

“Start again, a thousand times, start again”

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translated by Mariana Bandarra

When was the last time you saw the lead characters embark on a flying carpet trip in a Brazilian film? And when was the first? *Triangulum* is the latest product of Berlin-based southern Brazilian couple Gustavo Jahn and Melissa Dullius. Filmed in Cairo, the film is a complete alien in the the scenario of our cinema (especially because it denies, through this literal and metaphorical fluctuation, any link with the country -- with any country, actually). It is a film that exists in the sky, where it borrowed its name from a constellation, and can only really be enjoyed like this, from the heights.



The picture starts with a prologue titled “A stroke of fate”, introducing the trio of outcasts we will follow from then on. One is wounded, the other blind, and the third holds a photo of herself wearing a Muslim chador in her hands. They meet



on a busy street somewhere in Europe when they get an angelical visit from a young woman who is the very embodiment of the idea of fate, and who will take them - in a stroke of magic (better known as optical effects) – to the busy streets of a major city in the East. The traffic through space is only half the mystery: blue lettering also announces they’ve been sent to the future.

The materiality of *Triangulum* has us believing the mystery. The flying carpet ride over Cairo is created by a simple worm’s eye view, overlapped with static shots of the city in the opposite direction (the characters’ subjective view from the city, from above), and the strolling sensation is achieved through mere suggestion -- the characters’ hair does not even have to fly in order to complete the forgery. The forgery is clear and that is *precisely* what the movie wants us to believe. The 16mm capture adds to the new images that same feeling we get when watching an old tape, as if the story of these three was seized from some archive booth, reunited and re-cut with new meaning. Even a gleaming triangle is placed floating above the earth, as if to lend the three friends the energy to carry on and embrace the mystery, but even they seem to be too tightly bound to this earth, at ground level, to believe that a flying carpet ride defines them. *Triangulum* exists to

confirm a premise from the beginnings of the art: cinema is essentially a privileged territory to accomplish tasks. These tasks are more visible when seen



from inside the plot, but this agenda is more powerful, the more exterior it becomes. Notes received from strangers on the street provide directions for each of the friends to fulfill their personal journey of discovery and stunning, but the completion of these journey will hardly grant any redemption. The movie's intellectual link to Godard is less the one from the looks of colorful letterings and jump-cuts than the one from Groupe Dziga Vertov – and, by a geographic coincidence, that of *Ici et*

Ailleurs (Here and There). The issues brought up by the French filmmaker three decades before are not revamped, however - on the contrary. Ellipses and editing tricks make the film into, at once, an unwilling specimen of silent film comedies and a Godard picture from the Maoist phase: there's room for the existentialist thriller and for Mickey Mousing.

There's a sweet kind of anachronism in *Triangulum's* attempt to be relevant from a distance, to admit the experience of film as a second-hand event, one that takes place when the image is overly safe in its character of object from the past in order to subject to the demands of the present-time youth, who need to solve something, accomplish something, get from one place to another – that is perhaps the reason for the innocent attempt to place them in a future where this purpose to be met could supposedly be found. A young Palestinian recites a poem about reuniting with the motherland when mixing with the mud from a camp, another girl insists upon the revolutionary possibilities that a victory of the Iraqi people in the war against America could bring to all the subdued peoples, but the film looks at these discourses with the same melancholy that Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville felt, in the editing room of a French TV network: they had to make sense of a handful of cutoffs from a reality that did not belong to them, but whose images they were now responsible for.

When the wounded character reads his note that says “Mecca is where the heart is”, *Triangulum* seems to search simply for the place where actions will take place in an affectional way, rather than their purpose of effect. And setting one's heart at that place where it can never be reached (we stop halfway through, in a tent in the desert where the wound bleeds terribly) is, in a way, recognizing that image belongs in the place between here and there, between production and reception, but this “in between” is still a field of pure speculation. The knowledge of this space “in between” might have been lost with the books from the Library of



Alexandria, where the blind man comes back from with a stack of papers that certainly contain the answer to something, but not to his questions; or in the simple contact by shock with the women who wear the same cloak covering their heads and are given a card showing the faces of several other women with black strips over their eyes. This is History, the resistance to tradition promoted by modernity that barely seems to notice its own frailty, its backwardness, its helpless laggardness. This does not mean, however, that one should stop looking for their heart, wherever it may be. The three time travelers are left to start over their quest, once the the first task appears to have failed “start again, a thousand times, start again”, is the motto that repeats itself throughout the film. This time, however, they are haunted by a childhood image, an image from the childhood of this vigorous, terrifying cinema that Gustavo Jahn and Melissa Dullius subscribe to, like the time traveller in *La Jetée*. This image is that of their own death, the death of voluntarism, of the desire for movement, put into practice by land and sea, in color and black-and-white, from the discourse of



those who have left and can only speak of resistance from the distance (in an editing room or in a café in Cairo, from Brazil but through Berlin), a death whose cause is the end of the feeling of plenitude for this youth who cannot come to terms with itself, not because it is political, but simply because of youth itself. What *Triangulum* ensures its characters – played by the directors themselves, along with the film photographer Michel Balagué – is that now there is a flying carpet, perhaps the only

space where a sight from a distance means a better sight, and that when this journey is over, that could probably be the magical transporter to that unachievable space “in between”. Whatever the case may be, Jahn and Dullius are now, themselves, the parents and guardians of images of torpidity and riddle “here” in *Triangulum*. And “there”, where we are standing, it might be possible to hitch a ride in the next trip on the flying carpet. Let adulthood come, then.

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<http://www.revistacinetica.com.br/triangulum.htm>