Solanas, Fernando and Octavio Getino, 'Towards a Third Cinema', in *Twenty-Five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael Chanan (London: BFI, 1983), pp. 17–27.
Young, Robert J.C., *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

1

¡QUÉ VIVA MÉXICO! (LONG LIVE MEXICO, 1931), DIRECTED BY SERGEI EISENSTEIN

Crew

Director: Sergei Eisenstein
Co-director/producer: Grigory Alexandrov
Director of photography: Edouard Tissé

Reconstructions

Qué viva México, 1979: Grigory Alexandrov and Nikita Orlov
Mexican Fantasy, 1998: Oleg Kovalov
The following film analysis is mainly based on the 1979 reconstruction of the original film by Grigory Alexandrov, the co-director of the film in 1931 (see Seton, p. 228) and Nikita Orlov, based on the original print materials now owned by Mosfilm Studios. Alexandrov had worked with Eisenstein on earlier films such as *October* (Leyda, p. 223). Also included is a brief discussion of Oleg Kovalov's creative re-writing of the film footage entitled *Mexican Fantasy* and released in 1998.

Plot

The film – though never completed by Eisenstein – was to consist of six separate sections, which are described below. **I: Prologue:** Images of Mayan pyramids, followed by a funeral. **II: Tehuantepec:** This first novella is set in the isthmus of Tehuantepec, a region in southern Mexico and home to a matriarchal society. Concepción finally obtains the last gold coin necessary to marry the man of her dreams, Abundio. We see the marriage preparations and the ceremony. **III: The Fiesta:** This novella focuses on the drama of the colonisation of the Aztecs by the Spanish, as recorded in various dance ceremonies and, subsequently, the pilgrimage. This sequence was based on footage taken of the Corpus Christi festival in Tetlapayac in 1931 (Seton, p. 205). Next we focus on a different type of fiesta, the bullfight, and in particular David Lisiaga, the Mexican bullfighter, and the Picador, Baronito. The bullfighters are much admired by the women during the bullfight, and, afterwards, take their young ladies out on boats, heavily festooned with flowers, and bearing the title '¡Qué viva México!' inscribed on them. **IV: The Maguey Cactus:** This novella is set in the State of Hidalgo at the

beginning of the twentieth century during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. It was filmed in the Tetlapayac ranch, part of an old Spanish plantation belonging to don Julio Saldívar, eighty miles or so to the south-east of Mexico City (Seton, p. 195). María and Sebastián are soon to marry, but there is a rule that every girl about to marry must be introduced to the landowner. While visiting the ranch, Sebastián is pushed to one side, and María ends up getting raped. Sebastián challenges the rapist, but he is thrown down the stairs, and María is imprisoned. Sebastián swears to get even, and with some accomplices – including his brother, Feliciano – they attack the ranch. Outnumbered, they are beaten back and retreat to the maguey cactus plantation. In the pistol exchange, they kill the landowner's daughter. Eventually Sebastián and his two accomplices are captured, though Feliciano lies undetected nearby. As punishment, Sebastián and his two accomplices are forced to dig a hole in which they are buried with just their torsos revealed, at which point the horses are forced to stampede them to death. A violent, cruel death. María is released from her cell and, coming across Sebastián's corpse, she collapses in grief. **V: Soldadera:** This novella only exists as an early draft, and was not shot by Eisenstein. The main idea was going to be that the female soldier was a symbol of the revolutionary Mexico which was going to sweep aside the past. Contains some rudimentary battle scenes, showing the forces of reaction being routed. **VI: The Day of the Dead:** The film's epilogue centres on the Day of the Dead, celebrated in Mexico on 1 November. Scenes of Mexicans eating on the gravestones of their departed loved ones are followed by scenes of a carnival in which masked dancers accompany the merry-go-round in the background. Finally the masks are cast off, and the film concludes with the close-up of the face of a smiling young boy, the son of a 'soldadera', as the voice-over suggests, and a symbol of the future of Mexico when it is truly free.

Analytical Overview

The most important point to mention about *¡Qué viva México!* (1931; reconstructed by Grigory Alexandrov in 1979) is that it was not completed by Eisenstein, and therefore we can only speculate about what form it might finally have taken had Eisenstein been given the opportunity to edit the film. Ed González has made this point effectively: 'No version of the film can ever capture exactly how Eisenstein would have assembled the footage he shot in Mexico from 1931 to 1932, and as such Alexandrov's interpretation of the director's *¡Qué viva México!* ("as Eisenstein conceived it and as we planned it") becomes rather slippery when analysed using an *auteurist* model' (Gonzalez). The film was funded in 1931 by the distinguished socialist writer, Upton Sinclair, and his wife, who were keen to encourage the famous Soviet film director to produce a revolutionary film about Mexico. But after the initial three months ran out, and Eisenstein was clearly not close to producing a finished product, Sinclair decided to pull the funding on the project. As he later explained: 'What first led us to distrust him [Eisenstein] was that when the money was spent he wrote us that we'd have to send more or we'd have no picture . . . He kept that up, over and over, and we realised that he was simply staying in Mexico at our expense in order to avoid having to go back to Russia' (Seton, p. 231). As a result Eisenstein and Sinclair fell out with each other, and Sinclair kept the raw footage Eisenstein had been sending him, and subsequently refused to allow Eisenstein to edit the film. Some of the negatives were sold by Sinclair – who was trying to recoup some of the capital he had raised for the venture – and released piece-meal as *Thunder over Mexico* (1933; based on the 'Maguey sequence'), *Eisenstein in Mexico* (1934), *Death Day* (1934; based on the Epilogue), and *Time in the Sun* (1939). Eisenstein was extremely upset by what he saw as an act of personal betrayal. When asked years later by Jan Leyda why he had not directed any major film since *¡Qué viva México!*, 'he gave me the most genuinely anguished look I ever saw on his face and shouted at me: "What do you expect me to do? How can there be a new film when I haven't given birth to the last one?" And he clutched his belly with an equally painful gesture' (Leyda, p. 302).

Finally, in the 1970s, the raw footage found its way to Moscow and, in 1979, Grigory Alexandrov – who had worked with Eisenstein on the original project in Mexico in 1931 as his co-director – produced a new reconstruction of the whole project – calling it by the original title – which was released in that year by Mosfilm Studios. While not definitive, Alexandrov's reconstruction is probably as near as we are going to get to the final version of Eisenstein's project, *¡Qué viva México!* It is important to point out, however, that Alexandrov and Eisenstein grew apart as the project was maturing in Mexico in 1931, and also that Alexandrov left the film team as soon as the film was completed (Seton, p. 229).

It is clear that Eisenstein went to Mexico since, like a number of artists and intellectuals of the time – such as D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, and Graham Greene – he felt drawn to Mexico as an image of an alternative to Europe (Podalsky, p. 27). As such *¡Qué viva México!* is emblematic of the early phase of Latin American cinema – continuing up until the 1950s – when the most significant films were directed – or funded – by foreigners, or foreign corporations. This phase continued with films such as *Los olvidados* (1950), directed by a Spaniard, and *Orfeu negro* (1959), directed by a Frenchman. Despite its truncated status *¡Qué viva México!* is an absorbing film which proved to be highly influential for the way in which the language of film was to develop in Latin America. Eisenstein, indeed, was hostile to the advent of sound in the cinema and, in 1928, he, Grigory Alexandrov and Vsevolod Pudovkin co-signed a manifesto which expressed hostility to 'sound cinema'; sound, they argued, would 'degrade' cinema and make it too similar to the theatre (Aumont, p. 34, and p. 131). Eisenstein was much more interested in the artistry of the image, and his film is, as we shall see, extremely sophisticated in a visual sense. As Ismael Xavier pointed out, 'the montage principle typical of modernist prose provided the ground for Eisenstein's intellectual cinema, which refused a more conventional political pedagogy based on classical narrative and proposed instead a rich variety of experiments in film language that triggered a level of conceptualization rejected by the Soviet bureaucracy and by film industries everywhere' (Xavier, p. 347).

Similar to Alexander Dovzhenko's film *Earth*, *¡Qué viva México!* addresses a theme almost too big for a movie, namely, the interplay between life and death. As Leyda puts it: 'How strange that on opposite sides of the planet the two greatest Soviet artists should be filming the same theme: death as part of life – Dovzhenko in the utter simplicity of *Earth* and Eisenstein in the complex structure and grand range of *¡Qué viva México!*' (Leyda, p. 275).

Montage

Eisenstein's work is closely identified with montage, so much so, in fact, that French critic Christian Metz linked Eisenstein to the 'montage or bust' group. Classical film theory typically acknowledges the existence of three distinct though overlapping types of montage – narrative, graphic and ideational – and *¡Qué viva México!* has recourse to all three in differing degrees. In narrative montage, for example, various images and scenes focus on a single subject followed from point to point. This is the type of montage we find in the opening sequences of the film in which we gradually build up a picture of the Mayan pyramids at Chichen-Itza when viewed from different angles; in some ways this establishing sequence gives the impression of being a highly choreographed succession of postcards of an exotic location. We find a similar device used when the tropical landscape of Tehuantepec is introduced later on in the prologue, and when the maguey plantation is introduced at the beginning of the 'Maguey Cactus' novella (IV). Graphic montage, for its part, is normally reserved for describing those shots which are juxtaposed on the basis of their physical similarity. A good example of graphic montage occurs in the Tehuantepec sequence which describes the means whereby Concepción will be able to marry. She is first shown combing her hair and, subsequently, a voice-over explains to us that she is saving up for her dowry, which is a necklace made of gold coins. This still image of the necklace – shown in a crescent shape – then dissolves to reveal a man in a hammock, the focus of her desire. This graphic montage – also called visual rhyming – underlines the strict complementarity between the necklace and Abundio. Once the crescent shape is complete, Concepción will be able to exchange it for her husband. Though it appears dated to modern eyes – precisely because modern-day directors avoid its stagey feel – this type of graphic montage was an important resource for Eisenstein as he explored the different depths available in the semiosis of the film image.

But it was the third type of montage in which Eisenstein excelled, the so-called ideational montage, an innovation of which the Soviet film director can be called the inventor. In ideational montage two separate images are brought together and their juxtaposition gives rise to an idea which shows how they are linked, rather like the tenor and vehicle in a vivid metaphor. In his film *Strike* (1924), for example, Eisenstein had managed to convey the sense of the brutality of slaughter when he juxtaposed images of cattle being butchered with shots of workers being cut to pieces by the cavalry. He uses a similar technique most notably in the 'Maguey Cactus' section. Just after Sebastián learns that María has been raped (and here the rape is, as Podalsky points out, a 'trope of societal breakdown', p. 34), the novella

cuts to the landowner who – from the balcony – orders the celebrations to continue, and instructs the musicians to carry on playing. At the same time we hear – via a voice-over – that Sebastián is determined to get his revenge, and his brother and the three men say they will help him. Shots of the drunk party revellers drinking pulque and having it drip from their lips are interspersed with images of pigs eating off the floor, and flies buzzing around the drink, a juxtaposition which underlines the piggish brutishness of the people at the fiesta. The viewer is thereby predisposed to see with great sympathy Sebastián's desire for revenge. The same novella has another example of ideational montage which is perhaps more subtle in symbolic terms. During the exchange of pistol shots in the maguey plantation to which Sebastián and his men have been forced to retreat, we find a highly choreographed sequence of shots comparing the sap from the maguey cactus with the workers' blood. Exchange of fire is cross-cut with images of the cactus being destroyed and its sap dripping out. The landowner's daughter's death is prefaced by the shot of an exploding cactus leaf. Later on, when Sebastián leaves his brother hidden under a maguey bush, the image of his distress is followed by the shot of sap weeping from a broken cactus leaf. Given the importance of the opening sequences of the film in which the maguey cactus is shown to be the life-blood of the region, especially for the farm labourers epitomised by Sebastián's family, it is clear that, via a process of ideational montage, Eisenstein is creating an analogy between the workers' blood and the maguey cactus sap, which includes not only the obvious visual similarities between the two liquids but is also used to expose the notion of exploitation. Eisenstein shows his Marxist credentials by focusing on the cruel exploitation of the peasants by the landowners – here associated with the authoritarian regime of Porfirio Díaz, whose portrait adorns the walls of the ranch – in the era which preceded the Mexican Revolution. The notion of exploitation is imaged very clearly via the sap which the peasants have to suck laboriously from the cactus plants, in order for it to be fermented and then drunk by the rich – a classic case of the workers' produce being used as an agent of their own oppression. The image of sap/pulque thereby also has the added ideational resonance of fermentation. This was clearly an image that Eisenstein wished to explore; in his introduction to the following novella, 'The Maguey Cactus', speaks of the Revolution which is about to explode onto the front stage of history in terms of the 'fermenting Mexico', and this indicates how resonant the image of the maguey cactus became in Eisenstein's hands.

Comparison of the Novellas

It is, of course, frustrating to have to content ourselves with the raw film footage rather than the edited version of the film, but, even with what we have, it is possible to get a sense of Eisenstein's aim in filming *¡Qué viva México!* The most successful of the novellas – the one which most obviously hangs together – is clearly the 'Maguey Cactus' sequence, while the least successful – because of its radical incompleteness – is the 'Soldadera' sequence. The plot of the 'Maguey Cactus' novella is well worked-out, and combines a political story of oppression

with a story of young love, bound together with a powerful image drawn from the landscape, the maguey cactus, whose sap (as we have seen above) brings together – in an orthodox Marxist way – the sense of exploitation with the idea of the life-blood of the people. The opening sequence is visually impressive and has been noted by a number of critics, although the film as it stands does not successfully integrate the sequence describing the burial. The Tehuantepec novella, though lush and evocative, is at times rather emotionally cloying, and rather surprising as the opening novella for a political committed *cinéaste* like Eisenstein. The film's epilogue, though truncated, is masterful, in that it overlays a religious, cultural ceremony – the Day of the Dead – with a political significance. Rather than simply rehearsing the Aztec notion of the continuity of life and death, Eisenstein uses the masks which characterise the celebrations of the Day of the Dead to make a political point. When the masks are cast off, some reveal the face of smiling young boys, while others show the skull of a socially doomed class, the military, the gendarmes. It is not insignificant that one of the people chosen to represent this class is wearing spurs, namely, the social class which, in the pre-Revolutionary era, had raped humble women such as María and murdered men such as Sebastián if they dared to rebel. Given the particularly brutal way in which Sebastián and his accomplices were murdered, it is unlikely that the viewer will shed a tear on account of the demise of the landowner class. The epilogue concludes with the shot of a face of a smiling young boy, a symbol of the future of Mexico in the post-Revolutionary era.

The Tapestry

Eisenstein referred to *¡Qué viva México!* in terms of the Mexican sarape: 'A sarape is the striped blanket that . . . every Mexican wears. So striped and violently contrasting are the cultures in Mexico running next to each other and at the same time being centuries away . . . we took the contrasting independent adjacence of its violent colors as the motif for constructing our film: 6 episodes following each other' (quoted in Seton, p. 197). Though the four novellas are distinct in many ways – in turn they focus on a pre-historical matriarchal society, the Spanish influence in Mexican culture (specifically Catholicism and bullfighting), the oppression of the Mexican working class by the landowners in the pre-Revolutionary era, and female agency within the Mexican Revolution – there are a number of common strands which suggest that Eisenstein was attempting to produce a unified artistic vision of Mexico. Leyda has drawn attention to the subtle overlay in Eisenstein's film: '*¡Qué viva México!* employed both the great solid blocks of contrasting sections and the intricate lacy geometry of a growth that can be found in plant-life as well as in mathematics. The separate stones of cells of this elaborate structure were sometimes as minimal in movement or drama as shots in *Arsenal* or *Earth*, Eisenstein's movement being planned as successive impacts of these lightly breathing compositions' (Leyda, p. 276).

The soothingly edenic culture portrayed in Tehuantepec (Part II) offers a necessary counterpoint to the aggressively violent eddies characterising Catholicism and bullfighting (Part III). The notion of feminine agency underlies the culture of Tehuantepec (Part II) as much as the unfinished section on the role of the female soldier in the Revolution (Part V). Other visual twinnings are more subtle. The Christological resonance of the final scene of the 'Maguey Cactus' sequence – in which the three men are trampled to death – is enhanced via the visual similarity of this scene with the depiction of the re-enactment of Christ's passion in Part III (as in the later scene, there are three Christ figures, and the ropes used in each sequence mutually reinforce their interconnectiveness). Eisenstein's notes suggest that he intended to splice the depiction of Sebastián's death with images of the Corpus Christi, but, because he was unable to edit, it remained an intention rather than an accomplishment (Seton, p. 205).

Mexican Fantasy

Mexican Fantasy (1998), written and directed by Oleg Kovalov, is a new version of Eisenstein's *¡Qué viva México!*, described in the blurb as a 'thoughtful and contemplative interpretation of the film that might have been' ('Blurb'). Unlike Alexandrov's version – which combines a selection of the first-cut with a running commentary provided by Alexandrov explaining the gestation of the film – Kovalov's version attempts to recreate Eisenstein's original vision. This he does by cross-cutting between the separate novellas, using 'The Maguey Cactus', which is the fourth section in Alexandrov's edition, as the central narrative around which all the other stories are woven. Although it is, of course, impossible in an empirical sense to reconstruct what Eisenstein would have created, it is clear that Kovalov's version draws inspiration from Eisenstein's theory of montage in order to achieve its various cinematic effects. Whereas the raw footage, for example, in Alexandrov's section III, entitled 'The Fiesta', simply shows us the Corpus Christi festival in Tetlapayac and, subsequently, the bullfight, Kovalov cross-cuts between the two festivals, attempting to show the similarities between the two. Perhaps more interesting than this, though, is the way in which Kovalov attempts to build sequences from the two festivals as well as the preparations for the marriage between Concepción and Abundio (which appears in Alexandrov's version as Section II) into the 'Maguey Cactus' section. This leads to some interesting montage effects. For example, the tragedy visited upon Sebastián and María as a result of their desire to marry (María is raped, and Sebastián murdered in a savage manner because he rebelled) is rendered all the more acute by being spliced with the happy outcome of Concepción and Abundio's love which takes place against the idyllic backdrop of Tehuantepec, a contrast which is absent from Alexandrov's version. Likewise María's suffering at the hands of the landowner's friend is enhanced by being directly compared to Christ's Passion; after a scene depicting the three men walking painfully up the hill to the Church during the Corpus Christi ceremony we cut immediately to a long shot of María, accompanied by Sebastián, riding her donkey (like Christ perhaps) to the ranch.

Some of the contrasts in the 1998 version are inventive. Thus, whereas in the first-cut version, María is raped and then summarily ejected from the

room – producing a rather bathetic effect which ill suits the circumstances – Kovalov's version intensifies the suspense by cross-cutting to a number of other sequences while the rape is 'in process' (in particular, the real bullfight sequence followed by the mock bullfight performed in the ranch-yard). Perhaps just as important, these sequences, particularly those showing the fireworks burning in the model bull's torso – since we know that María is being raped off-screen – allude suggestively to the pyrotechnics of passion. Kovalov's editing brings to the fore some metaphorical resonances which are merely hinted at in Alexandrov's version. Whereas the rather protracted scenes depicting the extraction of the sap from the maguey cactus appear in Alexandrov's version to be related to the life-blood of the people, in Kovalov's version they take on a sexual depth since the sucking of the cactus sap is spliced with a scene in which Abundio is portrayed as about to kiss Concepción's exposed nipple on the hammock – just before the palm tree leaf discreetly blocks our view. In Alexandrov's version though Concepción does appear with her breasts exposed when frolicking with Abundio on the hammocks the effect is less sexual. Although Kovalov clearly did not follow Eisenstein's notes to the letter (thus he does not splice Sebastián's death with images of the Corpus Christi ceremony, as Eisenstein's notes suggest was the latter's original intention, which is a pity; see Seton, p. 205), it is clear that his version offers some thoughtful analyses of the raw footage.

Works Cited

Aumont, Jacques, *et al.*, *Aesthetics of Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

'Blurb', *Mexican Fantasy*, written and directed by Oleg Kovalov, produced by Sergei Selianov, 1998. (Russian with English subtitles.)

Geduld, Harry M., and Ronald Gottesman (eds), *Sergei Eisenstein and Upton Sinclair: The Making and Unmaking of* ¡Qué viva México! (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1970).

Gonzalez, Ed, '¡Qué viva México!', www.rottentomatoes.com/m/QueVivaMexico-1036049/reviews.php (consulted on 18 December 2003).

Leyda, Jan, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

Podalsky, Laura, 'Patterns of the Primitive: Sergei Eisenstein's *¡Qué viva México!*', in *Mediating Two Worlds: Cinematic Encounters in the Americas*, eds John King, Ana M. Lopez and Manuel Alvarado (London: BFI, 1993), pp. 25–39.

Seton, Marie, *Sergei M. Eisenstein* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978).

Xavier, Ismail, 'Historical Allegory', in *A Companion to Film Theory*, eds Toby Miller and Robert Stam (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 333–62.

2

LOS OLVIDADOS (THE YOUNG AND THE DAMNED, 1950), DIRECTED BY LUIS BUÑUEL

Cast

Jaibo, played by Roberto Cobo
Pedro, played by Alfonso Mejía
Carmelo (the Blind Man), played by Miguel Inclán
Marta (Pedro's mother), played by Estella India
Meche, played by Alma Delia Fuentes
Julián, played by Javier Amézcua
Judge, played by Héctor López Portillo
Poxy, played by Efraín Arauz
Ojitos (Little-eyes), played by Mario Ramírez
Reform School Director, played by Francisco Jambrina

Crew

Editor: Carlos Savage
Art Directors: Edward Fizgerald, W.W. Claridge
Music: Rodolfo Halfter; themes by Gustavo Pittalunga
Sound: José B. Carles
Production: Ultramar Films, Oscar Dancingers
Photography: Gabriel Figueroa
Script: Luis Buñuel, Luis Alcoriza
Assistant Director: Ignacio Villareal
Director: Luis Buñuel

Award

Winner, mise-en-scène, Cannes International Film Festival, 1951

Plot Summary

Pedro and Jaibo belong to a gang of thieves who live in Mexico City; their gang is the 'young and the damned' of the English translation of the title. Jaibo has just escaped from prison. They steal some money from a blind old man,