film, is a forceful critique of Mexican sociopolitical conditions and the punishment meted out on a couple as they try to navigate their way through a system that is stacked against them – particularly because they are unwilling to compromise their sometimes high-minded values.

Authors have repeatedly drawn on cinema and film language in their writing. An infamous early example is a passage in Martín Luis Guzmán's *El aguila y la serpiente* (1928), where the revolutionaries watch a film projected onto a sheet in the camp and shoot it up, annoyed by its lack of authenticity. Guzmán's inclusion of this scene – in a text that is fictionalized reportage – reflects a pattern of filmic references in literature from its inceptions, as well as the close attention paid by writers in cinema as spectacle and form. Guzmán, like many of the other writers mentioned here, had a keen interest in film; alongside Alfonso Reyes, he wrote extensively on this developing art and industry within and beyond Mexico (Reyes and Guzmán, 2003). This is reflective of its significance, pervasiveness, accessibility, and importance as a source of inspiration. The evolution can be traced from those writers, like Guzmán, who plot the early experiences of viewership and make future predictions about developments in film, to more recent authors who grew up in a culture steeped in a rich cinematic tradition and chose to adopt its discursive and stylistic techniques – what Margo Glantz calls “cinematization of the mind” (1994: 259).³

In one of the few texts dedicated to the use of filmic language in literature, J. Patrick Duffey sees film as integral to the style of earlier writers, such as Guzmán,

³ “la cinetización de la mente”

but describes the adoption of cinematic language as a means of avant-garde experimentation for many born after the 1930s who wanted to move away from naturalism (see, also, González Eguiarte on Azuela's experimentations, 2002). His analysis includes the 1960s countercultural Onda movement, whose references to cinema and the adoption of film language were integral to their recourse to the popular (see, too, Glantz, 1994, and Agustín, 2004), and more recent, writers such as Luis Zapata, José Emilio Pacheco, and Laura Esquivel. Duffey pays close attention to *Revueltas*, discussed above, and Juan Rulfo, especially the latter's text *The Golden Cockerel* (1964). That Duffey (1996: 62–63) feels the need to produce a critical assessment of Rulfo's text as a published piece and its merits or failings as a novel becomes moot when compared with a later publication of this text alongside two other treatments, *The Secret Formula* (Rubén Gámez 1964) and the short *El espejo* (Antonio Reynoso 1960), with production notes, a preface by the film critic Jorge Ayala Blanco, and production stills (Rulfo 1990). This presentation and its foregrounding of the filmic text completely sidesteps the option of reading it as a novel, presenting it instead as published scripts to be studied as a supplement to the film. Given the creative flows between literature and film, there is potential for considerably more research into the literary adoption of filmic language.

Literature does not exist as an art form hermetically sealed off from other forms. As well as a long history of borrowings and collaboration between the arts, there is also an outcrop of creativity that has evolved from writers' need to find a means to earn a living beyond the literary or to find other outlets for their creative urges. A longer exploration would be necessary to allow for a complete unpacking of

every writer's distinct pathways toward involvement in the industry. More important is the fact of writers' close working relationships and the collaborative nature of much scriptwriting and filmmaking in Mexico, irrespective of the writers' nationalities or the origin of the source material. It has been difficult, and still is, to earn a living as a writer in Mexico due to the nature of its publishing industry, which is characterized by difficulties with distribution and low book sales, thereby leading to a precarious living for the professional writer. Scriptwriting has been an excellent option for writers given Mexico's large and consistent cinematic output.

Figueroa, the Mexican cinematographer who had a foundational role in establishing a particular visual style associated with a nationalist aesthetic, described cinema as "an activity that combines all of the arts: literature, the novel, the short story, the essay" (1976: 42).⁴ He expands the idea of what literature is to the novel, short story, and essay. In Mexico, the essay is a genre that has drawn as much from the literary as the nonliterary. Figueroa's list could be extended but suffices to give a sense of the range of influences that can be traced. This emphasis on cinema as a form that borrows from others does not make it derivative; rather, it draws on these other forms to create something that is more than the sum of its parts. As a consequence, in looking at adaptation and the many different ways in which the relationships between cinema and literature have evolved, it is vital to view it as part of a comprehensive series of interconnections that must be considered in any analysis.

⁴ "una actividad que reúne todas las artes: la literatura, la novelística, el cuento, el ensayo"

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