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<th>PORTAIS EM TORNO DO FILME:</th>
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Homer Meets the Coen Brothers: Memory as Artistic Pastiche in _O Brother, Where Art Thou?_

Autora: Margaret M. Toscano, University of Utah

"The Coen brothers' 2000 film _O Brother, Where Art Thou?_ presents an intriguing and unusual case for the question of whether historical accuracy is important in films that use classical antiquity as a direct setting or indirect reference point. With key elements of the film based on Homer’s _Odyssey_, _O Brother_ is set in the American south during the Great Depression. Those familiar with the often whimsical style of the Coen brothers probably did not know what, if any, connection this effort would have to either historical period. However, lovers of Homer have noted many clever allusions to the adventures of Odysseus in the _O Brother_, while those interested in the myth of a charming Old South appeared pleased at how the film nostalgically presented 1930s southern culture."

"On one level, _O Brother_ presents itself as a light-hearted frolic made simply for fun, but there is a melancholic and serious thread running throughout. The "Man of Constant Sorrow" is in constant counterpart with "You Are My Sunshine." This playful movement between entertainment and social awareness returns us to the two strands of critical interest in cultural memory referenced earlier. Whether we are examining _O Brother_ as an example of the way minorities need to reclaim cultural memories to define their own identities, or whether we are enjoying the film as a masterfully funny pastiche, the film allows us to participate in the on-going remaking of folk histories."

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**Primeiro momento:** Este filme reúne elementos do arcaísmo narrativo da epopeia homérica, _A Odisseia_, e, em simultâneo, um olhar etnográfico e musicologicamente rigoroso relativamente ao Deep South, ou Cotton States (Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, entre outros) dos anos da Depressão dos anos 30 do século passado. Na estruturação destes elementos, surgem personagens e situações que evocam a simbólica viagem de cada ser humano a bracu com o mundo que é tanto morada terrestre como exílio sagrado, tanto aventura heróica como desventura continua, tanto viagem de elevação moral e emancipação social como ciclo infernal de incompreensão e ódio. Os múltiplos géneros musicais patentes no filme não só acompanham a narrativa do filme, mas, sim, constituem um elemento narrativo da maior importância. Devido a esta rica confluência de géneros musicais em conjunto com as suas narrativas mítica e moderna, o filme organiza-se à semelhança dos múltiplos tributários, canais e afluentes que convergem na vasta foz do Delta do Mississippi._Blues_, _bluegrass_, _Baptist traditional_, _old-time religion_, _chain gang chants_, etc., contribuem para a nossa compreensão de uma realidade regional que atinge – na sua representação fílmica, ora meticolos e imprevisível, ora trágico-satírica e pos-modernamente lúdica no jogo das suas referências literárias e cinematográficas (ver, por exemplo, o filme de Preston Sturges, _Sullivan’s Travels_ [1941] que serve de referência cinematográfica próxima, cujo guión propicia ao filme dos irmãos Coen o seu título) – uma inesperada dimensão simbólica. Esta inesperada dimensão é a de uma humanidade cuja identidade se alicerça: 1) na memória cultural que a funda; 2) nas lutas, conflitos e tensões que, ora a esmagam, ora a incitam a superar os particularismos das verdades pequenas; e 3) no _pathos_ que a universaliza. Um filme pode ser isto também, como o prova _Irmão, onde estás?,_ i.e., uma obra visual e narrativa que asinala as metamorfoseos do tempo, do espaço e das sensibilidades no jogo eterno do mesmo e do outro, do novo e do arcaico, da identidade e da transformação (dessas mesmas identidades.) O cinema é um vasto mar onde a memória se metamorfoseia e se renova continuamente.

**Segundo momento, a seguir ao nosso primeiro visionamento do filme:** We are long-standing scripts in need of constant revision. We human creatures seem to be capable of such revision to a high degree: we are works-in-progress. Of course, the freedom that is due to the political cynicism and savagery of recent times and the destruction of those values generated in American history that sought to enlarge the social imagination rather than divide and diminish it. The awakening and struggle of minorities, their eloquence and, yes, their exposure to violence, all this social ferment and questioning comprise to a great extent what I consider to be America’s contribution to the human situation: the urgently felt and urgently lived quest for a collectively-invented identity of equality that nonetheless accepts that such equality must be discovered by the individual in accord with his or her personal, inalienable and unfolding life-story. Each people has its own unfolding historical awareness of such yearnings that must be respected. Unfortunately, in our present world, under the impetus of globalization, too often if not always, such globalization means: our way, not yours. My personal conviction lies much closer to the view that, instead of dissolving borders, an awareness of the constellated complexity of borders should be heightened. I mean here the cultural and historically specific borders of every people. I can’t envision a truly inhabitable human world when everything is being reduced to an ongoing "chat." History cannot be expressed by the immediacy of the chat room. Historical consciousness is arduously won. (And globalization doesn't take the necessary time to understand anything owing to its economic feeding frenzy.) We risk ending up with a very homogenized world indeed. The border, i.e., the boundary-experience is of immeasurable significance: it is where an I and a Thou meet, recognize sameness within difference, difference within sameness, and also accept the ultimate otherness of the other. My humanity is ultimately measured by how it is given to, not imposed upon, an other. I find such boundary experiences more exhilarating than daunting, more humanizing than threatening. So, returning to the Coen brothers: they are rescuing for us, I believe, the images of an America that, if present tendencies prevail, risks being finally placed in a national archive for extinct ways of life: a memory museum of the American experience before hatred and bigotry turned American society into one of degraded freedom and crushed hope.

Christopher Damien Auretta

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