trans atlantic cultures
Cultural Histories of the Atlantic World 18th–21st Centuries

ISSN 2739-6614
transatlantic-cultures.org



Ruy Guerra, the ‘Travelling Filmmaker’

Vavy Pacheco Borges

Ruy Guerra (RG) was born on 22/08/1931 in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), capital of the Portuguese colony of Mozambique on the shores of the Indian Ocean. He is seen as a ‘citizen of the world’ due to his experience and his cultural production in various countries in three continents around the Atlantic.

TRANSLATION	Eoin O’Neill
PUBLISHED	July 9, 2025
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE	Portuguese
AVAILABLE IN	English, Portuguese
TOPICS	Cinema
SPACES AND PLACES	South Atlantic · Africa · Europe
PERIODS	The Atlantic Space Within Globalization
KEYWORDS	france, brazil, cinema
PERMANENT LINK	https://transatlantic-cultures.org/en/records/ruy-guerra-o-cineasta-viajante/

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Vavy Pacheco Borges

Full Professor · Department of History · Unicamp - Universidade Estadual de Campinas · Brazil

Vavy Pacheco Borges has been Professor of Brazilian History in the Republican period ate the Pontificia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP) and at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp). Her publications focus on The Constitucionalist Revolution of 1932, in São Paulo, as well as on Biographies. She is the author of Ruy Guerra: paixão desencarnada (São Paulo, Boitempo, 2017)

#"Someone in transit"

Ruy Guerra (RG) was born on 22/08/1931 in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), capital of the Portuguese colony of Mozambique on the shores of the Indian Ocean. He is seen as a 'citizen of the world' due to his experience and his cultural production in various countries in three continents around the Atlantic. A triangulation that began when he was very young. At the age of three or four he travelled with his parents and brothers in a transatlantic ship to Lisbon to visit his families of origin. The second time was around 15 years later when coming in another transatlantic ship - appropriately baptized *Império* - he landed in Lisbon port under the guard of the International and Defence of the State Police (*Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* - PIDE), suspected of being involved on activities in the colony against the dictatorship of Antônio Salazar. Having finished his secondary school in Lourenço Marques, six months later he went to Paris to study cinema. Graduating in 1954, he spent four years trying to make a film on the European continent. In July 1958 he came to Rio de Janeiro where, later with other young filmmakers he created the movement called *Cinema Novo*. With his first two films - *Os Cafajestes* (1962) and *Os Fuzis* (1964, Silver Bear in Berlin) - he soon became known in the Brazilian and international cinematographic scenario. In the middle of the 1960s he was the first filmmaker from his group to leave Brazil and film abroad, in his case in France.

Having chosen Brazil as his country of adoption, he was driven by his passion for cinema to travel to Africa, Europe, and the Americas, staying there for long or short periods. The search for locations, filming, festivals, congresses led him, for more than half a century, through various continents (including the United States and Canada), even reaching Japan in a mission for the Mozambican cinema. In the middle of the 1990s, after spending some years in Lisbon, in a column for *O Estado de S.Paulo* newspaper, he wrote that he had the "certainty of being someone in transit," a fact which caused him identitarian anguishes: he was - and at the same time he was not - Mozambican, Portuguese and Brazilian. In the years when he used to go often to Cuba, he wrote in a sort of diary: "I am a Brazilian for more than thirty years, almost half my life has been in various continents and countries, and I give myself the right of feeling Latin American, Latin-African, Latin-Portuguese, all with the pride of those who have experienced the feeling of pain"; he concluded by highlighting his "schizophrenic Latin-Africanity." In the middle of the 1990s he returned to Brazil and settled in Rio de Janeiro, where he still lives, as do his children and grandchildren; today he feels like "an assumed Carioca." He likes to declare that he is "a Brazilian filmmaker born in Mozambique."

["*Esta Janela*" (This Window) a column in which RG discusses his identity; in Portuguese and French versions. With an indication of interviews with him in French and Spanish.] (http://www.bahiaflaneur.net/blog2/2012/08/cette-fenetre-par-ruy-guerra.html)

In one form or another, he was part of some of the great historical events of the 20th century. In Mozambique he lived for two decades under the authoritarian and racist colonization of the Salazar dictatorship. He returned there intermittently between 1975 and 1985, participating in the decolonization begun by the nationalist revolution of the National Liberation Front (*Frente Nacional Libertadora* - FRELIMO), which brought Samora Machel, a socialist/Marxist government, to power. He lived under the military dictatorship in Brazil, where he suffered censorship and was called for inquiries.

In Cuba, through his friendship and work with Gabriel García Márquez, he was close to the group in power under Castro's dictatorship. His professional training occurred in Paris in the 1950s, in the middle of the first waves of *Nouvelle Vague* and its fight for a "cinéma d'auteur" (cinema of auteurs) against industrial cinema. In Rio de Janeiro in the 1960s, as well as filming, he participated in the birth of Brazilian Popular Music (*Música Popular Brasileira* - MPB after the Bossa-Nova period), writing lyrics for emerging young composers. He participated in the emergence of *Nuevo Cinema Latino-Americano*, circulating among the

Spanish speaking countries in the Americas, such as Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic. In the 1960s, when the image of Brazil was at a high point in France, he worked for O.R.T.F. (Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française) in *Carnets de Voyage au Brésil* (1966), documentaries that Pierre Kast filmed in Brazil, which showed to the French people various aspects of Brazilian culture, such as architecture, fine arts, music, cinema. RG was chosen as an adviser to the director due to the ties which had been formed in the country in these areas.

In his mid-1970s poetry, he states: "I live on a woman's body/which makes of me what she wants/which flees from me and defoliates me/and plays cat and mouse. I live on three continents/and this does not contain me/The anger I have in my teeth/I do not know if it does me harm or good. I live in the shadow of a tunnel/on the other side of the sun/and in this difficult key/ I support myself on a *be flat*." The biography I wrote of him - *Ruy Guerra paixão escancarada* (Ruy Guerra, a wide open passion, 2017) - is based not on a chronological order but on his experience in these three continents that he considers fundamental in his trajectory. As highlighted in the title, Serge Daney, a journalist and critic of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, saw RG as a "travelling filmmaker." [1] Chico Buarque, in the presentation of the RG's book in his newspaper columns, jokes: "a nomad because he is a filmmaker or probably vice-versa."

In his family and in public school he received a Luso-European education. Many of his teachers had been exiled by the Salazar dictatorship and were thus critics of the socio-political situation; they guided the readings of students enlightening them in relation to the *status quo*. The cultural production which came from the metropole faced a certain refusal and the one that came from Brazil was given a great importance, although some books and journals had to enter in an undercover manner. [2] The now independent former Portuguese colony had many similarities with Mozambique in the area of culture and geographic space, such as climate, the presence of black people, aromas, and flavours. RG says that, as a young man in his native land, he learned by heart numerous Carnival songs of that time. The group of young people which RG was part of included those most marked by a critical education, then called 'intellectuals' or 'revolutionaries;' the majority left the country, forming what was called the 'diaspora generation.' Amongst others, taking voluntarily exile in France were poets such as Noemia de Sousa, Virgílio de Lemos, and Gualter Soares, while the fine artist Bertina Lopes went to Rome, and the philosopher Henrique Martins went to Great Britain. Some were part of the 'retornados' (those who returned to the metropolis), such as the philosophers Fernando and José Gil, the intellectuals Eugênio Lisboa, Luiz Carlos Patraquim, and Edmundo Simões; while the poet Rui Knopfli, RG's best friend during his youth, went to Portugal only some time after 1975.

Not being able to study cinema in Lourenço Marques, RG moved to the European world, choosing the new Parisian school to the detriment of other possibilities, such as Centro Sperimentale di Roma, or the Polish school in Lodz. Probably this choice depended on the enormous family respect for French civilization, especially on the paternal side, as well as his elementary understanding of the language learned in the lyceum. Although his acceptance in Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (IDECH) in 1952 should have in theory been difficult because he arrived after the closing of enrolments, he nonetheless was accepted, according to him, on account of his Mozambican origin. His presence showed that the recently created IDECH was open to students from diverse origins, proving the self-affirmed internationalist vocation of the institute and of French culture. Receiving a degree in film (with a brief introduction to television) and having spent two years on an acting course in Théâtre National de Paris (TNP), he expanded his European base by unsuccessfully trying to film his first script (*Os Lobos*, which afterwards was transformed into *Os Fuzis*) in Spain and Greece. Still in France, he had his first role as an actor in the film *SOS Noronha* (1957) by Georges Rouquier, filmed in Corsica; Brazilian actors in the cast included

José Lewgoy and Vanja Orico. The actress and singer was instrumental in RG returning to Brazil, by inviting him to direct a film, although this was never made. To live in Brazil was something he had planned for many years and was facilitated by many good Brazilian friendships he had made in the Parisian world. Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes, merely an acquaintance, gave him a fundamental help in forging a type of contract for RG to work in the recently created *Cinemateca Brasileira* in São Paulo, a requirement of the Brazilian consulate in Paris for his entrance visa.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MjfnQZDKWw

> Interview with RG in conversation with Pedro Bial 1/12/2017
>
> **Source:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MjfnQZDKWw

After his initiation in the Brazilian *Cinema Novo*, his production is varied in terms of genre and countries:

In Brazil nine feature films: *Os Cafajestes* (1962), *Os Fuzis* (1964), *Os Deuses e os Mortos* (1970), *A Queda* (1976), *A Ópera do Malando* (1985), *A bela Palomera* (1987), *Kuarup* (1989), *O Veneno da Madrugada* (2006), *Quase Memória* (2015), and part of *Estorvo* (2000); two short films; *Orós* (1959), and *O Cavalo de Oxumaré* (1960), unfinished, and two video clips: *Talk to me* (1984) and *Obvious Child* (1990). **In France** one feature film *Sweet Hunters* (1968), one medium length film, *Chanson pour traverser la Rivière* (1966), and one short *Quand le Soleil Dort* (1954). **In Mozambique**: one feature film *Mueda, Memória e Massacre* (1980), one television series *Os Comprometidos: Atas de um Processo de Descolonização* (1982-1984), and three short films: *Operação Búfalo* (1978), *Danças Moçambicanas* (1979), *Um povo nunca morre* (1980). **In Portugal** two feature films: *Monsanto* (2000), *Portugal S.A.* (2003), one film for French television *La Lettre Volée* (1981), and one short film for French television: *Carta Portuguesa a Sarajevo* (1994). **In Mexico** one feature film, *Erendira* (1982), **In Cuba**: one series for Spanish television *Me alquilo para soñar* (1991-2) and the feature film *Estorvo* (2000). **In Argentina** part of the feature film *O Veneno da Madrugada* (2006).

Ruy Guerra's Site

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1ZDPkheiLA

> Trailer of Ruy Guerra's film *Quase memória*
>
> **Source:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1ZDPkheiLA

#"Cinema is the only universal language"

After graduating in *Liceu Salazar* (now Josina Maciel), RG wrote in the yearbook of a friend the above phrase, which probably speaks for itself and seems to have been a type of motto of his life. He thought of his cinematographic production as aimed at any part of the world, as can be seen in the longitudinal breadth of the presentations and awards of his films: from the extremes in the east of Tashkent in Uzbekistan (1980), New Delhi in India (2002), and Hong Kong (1989) to the most western extreme, some various Latin American festivals.

An auteur director, the greatest characteristics of his cinematographic production are, as to be expected, linked to his personality and his interaction with the places where he lived; characteristics which were adapted, accumulating, showing a certain intersection of the influences wherever he went.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNP5NqIhNLY&t=1s

> Trailer of the film *O Homem que matou John Wayne* (2015), a documentary about Ruy Guerra
>
> **Source:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNP5NqIhNLY&t=1s

##The presence of a political perspective

Being political for RG has a wide-ranging meaning: it means being involved with the problematics of his time. RG sees himself and is seen as a man on the left due to his discourse, his attitudes towards life, and his expressions in the artistic and educational field. Being politically engaged never signified for him being a member of or active in any party, but always being attentive to the socio-political reality of the country in which he was in. In relation to his production, he constantly repeats that any aesthetics is political, since it necessarily involves a certain worldview, with the set of values which it enunciates, defends, or condemns. He likes to state that anyone analysing his films will observe a certain obsession for areas of power and for repressive mechanisms, both in social or political structures and in the family environment.

This position, begun in his African adolescence, accompanied him throughout his trajectory until the present in Brazil. [3] Since young age, making cinema for him was a form of thinking and presenting socio-political relations and practicing social denunciation. He began at 16 with a borrowed camera and the help of friends to buy the material for filming; for months he filmed the harsh reality of the workers of Cais Gorjão port in Lourenço Marques, the principal place for the outflow of wealth from that part of Southern Africa; the images reminded him of 'concentration camps.' Unfortunately, the film, due to its fragility, only withstood a single domestic exhibition.

In Brazil at the beginning of the 1960s, RG and other *cinemanovistas* were interested in producing films which portrayed the reality of people, political and social conflicts, avoiding the rules of production and the dogmatisms of the aesthetics of industrial cinema. *Os Cafajestes* presents a society of classes and focuses on a critic of the customs of part of Zona Sul society in Rio de Janeiro. *Os Fuzis* was made using RG's first script. It is about isolated mountain people who need guns to defend themselves from hungry wolves who have come to eat their sheeps and thereby threaten their survival; however, they received soldiers, not weapons. This was the European version, which was set in Spain or Greece, and to adapt it to Brazil, hunger replaces the wolves; in both versions the soldiers leave without resolving either the problem of the wolves or of hunger. Some of his other films concerned with this view are *Os Deuses e os Mortos*, *A Queda*, *A Ópera do Malandro*, *Kuarup,* and the two films he directed in Portugal in the 21st century - *Monsanto* and *Portugal S.A.*

A foreign immigrant in Paris in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, RG was irritated by the films from the *Nouvelle Vague* because they were made by young filmmakers from the French bourgeoisie who ignored the problem of immigration and the Algerian War; he considered this attitude of a *soi-disant apoliticism* extremely political, as he wrote and stated in interviews. In this period, he went often to Paris for some work or in search of it. He was linked to the group of the cinema magazine *Positif,* with political positions from various left-wing groups. In 1966, in France, he made a fictional episode for a film about the Vietnam

War - *Loin du Vietnam* - coordinated by Chris Marker, in which participated Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Lelouch, Jori Ivens, and William Klein. RG's episode was not actually used in the film. [4]

His political position was the main reason for his return to his native land after a quarter of a century. He sought to collaborate in the construction of a new nation emerging from the former colony; between 1976-1986 he made intermittent visits to Mozambique, participating in the intense experience of decolonization. The Popular Republic of Mozambique was a country of illiterates, with a strong oral tradition. Since there was no television yet, Samora Machel, concerned with the construction of national identity, attributed to the cinema screen the role of a pedagogical tool, with which it was sought to awaken a national feeling. RG thus actively collaborated with the National Institute of Cinema of Mozambique (INC, now INAC) created shortly after coming to power of FRELIMO. He contributed to the training of technical staff by giving practical classes and bringing to Maputo specialists in various activities in the area; one of these, Licínio de Almeida, is still there today, working actively and internationally recognized.

Article by José Luís Cabaço about Mozambican cinema and Ruy Guerra

The films RG made in this period are essentially political in purpose and in nature; anthropological and historic, they are faithful portraits of that society in transformation. They are considered by some as part of an 'activist cinema.' Only a single example seems to me to allow this rigid classification: the short film *Um povo nunca morre* (1980). It shows the bringing to Maputo of bodies of FRELIMO activists killed in the struggle outside the country. It is thus linked to the construction of a cult of heroes, adding to the official memory of the struggle waged by FRELIMO, after it was transformed into a political party. Of his African films the most famous - considered the first Mozambican feature film - is *Mueda, Memória e Massacre* (1980); in the analysis of this film it has been attributed a much broader merit from the cinematographic point of view than its undoubtable historical documentary value.

[Article by Raquel Schefer *O nascimento de uma nação: Mueda Memória e Massacre*] (http://www.buala.org/pt/afroscreen/o-nascimento-de-uma-imagem-mueda-memoria-e-massacre-de-ruy-guerra-1979)

In 1984 he was invited by the government to film a political trial; the film would be entitled "*Raízes da Traição*". But RG suggested another title which was adopted: "*Atas de um processo de descolonização: os comprometidos.*" The series was shown on television; it is important for having recorded a fundamental event in the decolonization process.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yia_JL2L3gs

> Video about the situation of the Samora Machel administration on the trial of those 'compromised' by the colonial political system
>
> **Source:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yia_JL2L3gs

His left-wing position is also clear in his relations with Cuba, where he lived for some time. After the appearance of the International Festival of New Latin-American Cinema in 1979, RG´s films were part of the exhibitions. Since 1988, in the well-known *Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV*, in San Antonio de Los

Baños, 30 km from Havana, RG has participated in projects and scripts with someone who has become, in addition to a partner, his personal friend: Gabriel García Márquez, Gabo, one of the founders and financer of the *Escuela*.

His political perspective is neither activist nor didactic. His position in relation to the binomial art/power has always been one of independence. Despite being connected to people close to 'El Comandante,' he was always opposed to the latter's interference in Cuban cinema. In one of his columns in *O Estado de S. Paulo*, for example, he alluded more than once to the difficulties of dialogue between power and art. He has criticized Fidel Castro for having seriously interfered on the work of the filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, aka Titón. However, he reaffirmed his admiration and support for the Cuban Revolution "which rescued not only for Cuba, but for all Latin America and Third World countries, much of the dignity usurped during colonization and perpetuated by the current mechanisms of economic and cultural domination."

##The presence of the non-rational

In a large part of RG's production the presence of a strong imagination can be noted. For RG the imagination is part of his vision of the real, which goes beyond the rational. His interest in showing scenes about *macumba*, folklore, rituals, prophets, soothsayers and magical thought is an evidence of influences from his African education, fortified by reencountering in Brazil the presence of black culture, which travelled for centuries in the slave ships. This presence can be tracked from the beginning, since *Joana Maluca,* a film never made but the reason for his moving to Brazil and which he was supposed to direct for Vanja Orico with whom he had become friends in France. The film was to be based on a short story of the actress' father, the writer Osvaldo Orico (born in the Amazonian state of Pará), allusive to the myth of the *peixe boto*, which transforms itself into a man and gets young women pregnant. The documentary *O Cavalo de Oxumaré* (1960, unfinished) is about the initiation of a young white woman into *macumba*, the religion of the black man she loves. In *Os Fuzis* (1964), a fiction film with a documentary side, the vision of the non-rational is present in the north-eastern religiosity and regional fetishism, in the religious procession which asks for rain, in the fact that the people wait for the rain from their miraculous *boi-santo*. In *Sweet Hunters* (1969) - his third film and nothing to do with Africa or Brazil - scenes of superstition are shown; for some critics the film seems to mark a rupture with the realistic perspective of his previous films.

For RG the question of the so-called "realismo mágico" or "realismo fantástico "(magic or fantastic realism) is a cultural question. He has stated that his African origin led him to see that what for one culture is magic, for another can be considered as concrete knowledge, as a form of understanding reality. He believes that in Latin America magical realism served for authors to appropriate their own culture in a form that was not previously codified. He says he distrusts rationality; he believes that in order to create a film it is good to let the imagination loose, even to the point of delirium; and advises students to be true to their imagination. For the French film critic Michel Ciment, RG's magical realism unites Africa and Latin America in an identity common to the world then called underdeveloped and which opposed the hegemony of the developed world. When Gabriel García Márquez, one of the masters of fantastic realism, met RG for the first time, he said that RG had made a film of his before knowing him, or even before reading one of his stories; he was referring to *Sweet Hunters* and the story *El ahogado mas hermoso del mundo*. The works which RG adapted from Gabriel García Márquez were those classified within the magical realism of the Colombian writer; *Os Deuses e os Mortos*, a metaphorical film, was also included in this classification. RG is the director who has brought the most of Márquez's works to the screen:

Erêndira, *A Fábula da Bela Palomera*, *Veneno da Madrugada* and *Me Alquilo Para Soñar* (a miniseries for Spanish television totally filmed in Havana). The two have met in Spain, Italy, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, and Cuba to work together; from what they have always stated to the press, long and pleasant meetings, watered by bottles of whisky.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_CeATHa9dM

The filming of the documentary *Del Viento y del Fuego,* made in Mexico, with interviews with Ruy Guerra and Gabriel Garcia Márquez by Humberto Rios and Gonzales Videla

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_CeATHa9dM

##In search of innovation

RG prefers to call cinematographic language as filmic. The study and practice of this language is constant in his cinematographic production. He stresses as essential the search for renewal in this field to break away from concepts and standards linked to the hegemonical American structure, which for him reduces reality and does not serve for our culture. This search had its origin in his adolescence in Lourenço Marques, when he began reading theorists such as Sergei Eisenstein and Lev Kuleshov; his idol was Orson Welles, and he is proud of having watched a closed session of *Citizen Kane* (1941). In the Paris of *Nouvelle Vague* with its auteur cinema, this concern intensified; various times critics have pointed to this influence in his debut film *Os Cafajestes*. During the many times he has been in Paris he had the opportunity to see cinema from all over the world. He feels very influenced by the Italian cinema of Francesco Rosi and Michelangelo Antonioni. His production has been present in the magazines *Cahiers du Cinéma* and much more in various numbers of *Positif,* for RG was personally linked to some members of the latter. Both magazines were strongholds of theoretical articles and discussion; those contacts may have been factors for the deepening of his reflections in a continuous form. His cinema library (now with almost one thousand books) is an evidence of this concern. He has sought to innovate for every film and does not like to repeat himself. He jokes: "if it is to fall, may it be from on top of Corcovado mountain and not on the pavement."

VIDEO

View online: https://vimeo.com/17852911

Interview given to Eric Nepomuceno, *Sangue Latino*, Canal Brasil

Source: https://vimeo.com/17852911

The film *Os Deuses e os Mortos* (1970) can be seen as a good example of these three main characteristics. The military dictatorship in Brazil forbade politics to be treated directly or criticized in movies. RG, as many others, intended to escape from the dictatorial censorship by focusing on another epoch and using metaphors. As Ismail Xavier has analysed, "discourse about a world in disintegration assumes a central role in the dramatic composition. The film focuses on conflicts between the tradition of landholders and the intervention of traders in the cacao zone in Southern Bahia during the First Republic. It typically steps back in time as do historical films, but its horizon is of a totalizing allegory of the neo-colonial system represented as a nightmare. It is a scenario which looks at aspects of the human experience that go beyond the question of the cacao crisis from 1910-1920, resulting in a dramatic laboratory capable of exposing a

more permanent structure of domination within the national/foreign polarity. At the same time the film brings to the foreground the debate about questions of identity and long-distance administrative interests. An anthropological dimension gains importance in *Os Deuses e os Mortos*, crystalized in the attention given to syncretic representations of the Brazilian rural world, like its rustic Catholicism, traits of Amerindian religion, and its incorporation in African culture. As frequently happens in the focus on the past, the main target of this film is the discussion of the present, notably the suggestion of similarities, recurrences, common structures of experience connecting the two times. As in other films from the same period, there is a movement here to 'revise history,' undoubtedly causes by the key moments of 1964 and 1968, when the teleology of salvation which fed *Cinema Novo* entered in crisis and the way of connecting the practice world and religious faith was redefined. It is the moment when the problem of reflexive modernization comes to be focused on in its darkest dimensions." [5]

Os Deuses e os Mortos is the favourite film of the *Positif* critic Michel Ciment. [6] For Michel Estève it is "one of the most original essays on political reflection attempted on screen." [7] Much praised are the scenes on continuous shots, long takes being a mark of RG, and handled in a magistral manner by the hand camera Dib Lufti. The impact created on the viewer by the extreme use of the imagination was succinctly described by Howard Thompson, a New York Times film critic who on 19 June 1972 stated: "Your stomach will turn, but you will never forget this notable Brazilian film *Os Deuses e os Mortos*, in the New Yorker Theater. Watching this film is like riding on the back of a serpent (...). Mr. Guerra structures the labyrinth of a nightmare with surreal images and murdering tensions. He composes the totality of his landscapes with phantasmagorical and grey images of death." Furthermore: "Now that we know what Mr. Guerra is capable of doing - with power, beauty, horror - we can only ask ourselves what will happen next."

On 23/05/2018, the timeliness of the film was highlighted by Luiz Carlos Azedo in *Correio Braziliense*: "The same allegory can be transposed to the daily urban life of the present, since its human material, from the cultural and political point of view, remains present. Violence, the dispute for territory, banditry, oligarchies, the culture of the old *coronelismo*, all elements in the script of *Os Deuses e os mortos* are alive not only in the little grottos, but also the large metropoles. Ruy Guerra knew what he was doing. (...) The allegory with our politics today is also perfect, it is enough to read the newspapers. What is not lacking are candidates for gods and the undead. They thrive in an environment of social inequity, despair, violence, and ethical crisis. Narratives of these actors functioned as allegories of a recent past which was hit by globalization and Operation "Lava Jato" but continues to haunt the present. A former governor well-liked by his peers has been jailed, the former leader of a rebel generation is back in jail, and a former president in prison insists on running despite a criminal record. Ministers, senators, congresspersons and governors compose a cortege of the undead, there emerge candidates for gods. Outside this universe, the security apparatus and organized crime face each other, with casualties on both sides. And death waits for individuals on every corner, on the street or in the *morro*, in the dark night or in the light of day, while life continues miraculously, although hope has not been reinvented, as in the scenes of *Os deuses e os mortos*."

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/embed/G8spz0kRX9s?feature=oembed

Scene from the film *Os deuses e os Mortos*

Source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8spz0kRX9s

#"The word is my last refuge" [8]

RG likes to state that his taste for erudition and arts comes from his African infancy and adolescence, from his family's taste for culture, above all from literature and music. His group of young friends possessed the same taste for arts in general. His long presence in Paris certainly emphasized this aspect of his personality. Since his adolescence in his native land he has published articles, poetry, and cinematographic reviews. He is presented as a Mozambican writer in anthologies and works on the theme. He has also constantly stated that his great desire in life was to be a writer and until the present he says that he dreams of the day when, not being able to film, he will return to his initial dream.

Replying to a request for collaboration with a dictionary of Portuguese expressions in Mozambique prepared by Maria José Laban, he denied being a grammarian or a philologist: "I write by ear, mixing accents and prosodies, in an amalgamated mix during my wandering in Portuguese, Mozambican, and Brazilian lands - and it is the feeling of the moment that tells me what to write. Some Spanishisms and Gallicisms also intrude, although a little against my will. Sincerely - I do not invent either words or grammatical rules (...) - to say more would be to enter quicksand, *matope* mud in Mozambican language, in my adventures as a *mufana* (a young boy) lost in the forest."

In his writings we can find construction or terms which remind us of his Portuguese origins such as *burdas, escanzelado, dérreis, sem que nem lê, lès a lè, obas and olés*...

##Prose

On the occasion of the Portuguese edition of the book published in Brazil *20 navios*, the Mozambican Luiz Carlos Patraquim wrote on the site *Buala*, in an article called *Stories and their melancholy*: "The truth is that he makes the perfect triangulation, which Agostinho da Silva liked so much. A native of Lourenço Marques (Maputo), a name of reference in the Brazilian *cinema novo* - (...) (with a) Portuguese passport although with a derived language, the filmmaker Ruy Guerra has become a columnist. The proof? Sit on an esplanade on Avenida Atlântica, sit on the banks of the Tejo in a melancholic afternoon or, with spicy *chamussa* and *manica* sip, look at the edge of the Indian Ocean, although dirty, from the open veranda of a restaurant on Costa do Sol and read, counting the ships, twenty. There are stories for the three corners of the triangle, of course: Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, (...). Manuel Ferreira included him in his poetic anthology about Mozambique. A Ruy leaving adolescence, the pain of love flying in naive verse, is revealed to us in the *No Reino de Caliban III*, where concerns of a social nature and identitarian movements are manifested in a line which will have in Knopfli its great and tragic cultivator." (...)". Patraquim makes a long quotation from the story *Esta Janela* (This window): "opening with *Esta Janela* where he interrogates his identity belongings - this triangle: "From this window, when night arrives and Lisbon is pulverized in its anonymous lights of a large city, I can imagine myself in Maputo, Havana, Rio, or any other womb, I know now that I cannot deceive myself anymore because I am inexorably alone with my schizophrenic Latin-Africanity. How it is painful to be eternally quartered, an eternal foreigner within myself, 'tied to my body.' What is left to me is language as a homeland, a patria, as the poet. And the 'feeling of the world,' like another. It is a lot. I would say that it is too much. What I have is this, my window. A psychanalytic window, of Lisbon. *Evohé* at a distance and a bottle of rum!"

Among the 43 articles we may find two of the most significant about his identitarian anguish; the above cited and another, *The smell of mangoes*. During the almost five years of his weekly column in *O Estado de S. Paulo* we can find texts of a very diverse nature. Some about the *little nothings* of daily life, as he says, but also about his vision of the world, art, politics, memory. Some are the direct inspirations of the three continents where he has lived.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, RG wrote a play which can be seen as a musical - *D Quixote de lugar nenhum*. It is an adaptation of Cervantes' work to the Brazilian northeast, so dear to RG. He declared that he used a 'joking view' of the famous book and its character; and that he has allowed himself iconoclasms. He asserts that the Northeast culture is very Hispanic and that the arid *caatinga* is similar to Spanish landscapes. [9] This interest may be tracked to 1976, when he wanted to film João Ubaldo Ribeiro's novel Sargento *Getúlio*. For him, Sargento Getúlio was a character who showed "a defence of the feudal values of the rural society of the Northeast, supported by violence, intrigue, petty politics, and a *machista* code of honour," as written in one of his agendas in his private archive.

##Poetry and Musical Lyrics

More than 100 poems which RG has composed have their origins in the great presence of oral tradition in the Mozambican and Portuguese peoples. An analyst of African poetry perceives that in his poems with African themes RG "sets in motion the legacy of his experience and maintains poetry as a dialogue with the land and/or the peoples of his country (...) with a dialogic form of the best African poetry." [10] A significant number of poems revolve around the identitarian question; at times the concern appears linked to themes of love and death. Important among his political poems is *Cuba, cemitério de cowboy: carta aberta a John Álamo Wayne*. During the experience of the Mozambican civil war, he wrote poems critical of the struggle and the effect of the violence on the Mozambican people.

Among his lyrics *Fado Tropical* is well-known: a partnership between him and Chico Buarque de Holanda for the musical *Calabar, elogio da traição*, at the beginning of the 1970s. It establishes an original relationship between Brazil and Portugal. Another politicized and relevant song, with the Latin-American perspective for which RG is known is *E Daí?*, written in partnership with Milton Nascimento. The lyrics shows a vision of unity in underdeveloped - a popular term at the time

- Latin American countries. Nelson Motta noted Afro-Brazilian syncretism in some of his refrains; an example, *Reza,* one of the first partnerships with Edu Lobo.

VIDEO

View online: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHQFmBrjLCM

Version of *Fado Tropical* sung by Chico Buarque and Ruy Guerra

Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHQFmBrjLCM

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge4eu4C_gD4

Version of *E Daí?* sung by Milton Nascimento

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge4eu4C_gD4

NOTES

1 Serge Daney, a critic from *Cahiers du cinéma*, in an article about the film *Erêndira* in *Libération* on 21/11/1983 refers to RG as "*cet excellent cinéaste-voyageur*" (That excellent travelling filmmaker).

2 Recently the Mozambiquan writer Mia Couto, in some interviews, has stated multiple times the great influence of Brazilian culture on Mozambique.

3 For example, in a column in *Jornal do Brasil* on 20/03/2018 http://www.jb.com.br/artigo/noticias/2018/03/20/terra-sem-lei/

4 See the reasons for refusal in Borges (2017), pp. 164-166.

5 See Xavier (1997). See also on the Internet a recent analytical review from 12/07/2012 by Carlos Natálio: "Os deuses e os Mortos (1970) de Ruy Guerra".

6 See the interview in *O Homem que Matou John Wayne* and various other interviews of the journalist.

7 See Estève (1984).

8 Some of his poems and talks deal with the importance of the word in his artistic production, characterizing it as his boat, his bridge, his last trench, etc.

9 Dom Quixote de Lugar Nenhum. In: ENCICLOPÉDIA Itaú Cultural de Arte e Cultura Brasileiras. São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2018. Available at: <http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/evento487716/dom-quixote-de-lugar-nenhum>. Accessed on 7 Aug. 2018. Enciclopedia Entry. ISBN: 978-85-7979-060-7.

10 See CHAVES, Rita. *Ruy Guerra: a poesia entre os seus*. Lecture presented at the International conference *Ruy Guerra et la pensée critique des image*, Paris, 7-9 oct. 2015.