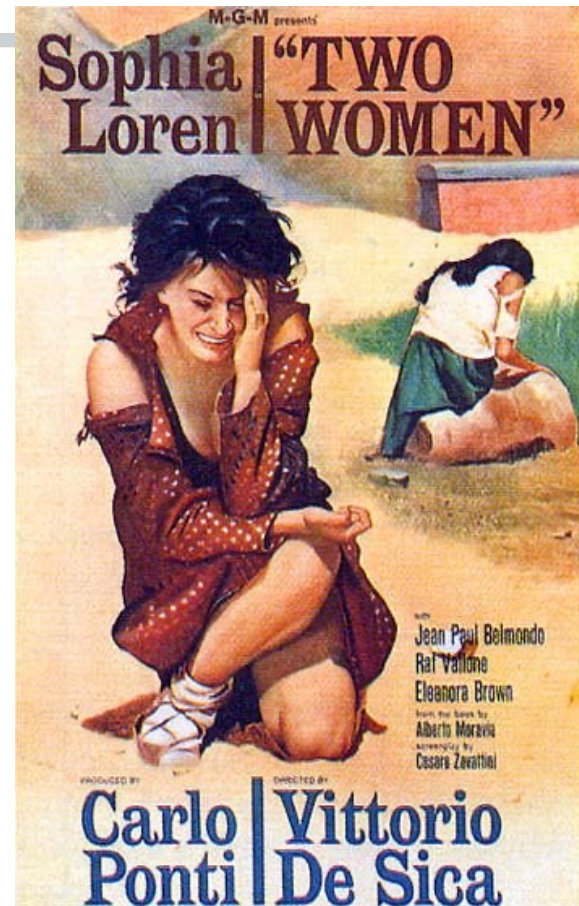# **Modern Cinema**

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Intro to Film
April 10, 2013

Agenda

1. Intro

2. Modernity and Cinema

3. Italian Neorealism

4. French New Wave

5. Cinéma Vérité

6. Third Cinema

7. Brazilian Cinema Novo

Modernity and Cinema

The "modern fact" is the loss of belief in the world, not a loss of belief in its existence outside of us but in our capacity to relate to it… an awareness of its fictitious characteristics.

Modern cinema tells stories about the "individual" who has lost his or her contact with the surrounding world.

Modern films, just like modern narrative in general, are said to transgress the limits of narrative genres and conventions.

As Alain Robbe-Grillet put it, "each new work constitutes and destroys at the same time its own rules of functioning."

Innovation and originality were modern film auteurs' first-order artistic ideals.

"The Origin of the Crisis: Italian Neo-realism and the French New Wave," Gilles Deleuze

Bicycle Thieves (ITA, 1948) Vittorio De Sica
Hailed around the world as one of the greatest movies ever made, Vittorio De Sica's Academy Award–winning Bicycle Thieves (Ladri di biciclette) defined an era in cinema. In postwar, poverty-stricken Rome, a man, hoping to support his desperate family with a new job, loses his bicycle, his main means of transportation for work. With his wide-eyed young son in tow, he sets off to track down the thief. Simple in construction and dazzlingly rich in human insight, *Bicycle Thieves* embodied all the greatest strengths of the neorealist film movement in Italy: emotional clarity, social righteousness, and brutal honesty.

Deleuze defines the beginning of the modern cinema with the Italian neorealism. He refers the new image that the Italians created in the post-war, as an image that could not be understood, because the war was not logically comprehensible or intelligible. So they created something very close to the reality with non-actors and real décor but with some disconnected actions to show how illogically could be ours lives and miseries.

My Voyage to Italy
(USA/ITA, 1999)
Martin Scorsese

I like to think of neorealism as the seed from which a beautiful, solid tree has grown, and the branches on that tree represent virtually all the major Italian filmmakers of the postwar era.

In Neorealism, *Since the people and the places would come right out of the landscape so would the stories.*

Packed with insight and film clips, *Voyage* covers Italian cinema from World War II through the early '60s, the time that the young Scorsese watched these films before starting his career. The heart of the documentary is the Neo-Realism movement—not the lightest of genres, but Scorsese's passion helps considerably. Scorsese explains cinematic vision made by directors like Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini, and Michelangelo Antonioni.

What is the definition of *neorealism?*

What neorealism has produced, according to Gilles Deleuze, is a new kind of images. Neorealism is a cinema of the seer *(voyant).*

a) Location shooting

b) Post-synchronized sound shooting

c) Use of non-professional actors

d) A commitment to representation of social reality/actuality

e) The narrative reflects actual duration

Documentary-like visual style with an avoidance of special effects or unnatural lighting
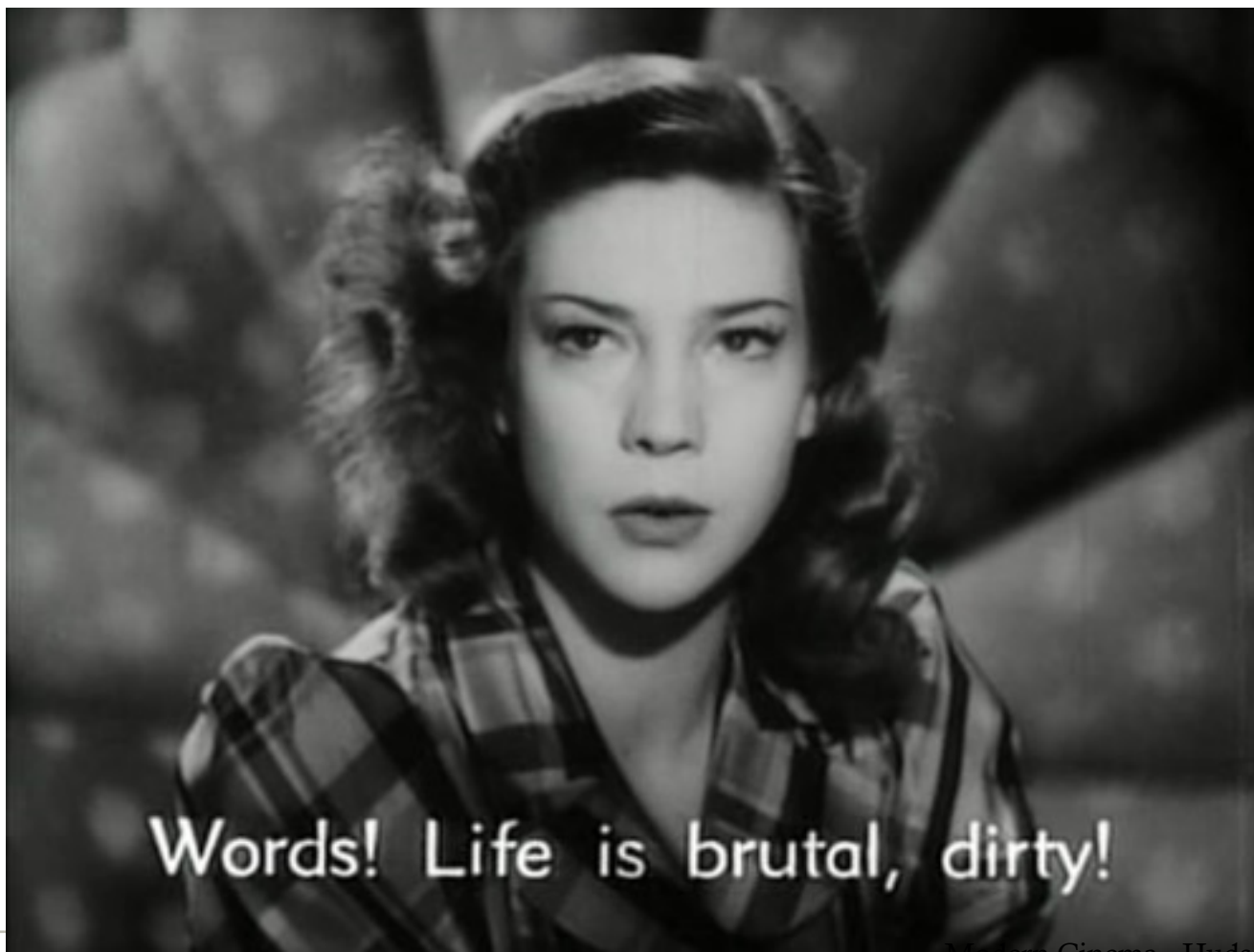
The use of **actual locations**, especially city exteriors, rather than studio sets

Directors cast real non-professional people—not trained actors—sometimes even for the lead roles.

Screenwriting featured **conversational, everyday speech** rather than literary or over-dramatic dialogue

Words! Life is brutal, dirty!

"A new kind of image is born that one can attempt to identify in the post-war American cinema, outside Hollywood [studios]."

The crisis of the representation creates in cinema history the separation between the **modern and classical** (commercial) cinema. How is the modern cinema shows this crisis? How does both cinemas represent space/time? Classical and conventional narrative (linkage of actions and representation of time) differs from modern stories in cinema, which present the time instead of represent it.

Umberto D (1952) Vittorio De Sica

Shot on location with a cast of nonprofessional actors, Vittorio De Sica's neorealist masterpiece follows Umberto D., an elderly pensioner, as he struggles to make ends meet during Italy's postwar economic boom. Alone except for his dog, Flike, Umberto strives to maintain his dignity while trying to survive in a city where traditional human kindness seems to have lost out to the forces of modernization. Umberto's simple quest to fulfill the most fundamental human needs—food, shelter, companionship—is one of the most heartbreaking stories ever filmed and an essential classic of world cinema.

- First characteristic: "The image no longer refers to a situation which is globalizing or synthetic, but rather to one is **dispersive**." 219

- Second: "**Linkages**, connections, or liaisons are deliberately weak". 219

- Third: "The sensory-motor action or situation has been replaced by the stroll, the **voyage** and the continual return journey. […] it has become urban voyage, and has become detached from the active and affective structure which supported it, directed it, gave it even vague directions." 220

Paisà aka *Paisan* (ITA, 1946) Roberto Rossellini
Six vignettes follow the Allied invasion from July 1943 to winter 1944, from Sicily north to Venice. Communication is fragile. A woman leads an Allied patrol through a mine field; she dies protecting a G.I., but the Yanks think she killed him. A street urchin steals shoes from a G.I. who tracks him to a shanty town. A G.I. meets a woman the day Rome is liberated; in six months they meet again: he's cynical, she's a whore. A US nurse braves the trip across the Arno into German fire in search of a partisan she loves. Three chaplains, including a Jew, call on a monastery north in the Apennines. Allied soldiers and partisans try to escape capture in the marshes of the Po.

- Fourth: "We ask ourselves what maintains a set [ensemble] in this world without totality or linkage. The answer is simple: what forms the set are **clichés**, and nothing else. Nothing but clichés, clichés everywhere…" 220

- Fifth: "How can one not believe in a powerful concerted organization, a great and powerful **plot**, which has found the way to make clichés circulate, from outside to inside? The criminal conspiracy, as organization of Power, was to take on a new aspect in the modern world, that the cinema would endeavor to follow and to show." 221

Mamma Roma (ITA, 1962) Pier-Paolo Pasolini
Anna Magnani is Mamma Roma, a middle-aged prostitute who attempts to extricate herself from her sordid past for the sake of her son. Filmed in the great tradition of Italian neorealism, Mamma Roma offers an unflinching look at the struggle for survival in postwar Italy, and highlights director Pier Paolo Pasolini's lifelong fascination with the marginalized and dispossessed. Though banned upon its release in Italy for obscenity, today Mamma Roma remains a classic, featuring a powerhouse performance by one of cinema's greatest actresses and offering a glimpse at a country's most controversial director in the process of finding his style.

- These are the five apparent characteristics of the new image of modern cinema: the dispersive situation, the deliberately weak links between characters and sequences, the voyage form (freely wandering), the consciousness cliché, the condemnation of a structured, understandable and well recognized plot.

- "What is an image which would not be a cliché?"

- The term "cliché" is a French word which derived originally from printing, and refers to the blocks that are used to make prints. A cliché has come to mean an overused expression or imagery which, though it was once fresh and conveyed something novel, has been repeated so many times that it is now a trite stereotype.

La Nouvelle Vague
The New Wave

A term coined by critics for a group of French film critics / filmmakers of the late 1950s and 1960s, influenced (in part) by Italian Neorealism. Although never a formally organized movement, the New Wave filmmakers were linked by their self-conscious rejection of classical cinematic form and their avant-garde spirit of youthful iconoclasm.

Some of the most prominent pioneers among the group, including Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Éric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette, began as critics for the famous film magazine *Cahiers du cinéma*.

Style

Many film makers also engaged in their work with the social and political upheavals of the era, making their radical experiments with editing, (jump cut) visual style, and (improvisatory) narrative part of a general break with the conservative paradigm.

DIRECTOR FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT AND DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DENYS CLERVAL FILMING "BAISERS VOLÉS" ("STOLEN KISSES," 1968) ON THE ROOFS OF PARIS

New Wave Characteristics

- Emerges in the late 1950's

- Many new wave movements

- Rejection of studio bound filmmaking

- Director as artist (Auteur)

- Youth, energy spontaneity, *laissez faire*

- Rejection of narrative and style

- Influence of American cinema

Mise en Scene

- Location shooting

- Non professional actors

- Open ended narrative

- Self-referential

- Breakdown of taboos

- Audience willing to view new type of film reflecting the speed of modern life

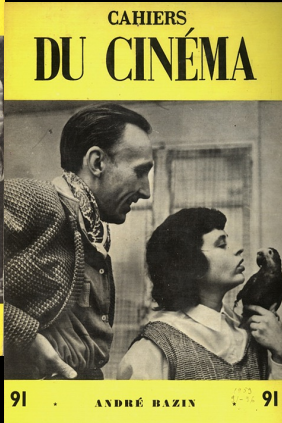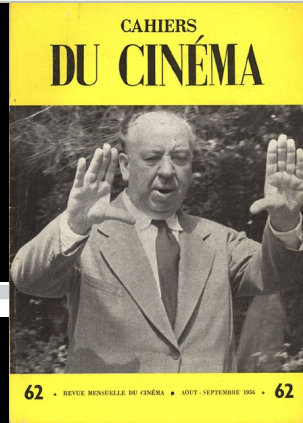The 400 Blows (1959) François Truffaut

New Wave Context

- Post Second World War (economic crisis and low-budget productions)

- French studio system was too rigid and hierarchical

- Young film makers wanted to make films not literary adaptations

- Influences by documentary and Dziga Vertov's *Kino Pravda* (film truth) manifesto

Pierrot le Fou (1965)
by Jean-Luc Godard

New Wave vs. Hollywood

The New Wave (or Nouvelle Vague) showed the vibrant realism of Paris' streets and its inhabitants at a time when many Hollywood films were still formulaic and studio-bound.

A Hollywood film of the time would more than likely have included a linear narrative and uncomplicated shots and edits (such as a typical shot-reverse-shot); a film from the New Wave, however, would astonish you with extended shots, handheld footage, naturalistic performances, on-location shooting, whip-pans, socio-political commentary and ambiguous or unresolved endings.

Auteur

Theory

Auteur: A filmmaker, usually a director, who exercises creative control over his or her works and has a strong personal style.

Auteurism is the method of analyzing films based on this theory or, alternately, the characteristics of a director's work that makes her or him an auteur/artist.

Both auteur theory and auteurist method of film analysis are frequently associated with the French New Wave and the film critics who wrote for *Cahiers du cinéma.*

Auteur theory draws on the work of André Bazin, co-founder of the *Cahiers du cinéma*, who argued that films should reflect a director's personal vision. Bazin championed filmmakers such as Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock and Jean Renoir. Another key element of auteur theory comes from notion of the *caméra-stylo* or "camera-pen" coined by Alexandre Astruc the idea that directors should wield their cameras like writers use their pens and that they need not be hindered by traditional storytelling.
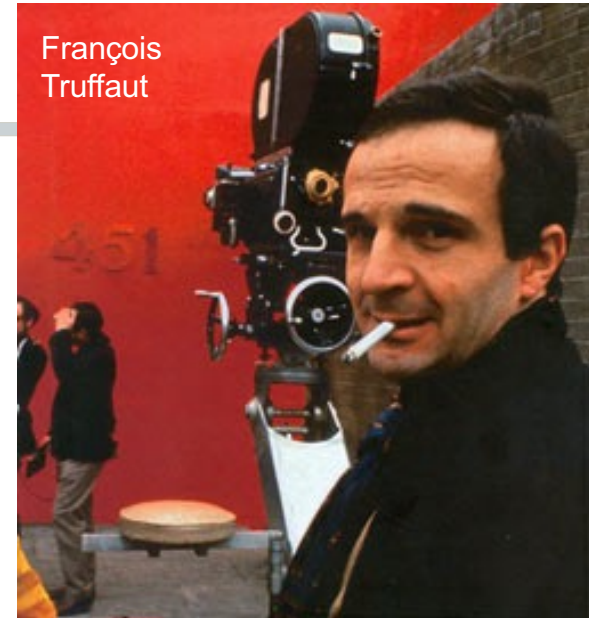
Film Director vs. Auteur

François Truffaut

- An *auteur* takes a text and renders meaning through their own transformation.

- A *director* takes a text and attempts to maintain the original meaning.

PROBLEMS WITH AUTEUR THEORY:

- Noise of other productive agents

- Director does not subordinate him/herself to the author—source is only a pretext or catalyst.

- Film is by its nature a collaboration—how can one person take credit?

- Don't collaborators alter the vision? Can a director actually have a complete vision?

- What contemporary directors do you think qualify for this designation?

Jean-Luc Godard

"A story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end… but not necessarily in that order. "

- The *enfant terrible* of the French New Wave, Jean-Luc Godard was arguably the most influential filmmaker of the postwar era. Beginning with his groundbreaking 1959 feature debut *A Bout de Souffle*, Godard revolutionized the motion picture form, freeing the medium from the shackles of its long-accepted cinematic language by rewriting the rules of narrative, continuity, sound, and camera work. Later in his career, he also challenged the common means of feature production, distribution, and exhibition, all in an effort to subvert the conventions of the Hollywood formula to create a new kind of film. A leading figure of the Nouvelle Vague movement of the 60's, Jean-Luc Godard's works have transformed the face of cinema.

A bout de Souffle (FRA, 1960) Jean-Luc Godard

- Godard's first feature has been widely hailed as one of the most influential motion pictures ever made. On the run after killing a cop, a small-time crook hides out in Paris with an American girl. After she betrays him, he chooses to face his fate, modeled on his hero, Humphrey Bogart.

- *Breathless* exhibits the trademark documentary shooting style, natural sound design, and thematic interest in the detritus of American popular culture. With its lack of polish, surplus of attitude, crackling personalities of rising stars Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg, and anything-goes crime narrative, Jean-Luc Godard's debut fashioned a simultaneous homage to and critique of the American film genres that influenced and rocked him as a film writer for *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Jazzy, free-form, and sexy, *Breathless* helped launch the French New Wave and ensured cinema would never be the same.

Modern Cinema - Hudson Moura 25

Cinéma-vérité

- **Cinéma-vérité** is a style of filmmaking, combining naturalistic techniques that originated in documentary filmmaking, with stylized cinematic devices of editing and camerawork, staged set-ups, and the use of the camera to provoke subjects.

Jean Rouch and Edgard Morin directing and participating in *Chronicle of a Summer* (1960)

Cinéma Vérité =
new cinema truth

"There are two ways to conceive of the cinema of the Real: The first is to pretend that you can present reality to be seen; the second is to pose the problem of reality. In the same way, there were two ways to conceive Cinéma vérité. The first was to pretend that you brought truth. The second was to pose the problem of truth."
Edgar Morin

1. **Interacts and engages** with the subjects, individuals and audiences. Subtlety presents their point of view. Provokes subjects to obtain a reaction.

2. **characters**: the truth of their performance produces of a *new reality* that would not have existed

3. **cutting style**: shots give impression that there is no space between the beginning of the end of one shot and start of another.

4. **documentary of** *encounter:* characters & camera

Third Cinema

Third Cinema is an aesthetic and political project in the 1960s and 1970s, which still influences filmmaking strategies and projects today.

The term "Third Cinema" reflects its origins in the so-called Third World, which generally refers to those nations located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America where historical encounters with colonial and imperial forces have shaped their economic and political power structures.

Third Cinema was a militant practice parallel with revolutionary struggles of this period, produced with the intention of provoking discussion with and amongst its viewers and proposing alternative visions of the past, present, and future.

Manifestos: **"Aesthetic of Hunger" (1965) by Glauber Rocha from Brazil; "For an Imperfect Cinema" (1969) by Julio García Espinosa from Cuba; and "Towards a Third Cinema" (1969) by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino from Argentina.**
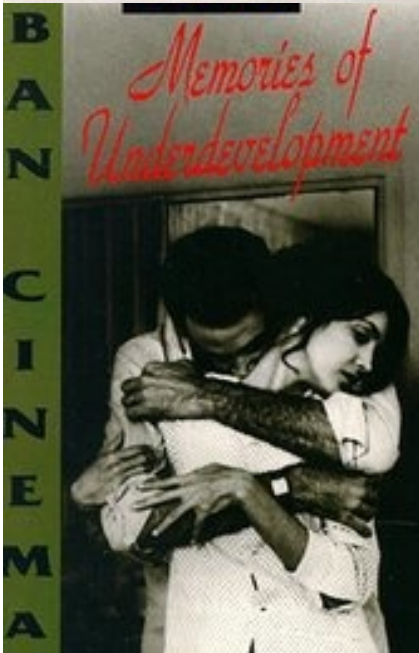
Third Cinema Characteristics

Political oriented militant cinema vs. mainstream entertainment cinema

Personal-experimental vs. literariness of author-cinema

Facilitates interaction among intellectuals and the masses by using film for education and dialogue.

The question of national liberation and the right to speak in one's own cultural languages.

Third Cinema challenges viewers to reflect on by the experience of poverty and subordination by showing how it is lived, not how it is imagined.

Brazil's Cinema Novo 1963-70

Brutal reality of the lives of *favelados*, in the slums of the big cities, or of *retirantes* (migrants) fleeing the famine in the draught-stricken northeastern Brazil.

- These films show the *people* for the first time in a Brazilian screen instead of a representation or a convention of characters depicted in commercial cinema, such as the classical Hollywood style studio system.
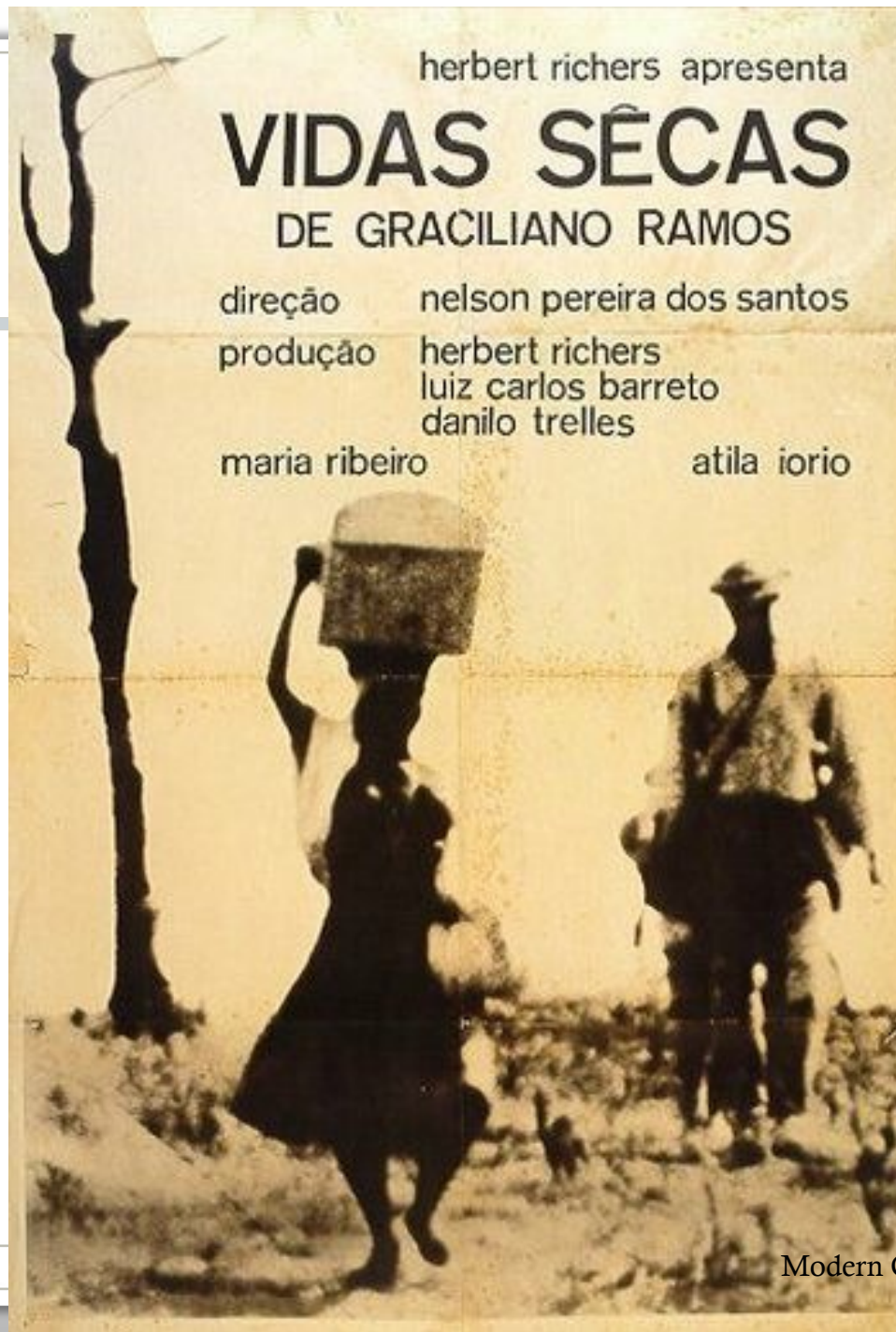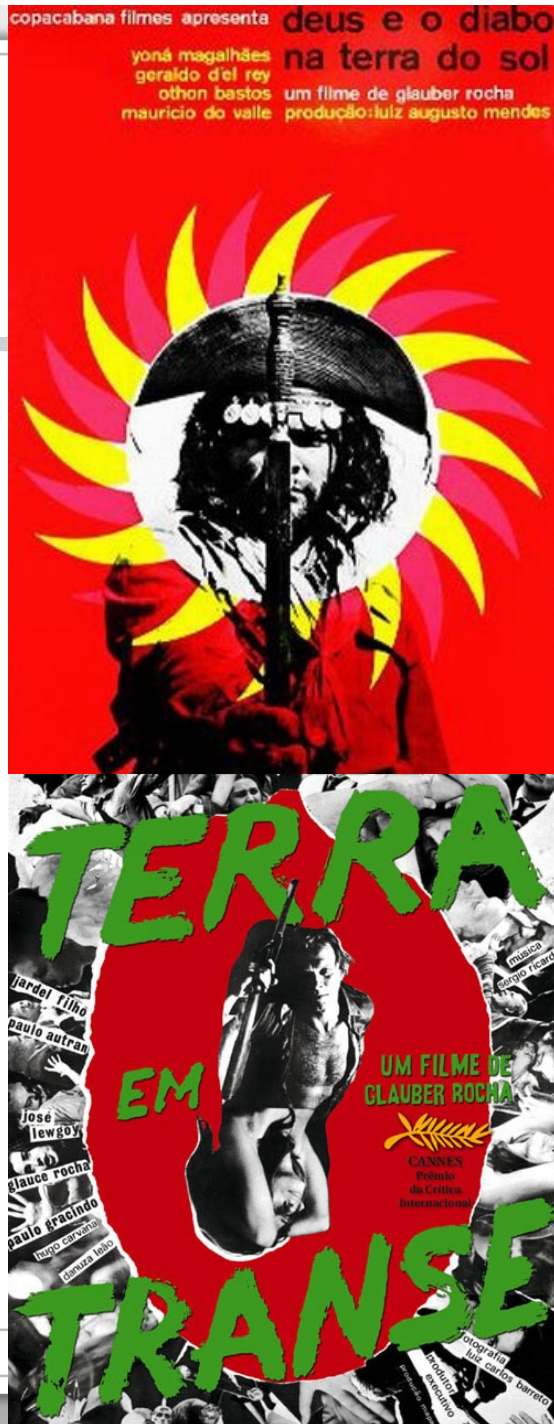
Cinema Novo's Auteurs

Glauber Rocha (left); Joaquim Pedro de Andrade (above)

- "They [filmmakers] saw themselves as representatives of the colonized, charged with a mediating function in the reaching of social equilibrium. In reality they were speaking and acting primarily for themselves. These limitations were clear in Cinema Novo. […] Nevertheless, the significance of Cinema Novo was immense: it reflected and created a continuous and coherent audio-visual image of the absolute majority of the Brazilian people. Cinema Novo created a mythical universe made up of the impoverished interior, urban slums, lower class suburbs, fishing villages, dance halls, and the soccer stadium". Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes, *Cinema: a trajectory within underdevelopment* (1973).

Barren Lives (1963) Nelson Pereira dos Santos

"Cinema Novo stood with the Brazilian utopia. If it is ugly, irregular, dirty, confusing and chaotic, it is also beautiful, disharmonic, luminous and revolutionary." *Glauber Rocha*

Black God, White Devil (BRA, 1963)
Glauber Rocha

- Manuel is a cowhand in the Sertão, an arid region in north-eastern Brazil. One day, unable to take any more, he kills his abusive boss and flees with his wife Rosa. Manuel joins up with a strange priest, who preaches a gospel of violence. Gradually, Manuel drifts into a life of crime, and eventually joins the gang of legendary outlaw Corisco.

Shown at Cannes in 1964, Glauber Rocha's *Black God, White Devil*, together with Nelson Pereira dos Santos' *Vidas Secas* (Barren Lives), introduced the international viewing public to the Cinema Novo, an artistic movement which strove, in the name of a political conscience, for a Brazilian identity and ethos.

Modern Filmmaking movements around the world during 1960-1970s

- Young German Cinema

- Independent American Cinema (John Cassavetes)

- Direct Cinema (UK, US, Canada)

- Among others cinematic movements around the world post-1960s… Iranian New Wave (Mowje No), Japanese New Wave (Nuberu bagu), Australian New Wave, British New Wave, Novo Cinema (Portuguese New Wave), Czechoslovak New Wave, Hong Kong New Wave, and more recently movements such as Dogme 95.