

Mediático is delighted to present a [second review](#) of a recent Mexican film written by [Olivia Cosentino](#) a PhD Student in Latin American Literatures and Cultures in the Spanish and Portuguese Department at the Ohio State University, where she is also concurrently studying for an MA in Film and Media Studies. Cosentino's research interests include youth and gender studies in post-época de oro Mexican cinema. (see her earlier essay on [Güeros](#) here).

ON VIENTO APARTE (ALEJANDRO GERBER BICECCI, 2014)

by Olivia Cosentino

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending the commercial premiere of *Viento aparte* (Alejandro Gerber Bicecci, 2014) at the Cineteca Nacional in Mexico City. I had been waiting to see this film since its festival debut because it fits into a previous research project of mine on the function of the contemporary Mexican youth road film. *Viento aparte*, however, does not fit my previous conclusions - that the form of the road movie allows for escape narratives in which youth explore and act upon desires, but these desires are ultimately dismissed and/or transformed to conform to the social order, exemplified by *Por la libre* (*Dust to Dust*, Juan Carlos de Llaca, 2000) and *Viaje redondo* (*Round Trip*, Gerardo Tort, 2009).^[1] Rather, *Viento aparte* is better compared with another socially conscious and critical Mexican youth road film: *Y tu mamá también* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2001).

Gerber Bicecci's film follows the journey of young siblings Omar (Sebastián Cobos), 15, and Karina (Valentina Buzzurro), 12, from Oaxaca to their grandmother's home in Paquimé after their mother falls ill during their family's beach vacation. This trajectory - *provincia* (Mexican territory outside of the capital) to Mexico City to more *provincia* - distinguishes *Viento aparte* from the typical Mexican youth road film whose protagonists escape from the confines of Mexico City to *provincia* and sometimes return to Mexico City (as in *Y tu mamá también*). I highlight this path (*provincia* - Mexico City - *provincia*) because of the

importance of place and space, especially the contrast between the perceptions of the capital city and the rest of Mexico, to the development of *Viento aparte*'s criticism of the *chilango* attitude towards provincial violence and Mexicans who live in the countryside.

Viento aparte offers similar social commentary to *Y tu mamá también*, but the difference between 2001 and 2014 is evident not only in the severity of Mexican reality, but also in Gerber Bicecci's choice to use forms of media, instead of a narrator, to make the audience aware of the country's problems. To put it lightly, Mexico at the turn of the century was not the same country that it is today. In *Y tu mamá también*, Julio (Bernal) and Tenoch (Luna) are inconvenienced by the traffic and pass the time farting around (literally) as the narrator tells us that a construction worker from Michoacán was struck by a speeding *pesero* while crossing the road. Later, Julio, Tenoch and Luisa (Verdú) are delayed by a group of *campesinos* who request monetary tributes for their town "queen," but the three are distracted by their conversation about sex. Cuarón's film witnesses the enormous disparity in wealth as well as the general ignorance towards and even dismissal of the impoverished communities outside of Mexico City by members of the middle and upper classes.

The incidents that we view in *Viento aparte* are much more brutal in nature. Omar and Karina's bus out of Oaxaca is stopped by a roadblock on the highway because of a group protesting the massacre of 39 people in Arroyo Rojo. I note the eerie foreshadowing as *Viento aparte* was filmed prior to the [disappearance of the 43 students](#) in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero in September 2014. More than foreshadowing, however, the film's narrative is symptomatic of the violence which is all too commonplace. Later in the film, the siblings start to fight after they get stuck at yet another bus station, but stop abruptly when they see a man hanging from the overpass on the highway, an emblematic image of violence and unrest (satirized in Luis Estrada's *La dictadura perfecta* [*The Perfect Dictatorship*, 2014]).



Image 1: From Luis Estrada's LA DICTADURA PERFECTA (The Perfect Dictatorship, 2014)



Image 2: From VIENTO APARTE

Unlike *Y tu mamá también*, whose narrative is mediated by a voice-of-God narrator who explains to the viewer the social reality to which Julio, Tenoch and Luisa are blind, Karina and Omar witness this reality firsthand and are bombarded by it on all platforms of media. They walk past printed “Missing” posters in the bus station in Chihuahua, the television reports news of 14 decapitated bodies, the radio DJ talks about the provincial violence and the photographer who documented the mass killing in Arroyo Rojo shows the siblings his grotesque photos at an Internet café in Oaxaca. *Viento aparte* documents this passage of time and presents a new Mexico characterized by the omnipresence of smartphones, social networking and televisions – at least, for the privileged sectors of society. We are reminded of this privilege when the photographer tells Omar and Karina that his photographs are “the only proof of the massacre.”

Despite this consciousness of violence, *Viento aparte* demonstrates the insensitivity and

indifference to the plights of the indigenous and lower classes by Mexico City dwellers. A good example of this is when Karina and Omar laugh at their indigenous driver's story about being deported from the U.S. after being caught in a 7/11, to which the driver takes great offense. Later in the film, we hear a man on the radio discussing the massacre in Arroyo Rojo, Oaxaca (the post-massacre chaos is witnessed by Omar and Karina after their bus is not allowed to pass) and what responsibility the *capitalinos* (capital city dwellers) have in the matter. He exclaims, "Provincial violence... and *we* are trapped in traffic," referring implicitly to the back-up caused by protesters who come to Mexico City to seek justice. (I note the relevance in terms of personal experience: just after writing this paragraph, I got on a bus that was delayed 40+ minutes because a protest shut down Paseo de la Reforma. Later, in the midst of horrendous traffic, my Uber driver told me with frustration that all the protesters come from the *provincia* - "pero, ¿qué culpa tengo yo?/ but, how am I at fault?") *Viento aparte* criticizes the self-important and apathetic attitudes of the *capitalinos* in their Mexico City bubble, paying attention to the protests only because they are an inconvenience and utilizing the Mexican countryside as a vacation getaway.

The *chilango* attitude seems to be: out of sight, out of mind, however, *Viento aparte* purposefully does the opposite; it visualizes the *provincia* and brings the violence to center stage by physically moving the narrative outside of Mexico City. It is important that Omar and Karina's final destination is Paquimé, indigenous ruins, and not DF, as it symbolizes a return to their past, quite literally as they are going to their grandmother's home. But the film's conclusion is not quite redemptive for the protagonists, rather, *Viento aparte* ends on open note, leaving space for the spectator to ponder the future of the siblings and also what is to come for Mexico as a whole.

Picture credits:

Featured Image: *Viento aparte*:

<http://blog.pterodactilo.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/viento.png>

Image 1: *La dictadura perfecta*: <https://tiempobullet.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/dp4.jpg>

Image 2: *Viento aparte* (man hanging): screenshot

from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RZsoVHEmAk>

Notes

[1] See “Configuring Desire and Social Order in the Contemporary Mexican Youth Road Film” in the forthcoming *The Latin American Road Film*, Eds. Verónica Garibotto and Jorge Pérez.

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