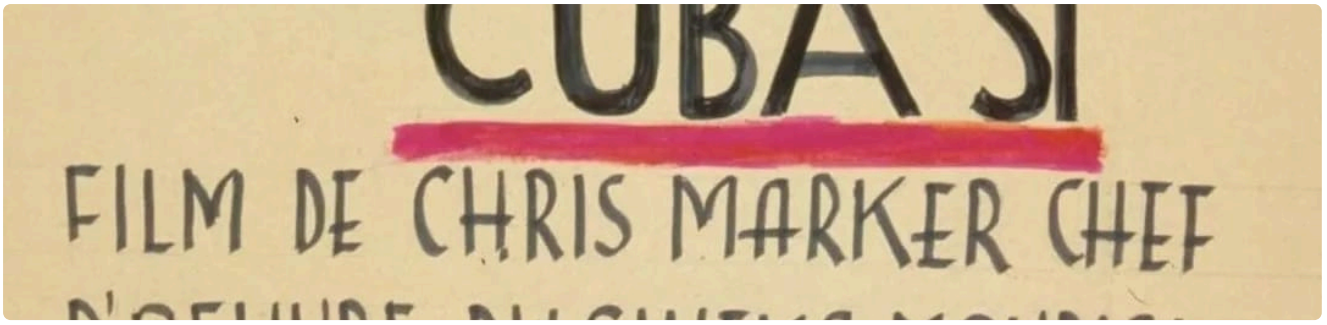
trans atlantic cultures
Cultural Histories of the Atlantic World 18th–21st Centuries

ISSN 2739-6614
transatlantic-cultures.org



The Transatlantic Voyages of Chris Marker

Carolina Amaral de Aguiar

This article studies transatlantic networks established by film director Chris Marker. Whereas it seems not possible to restrict him to the label of 'Transatlantic filmmaker,' it can be said that some of the most solid bridges he created in his trajectory crossed this ocean, especially with regards to his interest in 1960s and 1970s Latin America.

TRANSLATION	Eoin O'Neill
PUBLISHED	September 4, 2025
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE	English
AVAILABLE IN	English, Portuguese
TOPICS	Cinema
SPACES AND PLACES	North Atlantic · South Atlantic
PERIODS	The Atlantic Space Within Globalization
KEYWORDS	cinema, documentary, travel, cuban revolution, popular unity government, 1960s
PERMANENT LINK	https://transatlantic-cultures.org/en/records/the-transatlantic-voyages-of-chris-marker/

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Marker, a travelling filmmaker

The wide-ranging filmography of Chris Marker (1921-2012), including both the films he directed and those in which he collaborated, cuts across various historic events and landmarks of the second half of the twentieth century. Constantly remembered as one of the exponents of the film-essay, since his works were characterized by a personal tone in the link between images and text, the French filmmaker was one of the cinema directors who most travelled to and filmed distinct regions around the world: France, Sweden, Germany, Iceland, Greece, the Soviet Union, Slovenia, Bosnia, Israel, Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, the United States, Cuba, Chile, Bolivia, Mexico, and Brazil. In this sense, Marker can be defined as a cultural mediator who, through his own circulation and his works, caused important cultural transference in the field of cinema.

Many of Chris Marker's documentaries can be seen as travel films. He is described in the texts about his cinematography as a traveler, as someone who constructs a particular perspective of the world and politics through encountering cultures and subjects different from their own place of enunciation. Films such as *Dimanche à Pekin* (1956), *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958), *Cuba si* (1961), *Le mystère Koumiko* (1965), *Si j'avait quatre dromadaires* (1966), and *Sans soleil* (1982) can be seen as audiovisual diaries of travel which marked a personal vision present in their images, editing, and commentary. The question of experience, of spatial and cultural alterity also appear in Marker's photography, as is clear in the photographic books *Coréennes* (1959), *Le dépays* (1982), and *Staring back* (2007). This traveler identity is strengthened by bibliographic data: between 1954 and 1958, he was editor of the series *Petite Planète*, travel guides launched by *Editions Seuil*, linking essays by writers with photographs of the countries visited.

VIDEO

View online: https://archive.org/details/ChrisMarkerSansSoleil1

Sans soleil (1982), by Chris Marker, a film-essay which uses shots filmed by him in France, Iceland, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Japan.

Source: https://archive.org/details/ChrisMarkerSansSoleil1

This characteristic of Marker's work, linked to his socialist activism (although he was never a member of any party), demarcates an internationalist conception of the idea of revolution. In this context, the Atlantic world is one of the central scenarios in which he circulates in the aim of witnessing, with his cinema, social processes and political ruptures. While it is not possible to restrict him to the label of a "Transatlantic filmmaker," it can be said that some of the most solid bridges he constructed in his trajectory crossed this ocean, especially in relation to his interest in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. This text thus seeks to map some of the American networks established by Marker.

Two moments of Cuba by Chris Marker

When the Latin American presence is analyzed in Chris Marker's filmography, the countries which appear with the greatest recurrence are Chile and Cuba. Not by chance these two countries were the stage of paradigmatic revolutions in the second half of the twentieth century which had great international reverberations as alternative projects to the Soviet model discredited by the dissemination of the crimes of Stalinism. Marker was one of the European intellectuals who saw in the Cuban Revolution (1959) and later in the Popular Unity government (1970-1973) an impulse for new internationalist revolutionary strategies. In these regions, the French filmmaker created ties of friendship and cooperation with Latin American

filmmakers, who would be fundamental in the consolidation of cinematographic institutions in Latin America (such as *Instituto del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* (ICAIC) in Cuba and *Escuela de Artes de la Comunicación* (EAC) in Chile), the promotion of Latin American cinema in Europe, and (particularly in the Chilean case) the welcoming of filmmakers in exile. Marker also transformed these processes into opportunities to reflect on the directions of the left in France and his own political activism.

Like many aspects of his life, his first contact with Latin American involves a certain mystery. In the Cd-ROM *Immemory* (1997), one of Marker's incursions in new medias, he presents a series of photos and documents about his time in *Colegio de La Salle* in Havana in the 1930s. According to him, his family saw the fact that his uncle, Anton, was on the island as a form of inserting Marker in this elite school which had the colonialist mission of propagating French culture. In relation to this experience he stated: "The outcome, it must be said, was rather different: for them, the first in a long series of disappointments. And for me, the first look at an island that would count so much in my life" (*Immemory*, 1997). Whether this link with Cuba was created posteriori by a Marker who frequently promoted a hermetic personality of himself or whether the filmmaker actually had a Cuban adolescence is difficult to know. However, the above citation is symptomatic of a perspective towards Latin America which proposed to invert the traditional flux of the metropole (Europe) towards the colony (America) to seek in the old colonial territories a political and cultural protagonism.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_QfK8pfbHo

> Percurso pelo Cd-ROM *Immemory* (1997), by Chris Marker.
>
> **Source:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_QfK8pfbHo

As a filmmaker, Marker was in Cuba for the second anniversary of the Cuban Revolution at the invitation of ICAIC [1], between December 1960 and January 1961. His visit was the fruit of the policy of this institute which consisted of attracting renowned names from worldwide cinematography who could collaborate with the training of filmmakers in the country. Moreover, the international opening of ICAIC sought to disseminate abroad the achievements of the Revolution, feeding on the interest which Fidel Castro and his companions had awoken in the left around the world. In addition to Marker, French intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Gérard Philipe, and Agnès Varda visited the island at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s.

The principal fruit of Marker's stay in post-revolutionary Cuba was the documentary *Cuba si* (1961) celebrating the victory of the guerrillas. The majority of the shots used in the film were taken in Havana, Zapata, and Las Villas with a 16-millimetre camera by Marker himself, assisted by a Cuban team, including names such as Dervis Pastor Espinosa, Jorge Fraga, Saúl Yelin, Juan Vilar, and Eduardo Manet. The latter published the article "Tres semanas de trabajo junto a Chris Marker," [2] in *Cine cubano*, in which he highlighted some of Marker's technical procedures which could be learned by young Cubans, such as the rapid register, the insertion of the camera in daily life, and the preference for human figures. The text is an example of how there was, on the part of ICAIC, an attempt to find a legacy to be extracted from Marker's visit. Despite this, the impact of *Cuba si* on Cuban filmography is difficult to measure, even more so since the film was only exhibited in the island in 1963.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNdsK5WEh_M

Cuba si (1961), a film by Chris Marker shot in Cuba in January 1961.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNdsK5WEh_M

In France, *Cuba si* was a film that was much commented on, above all due to the controversy which caused its banning in 1961, resulting in many people taking public positions on it. [3] The argument used by the censor was that it was an "apology for the Castro regime" and "ideological propaganda." Only in 1963 was the exhibition of *Cuba si* allowed, at a moment when the frisson caused by the Cuban Revolution in France had begun to weaken. The exaltation of guerrilla warfare in the context of the Algerian War was another argument used by those opposed to censorship to explain the delay in the documentary from being allowed to be freely shown. *Cuba si* actually celebrated the Revolution, defending the existence of a union between the revolutionaries and the people which clashed which arguments of European opponents who saw Fidel Castro as a dictator.



Poster announcing the exhibition of *Cuba si* in France.

Source: Gallica

A much less optimist reading of the Revolution appeared in the second of Marker's documentaries about Cuba, *La bataille des dix millions* (1970). [4] This film does not have the lyricism of his previous Cuban work, to the contrary it is basically composed of speeches by Castro submitted to a few cuts. The theme dealt with is the campaign for the production of 10 million tons of sugar, a target established by the Cuban government in 1969 as a form of overcoming the severe economic crisis affecting the country. The challenge to reach this production target – never attained – is seen in the historiography as one of the episodes marking the greater dependence of Cuba in relation to the Soviet Union. *La bataille des dix millions* proposes to present a self-criticism of the left which justified the failure of the campaign, attributing it basically to underdevelopment and US imperialism. It can be said that Marker here adopted a discourse aligned with the official discourse of the Cuban government.

The context of the making of *La bataille des dix millions* was very distinct from that of *Cuba si*. It was made when some French intellectuals had broken with Cuba due to episodes which signaled a new direction for the Revolution, such as Castro's support for the invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968) and the so called "Padilla Case." [5] (1971). The 1970 film thus appears to dialogue principally with the European left, seeking to give a further chance to the Cuban government. In 1971, however, Marker sent a letter to Alfredo Guevara (first director of ICAIC who remained in the position from 1959 to 1983) in which he opposed the imprisonment of Heberto Padilla, describing the forced confession as "grotesque" and "implausible." [6] In the film *Le fond de l'air est rouge* Cuba once again becomes a theme present in the work of Marker, this time with a much more critical perspective, especially of the figure of Fidel Castro. [7]

The 1970 Cuban documentary was put together exclusively with audiovisual material sent by ICAIC to Marker, with extracts from *Noticieros ICAIC Latinoamericanos*, coordinated by Santiago Álvarez. This exchange between the French director and Cuba was also responsible for the two short films he directed about Brazil: *On vous parle du Brésil: tortures* (1969) and *On vous parle du Brésil: Carlos Marighela* (1970). [8] The former consists of interviews with Brazilian exiles who reached the island in 1969, released in

exchange for the US ambassador, Charles Burke Elbrick, kidnapped by Ação Libertadora Nacional (ALN) and Movimento Revolucionário Oito de Outubro (MR-8) in the context of the Brazilian military dictatorship. The second short film is dedicated to the memory of Carlos Marighella, murdered by the military in 1969. It is worth emphasizing that when the film was being made Marighella had become well known in France due to the 1970 French translation of *Minimanual do guerrilheiro urbano* (1969), seen as a practical guide to guerilla warfare.

VIDEO

View online: http://www.ina.fr/video/VDD13021574/fidel-corta-cana-fidel-coupe-la-canne-a-sucre-video.html

Episode of *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano* from 1969, in which Fidel Castro appears cutting sugarcane, one of the archive materials sent by Cuba used in *La bataille des dix millions*.

Source: http://www.ina.fr

In addition to an interview with an exile, *On vous parle du Brésil: Carlos Marighela* uses audiovisual sequences and photos taken in Brazil, such as the scenes of the burial of the student Edson Luís de Lima Souto, murdered by the dictatorship and filmed by Eduardo Escorel. This Brazilian filmmaker stated that he received information, upon not finding his film in the place where it had been kept, that the material had been sent to Cuba [9]. The source appeared reliable because these images, as well as those of exiles interviewed in *On vous parle du Brésil: tortures*, were originally used in episodes of *Noticieros ICAIC Latinoamericanos*. To complete this, in 1970 Alfredo Guevara wrote to a Brazilian to whom he referred as "Dirceu" informing the latter than Marker had finished a documentary about the torture inflicted by the Brazilian dictatorship and that he intended to show it on French television. [10] These three non-filmic pieces of evidence lead us to believe that the short films made about Brazil used the audiovisual material sent by ICAIC to France.

On the other hand, the analysis of these documentaries and the existence of this network show that the French filmmaker had become an important voice in the denunciation of repression in Brazil (as would happen later in relation to the Chilean dictatorship), establishing a discourse consonant with the support of the armed struggle that Cuba defended at that moment as a form of defeating the Brazilian military. The filmic analysis of these short films, especially *On vous parle du Brésil: Carlos Marighela*, reveals a strong emphasis on the armed struggle as a strategy to fight the authoritarian regime. It is worth noting that at the end of the 1960s many Brazilian exiles did military training provided by the Cuban government, which reaffirmed its objective of spreading guerrilla insurrections on the continent.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/embed/RRayfbGVuVI?si=3uNFJB3iWlIrAiGM

On vous parle du Brésil: tortures, a short film by Chris Marker which denounced the repression of the Brazilian dictatorship.

Support for Allende and solidarity with Chile

The ties between Chris Marker and ICAIC showed that traveling to Latin America served to establish solid and long-lasting exchanges, which took the form of cinematographic readings of the political processes underway, such as revolutions and dictatorships. This movement become clearly visible in the analysis of

the initiatives about Chile which were established supporting the union between socialism and democracy represented by Popular Unity and later the victims of the 1973 coup.

Marker's first contact with Chile goes back to the beginning of the 1960s, when he wrote the commentary present in *À Valparaiso* (1962), by Joris Ivens. On that occasion, the French filmmaker was not in the country, but created an essay-like description highlighting the social inequality and the evils of colonialism imprinted on the landscape of the Chilean city. Marker's trip to Chile occurred a decade later in 1972, when he accompanied Costa-Gavras' entourage, then filming *State of Siege* (1972) in Santiago. According to Marker, the initial idea was to make a documentary about Salvador Allende's winning power, however, instead of a film about Popular Unity, the time spent there served to create ties which would last for years, during the Chilean exile:

> *I made a friend for life: Carmen Castillo. I re-encountered Mattelart, whose heterodox analyses seduced me, and Patricio Guzmán, who had just finished El primer año. After other meetings with other filmmakers, we agreed that this was the best film to inform the French public, and on my return I made the VF [French version]* [19]

The contacts made in Chile in 1972 resulted in a filmography which helped spread knowledge of Allende and international accusations of dictatorial repression after the coup of 11 September 1973. On Marker's death in 2012, Patricio Guzmán published a text where he remembered the importance of the French filmmaker for his project of creating a testimonial cinema able to take into account the transformations and conflicts carried out by Popular Unity. [11] In addition to this text, widespread documentation present in the archives of ISKRA (Image, Son, Kinescope, Réalisation Audiovisuelle) [12] shows that Marker and a group of producers linked to him functioned as disseminators and distributors of the work of Guzmán in Europe. Marker made a French version for Guzmán's documentary *El primer año* (1972), given the title of *La première année* (1973). The changes consisted of the inclusion of a prologue, some cuts, and the translation of text followed by the insertion of new voiceovers in French. There are also records that a French version of the documentary *La respuesta de octubre* (Patricio Guzmán, 1972) began to be made.

Text "Lo que debo a Chris Marker," written and distributed by Patricio Guzmán after the death of Chris Marker in 2012.



Advertisement for the opening of the French version (*La première année,* 1973) of the film *El primer año* (1972), by Patricio Guzmán. The invitation includes a drawing by Jean-Michel Folon.

Source: https://www.patricioguzman.com/es/peliculas/el-primer-ano

When the coup occurred in Chile, Marker's producer was negotiating with Guzmán and EAC (responsible for the Chilean production) to distribute in Europe and French-speaking countries his third film about the Allende government, provisionally entitled *El tercer año*. Marker played a fundamental role in providing film for the Chilean team in a moment when the international blockage of imports hindered access to film material. The shots taken in 1973 did not become a documentary about Popular Unity, as was expected, but were used in the trilogy *A batalha do Chile* (1975, 1976, and 1979) by Guzmán, one of the most eloquent cinematographic reports about the coup. The first part of this film began to be produced in France by ISKRA, however, attempts to fund it with funds from European television were not successful, which was overcome by ICAIC's initiative in making the project feasible. *A batalha do Chile* can thus be seen as a cultural product of exile, in which actors from France, Chile, and Cuba were involved.

After the coup, Chris Marker was one of the foreign filmmakers who engaged in formulated audiovisual denunciations about what happened in Chile, as well as building a positive memory of Allende. In the 1970s, Marker was close to Régis Debray who, after being released from prison in Bolivia, was welcomed in Chile in December 1970, by the Popular Unity government. Until the coup, Debray was one of the mediators between the Latin American country and France. In this context, the journalist had a copy of *Compañero presidente* (1971), a documentary directed by Miguel Littin which consisted of a conversation

between Debray and Allende. Thanks to this copy, Marker was able to remount the sequences to make *On vous parle du Chili: ce que disait Allende* (1973). This was a short film which sought to highlight the ideas of Allende in the immediate post-coup context.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmDLbOinf-Q

On vous parle du Chili: ce que disait Allende (1973), a film by Chris Marker mounted on extracts from *Compañero presidente* (1971), by Miguel Littin.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmDLbOinf-Q

In his visit to Chile, Marker strengthened his ties with the Belgian sociologist Armand Mattelart, who lived in the country. After 11 September 1973, Mattelart returned to France, where he came to defend the argument that the Chilean right had built a "front" in Leninist molds which involved distinct sectors of society, creating widespread support for the overthrow of Allende. This was defended in the collective documentary *La spirale* (1976), resulting from an initiative by Marker to denounce what was going on in Chile. Also participating in this film were the editors Jacqueline Meppiel and Valérie Mayoux and the Brazilian Silvio Tendler. It is an archive documentary which principally uses shots taken in Allende's Chile by both vehicles of the left and right, by filmmakers and television stations from distinct parts of the world.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnZI4RX5Fh4

La spirale (1976), a collective film in which the sociologist Armand Mattelart and Chris Marker denounced the coup in Chile.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnZI4RX5Fh4

It can be argued that Marker's most authorial film about the Chilean coup is *L'ambassade* (1974). Curiously, it is also one of his few fictional films – alongside *La jetée* (1962) and *Level 5* (1997). More than a fictional film, *L'ambassade* is a false documentary which initially presents itself to the public as a register made on super-8 by a refugee taking asylum in a foreign embassy surrounded by soldiers. The film is organized as a type of audiovisual diary in the first person, with a narrator who comments on the images as if they were the daily registers of those taking asylum in that place. The final scene, one of the few which show the outside, reveals the presence of the Eiffel Tower seen from the window, telling the viewer that the previous shots were not made in Chile, but in France. It is curious to note that at no moment does the narrator (who is also the *cameraman*) state that he is on Chilean territory. However, *L'ambassade* contains various elements which induce a reading that the episodes presented take place in this Latin American country. Evidentially, the most important of these is the contemporary historic context of the production, since it was already known that the embassies played an important role in providing protection after the 1973 coup.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBrUt3NajYo

L'ambassade (1974), a 'false-documentary' by Marker which suggests that it is a recording on Super-8 found in a foreign embassy in Chile after the coup.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBrUt3NajYo

According to Marker, *L'ambassade* was structured according to the "Kulechov effect," since the images recorded do not actually present Chile, but rather a filmic time and space constructed in the editing and by the voice over which brings the viewer to the Chilean post-dictatorial context. In practice the super-8 images were all shot in Paris, more precisely in the apartment of Lou, wife of the Cuban painter Wifredo Lam, during an encounter between Marker and his friends (some of whom were Chilean exiles). After this he proposed a series of activities and discussion which resulted in situations whose original meaning was altered in the editing. Thus, for example, a "real" debate about the Arab-Israeli conflict between Carole Roussopoulos and Édouard Luntz appears in fiction as a heated discussion between the character Carole, adept of the armed struggle, and Luco, member of the Communist Party. Marker approximates, in *L'ambassade*, the political contexts of Chile and France, at a time when the French left sought, through a union which included the communist and socialist parties, to reach power via electoral means – in a similar form to what had been done previously by the Chilean Popular Unity.

Finally, it is also worth noting that Chile is a constant theme in *Le fond de l'air est rouge*. This documentary dedicates its last block ("From Chile to... what, in fact?) to the expectations and uncertainties generated by Popular Unity and its downfall within the global left.

VIDEO

View online: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4812770p

Extracts from the script of *Le fond de l'air est rouge*, published in 1978 by François Maspero with the subtitle "scene from the Third World War: 1967-1977".

Source: Gallica

Other incursions in the Americas

Despite the weight which Cuba and Chile have in Marker's Transatlantic work, it should be understood that his interest in the Americas was not restricted to these two countries. In *Le fond de l'air est rouge* one of the principal questions is the repression suffered by guerrillas and the emergence of a new left in the decade after 1968, formulating a debate in which Latin America acquired importance. In addition to Cuba and Chile, the documentary is thus concerned with Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Bolivia, and Brazil. Similarly, the United States is one of the countries most commented on in the film, whether because of its imperialist policies (shown in the episodes of the Vietnam War and the death of Che Guevara, for example), or as an emergency stage for a youth who had attributed to themselves political protagonism.

Some of the images used by Marker in this archive documentary were made by him in Bolivia in 1967. He had gone there in the company of the editor François Maspero to pressurize the Bolivian government to release Régis Debray, imprisoned for accompanying Che Guevara's guerrillas. The images were made with a *beaulieu* (one of the first recording devices compatible with cassette tapes), but would only be edited ten years later, in *Le fond de l'air est rouge*. After the death of Marker, Maspero published a statement in

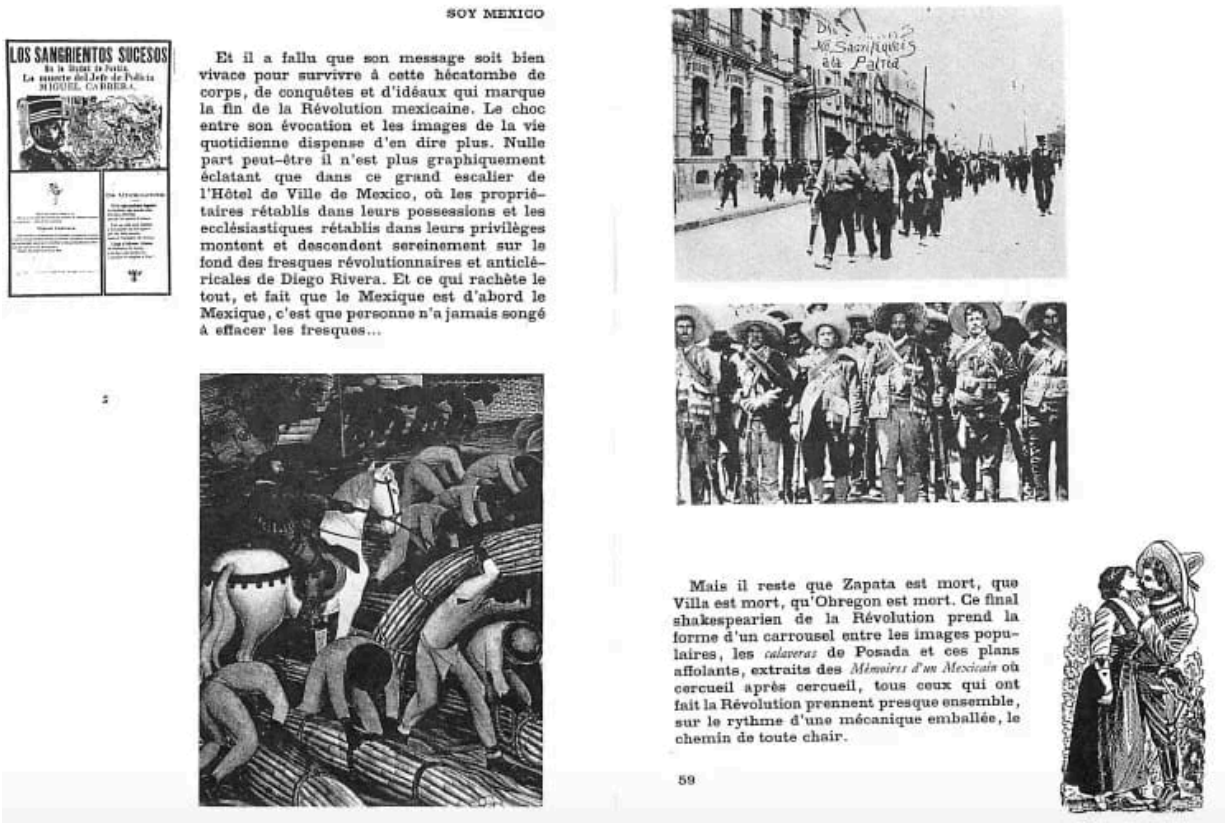
which he told of the tension faced by the pair because of the US soldiers who accompanied them on the flight from Lima to La Paz and who shared the same hotel as them. [13] It was on this trip that the close friendship between the filmmaker and editor developed, which would result in the film *On vous parle de Paris: Maspero, les mots ont un sens* (1970).

Statement by François Maspero on the death of Marker, in which he narrates their journey to Bolivia in 1967.

In addition to those already mentioned, another Latin American country received attention from Marker: Mexico. He published two books entitled *Commentaires* (1961) and *Commentaires 2* (1967), [14] which contained texts written for films that had been made (such as *Cuba si*, which appeared in the first volume) and comments on imaginary films. Among the unmade projects was *Soy México* (1965), whose title was possibly related to *Soy Cuba* (1964), by Mikhail Kalatozov, although there was no direct aesthetic dialogue between Marker's project about Mexico and this Soviet fiction made in partnership with ICAIC. *Soy México* is in the second volume of *Commentaires* and the text is accompanied by historic drawings and photos brought to France by François Reichenbach or Marker – according to Catherine Lupton, he had gone to Mexico in 1953 in a UNESCO delegation. [15]

The central question for Marker in the comment on Mexico is Mexican identity, for which the Spanish conquest and proximity with the United States are constituent aspects. He suggests that the *cliché* that one has on the outside about Mexicans is related to the self-image projected by the country itself. Marker thus evokes the figure of Malinche, the indigenous woman who accompanied Hernán Córtez and collaborated for the success of the conquest, as an identity metaphor for a Mexico constructed in accordance with the vision and interests of the "other."

In *Soy Mexico*, Marker presents a paradoxical country, in which a revolutionary peasant, such as Emiliano Zapata, could be "sanctified" by Hollywood. Or, where the Hôtel de Ville in which the large landholders and ecclesiastics stayed could have a Diego Rivera mural about the Revolution. In the text, he seeks to go beyond the Mexico which sells itself as a craftwork mask to seek the essence of the country, formed by elements it was intended to hide: the indigenous poor. "I am also Mexico" is the phrase repeated in Marker's comment, as a form of putting in evidence those it was intended to exclude.



Reproduction of the pages of Soy México, text published in Commentaires II (1967).

Source: https://monoskop.org

The United States was very present in Marker's filmography. Predominantly, the country appears as a protagonist in the colonialist relations which he sought to break in a large part of his work. Nevertheless, he does not reduce the US to the role of the principal agent of imperialism: the emergence of a counterculture, young and pacifist, is also a focus of interest for him.

As was done with Mexico, Marker dedicated a non-filmed script to the exploration of US identity. *L'Amérique rêve* (1959), published in the first volume of *Commentaires* (1961), was strongly incorporated by François Reichenbach in his film *L'Amérique insolite* (1960). According to Catherine Lupton, [16] Reichenbach kept Marker off the credits despite the evident coincidences between his script and the latter's comments. In response, upon publishing the text in 1961, Marker inserts imaginary credits in which he states that if it were a concrete film, he would chose Reichenbach as the *cameraman*.

L'Amérique rêve uses a series of photographs, publicity announcements, and illustrations which compose a mosaic of the *American Dream*. This mosaic is formed through elements such as the myth of the West (symbolized by the *cowboy*), the beauty of youth, artificial worlds (such as Disneyland or the Ghost Town), *junk food*, comic heroes, James Dean... This self-constructed identity of the US, linked to the idea of a country looking to the future, awakens in Marker's vision, a violent social aspect. The text ends in a premonitory tone, stating that this "American dream" could be transformed into "our" dream (in other words, that of Europe).



L'AMÉRIQUE RÊVE

Dans un monde bien ordonné, les animaux participent à la hiérarchie humaine. Nous voyons même ici clairement coexister les deux races fondamentales de la société américaine : la race chien, bienveillante, sociable, un peu excessive dans ses démonstrations, et la race chat, plus secrète, plus droite, plus noire, et qui dans son immobilité attentive recèle bien d'autres réserves de mouvement et de violence.

Les enfants de la violence, les hommes-chats, ne manquent pas d'ingéniosité dans l'organisation de leurs plaisirs. Ils ont inventé les hot-rods, des espèces de brancards roulants mus par un orgue, et qu'un starter sauteur fait partir comme des balles.

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Chaque dimanche, l'Amérique résonne ainsi du bruit des jeux basés sur la violence, et plus particulièrement la violence mécanique. Aux quatre coins du pays des autos flambent, des motos s'envolent, le craquement des os prend le relais de la friture traditionnelle. Les moins déterminés se soumettent passivement à la violence des machines. « En d'autres temps, ç'auraient été des supplices*. »

* Jean Cocteau.

Dans tous ces divertissements, l'accident reste — accidentel. Il fallait bien imaginer l'accident délibéré, le ragtime des queues-de-poisson, la polka des Catastrophes : le jeu des Stock-Cars. Comme si cette civilisation basée sur le confort prenait un plaisir pervers à voir bafouer et démolir les symboles du confort.

Les figures du massacre ne sont pas gratuites. Ici, il s'agit de reconstituer en trois coups la forme du morceau de steak appelé T-bone, en forme de T. Troisième voiture, troisième branche du T. Voilà... La cérémonie est finie, les entrailles des victimes dévoilent un chiffre, et les enfants apprennent que les voitures meurent aussi.

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Reproduction of the pages of the imagined film L'Amérique rêve, published in Commentaires (1961).

Source: https://monoskop.org

The United States is also a protagonist in *Loin du Vietnam* (1967), a film about the Vietnam War. This documentary emerged out of Marker's proposal to create a collective audiovisual product which could show solidarity with the Vietnamese people. Participating in it were Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, William Klein, Claude Lelouch, Agnès Varda, Joris Ivens, and Michèle Ray, amongst others. *Loin du Vietnam* can be read as supporting "Third World" liberation movements (of which the Cuban Revolution was also part), which exposes US imperialism as an evil to be fought against. This film would become of great importance in his work because, due to the efforts to produce it collectively, it was responsible for the creation of SLON production company (created in 1967, but only made official the following year).

Despite the denunciations of imperialism, it cannot be said that Chris Marker had a single reading of the United States. The only film recorded by him fully in this country is *La sixième face du Pentagone* (1968). Once again it was made in partnership with François Reichenbach, who codirected. Both were in Washington to record the protest against the Vietnam War held on 21 October 1968, when thousands of young people marched to the Pentagon in what became known as the Pentagon March. The camera moves among the protesters, taking many close-up shots of what was happening, producing tension. Along with the images of the director are some from third parties, such as Marc Riboud's famous photo in which a woman points a flower at armed police.

VIDEO

View online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpMvGhGp20w

La sixième face du Pentagone (1968), a record of the Pentagon March of 21 October 1968.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpMvGhGp20w

In addition to the direct sound and the speeches given on the march, Marker wrote a commentary which complements the imagens – there are few interviews. In his text, he defines the act as a new form of politics, a landmark in what is usually called direct action. The images and the voiceover materialize the difficulty in holding a pacifist march which is not restricted to protest, but also proposes an action: the invasion of the Pentagon. After seeing this objective partially achieved, Marker asks what was the effect of this event on US society and on the war itself, concluding that the great legacy was a transformation of some university students. For this the film draws on the emblematic figure of Che Guevara to establish a connection between US social movements, Latin American guerrillas, and anti-colonial struggles: the face of the guerilla murdered the year before the march is widely present on the posters and banners wielded against the war, while his name is repeated in the chorus chanted by young people from the "first world."

Many of the images in *Loin du Vietnam* and *La sixième face du Pentagone* were reedited ten years later in *Le fond de l'air est rouge*. In the 1978 documentary Marker critically reviews these demonstrations, as well as those by young French people in May 1968, to question if the victories of these acts were not more symbolic than real. *Le fond de l'air est rouge* looks at, through archive images, themes that are recurrent in Chris Marker's American filmography, such as guerrilla warfare and the decolonization movements; imperialism, wars, and military coups; student protests in the "first world" at the end of the 1960s; and finally the emergence of a new left in the 1970s.

Here it was sought to trace a panorama to indicate that, despite the strong presence of Cuba and Chile in Marker's 1960a and 1970s filmography, his cartographical travels through the Americas have ramifications not restricted to these two countries. In addition to multiple regions of the continent having been themes of his films, Marker established ties of sociability with filmmakers from various countries. One example was the cooperation between the Frenchman and the Colombian filmmaker Carlos Álvarez. SLON distributed his documentary *Un día yo pregunté* (1970) in Europe, acting in a similar form to what would be done later in relation to Patricio Guzmán. *Le fond de l'air est rouge* uses extracts from other Colombian films, such as *¿Qué es la democracia?* (1971), by Álvarez, and *Camilo Torres Restrepo* (1966), by Diogo León Giraldo. [17] The presence of these images made by Latin Americans in Marker's archive documentaries testifies to a fertile exchange in the field of activist cinema, the study of whose links has not yet been exhausted.

The Transatlantic World of Marker

A complete mapping of the Transatlantic connections of Marker also has to consider that Africa is a continent present on his horizon. Although this text focuses on the director's incursions in the Americas, it is worth commenting briefly about how African themes and images entered his filmography. African art was the theme of the one of his documentaries, co-directed with Alain Resnais: *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953), made after being commissioned by the organization *Présence Africaine*. The documentary principally consists of shots of African pieces exhibited in France, accompanied by a commentary – written by Marker – critical of the European colonialist perspective towards African culture. For this reason, *Les*

statues meurent aussi had trouble with the censors, who only allowed a version with many cuts be allowed shown in 1957. The directors chose not to show it in these conditions and only at the beginning of the 1960s did the film start to circulate.

VIDEO

View online: https://archive.org/details/LesStatuesMeurentAussi1953ChrisMarkerAlainResnais

> *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953), made in partnership with Alain Resnais, was one of the first films of Chris Marker.
> **Source:** Archive.org

Africa also appeared in the central axis of the narrative of *Sans soleil* (1982). In this documentary, the continent is presented as the other face of Japan: while the former suffers from the evils of underdevelopment, the Japanese are victims of an extreme development which has impacted on its millenary culture. The film is structured around the voiceover commentary of a traveler, the character Sandor Krasna, and uses footage from distinct parts of the world (as well as Africa and Japan, a shot that is repeated comes from Island). Marker used audiovisual material made by other filmmakers in Guinea-Bissau, as is indicated in the credits, in names such as Sana Na N'Hada, Mario Marret, and Eugenio Bentivoglio. It is interesting to note that Sana was one of the filmmakers from Guiné-Bissau sent by Amílcar Cabral to study cinema in Cuba in the 1960s. It is possible that É ICAIC acted as an intermediary in the relationship which the Guinean established with Marker. The latter made more than one trip to the African country to debate films in the National Institute of Cinema (INC), founded in 1978 in Guinea-Bissau. [18] The relationship between the French filmmaker and Sana connect in some manner the three continents which border the Atlantic.

Les statues meurent aussi and *Sans soleil* are examples of how Marker's filmography sought to expose the colonialist relations present in the connections between France and other Atlantic territories. Marker constantly valorized African and Latin American culture in relation to its inventive and liberational potential. He is thus an example of a vision which sought to break Europe's hegemony in relation to its colonies or former colonies. However, Marker does this at the same time that he demarcates that his own point of view starts from a place of metropolitan enunciation, from which he sought to move away through the experience of travel, seen as an expansion of perspective. This exercise is accompanied by the desire for a revolutionary liberation which could explode in non-European territories, but also on the Old Continent itself.

Revolutions – whether they are the fruit of armed struggle, as in Cuba, or derived from new institutional paths, as in Chile – are seen, in the Markerian filmography, as processes of transformation and rupture which positively shake the global order. The Latin American case thus occupies a special place in Marker's revolutionary imagination, in particular, and of the European left in a general manner, in the 1960s and 1970s due to its condition as the state of new left projects. Europe is one of the poles affected by this "Latin wave," which would find its parallel in the cinematographic field in the context of new cinemas. Latin America was not his only inspiration, since for Marker, not only the Atlantic, but the entire planet is a connected territory in which the filmmaker challenges distances and frontiers.

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NOTES

1. ICAIC was the first of a series of cultural institutions created after the success of the revolutionaries with the object of disseminating a "new culture" compatible with the idea of the rupture intrinsic to this process.
2. Eduardo Manet, "Tres semanas de trabajo junto a Chris Marker", *Cine cubano* 4, (1960/1961): 24-33.
3. As an example: Samuel Lachize, "Symphonie pour un peuple libre", *L'Humanité*, Paris, 14 septembre 1963.
4. In the ICAIC archives, in the Chris Marker file, there is a typed page indicating that the list of films was updated on the visit of the French filmmaker to the island in March 1968: "Chris Marker: filmografía", Havana, ICAIC, [1968?]. ICAIC Centro do Documentation, file "Chris Marker". However, apart from this source, no other indications were found that Marker returned to Cuba after 1961.
5. "Caso Padilla" was the name given to the imprisonment of the writer Herberto Padilla, in 1971, after the publication of the book *Provocaciones* (1971), which criticized the Cuban government. His arrest caused strong criticism from the international community. Although this mobilization led to the release of Padilla, the act was followed by public self-criticism resulting from the pressure which collaborated with the diffusion of the image of an authoritarian Cuban state.
6. Alfredo Guevara, *¿Y si fuera una huella?* Epistolario, (Havana: Editorial Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, 2009).

7 Although the epistolary book *¿Y si fuera una huella?* (Guevara, 2009) is a collection of letters made by Guevara himself (and thus a partial selection), it is symptomatic that the last mention of Marker in the publication is the already mentioned 1971 letter to the Frenchman. This may be evidence that after this date the intense exchange between the two, which also involved the sending of film material, ended.

8 The original title of the documentary misspells the surname of the Brazilian revolutionary, who was called Carlos Marighella.

9 Information obtained in: Patrícia Machado and Thais Blank, "Eduardo Escorel e a política dos arquivos: notas sobre a trajetória de imagens de um cortejo fúnebre no Brasil de 1968", *Revista Brasileira de História da Mídia* 3, no 2, jul./dez. (2014): 193-197.

10 Guevara, *¿Y si fuera una huella?*, 214.

11 Patricio Guzmán, "Lo que debo a Chris Marker", *La fuga* 14, (2012).

12 An activist production company created by, amongst others, Chris Marker in 1974 through *Service de lancement des œuvres nouvelles* (SLON), existing since 1967.

13 Maspero's statement was published online in: Antoine Perraud, "Tous autour de Chris Marker", *Mediapart*, 26 novembre 2013.

14 Chris Marker, *Commentaires*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961) and *Commentaires II*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967).

15 Catherine Lupton, *Chris Marker: memories of the future*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2008) 98.

16 Lupton, *Chris Marker: memories of the future*, 66.

17 Information provided by Sergio Becerra, "En torno a Camilo Torres y el Movimiento Estudantil", *in* Mariano Mestman, (coord.), *Las rupturas del 68 en el cine de América Latina*, (Buenos Aires: Akal, 2016), 217-248.

18 Information provided by Fernando Arenas, "The Filmography of Guinea-Bissau's Sana Na N'Hada: From the Return of Amílcar Cabral to the Threat of Global Drug Trafficking," *Transnational Africas*, PLCS 30/31 (2017).

19 Chris Marker, [e-mail] 27 Oct. 2011, Paris [para] Carolina Amaral de Aguiar, Paris.