
FROM MOVIE TO MOVIE: Where are you, Casal?

16/12/2019



Jorge Luis Sánchez's film that competes at the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema is a very postmodern tribute to the great modernist poet.

Buscando a Casal (*Looking for Casal*) is not like other historic films shot in Cuba, not even those previously made by its director, Jorge Luis Sánchez. First of all, it avoids the convention to articulate a ludic narration, full of symbols, with evident theatrical intention. Nobody should expect an official and meticulously exact biography of the great Cuban poet Julián del Casal, because what the filmmaker intended to achieve was the refulgent recreation (but not less serious and even tragic for that) of the artist, the man and the icon.

Looking for Casal, but his spirit rather than his carnality. The film is a very postmodern homage to one of the most significant voices from Hispanic American modernism. And incidentally, it reflects on the independence of arts. Over and over, the film debates on the role of poetry in the great scheme it is part of. Casal —the historic figure, the chronicler and the poet— is the perfect champion of the freedom that entails the most authentic creation. Freedom that, obviously, does not reject odd commitments.

To settle the fable, Jorge Luis Sánchez creates a firework show where artifice, exoticism and estrangement prevail. In the style, maybe, of Casal's poetry. In the film, actors and actresses play characters that seem to keep clearly in mind that they're just that: characters. Archetypes, characters, representations.... The Havana of the film is an evident multicolor set. Atrezzo is actually that, atrezzo.

Achieved uniqueness, thanks—in a large extent—to art direction and the script, the film takes delight in its own juice. At times, it seems too judgmental and emphatic. It is as if it insisted on the importance and originality of the allegory it presents.

Beyond recognized incidents, Julián del Casal remains an enigma. In that extent, the film's title is illustrative. *Buscando a Casa* illuminates the character through a fine-tooth comb.

Translated by Jorge Mesa Benjamin / CubaSi Translation Staff
