

Fiction implies documentary and documentary implies fiction. To paraphrase Godard, it's merely a matter of choosing between ethic and aesthetic. But just as abundance is Adirley Queirós and Joana Pimenta's bread and butter, so *Dry Ground Burning* purposely blurs the line between documentary and fiction.

What we're experiencing here is a documentary living a fictional life. The characters of Léa and Chitara are fictionalised and idealised extensions of their very own lives, while the plot is constantly being rewritten by life's hurdles being thrown at them.

*Dry Ground Burning* is meant to be empowering. Acts of resistance deserve to be glorified. George Miller is never far away. Neither is John Carpenter. In a way, what Artaud did for theatre, Queirós and Pimenta have done for reality. There's theatre and its double, and then there's reality with genre as its double. Here, implementing genre becomes a rebellious act. Through the perversion of reality, through the subversion of genre, the film turns oppression into resistance, allowing these real inhabitants of the slums to act as heroes – even if just for a day.

The film turns Plato's Cave upside down and inside out – becoming the mirror and the reflection; the characters, the consciousness and those kicking the consciousness. We enter a blurry balancing act, a cat and mouse game, through genre and structure, with their freedom at stake – to continuously put the oppressors on the wrong foot, to as good as turn them into comic relief. Genre turns into a way to reshuffle the power balance, to keep political enemies at bay in this fictionalised world. The Good, the Bad, to escape their Ugly. They dictate the shape of this film and that's their empowerment. That's where they make their impact felt.

Whatever the world is withholding from them, they use this story to emancipate themselves. But when you peel away the fiction, there is nothing but brutal reality. Even time feels uprooted and displaced to enhance that rhapsodic, cumulative effect. This is a film remembered from a prison, a physical and a mental one, with a sole purpose to take their homeland back. They dream out loud: to create a collective myth, to construct a voice, to deconstruct authority and to eventually take back that power. This is their symbolic dismantling of the system.

The Captain has arrived, but this won't stop Chitara – nicknamed Joana Darc, the ringleader of this all-female posse – to keep on representing the Davids of this world and keep that idle dream alive. When burning at the stake, she'll signal through the flames to ravage the totems of Bolsonaro's regime. She has the responsibility, to go back to Artaud, because the mind believes what it sees and does what it believes.