

these environments – is able to move the viewers. The novelty lies in the way in which Nati's gaze becomes the centre of the narrative. This is where all the anxieties and suspicions that the film provokes in the viewers originate, and they will stay with them long after the film is over.

Guillermo Oscar Fernández (Trans. Beatriz Urraca)

Anita

Studio/Distributor:

Millecento Cine

Director:

Marcos Carnevale

Producers:

Marcos Carnevale

Jorge Gundín

Inés Vera

Screenwriters:

Marcos Carnevale

Lily Ann Martin

Marcela Guerty

Cinematographer:

Guillermo Zappino

Art Director:

Adriana Slemenson

Composer:

Lito Vitale

Editor:

Pablo Barbieri

Duration:

104 minutes

Cast:

Alejandra Manzo

Norma Leandro

Leonor Manzo

Luis Luque

Format:

Colour, 35mm

Year:

2009

Synopsis

Anita, a young woman with Down's syndrome, and Dora, her mother, live in the Buenos Aires Jewish neighbourhood of Once. Anita helps her mother in the family business, a stationery store located in the same building where they live. On the morning of 18 July 1994, Anita is left alone in the store while her mother goes to the AMIA headquarters, situated nearby. On that precise day, the AMIA building is bombed. Dora perishes in the attack and their store is completely destroyed. Amid the confusion, Anita ventures out in search of her mother, but she gets lost in the streets of Buenos Aires. Her meanderings lead her to encounter a variety of people. The first person she meets is a failed photographer who gives her shelter for two nights. Next, she is begrudgingly taken in by a Chinese family who runs a grocery store. Finally, she ends up in a deprived Buenos Aires suburb where she is taken in and cared for by a frustrated nurse. Meanwhile, her brother Ariel, distraught over the death of his mother and the disappearance of his sister, looks for her.

Critique

The AMIA building was the target of the deadliest bombing ever on Argentine soil. The attack left 85 people dead and 300 injured. More than two decades have passed since the blast, and the perpetrators have never been caught. The case remains unsolved. This open wound in Argentine history inspired Carnevale to produce and direct *Anita*, the first feature film that revisits the attack. With a non-professional actress in the leading role, the film is a telling commentary on the suffering of 'a real person'. The story explores the consequences of the tragedy from the point of view of the protagonist – a young woman who exhibits child-like qualities. Her character embodies features associated with childhood: namely innocence, vulnerability and a dependence on adults, as well as behaving and dressing in a childish fashion. Hence, Carnevale skilfully crafts the film as a child-centred narrative. Anita's wandering in search of her missing mother and her own status as one of the disappeared echoes the search for the disappeared under the repressive government regime in Argentina.

The AMIA bombing arguably marks the turning point in Anita's life and divides the story into two parts. The first part depicts Anita and Dora's ritualized life in a seemingly safe environment. The establishing shot of a dormant and peaceful Buenos Aires accompanied by shots of the family's daily routine exudes unity and dependence. The prolific

use of scenes in which mother and daughter share the same space underscores not only their close relationship but also Anita's complete reliance on her mother. The explosion, however, puts an end to Anita's harmonious life. In shooting the blast from inside the stationary store with Anita in the foreground, Carnevale intelligently compels the spectator to be a participant of this traumatic moment in Anita's life.

Aside from tearing family life apart, the blast propels a shift in the narrative, splitting the story into two parallel strands: one follows Anita's search for her mother, the other Ariel's search for his sister. Their search is analogous to the situation experienced by the mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared during the last military dictatorship. In Anita's case, however, the roles have been inverted because it is the child who looks for the missing adult. As such, the spectator witnesses the plight of the protagonist who experiences orphanhood, hunger and exclusion. Thus, Carnevale invites the audience not only to see the AMIA bombing through the lens of the Dirty War, but also by turning the camera on the child.

After the explosion, what emerges is a hostile and decadent Buenos Aires, where rushing passers-by, graffiti-covered walls and closed shops form the backdrop of Anita's roaming. Such a cityscape undoubtedly reflects Anita's own hardships. Despite their bleakness, the city and its suburbs are home to people who, albeit not readily, come to Anita's aid by giving her shelter, food and clothes. The film therefore suggests that the strangers Anita encounters metaphorically represent her surrogate family. Breaking down the barriers of resistance with resilience and humble tranquillity, she becomes the child of the Argentine family.

In casting Manzo, Carnevale has chosen a less conventional path to deal with the heinous event, but she delivers an extraordinary debut performance that makes the film endearing. The casting of a person with Down's syndrome in the lead also provides audiences with a new perspective from which to comprehend the AMIA bombing. Not only does Anita embody a vulnerable child but she also has an intellectual disability. Yet she overcomes all challenges, thereby becoming a role model for the Argentine people. Melodramatic at times, *Anita* brings a message of hope to a society that needs to come to terms with the traumas of the past.

Mirna Vohnsen

Clandestine Childhood

Infancia clandestina

Synopsis

In 1979, 12-year-old Juan and his Peronist family return to Buenos Aires after several years spent in hiding in Cuba. As members of the Montoneros Organization, an anti-government urban guerrilla group, they assume false identities and quietly plot their subversive activities under the front of a chocolate-covered-peanut business. Now known as Ernesto, Juan must drop his Cuban accent and adapt to his new life as a seemingly normal pre-teen or risk exposing his family. He easily finds a group of friends and soon

Studio/Distributor:

Film Movement
Pyramide Internati
Historias Cinematc
Habitación 1520 P

Director:

Benjamín Ávila

Producer:

Luis Puenzo

Screenwriters:

Benjamín Ávila
Marcelo Müller

Cinematographer:

Iván Gierasinchuk

Art Director:

Yamila Fontán

Composer:

Pedro Onetto

Editor:

Gustavo Giani

Duration:

110 minutes

Cast:

Teo Gutiérrez Morel
Natalia Oreiro
César Troncoso
Ernesto Alterio

Format:

Colour, 2K Digital

Year:

2011