

And Your Mother Too (*Y tu mamá también*, Mexico, 2001) Mexican Renaissance

Director: Alfonso Cuarón

Producers: Jorge Vergara and Alfonso Cuarón

Screenplay: Carlos Cuarón and Alfonso Cuarón

Director of Photography: Emmanuel Lubezki

Editors: Alfonso Cuarón and Alex Rodríguez

Production Designer: Miguel Ángel Álvarez

Cast: Maribel Verdu, Gael García Bernal, Diego Luna

While the Mexican film establishment disapproved of *Y tu mamá también*, they nominated *Violet Perfumes* (*Nadie te oye: Perfume de violetas*, 2001) for the foreign language Oscar, the masses loved it and it was, at the time, the biggest box office hit ever.

Writing in *Variety*, Mexican film scholar Leonardo García Tsao dismisses the film as a “south-of-the-border *Beavis & Butthead*, its protagonists “oversexed and underdeveloped.” (Smith, 2002, p. 16b)

Tsao’s description of the protagonists is entirely correct and the comparison with the MTV spin-off draws attention to the reason for the Establishment’s distaste: that the film is too culturally North American.

Generically it does draw upon Hollywood’s teen pics and road movies however there the resemblance ends. Stylistically the film is characterised by long, handheld shots. On their first night on the road they stop at an inn where the ‘lads’ learn about Ana’s background. The scene lasts 165 seconds and is shot in one take. Whilst long takes often have a documentary feel, giving the impression nothing of the pro-filmic (that is, what is being filmed) event has been cut out, here the camera’s constant movement (either following the action or unsteady handheld) draws attention to itself in a way that documentaries normally wouldn’t do. However at the scene’s end the camera follows a woman into the kitchen where a family work (and play). The woman is not an important character and so this movement is unmotivated by the narrative and it allows us to see what’s normally hidden from a film’s view, that is ‘ordinary people’.

This isn’t the film’s only political element. An omniscient narrator explains that a traffic jam, which the boys blame upon protestors, was caused by the death of a labourer who risked crossing the road in order to earn more money by arriving at work earlier. Tenoch’s (Luna) sister is seen protesting against the government, contrasting with her brother’s vacuity as his only concern is to ‘get laid’.

In an interview, when the director was questioned about his sympathy for the underclass, Cuarón replied:

There are many different Mexicos that exist at the same time and sometimes in the same space, though they don’t really co-exist. The barriers between the classes are a big problem, though everyone tries to deny it. (Smith, 2002, p. 19b)

Cuarón cites Godard as an influence, the omniscient narrator of *Band a part* (1964) and *Masculin féminin* (1968) and the ‘love triangle’ is reminiscent of *Jules et Jim*, directed by François Truffaut in 1962. Presumably these ‘high culture’ influences wouldn’t have upset the establishment.

Paul Julian Smith (2002) ‘Heaven’s mouth’ *Sight and Sound* vol.12, issue 4

Interview with Carlos Cuarón and Alfonso Cuarón at www.wga.org/WrittenBy/0303/mama.html
Review, by Charles Taylor, in *Salon* at www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2002/03/15/y_tu_mama/