



the old Monkey's Paw saw about being careful what you wish for. All three, I think, and all the stronger for this special combination.

The longest piece in the program is also one of the most accomplished: Traumalogia, from writer/director Daniel Sánchez Arévalo. If the usual eight minutes of commercial breaks were added to this 22-minute narrative, it would qualify as a clever, classy, half-hour sit-com, and I would not be surprised to learn that the filmmaker is already working on a full-length feature based on what's here. Why not? He already possesses a keen understanding of character, storytelling, dialogue, cinematography, composition, editing and more, as he spins a funny, witty, quick-paced tale of family, wedding and hospitalization. We'll be hearing more from Señor Arévalo soon, I suspect.

That old misogynistic chestnut comparing a woman to a dog walking on its hind legs gets a kind of comeuppance in the penultimate short on the program. Cristina Lucas's ten-minute You Can Walk, Too begins with a young woman (perhaps the director herself) musing on this ineffectually stupid quote, and then provides a visual compilation of dogs, all kinds, walking on their hind legs. It's funny as hell and, after a while, you ask yourself, Why is this quote so famous? This is, I would guess, Ms Lucas's point. The "comparison" is clever, nasty and stupid. Replace women with blacks, gays, Irish – your pick – and the result is the same. Still, the idiotic aperçu continues to haunt us. Which may also be Ms Lucas's point.

The final segment, Fuego de angel (Angel's Fire), a documentary about the child labor in the Peruvian brick industry, is brief (13 minutes), quiet and compelling, as it uses visuals of the children at work and play, along with bits of their own explanation, to create a portrait of lives mostly harsh and unfair. The film's most evocative moment comes as one child, with a tact that seems extraordinary, given the circumstances, tells the filmmaker that he would prefer not to speak about the beatings he gets from his father. By simply allowing us to watch and listen, writer/director Marcelo Bukin contributes more than do certain famous documentarians who prefer to sermonize and scream. The program of Spanish shorts was screened last Saturday and will be screened twice today, Monday.

– James Van Maanen

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