

Transparency and Commitment: the significance of Formentera in *Aigua clara* and *L'illa de l'holandès*

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There can be little question about the importance of location in the context of cinematography and the relevance of the landscape as setting for the narrative has been elucidated pertinently by recent scholarship on the topic. David Ingram (2004) and Martin Lefebvre (2006) in particular have provided excellent studies which have focussed not only on cinematography but also the more ideological dimension elicited with respect to actual geographical context. It is this perspective which is of interest to the present study which seeks to consider the island of Formentera and the implications of its representation on celluloid.

The lesser of the Pitiüses has been frequently used over the last half century as backdrop for a number of cinematic tales. Though, as might be anticipated, the pristine environment has been employed appropriately for a range of essays—including German deliberations on tourism and hippydom, Dutch reflections on Mediterranean idylls and the industrial decadence of northern conurbations, French voyages of self-discovery and, latterly, Julio Medem's psychological drama *Lucía y el sexo* (2001)—this self-proclaimed *últim paradís* has also figured as location for two significant essays in the Catalan tradition. These are, of course, Sigfrid Monleón's cinematic version of Ferran Torrent's eponymous novel *L'illa de l'holandès* (2001) and the more recent 48 minute documentary on the twentieth century history of the area, *Aigua clara* (2007), by Carmelo Convalia.

In a cinematic current which is dominated unsurprisingly by Catalonia and its capital it is enormously refreshing to be exposed to the peculiarity of this island community of some eight thousand souls who occupy a mere eighty-two square kilometres, a few nautical miles to the south of Eivissa. Their story, however, is more than revealing and its significance extends well beyond the limits of their own linguistic area to relate specifically to the Spanish state, twentieth-century European history in general and also the destructive,

homogenising impulse of globalisation. And it is particularly appropriate that the message communicated by both films should develop from a precise microscopic account, centring around a core of individuals, their community and its environment.

Més clar que l'aigua

Though chronometrically anomalous it seems appropriate to start with the documentary. This measured but moving account of how the island endured the twentieth-century traumas of dictatorship, II Republic, Civil War and Francoist repression is related in first-person narrative by natives who experienced these cataclysms at first hand. As such, for the first time in the medium of cinema the islanders are afforded their own voice as they tell their own tale in their own words. What is more, the great majority of the production team—from assessors to soundtrack assemblers—are also citizens of long standing in the locality. Even the Basque director and script-writer, Carmelo Convalia, has plied his trade there for the past three decades, fully active as a journalist within the community.

Despite its allegedly closer relation with fact and actuality documentary is as open to editorial manipulation as its cousin the fiction film as might be demonstrated by the marvellously provocative offerings of Michael Moore. Bill Nichols (1991 & 2001) has correctly warned of the deceptive authority that this mode, with its allegedly 'higher indexal link with reality' can afford. Though eye-witness testimony, newsreel footage, reportage, photographs, documentation and other primary material may seem to offer an incontrovertible truth this can be subverted by stylistic massage in construction, editing, narrative and representation which leaves any production open to the tendentious message.

In an effort to keep such dangers to a minimum, Convalia opted for a conventional, bipartite structure for the narrative. The personal tale of amiable nonagenarian, Joan Colomar (b. 1913), and his recollection of life in Formentera during the period concerned is told unmediated to the camera. This discourse is then combined with a more general overview which relates, through voiceover, intertitles and illustration by a variety of official documentation and

contemporary photographs, the version as might be offered by standard historiography. The combination thus offers an evocative link between history as a generic, academic analysis and personal, lived experience.

The amalgam is particularly successful as the extra-diegetic element of Nichols' expository mode is imbued with the affective immediacy of individual testimony from a highly sympathetic source. As such, the 'informing logic' of the Voice over with its 'commentary distinct from images' is 'presumed to be of a higher order' which affords an impression of objectivity with a well supported argument delivered with the omniscience of the commentator's discourse (Nichols 2001: 107). Indeed, the common sense of the external rhetoric offers a perfect background to the empathetic attraction of Colomar's life story. Devoid of the drama and poetic impact often exploited by this mode the understated intimacy of the protagonist's discourse affords a disarming and engaging contrast to the magnitude of the events described.

An account of Joan's childhood and adolescence, involving the general picture of the Restoration and dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, lead on to the *prise de conscience* of an embracing of anarchist ideals and membership of the CNT. The islander thus becomes an active participant in the political struggle of the Republic and Civil War. And the protagonist's involvement in the antagonism and subsequent release from incarceration with the liberation of the Pitiüses under Captain Bayo is recounted with emotion and drama as the discourse acquires intensity through the increasingly speedy intercutting between personal and historical dimensions.

It is precisely in the wake of the military conflict that the climax of the film is witnessed in the exposé of the concentration camp, *Sa Colònia* (1940-42), wherein over a quarter of the island's menfolk were interned. Conditions were both barbaric and inhuman as 1500 prisoners were accommodated in 12 Spartan huts. Indeed, the state of affairs was so appalling that 58 inmates died of starvation during this biennium. It is at this point that eye-witness testimony of internees and men who visited the precinct as children converge with the input of Cándido Méndez —a celebrated union leader and

politician thus maintaining the external dimension of officiality—, whose father was one of the survivors of this execrable institution.

The intensity of the moment is thus marked by the collision of the personal and general levels in the narrative as the soundtrack, previously decorative in relation to the discourse, rises in crescendo to underscore the condemnation with the pulsating rhythm of local musician's Xumeu Joan's insistent lyric. The intrusion is accompanied visually by the union leader's stark denunciation, 'En el campo de Formentera mataban a la gente de hambre', whose intensity is reiterated by immediate white-out, an acutely poignant strum on a guitar and repetition of the statement and effect in gripping slow motion.

The importance of this section is apparent: over a quarter of the running time is devoted precisely to the episode and, subsequently, the remainder of the film tapers off in controlled anti-climax covering the later years of Colomar's life. Despite the stark understatement of the testimonies, however, the cinematography alerts us to a message of more actual ideological significance. In his account of his visits to the camp as a young boy to take his uncle food, Pere Serra describes the motto over the archway of the entrance to the compound: 'Colonia Penitenciara. Disciplina de un cuartel. Seriedad de un banco. Caridad de un convento.' The sober amalgam of spirituality and labour obscures the disdain for human life displayed within; and the welcome offers a chilling reminder of a similarly impertinent greeting which couched an identical disregard for humanity. We refer, of course, to the perverse 'Arbeit Macht Frei' which adorned the gates of Auschwitz.

The comparison is well considered and, in effect, extends the reference beyond the limits of the locality. In the context of a continent which struggled to unite and cohere after the cataclysm of World War II the horror of the genocide, though recognised, was consigned to the background. The magnitude of the atrocity, nevertheless, could not be held at arms' length for long. As in classic cases of trauma the ghost refused to be buried, returning to haunt all concerned time and again. The chilling memoirs of Primo Levi might act as a pertinent example of this phenomenon in literature and, as filmic equivalent, we might posit Resnais' disturbing 'documentaries', *Nuit et brouillard* (1955) and *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959).

The experience is of immediate relevance to contemporary Spain, of course, where the *pacto de silencio* of the immediate post-dictatorship has been similarly breached in literary and cinematic revisitations dealing with the injustice and barbarity of the conflict and dictatorship. And this documentary situates itself very firmly within this current with its subtextual advocacy of the values represented by the *Ley de memoria histórica* promulgated appropriately in the same year as the production.

In this way, the film extends beyond the immediacy of its own reference. This essay in self-recovery —the telling of one's own story— becomes an apology for the legitimacy of historical investigation in a further marriage of the particularity of the island with the general of the state and continent. At this point, for example, it is entirely significant that the two levels of discourse —the words of politician Cándido Méndez and eye witness Joan Colomar— come together in their defence of the principles embodied in the legislation and, by extension, the academic discipline of history. Though their registers vary accordingly, the centrality of their deliberation is underlined by their back to back appearance which allows for full facial expression attesting the sincerity and moment of the pronouncement:

CÁNDIDO MÉNDEZ

Creo sinceramente que en la actualidad no se trata de ninguna manera de reabrir heridas sino, bien por el contrario, de restañar las heridas, cerrar definitivamente las heridas. La memoria histórica debe de aflorar desde la reconciliación, insisto, para restañar las heridas. Pero nunca se puede restañar una herida que supura porque no se ha zanjado, no se ha cerrado, no se ha limpiado desde el punto de vista histórico, desde el punto de vista político, desde el punto de vista social.

JOAN COLOMAR

No amb rencor: és a dir, que hem de massacrar aquests perquè ens han matat a nosaltres, no, perquè és una cosa que si no queda record, no?, bé, passen es anys, ningú se'n recorda des que sofrigueren aquí, de ses

calamitats i sa misèria d'aquí i en altres *puestos*. Es règim franquista n'hi ha molts que diuen que això s'ha d'oblidar. Jo pens que és mal d'oblidar. Per jo és mal d'oblidar.

Indeed, with some of its finest cinematic touches, the film dwells inevitably on this formulation: the centrality of the past and the inevitability of its presence. On the level of narrative, the testimony of Pepita Juan recounts the murder of her grandfather after the war at the hand of the Francoists and how this crime determined her mother's subsequent life and that of her own, even to the present day. The point is echoed and enhanced by an understated yet appreciable elegance in montage. As is typical of the convention, documentation and photographs of the early years of the century are adduced in monochrome in direct comparison to the modern-day colour of the rest of the film. The proffering of such material, of course, seeks to add immediacy and authority to the analysis by the provision of authentic 'evidence'. At certain key points in the various interviews, however, the narrative actually extends these modulations proleptically. These impactful superimpositions produce an immediate effect as they underline chromatically the identity of the past and present experience. The sequence describing the dismantling of the camp is a pertinent example. It begins with a series of contemporary photographs then continues in black and white which both allows the spectator to participate in the actuality of the event and, moreover, appreciate its relevance to the modern day by the graphic identity of the tonality.

The related technique of imposing modern colour shots onto the scenes and buildings from a previous monochrome document achieves the same effect. The narration of the expedition of Captain Bayo to re-take Eivissa in 1936 —and which liberates Joan Colomar from detention—, is accompanied visually by newspaper graphics of the period. These then morph into a modern day depiction of the trip from Formentera to the larger Pitiüsa which includes the same images of entrance into the port although now seen in colour. Once again, scenes historic and actual are fused optically which underlines the relevance of past upon present.

The effect of lending actuality and authority to the interviews is enhanced similarly by careful ambientation. The testimony of the majority of witnesses takes place in a natural framework which, whilst foregrounding the interviewee, usually affords a pleasurable appreciation of the island's natural beauty. Needless to say, the amenable environment encourages, *naturally*, a degree of persuasion to the testimony of those concerned. Significantly, the intrusion of malevolence is conveyed antithetically. The inhumanity of the prison camp is depicted by a dour interiority emphasized by a claustrophobia which allows no scopic enjoyment of the geophysicality of the island or any comforting vision of its crystalline waters.

More striking, in this respect, are the five empty chairs placed before a silent Colomar seated on the beach in quiet contemplation of the vast expanse of sea, as the Voice-over informs of the Francoist invasion and the murder of twelve islanders by the forces of occupation. Appropriately, the narrative moves on to deal with the 'disappearance' of Toni Mayans and the testimony of his granddaughter about this event and its consequences for the family. Once again the image, both stark and impactful, is crucial in the context of the film. The intense absence evoked by these empty chairs can only be assuaged by the recovery of the victims' memory, achieved by this documentary and the law it defends, which act as testament to their life and suffering.

The most eloquent and lyrical dimension of the location, however, is conveyed by the omnipresence of the sea throughout. The Mediterranean, of course, is inescapable in this slither of land which can boast a mere eighty square kilometres of terrain. When not filmed directly adjacent to Colomar its presence is evoked chromatically by the blue and white décor of the local houses and aurally by the undulatory intensity of Xumeu Joan's lyrical accompaniment. Significantly, our introduction to the protagonist reveals him shaving in the morning with the splashing of the water accentuated in the soundtrack. Moreover, Joan's ultimate act is the dignified and touching ceremony of casting a bouquet of flowers onto the water in a gesture, we assume, of commemoration of the victims of Francoist brutality whose fate had been previously left unrecorded.

The morning ablution and final ritual of closure again evoke the individual and collective dimensions but also allegorically the *natural* progression of the film's narrative. The title, *Aigua clara*, first seen at the very opening, is thus recalled by the ultimate vision of the crystalline waters whose importance is underlined by the indulgent *temps mort* of the concluding image. The reference is, of course, replete with significance. A symbol of time itself in its continued cycle and flux, the allusion to water echoes the dual deliberation on the individual and historical levels already established in the narrative. What is more, in poetic terms the sea can also elicit a regenerative freshness—herein lies the origin of all life—which can offer comfort and hope, cleansing and antiseptis, to the violence and brutality exposed hitherto.

As the camera dwells lovingly on the transparent water under the bouquet, however, the more significant, semantic relevance is understood. The expression 'més clar que l'aigua', of course, communicates something diaphanous: so obvious as to need no explanation. And the implication is immediately apparent. No justification is required for the telling of one's own story. History requires merely that the facts are made known: not secreted but left uncovered. It is only in this way we might avoid the careless archiving of the past or, worse still, its wilful discarding which Resnais' powerful Voice-over denounces to such chilling effect in *Nuit et brouillard*:

Il y a nous qui regardons sincèrement ces ruines comme si le vieux monstre concentrationnaire était mort sous les décombres, qui feignons de reprendre espoir devant cette image qui s'éloigne, comme si on guérissait de la peste concentrationnaire, nous qui feignons de croire que tout cela est d'un seul temps et d'un seul pays, et qui ne pensons pas à regarder autour de nous et qui n'entendons pas qu'on crie sans fin.

More intriguingly, the scheme ties in with a constant in the history Spanish art which has proved strikingly engaging, particularly in relation to the Civil War. When confronted with the barbarity of Francoism it is sufficient to simply record events—which speak for themselves—in order to denounce the dictator and all who would

defend him. The post-war novel as chronicle of its age springs immediately to mind in this respect in the context of literature. The technique also consciously recalls the arresting though simple visuality of major essays in denunciation of this type. Picasso's 'Gernika' offers an immediate example as does the straightforward poetic reportage of Pablo Neruda's *Tercera residencia* epitomized by the arresting litotes of 'Explico algunas cosas': 'Y la sangre de niños corría, simplemente, como sangre de niños'. It is essential constantly to see these atrocities and actualize testimony of them in order for the significance of the past —*més clara que l'aigua*— to be appreciated in the present.

L'holandès errant cavalca de nou

Formentera plays an equally provocative role in Sigfrid Monleón's intelligent cinematic version of Ferran Torrent's novel of the same name. Though the paratext indicates the invention of this island in the book's acknowledgements, its filmic setting—in combination with the skilful cinematography—inevitably ascribes a specificity of reference to the material and configures the speculation in a precise, definitive manner. Here, once again, the location is fundamental to the narrative although its relevance again extends beyond the confines of the particular to address issues of a much more global concern.

Having been arrested and tortured by Franco's police Lluís Dalmau (Pere Ponce) benefits from the relatively lenient sentence of five years internal exile on the island for informing on his comrades. Whilst trying to escape and return to the struggle, the protagonist becomes sidetracked by resident beauty Feli (Crisitina Plazas) and local resistance to tourist development (the scheme of Francoist potentate Lloveras [Juli Cantó]) orchestrated by local physician Dr Ferrús (Juli Mira) and the mayor (Francesc Garrido). The ecological disaster of economic development had been previously prevented by a mysterious benefactor—who we assume to be the bank robber Boixadós (Victor Pi) now suffering terminal cancer in a French prison hospital—and the community is finally redeemed by an equal act of altruism from his accomplice Patrice the Belgian (Féodore Atkine) who, in the face of another project of development, donates his share

of the heist —as the mysterious Dutchman of the title— to resist the initiative and re-establish native control over the locality.

Evidently, the film provides an overt denunciation of Franco's regime both in the violence of the repression and the self-interested participation of officialdom in the tourist development which had destroyed the *costas* during this same period. Indeed, the pre-eminence afforded the landscape by the majestic camerawork inevitably foregrounds the vulnerability of the ecological element which extends the importance of the deliberation beyond its immediate remit. Over the past few decades the movement to save the planet from the destruction of rampant capitalism has found its response in the cinema and David Ingram has summed up the disparate strands of the tendency:

Conservationism, since its origins in Progressivism at the turn of the nineteenth century, has taken a utilitarian attitude to non-human nature, treating it as a resource to be managed and developed for use and economic profit. In contrast, preservationism has argued for the need to preserve wilderness as a realm of spiritual and aesthetic contemplation separate from resource use. With the rise of modern environmentalism in the early 1960s, conservationism has become the "mainstream" ("reform", "moderate", or "shallow") wing of environmentalism. Mainstream environmentalism continues to place environmental concerns within the needs of a capitalist economy to sustain commodity consumption, profit maximization and economic growth, by calling in the expert knowledge of economists, engineers and scientists to provide ad hoc, technical solutions to environmental problems. [...] Advocates of mainstream environmentalism argue that these solutions are practical, pragmatic and realistic, and are therefore the most effective form of environmental restoration [...] Radical environmentalism includes a range of different approaches from deep ecology to social ecology and ecofeminism. (Ingram 2004: 13)

What is apparent in *L'illa de l'holandès* is the informed nature of the response at the heart of this green debate. The denunciation of Francoism is constant yet the film continuously prioritizes environmental concerns, studiously avoiding the facile dichotomy

between bad guys on the Right and good guys on the Left. Under the indulgent tutelage of Ferrús, for example, Dalmau must re-appraise his communist affiliation and break from the party line to devote himself to the prime concern of defending the island. This re-qualification is predicated on an ecocritical awareness —Ingram cites Jhan Hochman to this effect— of the deficiencies of the materialism of both reactionary and revolutionary ideologies with respect to the primacy of environmental concern:

Most important for green cultural studies are the capitalist/communist/technical dominations of world nature that are informed by a textual nature prone to represent nature unimaginatively and flatly, as a two dimensional backdrop to the human drama. Material and representational domination is reciprocal and double. Each stands to aggravate or potentiate the other, reifying nature as a realm fit primarily for multiple manipulations and annihilations. (Ingram 2004: 33)

Indeed the issue is confronted by the cinematography itself where the editing and camerawork critique the flat duality of standard representation. The depiction of the island is such that, to use Martin Lefebvre's terminology, it progresses beyond the status of background (*parergon*) to the more autonomous level of landscape (*ergon*): a movement 'from the margins into the centre, halting the progression of the narrative as we watch, transfixed, the spectacular setting' (Lefebvre 2006: 23-29). A pertinent example of this complexity occurs with the arrival of Dalmau at the hotel wherein the area's natural beauty is celebrated as the land sweeps down to the sea, as in a painting, with the chromatic intensity of pastel blue and brilliant white. The *temps mort* dwells indulgently on the scene as 'the contemplation of the setting frees it briefly from its narrative function' and the focus shifts 'from the narrative to the spectacular mode and back again' (Lefebvre 2006: 29).

The same process of interruption is appreciated in the peculiar employment of transitional shots, another technique isolated by Lefebvre as exemplary of this tendency. A pertinent example occurs during the modulation from Boixadós's hospital bed to the meeting of the islanders which counts on the inexplicable interpolation of Dalmau

plunging into the crystalline waters and submerging himself therein. The significance of such uneven editing is explained thus: ‘The minimal narrative function of these shots consists of assuring the transition between two segments and in presenting the new setting for the action. This function, however, easily gives way to what may be felt as an intention to depict landscape: this renders the setting available to be transformed into a landscape’ (Lefebvre 2006: 34).

Joaquín Ojeda’s montage is particularly suggestive in this respect. At these moments the link between inhabitant and island becomes graphically charged —as in Dalmau’s plunge into the sea—, rejecting the standard version of the location being merely ‘a two dimensional backdrop to the human drama’. Despite the conflictive political and romantic interest it is precisely the unity between human and natural elements which is continuously emphasised. Similarly, in the *temps mort* of the lyrical beauty of the environment seen from the internee’s bedroom the montage switches lingeringly between long shot, extreme long shot, Dalmau’s point-of-view and an over the shoulder shot: a *mélange* which underlines not only the beauty of the setting but also includes the character within this same prospect. The union is further enhanced in the scene of the physical examination with the juxtaposition of the close-up of the prisoner’s body, with its bruises from the beatings of his detention, and Martí’s interruption to warn of the destruction of the landscape implied by the tourist project controlled by those same established powers which have physically abused the protagonist.

A similar equation is elicited by the character of Joan, the teenage deaf mute and son of Boixadós, who has been left in the care of Patrice. The youngster’s devotion to the environment is total and throughout the film we see him at play in caves and lagoons fashioning, from drift-wood and straw, the elementary but elegant flamingos which adorn the various lakes and inlets. As Ferrús informs us, the birds were once visitors to these shores but disappeared during a previous era of mindless development when trees were felled and, as a result, the lakes which once provided sustenance became clogged with sand. Himself like the island, in need of protection and unable to speak in his own defense —Patrice actually states ‘cuidar de tu és cuidar de l’illa’—, Joan engages in an act of restoration to remedy this

avian deficiency, thus reflecting thematically the essential conservationism which is the main object of deliberation.

In this respect, it is revealing to consider the deviance here from the familiar modes of representation of nature wherein panoramic aerial depiction of the environment separates it from humanity. As many critics have noted with regard to the Western and wilderness films, the spectacle of outstanding and virginal natural beauty —often shot from on high— carries with it the absence of humanity and an implicit invitation for economic exploitation, a perspective summarized critically by Ingram.

In her essay on American television nature documentaries, Karla Armbruster focuses on the ideological effects of images that show animals or plants in shots of pristine nature empty of human beings. These shots, she argues, construct nature as ‘a place with no room for human beings, ultimately distancing humans from the non-human nature with which they are biologically and perceptually interconnected, reinforcing the dominant ideologies responsible for environmental degradation’. Writing on the Western movie Jane Tomkins similarly argues that the cinematography itself reinforces an ideology of domination over nature for the filmic spectator. (Ingram 2004: 33-34)¹

The standard vision evoked herein is employed, interestingly enough, to communicate the view of Lloveras who hopes to develop the island. The control alluded to by Tomkins is reflected here by the model created by the potentate revealing his plans for development upon which he dotes fetishistically, an enjoyment echoed in the editing in the modulation from an initial extreme close-up which dollies back to offer a sweeping panorama of the complete miniature. The destructive egocentricity of the entrepreneur is conveyed appropriately in his tour of the selected areas with Martí. The exterior long shots, dwelt on with such indulgence previously, give way here to shorter sequences which, rather than allow enjoyment of the natural beauty, concentrate

¹ Ingram, quite rightly, censures the facility of these generalisations. Their significance as a *point de départ* for cinematic appreciation of environmental concerns, however, remains apparent.

exclusively on close-up and medium shots of this figure who will be responsible for the desecration of the preserve.

What is equally significant in terms of characterisation is the tacit insistence on the contribution of those outside the law to the project of defence. Ferrús and Dalmau are ideological dissidents and internal exiles; and Patrice and Boixadó's are outlaws. Despite the natural justice of the preservation of this *últim paradís*, the forces of the establishment —whether Francoist potentate or French police— are, paradoxically, complicit to a greater or lesser extent with the proposed destruction. Additionally —and as the title suggests—, the theme of piracy underlines the anomaly. Over the centuries Formentera has had a long association with this phenomenon which, in terms of cinematic history, has received a spectacular and romanticized treatment. And once again in the present essay being placed outside the law —and its conditioning— allows a positive view of dissidence and the transgressive mentality which inevitably triumph. Such illegality, of course, is also pertinent given its relevance to green activism in general.

The characterization, in fact, also privileges non-conformity by bending standard depictions of gender. As David Ingram indicates, habitual essays on the heroic defence of the environment foreground the 'hegemony of the white male not only over non-human nature but also over his ethnic, racial and gender subordinates' (Ingram 2004: 36). A pertinent example would be manly, gung-ho hero Stephen Segal, director and star of *On Deadly Ground* (1994), wherein the confrontational protagonist reverses by force and cunning the destructive effects of the oil industry in Alaska. In our case, however, the island's defenders are totally unconvincing in terms of testosterone: the weedy, Pere Ponce, the portly, middle-aged Juli Mira and the lanky, diffident Francesc Garrido. They may well husband the natural landscape which is, as Annette Kolodny has argued, 'often feminized in American fictions of the wilderness'. However, they are more like avuncular guardians rather than leading men who view nature as 'the object for the projection of Euro-American male fantasies of erotic discovery or rape' (cited by Ingram 2004: 36).

The depiction of female characters provides similar dissidence. An initial feminist reading might take exception to the

loves of Dalmau's life, Teresa (Elvira Granados) and Feli (Cristina Plazas), who seem to take on the familiar role of temptress luring the protagonist away from the object of environmental protection, abetting a return to the more common role of political activist or romantic lover. A similar threat is posed by Isabel (Emma Vilarasau) to the virtuous Martí as she refuses to come to the island and be his wife. The denouement, as all the male figures gather in Patrice's hotel and ensure the escape of the 'Dutchman', likewise indicates the lazy stereotype of success through homosocial co-operation, compounded by the final sequence of male bonding as doctor and protagonist put their minds together to write a novel.²

The relevance of such a reading is noted although a more positive gloss is also possible. Like their male counterparts, these women deviate firmly from the norm. They are neither shrinking violets, mere appendages to the male ego or even sirens of perdition but informed and determined individuals in their own right: fully autonomous and in charge of their own destiny. The industrious and ambitious Isabel places her career and family over the insularity of her husband. Teresa refuses likewise to renounce her commitment to political resistance and be distracted by a conventional, tug-of-love struggle. As a consequence, she will not pursue any interest of the heart which diverts her from this goal and merely invites Dalmau to rejoin her when he 'returns to his senses'. Feli, chronically tired of her rural confinement and longing for romantic adventure finally escapes with her daughter and flying Dutchman, who she has managed to change into a person from the 'piece of flint' with whom she had been previously involved.

What is more, the more affirmative vision is underscored by the casting. Despite turning her back on Martí, Emma Vilarasau's Isabel is no uncaring careerist as might be the case with Sigourney Weavers's egomaniacal Katherine Parker in *Working Girl* (Mike Nichols, 1988). She is honest and compassionate as evinced in the tenderness and, indeed, sadness displayed in her resolve which is accentuated photogenically by the softness of her rounded features.

² I am grateful to Helen Fickling for outlining her interesting views on this aspect in a number of conversations.

Similarly, Teresa's virtue is demonstrated by her commitment and faith exemplified by her preoccupied vigilance from the quayside during Dalmau's embarkation into exile. She visits the internee clandestinely and arranges his escape and, in a moment's embrace, the couple look completely suited: the diffident, subversive intellectual supported by the committed activist whose resolution is compounded by the decisive intensity of her aquiline features.

This same determination is combined with passion in the case of the striking beauty of Cristina Plazas' Feli. A single parent as the result of a romantic fling with a previous visitor to the island her presence is formidable, as evinced by the centrality of the seat she takes in the collective meeting and the unashamed, prominent sexuality of her black dress and splayed-leg pose. Her defiant reproach of secretive partner Patrice —she can no longer live with a stone but needs a person of flesh and blood— is captured magnificently in the intensity of her victory in the silent face-off when she is confronted by the Belgian in a car as she rides past on a bicycle. Here, just as in the case of her peers, the conventional destructive element surrounding the female vamp is never posited. Even after voting in favour of the project of development she is never excluded but accepted warmly into the group of male dissidents by the bar —a virtue re-confirmed by her pirate-like escape with the Dutchman at the end of the film with his newly found affectionate intimacy. In terms of Mulvean (1975) analysis the females may arrest the storyline which men are hurrying along; but herein they offer no moment of digressive contemplation. They are not 'to be looked at' but act out their own agendas decisively with resolution and justification.

The antagonism between conformity and resistance is underlined further by the cinematography. The pressure towards passive acquiescence in the face of institutional decision is elicited to great effect by the motif of surveillance. Superintendence in an essay on imprisonment may be only to be expected. Curiously, however, it is not imposed officially upon the internee who merely has to sign in every day at the *comissaria*. It is rather of a more insidious, voyeuristic nature and is ubiquitously practised by individuals against other individuals. From the opening sequence Dalmau is observed by Teresa, his girlfriend and comrade in the struggle, as he boards the

boat to confinement. As he reaches the island the children spy on his arrival from under the boardwalk. Later, in his walks around the island, Dalmau studies Joan from on high as he makes his wooden flamingos and Patrice, who feels like the former's jailor, spies on him from the car as he leaves Feli's farm, unaware that we spectators observe him from behind and also see his expressionless face through the wing mirror. On occasions, characters survey the actions of their counterparts from on high —the cliff-top or road above the beach which enhances the notion of control— and even Martí spies on his girlfriend working in the shop.

Needless to say, Foucault's (1977) speculation on the interiorisation of the panoptic gaze alerts us precisely to this dynamic of the coercion visited upon the individual to conform to the values of the Establishment by acting both as prisoner and agent of repression.

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault 1977: 202-203)

By way of contrast, however, this scopic repression contrasts starkly with the visual transcendence experienced by defenders of the island as they gaze, entranced, on the natural beauty and live amidst its magnificence. Here again the absence of humanity from nature —a feature of the standard Hollywood depiction— is simply not tolerated. The moribund Boixadós, financial saviour of the community, sits spell-bound as he surveys (we imagine) a seascape from his hospital bed. Joan in turn looks longingly at the photograph of his father running, arms outstretched as if about to fly, amidst flamingos in the sea. Ferrús likewise sits idly with his feet in the water of the *salines* and the richness of the images implies a symbiotic unity between characters and environment enhanced at the end of the movie as doctor and internee stroll along the magnificent coastline and compose their novel.

The significance of this final conversation is appreciable. With the narrative resolved —the island has been saved thanks to the

proceeds from the bank robbery donated by the Belgian—, interneer and doctor discuss the novel they are about to write. The discussion lies outside the closure of the plot, a point underlined by the rolling of the end credits prior to the interchange. The technique is a familiar trope at the end of comedies as humorous out-takes often recall moments of fun during production. The scenes thus acquire an extra-diegetic quality as the slips by the actors —and their reactions to them— refer us to their condition as people as opposed to fictional characters. A similar effect is achieved here as, in terms of realism, the procedure imbues the pair with an additional layer of actuality. The nudge, one suspects, is in no way accidental and hints at a reference of more contextual import.

Formentera is, of course, evoked by every indulgent sequence which dwells with such affection and concern on the island's beauty: from the intimacy of the *cales* to the magnificence of ses Salines, s'Estany and cap Maroig. It is also evoked more incidentally by the stunning lighthouse capes of Barbaria and la Mola, the inlets like cala Saona with their unique boat-rails and the breathtaking cave where Feli and Dalmau first embrace. The insistence on time and space in *L'illa de l'holandès*, however, takes the equation further and presents the environment in terms of what Lefebvre describes as a 'territory' where

Space can be depicted in more "anthropological" terms. Indeed, space may be represented as pertaining to lived experiences other than narrative or aesthetic. This is the case, for example, with "identity" and "belonging" and the myriad ways of engaging with space that both can entail (defending it against invaders, for example). This is where the notion of territoriality, of space represented as a territory, becomes useful. For territory is space seen from the "inside", a subjective and lived space. This sort of space is associated more with cartographers, geographers, conquerors, hunters, but also with farmers or anyone inhabiting or having a claim on a stretch of land, than it is with the artist (although they are not mutually exclusive). When the geographer writes, 'Landscape is anchored in *human life*, not something to look at but to live in, and to live in socially. Landscape is a *unity* of people and environment which opposes in its reality the false dichotomy of man and nature....

Landscape is to be judged as a place for *living and working* in terms of those who actually do work and live there. All landscapes are *symbolic*, he returns the landscape to its territoriality. Indeed, beyond the study of the morphology of a region, geographers, especially cultural geographers, now describe landscape as a set of relations which are woven between human beings and the land: agriculture, hunting, fishing, navigation and shipping, forestry, etc. These relations are themselves reliant on vast economic and political stakes and possess otherwise imaginary and identifying aspects whose importance cannot be overstated. When these relations describe the ways one has of inhabiting the land, owning it, fighting for it, or working on it, the land tends to be represented in terms of territory. Territoriality, in other words, becomes the dominant predicate. Hence Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin often defines territoriality as ‘the “sum” [in the sense of totality] of the relations maintained by a subject [or a collectivity] with *their* environment’. The definition has the advantage of illustrating the “possessive” character of territory which contrasts with the experience that one can make of space in terms of aesthetic contemplation. (Lefebvre 2006: 52-53)

Needless to say, the film’s consistency with this cinematic pattern necessarily remits this parable of collective action against globalisation to the history of Formentera itself. As such, the deliberation acquires a further level of actuality as the narrative parallels the struggle by the islanders to protect their habitat against the destruction of mass tourism experienced to such disastrous effect by their neighbours in the last half century and known infelicitously by the term, *balearització*. Significantly, a detailed account of the movement of green resistance from the locality has been provided by Carmelo Convalia (2007), the director of *Aigua clara*, which underlines the analogy more specifically.³

As elsewhere, tourism had begun in the Pitiüses in the 1950s though in a severely limited form due to their woefully deficient infrastructure. The opening of the airport in Eivissa in 1966 and the

³ I am particularly grateful to Santiago Colomar, historical advisor to the documentary, for providing this and other information relating to the history of Formentera.

installation of the first electricity generator on Formentera in 1968, however, meant that the number of annual visitors increased. Conscious of the dangers involved in this expansion, various local groups began militating against the indiscriminate development evinced in the rest of the Balearics.

Intriguingly, the main brunt of the conflict against the plans of the construction conglomerates—in particular the Grup Matutes and its project of 1984 for a huge leisure complex of over 2.5 million square metres—did not take place during the dictatorship but during the democratic era—with all its supposed safeguards—, especially in the years of PSOE hegemony. The repeated disinclination of regional and central government to heed the islanders' concerns about conservation speaks volumes for the ecocritical denunciation, advanced in the film, of the lack of concern across the entire political spectrum for environmental issues. Most disturbing of all, of course, was that the prime mover for development, Abel Matutes, was the representative for the Pitiüses in both Senate and *Cortes* (Convalia 2007: 136-139).

As in the movie, the resistance demonstrated by the islanders was militant, dynamic and well co-ordinated. And if, like Lloveras, politicians at the highest level were interested only in personal enrichment and aggrandisement their local representatives, like Martí, were certainly not. In an exemplary demonstration of political integrity, the local council voted unanimously against the project and proposed instead state recognition for 'el ja conegut dret immemorial i natural de tot el poble de Formentera sobre l'ús i domini públic'. Rebellion was rife and representatives of *Partido Popular* voted in favour of the PSOE motion for conservation against the instructions of their regional overlord in Eivissa, Abel Matutes (Convalia 2007: 138). This particular battle may have been won by the people, for the people, but the war of aggression waged against the environment by big business was to continue. In view of the imminence of such threats the *Coordinadora d'Entitats Cíviques* was formed in 1987 to harmonise efforts and 'potenciar les iniciatives i activitats de les entitats socials per conservar l'activitat social, cultural i econòmica de l'illa de Formentera i dels seus ecosistemes naturals' (Convalia 2007: 140). The association was called into action immediately embarking

on campaigns against the creation of an airfield and massive camp site for tourist development which had been already approved by the *Comissió Provincial d'Urbanisme* of the Balearic government.

A long legal battle ensued which resulted, in 1992, in the *Tribunal Supremo* in Madrid finding in favour of the developers and against the island's local council. Resistance continued at all levels, however, but especially on the island with mass demonstrations and strikes. Amazingly, four members of the municipal administration (two PSOE and two GIF [formerly PP]) were sentenced to six years disqualification from public office for 'desobediència als tribunals i prevaricació': in other words, for carrying out the duty of their office to represent their electorate and 'per haver defensat la reiterada i manifestada oposició a tots els sectors socials al càmping'. The sentence was endorsed in 1996 by the *Tribunal Supremo* by the magistrate, Manuel Conde Pumpido, present day Attorney General of the PSOE government (Convalia 2007: 147).

In such a dynamic the relevance of the film is enhanced considerably. The stylistic techniques employed in the montage the *temps mort*, transition shots and representation of the location—draw our attention outside the fictional narrative, converting a generic natural landscape into what Lefebvre describes as a particular contextual territory. The link is, in turn, underlined by coincidence between plot and history as the struggle of the islanders reflects that of their filmic counterparts. In exemplary ecocritical fashion, environmentally irrelevant party divisions are discarded for the defence of the locality as, in both cases, the cause is won precisely by those who have been placed outside the law.

In the film the islanders resist the interests of big business with the providential, external assistance from the mysterious Dutchman. Similarly, after decades of concerted struggle, the project of mass tourist development on Formentera was halted amazingly by the *Plan Territorial Insular* approved by the Balearic Government in December 2009 which includes the catalogue of the *Patrimoni Cultural de Formentera* with all its virgin locations listed for protection (Convalia 2010). The implication, however, is quite clear. Conservationism is no wishful thinking. Green action and resistance

can take on globalisation, political machination and the legal system which supports them and still end up triumphant.

The struggle can even be waged in the cinema. As David Ingram has established, the anti-environmental interests of big business have long been underwritten by Hollywood as might be epitomised by Michael Bay's blockbuster *Armageddon* (1998). The narrative begins on an oilrig in mid-ocean where square-jawed prospector Harry Stamper (Bruce Willis) lives up to his surname and amuses himself by driving golf-balls at Greenpeace activists who are sailing around the platform in protest against the oil industry's destruction of the environment. However, an asteroid threatens the earth and the responsibility for its obliteration will lie with Stamper's photogenic band of roughnecks —Billy Bob Thornton, Ben Affleck and Steve Buscemi— whose manly virtues and technical expertise acquired in prospecting for oil will, with the aid of a nuclear device to be exploded on the asteroid, save the earth.

This eulogy of the pioneering spirit —and essential implication of fossil fuel and thermonuclear industries in global survival— was made on a budget of over \$135 million, grossing over \$201 million in the first six months after release. In the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon and the unreliable if not maverick control exercised over their nuclear capacities by such countries as North Korea, Iran, Pakistan and India, one might be forgiven for suspecting that such cinematic propaganda might just be flawed and that, paradoxically, it is the green activists who in reality may well be more purposely engaged in the protection of the planet.

For all its modesty —grossing a mere €164,042— *L'illa de l'hollandès* is surely more relevant in its deliberation and representation. Eschewing any epic quality in characterisation or bombastic, state-of-the-art effects typical of the dream factory, we are offered not the all-star captains courageous of Hollywood but the heroism of simple, ordinary individuals and their dedication to their environment. Its careful, evocative —yet imaginative— cinematography likewise evokes a relation with the landscape of a personal, aesthetical and ecological nature which is rich both in its consciousness raising and convincing in its proselytism against the Armageddon of big business and globalisation.

Conclusion

In its definition of the Balearic Islands, the *Enciclopèdia d'Eivissa i Formentera* comments that it is legitimate to speak about these in geographical or administrative terms yet continues with a sage warning: 'El que no es pot fer és emprar el concepte en un sentit històric general, perquè el procés històric de cada una de les illes que el formen ha estat diferent [...] És, per tant, un concepte que des de fora té sentit, però a l'interior no'. Indeed, both films highlight this condition with their reflection on the particularity of Formentera and its problematic place within the disjointed context of the archipelago as a whole. In this fraught configuration, *Aigua clara* tells the story of the twentieth century in the location wherein similarities and differences with its sister islands and mainland Catalonia are apparent. There is no doubt, however, that the unreserved advocacy of the documentary as regards the *Ley de memoria histórica* complements an ideological preoccupation which is current both throughout these areas, in the Spanish state and also elsewhere on the continent.

L'illa de l'holandès creates a similarly ambiguous effect. The narrative is again tied exclusively to the location in the unique triumph—both on celluloid and real life—in the struggle against mass tourism. Elsewhere in the linguistic domain that battle has been lost as epitomised by the destruction of Majorca and the Eastern seaboard *in toto* where the environmental disaster of the *costas* (*Brava, Dorada, Azahar, Blanca*) might be exemplified by the monstrosity which is the holiday 'Manhattan' of Benidorm. However, such exceptionality is compensated appreciably in the film by the Valencian overlay which is echoed spectacularly throughout. With the exception of Pere Ponce, the rest of the main players—including novelist and director—rejoice in their occidental dialect which emphasises once again the interconnection between the island and a mainland ravaged by property development. Just as with the documentary, nonetheless, the implication of the deliberation extends beyond these frontiers to the politics of conservationism in a global sense which has, like memory and its preservation, become a topic of fundamental importance to cinematic deliberation in general.

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