Plot Summary

This story is about a Bus driver named George and he meets a mysterious female named Carla. At first, they are intrigued by each other but then as the story progresses, George finds out there is more to Carla than meets the eye. She is originally from Nicaragua and she had left there due to the rising tensions between the Sandinistas and the Contras as a result of the Contra revolution. George and Carla eventually go to Nicaragua to find her lover and fellow resistance fighter Antonio. Once they are in Nicaragua, Carla and George venture through the country on their mission to find Antonio. They meet Carla’s family, other resistance fighters, an ex CIA worker named Bradley, and many more. Carla ultimately finds Antonio and realizes that her place is here in the revolution. George ends up going back to Scotland and returning to his life but now he knows more about Nicaragua and from his experience he is a better person. In short, both characters find themselves through their journey.
WHO:

- **Characters:** George Lennox, Carla, Bradley, Antonio
- **Director:** Ken Loach
  - Socially critical directing style
  - Known for his socialist ideals
- **Screenplay:** Paul Laverty
  - International upbringing
  - Worked in Nicaraguan human rights organization during 1980’s
  - Met director in Nicaragua and have collaborated on films since
- **Intended Audience**
  - Film came out soon after the issues presented
  - Purpose was to impact whatever audience film could reach
  - Perhaps people who were young during the time/didn’t understand
  - Americans- understand the other side
What: Genre and Themes

1. **Genre** - Non Fiction. This story could have happened although it is not based on an actual story. Events like the Sandinista Revolution were real and the Sandinistas and Contras did exist. Not really a romance because Carla and George’s love was small compared to the issue of the Sandinista Revolution.

2. **Central Themes** - Facing the truth (As represented by when Carla constantly tries to find Antonio). Understanding the people of Nicaragua (As represented by when George ventures to Nicaragua with Carla and he listens to the people tell their story.

3. **Other Themes** - Immigration (As represented by when Carla is harassed on the bus for not having proper Identification. Suicide/Mental health (As represented by when Carla has mental breakdowns or tries to kill herself because of the news of the instability back home.)
The director’s purpose for making this film is to inform people about the Sandinista Revolution. Even the romance between George and Carla pales in comparison to the bigger issue at hand—the instability of Nicaragua and finding what happened to Antonio. The director does not necessarily throw you into the plot right away. Instead he lets the story build up. From Carla and George’s romance, to the mystery behind Antonio, to them ultimately leaving Glasgow and going to Nicaragua. Although much personal information is not given about Carla, through her, we are able to see someone from Nicaragua who is affected by the revolution. In that sense, her purpose, along with everyone else’s in the story is to show what life is like for Nicaraguans.
In regards to the point of view of the story, we mainly see it from George’s perspective. The audience does not know much about Carla and that is fine because our job is to really to see things from an outsider(George’s). This is why much is not said about Carla’s childhood and etcetera. Only her involvement with Antonio and the Sandinista revolution is mentioned. This works well because our job as the outsider looking in is not to focus on individual people but rather the bigger picture-the Sandinista revolution.
When: PRODUCTION

- Produced in 1996
- Near the middle of Ken Loach’s directing career
- Shortly after Contra/Sandinista conflict (which ended in 1990)
- Significant because the lens of the film emphasizes Carla’s Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): the film itself looks back a few years to the conflict
When: Action

- Set in 1987, signifies near the end of the Contra/Sandinista conflict
- United States (e.g. Bradley, ex-CIA in the film) had given aid to counter-revolutionary Contras
- At this point in the conflict, Sandinistas are in control but Contras launch attacks against them
- We see some of these attacks in the film near the end
WHERE: SETTING
Where: Setting

- **First half: Glasgow**
  - George Lennox driving his bus throughout the city
  - Images of Carla performing Nicaraguan dances in the streets
  - Hospital after Carla’s suicide attempt

- **Second half: Nicaragua**
  - Carla & George search everywhere for Antonio
  - Carla asks old friends for locations, Bradley helps as well
  - Film draws to a close at a Sandinista military camp as Carla finds Antonio & George returns to Glasgow

- **Flashbacks**
How does it convey the tone/mood of the film?

- **Tone/mood:**
  - Dramatic
  - Emotional
  - Angry
  - Stressful

- **Achieves this by:**
  - Flashbacks
  - Violent scenes
  - Pathos
  - Contrast - Glasgow v. Nicaragua
  - Bias - Favorable view of the Sandinistas
How well does it fulfill its purpose?

- The film is able to make the audience feel the stress and terror that the Nicaraguans faced during (and after) the revolution.
- The powerful imagery and plot developments give insight into the effects of the revolution on the physical and emotional health of the Nicaraguans.
- The semi-improvised scenes made it feel like a documentary.
Evaluation: Like/Dislike

Like

- Use of Pathos: strong connection to emotion
- Definitely impacted viewers
- Was not overly romanticized
- Good use of flashback, other cinematic elements, to convey situations
- Actress: Oyanka Cabezas (Carla)
- Relatively accurate about historical perspective but still focused on the people/story

Genre: Historical Drama/Fiction

Dislike

- Lack of character development
- Seemed drawn out- clouded purpose for some of us
- Wishing we knew more about Carla and her past

POV: Film seems to be from George’s perspective so makes sense that many things are unclear. Film was very much in Loach and British filmmakers’ style, which works for some.
Evaluation: Theme and Purpose

- **Theme**: Support of socialism and other socially divisive topics right up Director’s alley
- **Purpose**: to give as authentic of a portrayal as possible to the situation, experiences, and emotional state of the people caught up in the conflict
  - Film was pretty successful in this purpose
    - Involvement of Nicaraguans, people knowledgeable about the time and country
    - Drew upon genuine emotions and connected with audience
    - Good cinematic storytelling
  - But....can this purpose ever be complete?
    - Only one “person’s” fictionalized story
    - Still had to go out of context to make a film about it- involving the Scot, George
    - Seeing the situation from George’s perspective