

Transnational realities in the Cinema of the last decades: Portugal as a case study

Monteiro, Paulo Filipe

*Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa
Portela LRS, Portugal*

Keywords

National identities, Portuguese Cinema, transnational networks

Some people say that Portuguese Cinema was a French invention. They are referring, of course, to the "new wave" of Portuguese films, which started to be recognized, mostly through the work of our oldest filmmaker, Manoel de Oliveira, in the early sixties, with retrospectives held in the French Cinéma. Ever since, Portuguese films have won presence, recognition and sometimes prizes in the major European festivals: a recognition that they hardly receive in Portugal, where even the cultural elite will often say Portuguese Cinema doesn't exist, which might be a way of saying it is not significant or hasn't much value.

This legitimation that cannot be obtained internally and comes from other European countries has effects on the characteristics of Portuguese films, as we will try to show. But it paradoxically requires these works to be "Portuguese", for it is the difference, almost the exoticism, that is appreciated.

As a counter-movement to this delicate situation, some artists and decision makers have started in the eighties to fight for the investment in large European co-productions: some of these were tried, with large budgets and meagre results. But this could not change the image of Portugal nor of Europe, for such films emulate American movies.

A last variable to be considered are the transnational programs for financing European or Hispanic cinema, for they are trying to create new international networks. Do they produce films different from those made with national funds? Does it still make sense to speak of a national film, when in this expensive medium a condition to their existence is almost always a co-production between several countries?

In the past as in the present, how Portuguese is Portuguese cinema?