

Number 132

THE INTELLECTUAL IN ANGUISH:
MODERNIST FORM AND IDEOLOGY IN LAND IN ANGUISH
AND MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

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Author's note: This paper was presented at a Latin American Program colloquium held on April 26, 1983, sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.

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ABSTRACT

The Intellectual in Anguish:
Modernist Form and Ideology in Land in Anguish
and Memories of Underdevelopment

This paper compares form, content, and context in two major Latin American feature films--Land in Anguish/Terra em Transe (Brazil, 1967) and Memories of Underdevelopment/Memorias del Subdesarrollo (Cuba, 1968)--placing particular emphasis on three sets of interrelationships: between these specific cinematic representations of the Latin American artist-intellectual; self-reflexivity of style and stance; and ideology as an historical and historicizing concept.

LAND IN ANGUISH: SYNOPSIS DESCRIPTION

PAULO MARTINS--poet, journalist, would-be political activist mortally wounded by a barrage of police bullets which he deliberately provoked--looks back in agonized delirium upon the events of the preceding four years of his life. The flashbacks, which constitute the body of the film, recapitulate in highly expressionistic, often parodic style, Paulo's wavering political trajectory in the fictitious country of El Dorado: from protege of the oligarchic PORFIRIO DIAZ, to ally of the populist provincial governor FELIPE VIERA, to disillusioned and apolitical bon vivant under the patronage of media magnate JULIO FUENTES. Offering "free reign" of his television channel and newspaper, Fuentes convinces Paulo to denounce his former mentor Diaz in a public expose, only to later betray the betrayer by aligning himself with Diaz in opposition to Viera's growing popular support. Utterly disillusioned and despairing after having failed to convince Viera and his secretary SARA (who is also Paulo's lover) to unleash the masses in open rebellion against Diaz' intended coup d'etat, Paulo runs a police barricade and precipitates his own (highly operatic) death.

In LAND IN ANGUISH, arguably his finest film, Brazilian director Glauber Rocha employs a highly expressionistic, aggressively eclectic style which abandons realist conventions of both image and sound in pursuit of a more synthetic or "poetic" truth. The influences of Eisenstein, Brecht, Godard are pervasive; debts to Orson Welles, Federico Fellini, and French and North American documentarists are also apparent. The final mixture, however, is pure Rocha: a kind of formal and thematic mestizaje which seeks ways of "having one's culture and destroying it too."* If such bizarrely heterogeneous blends are the inevitable testament of the "colonized" artist, seldom has a colonized artist used them to more brilliantly controlled effect.

*From Roger Greenspun's thoroughly negative (and thoroughly naive) NYT review, 5/15/70.

MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT: SYNOPSIS DESCRIPTION

Within a time frame which spans the two most precarious moments in post-revolutionary Cuban history--between the Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962--SERGIO, former furniture store owner and would-be writer now living off indemnifications from the government, reflects upon his life, his loves, and his ambivalent detachment from the social transformations which surge around him. He bids goodbye to his parents, his wife, LAURA, and later his friend, PABLO, but a certain critical curiosity keeps him from following them to Miami. Flashbacks retrieve fragments of his relationship to Laura and to HANNA, his German-born first love. In the course of the film, he has a brief but complicated involvement with an aspiring actress from the working class, ELENA, and fantasizes an affair with his Protestant maid, NOEMI. A series of documentary and semi-documentary sequences persistently interrupts this already fragmentary and discontinuous narrative line. Apparently disconnected, irrelevant, dissonant, these sequences function as a kind of supra-text which contextualizes the attitudes and experiences of the protagonist. Though Sergio views the world around him through eyes dim with bafflement, skepticism, self-absorption, the fictional-documentary composite offers a subjective-objective view of the early years of the Cuban revolution of unequalled complexity and insight.

Tomas Gutierrez Alea's MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT, generally regarded as the most outstanding work of postrevolutionary Cuban cinema, is a film of wry humor and virtually inexhaustible density. It conforms to the call for "didactic revolutionary art" in the most subtle and subversive way--by laying claim to all of contemporary film culture and by exploring and exemplifying, in its own presentation, the multifaceted nature of the medium.

THE INTELLECTUAL IN ANGUISH: MODERNIST FORM AND IDEOLOGY
IN LAND IN ANGUISH AND MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

This paper takes on a discrete and modest task which is, in the last analysis, also manipulative and self-serving. Discrete because it confines itself to a comparative reading of two films of the same general period, theme, and region of the world.* Modest because in conception and approach it foregoes the reinforcements of elaborate theoretical, methodological, and bibliographic apparatus. Manipulative because it does not pretend to a "complete" interpretation of either film but prefers instead to consider each in the light of the other, a choice which inevitably "contaminates" the critical act, enlisting it into the service of a prior and larger goal. Finally, the task undertaken here is self-serving. Precisely because they are not "easy viewing," LAND IN ANGUISH and MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT give the critic something to do. Having encouraged you to sit through a total of three and a half possibly uneasy hours of film viewing, I now seek to dispose of just one more (or whatever time it takes you to read whatever portions of this paper you choose to read) in order to convince you that your hours have been well spent.

I will argue that they were well spent on two counts. First, on the basis of the films' substance. All of us here at the Wilson Center are involved in a common, if ultimately individual, intellectual enterprise. Because of their focus on the roles and attitudes of intellectuals, MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT and LAND IN ANGUISH provide us with an oblique mirror in which to examine other versions of ourselves. I will also argue that the experience of viewing these two films is worthwhile based on a second criterion, form. Neither is a docile film in formal terms. Both resist conventional molds, protesting the normative in narrative. In defying boundaries and violating expectations, in refusing to be shaped by traditional form, this pair of films expands and even redefines formal tradition. More than their ideological stance, it is this formal audacity which moves me to claim that each of these films is the best effort of its respective director--prominent and prolific as each have been--and that the two of them stand

*LAND OF ANGUISH was shot in Brazil in 1966 and premiered at Cannes in 1967; MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT was filmed in Cuba in 1967 and premiered at Pesaro (Italy) in 1968.

not only among the greatest Latin American films ever produced, but among the most significant films of their decade worldwide.

At a deeper level, I wish to argue the interrelationship between these films' ideological stance and their formal audacity, but to do so is to recur to a third zone of critical inquiry: context. In another presentation at the Wilson Center, I argued that the study of the mutually interactive articulation of film content and film form is necessary but insufficient without a consideration of film context--the socio-cultural-political-economic milieux out of which a particular work is generated and into which it is received.¹

An early scene in *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* has the protagonist, Sergio, seated at the typewriter pecking out the opening lines of Edmundo Desnoes' homonymous novel. Early in *LAND IN ANGUISH*, Paulo Martins breaks with the aristocratic and authoritarian Diaz. "I would like to write a new kind of poetry," he explains to his dismayed mentor. This dimension of self-reflexivity--artist-intellectuals making films about other artist-intellectuals who inevitably function as their surrogates--motivates the convergence of the three areas of inquiry identified above. Any consideration of *LAND IN ANGUISH* and *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* must acknowledge the inextricable linkages between form, content, and context. This self-reflexive dimension also situates them squarely in the modernist tradition.

Because of the spatial and temporal constraints placed upon this paper, and because of the peculiarities of the films under consideration, I will combine my discussions of context and content, treating the formal issues separately and then returning in my conclusion to the issue of context, which I expect to be elaborated still further through the contributions of my three respondents and members of the audience.

Content and Context

In terms of their mode of production, both *LAND IN ANGUISH* and *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* are products of intensive collaboration among a small group of dedicated participants. In Rocha's case, extreme budgetary constraints encouraged a high degree of improvisation and experimentation. Tomas Gutierrez Alea recalls that the making of *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* was "itself a memory--or reminder--of underdevelopment" because the filmmakers had to confront economic and practical limitations at every turn. Gutierrez Alea's response, like Rocha's, was to convert such constraints into catalysts for creative experimentation. "In spite of the everpresent limitations imposed by underdevelopment," he concluded, "perhaps in fact because of them, never have I made a film in which I felt more free."²

The titles of the two films suggest the directionality of some of the differences between them. *LAND IN ANGUISH*, from the original Portuguese *TERRA EM TRANSE*, has been variously rendered in English as *Earth Entranced* and *Earth in Trance*. *Transe*, in Portuguese, connotes a paroxysm, a state of altered consciousness--the kind of physical

and psychic transport associated with certain religious experiences. According to critic Robert Stam, it connotes "frenetic movement, personal delirium and collective hysteria, ... [the] paradoxical simultaneity of stasis and movement."³ The English word, "anguish," substituted in the most commonly used title, derives from the Greek and means "difficult struggle." Though certainly appropriate, this particular rendering is also partial, since it fails to retain the mystical dimension of the original. Though terra can be rendered as either "earth" or "land," I would argue that the latter is the more faithful choice in this case. MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT is a literal translation of the original Spanish MEMORIAS DEL SUBDESARROLLO. The title takes on greater dimensionality in the course of the film as the meaning of the concept shifts from empirical socioeconomic realm to more intimate zones: psychology, culture, morality, ideology. Both titles, then, link subjective personal experience with a more abstract concept, though each does so in opposite ways. LAND IN ANGUISH attributes a personalizing, psychological state to an abstract entity--a land or nation. MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT subjectivizes the impersonal, analytical concept of "underdevelopment."

LAND IN ANGUISH takes place in a country which is historically and culturally synthetic and geographically nonspecific--a fictionalized setting so composite as to assume an almost mythic quality. The impulse here is fundamentally an allegorical one. The setting of MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT, on the other hand, is geographically, temporally, and culturally specific. The impulse here is fundamentally historicizing. Both films offer negative moral exempla: LAND IN ANGUISH, the futile self-destruction of a talented, ambitious, and potentially committed individual in a society with insufficient options for meaningful political participation; MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT, the self-paralysis of an individual (of obvious acuity, if undemonstrated talent, ambition or commitment) who, when presented with genuine options for meaningful social participation, refuses to acknowledge them or accept them. LAND IN ANGUISH synthesizes paradigms of political power and (pseudo) participation in a neocolonial society, ending on the eve of a right-wing coup d'etat. MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT elaborates paradigms of internalized colonialism and dependency in a postcolonial context, ending with preparations to repulse an expected attack from "the colossus to the north."

Interestingly, neither film concerns itself with the consequences of such momentous events, concentrating all its energies on the process that precedes and/or precipitates them. Both films schematize and subjectivize that process. Rocha personifies the basic forces involved in the struggle for national power (the Oligarch, the Populist, the Entrepreneur, the Communist, etc.) but significantly omits the military, preferring to represent the political trajectory toward military coup d'etat "as a battle of speeches between two different but [essentially equivalent] political discourses."⁴ In the final sequences of MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT, Gutierrez Alea alternates his attention between the solidarity of unified action and group resolve, and the anguish of isolated individual inaction.

In keeping with its highly stylized, essentially allegorical impulse, LAND IN ANGUISH orchestrates story, sound, and image towards the

display of social hierarchization. Consistent with its quasi-documentary, essentially historicizing impulse, MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT orchestrates story, sound, and image toward the representation of social democratization. While remaining within an essentially historical materialist (Marxist) ideological framework, MEMORIES argues for the "materiality" of such intangible cultural forces as social mores, taste, forms and expressions of sexual desire. In its elaboration of the dialectical interaction between historical circumstance and individual consciousness, Gutierrez Alea's film exposes and questions the perpetuation in the midst of a socialist revolution of values bequeathed by bourgeois society. LAND IN ANGUISH, on the other hand, posits an anti-secular view of history which may include but cannot be reduced to an historical materialist analysis, for Rocha also discerns the magical-spiritual in or beneath the material. Brazilian critic Ismail Xavier perceives this second dimension operating in the film on two levels: First,

The ... coup d'etat is ... represented as a repetition of the same act of domination/domestication/repression by which the Christian values claimed the right to define the specific colonial order.... Essential to this strategy is the film's representation of Christian domination as something regulated by those very magic powers officially rejected by the westernized dominant classes.⁵

Second,

The organization of imagery through Paulo's mental processes, the role played by baroque-style abstract representation, the constant intervention of off-screen commentary, all suggest that behind the coup are other determinations which do not eliminate class struggle as a frame of reference, but which makes it less absolute.⁶

As noted above, both LAND IN ANGUISH and MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT were made by (real) artist-intellectuals living in societies in the throes of rapid and sweeping social change about (fictional) artist-intellectuals living in societies in the throes of rapid and sweeping social change. If the protagonist of each film assumes an autobiographical stance, that stance is a formal, fictionalized echo of a generative process of self-scrutiny on the part of the filmmakers. (And here I include Edmundo Desnoes, author of the original novel Memorias del subdesarrollo and co-scriptwriter for the film version, as well as the two directors.) The Brazilian film, based on an original script, was made just two years after hopes of extensive social reform--if not an even more sweeping revolutionary transformation--were quashed by the intervention of an increasingly repressive military regime. The Cuban film was made eight years after a nationalist-populist regime which soon declared itself Marxist-Leninist supplanted a corrupt and widely detested dictatorship. Both films analyze the limitations and failures of social participation and commitment on the part of artist-intellectuals. Predictably, given the contrasting situations of both countries in 1966-1967, Rocha's film is essentially pessimistic and self-condemning in its retrospection: the anatomy of a disaffected

intellectual. Gutierrez Alea and Desnoes, on the other hand, consider the limitations of artistic freedom and the extent of artistic participation from a vantage point in which the future looms brighter than the past. In offering an anatomy of an alienated intellectual, with complementary glimpses of less alienated alternatives, their impulse is toward expiation, exorcism, not resignation; for despite Che Guevara's contemporaneous contention that all intellectuals formed within bourgeois society are marked by "original sin," they do not perceive themselves as condemned.

Both Paulo and Sergio suffer from mauvaise conscience. Paulo's final existential nausea is the product of his own successive betrayals of (pseudo paternal) political leaders. Sergio's mauvaise conscience derives from his awareness of his own privilege: "I have seen too much to be innocent," he admits after being unexpectedly acquitted of the charges Elena's family had brought against him. "They have too much darkness inside their heads to be guilty." Sergio alternates between the paralysis of ennui and the paralysis of acuity. If Paulo acts only to see his actions coopted and manipulated by the forces he had thought to oppose, Sergio is incapable of any action at all.

In an article entitled "The Crisis of the Liberal Imagination and the Utopia of Writing," Jean Franco, surveying Latin American fiction from the "boom" years, argues that authors like Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortazar, and Severo Sarduy cast the writer as modern hero in works which "flourish on the suppression of history."⁷ Rocha, Gutierrez Alea, and Desnoes offer us a counterdepiction: the artist-intellectual as anti-hero. Their characters' fate is in no sense an epic conquest or even the honorable fulfillment of a tragic destiny, but instead "an ambivalent journey into the abyss."⁸ Both protagonists are immersed in and complicitous with the false steps and impediments to progress of their historical time and place. If Paulo is "the more or less lucid critic of an ambient corruption in which he himself participates,"⁹ Sergio for his part retains a certain nostalgia for the refinements and privileges of an earlier "ambient corruption" and is complicitous in perpetuating ideological holdovers from that era. On the part of these filmmakers, this refusal of the artist-intellectual as hero is simultaneously political and aesthetic in its motivation, reflecting both the directors' analysis of the Latin American political situation and their opposition to the conventions of character portrayal in the dominant cinema.

The protagonists of both films reach a dead end. They both conclude that "words are useless," and surrender to a literal and/or metaphoric death. Paulo provokes police gunfire by deliberately running a roadblock. Sergio awaits Armageddon in the stubborn isolation of his luxury apartment. Both are entrapped by a past whose legacy endures because Paulo cannot and Sergio will not cast it aside.

On the part of the filmmakers, the act of representing the literal/metaphoric demise of the artist-intellectual is simultaneously a recognition of and a challenge to the encroaching awareness of the diminished power and potential of this group in both countries. In an article on "cultural elites" whose penning coincided with the filming of the works

discussed here, Frank Bonilla asserted that "The cultural elite is perhaps more obsolete than any other and is displaced from leadership even in its most sacred redoubts."¹⁰ Bonilla attributes this decline in influence not to the rise of technocracy but to the spread of military governments in Latin America. Whether the ascribed cause is or is not merely the symptom of another, larger cause, artist-intellectuals in the last 1960s in both Brazil and Cuba--and throughout Latin America--were fighting to establish either the legitimacy of a prior or the right to a future (relative) hegemony, or both.

Xavier discusses *LAND IN ANGUISH* as "part of a critical-creative trajectory [which] was inflected by ... political processes and by the specific awareness attained by the filmmaker of his own place within the social formation."¹¹ Having "cast himself as the omnipotent leader of the people, imparting the lessons of life and history to his audience," the filmmaker then "turned aggressive in response to his subsequent sense of impotence."¹² He concludes,

Cinema Novo wanted to be an instance of popular communion, the radical expression of Third World otherness in opposition to a neo-colonial cultural system. As a political proposal, it embodied the idealist assumption of a transparency that rendered the basic issues under discussion immediately legible; Cinema Novo saw itself as immanent within the dynamics of national upheaval. After the coup of 1964, the filmmaker, clearly displaced from the 'center of history,' became less ambitious in his impulse toward rebellion, more concerned with the determinations of his discourse, with [his] relation to the medium.¹³

As the product of a society in the process of redefining--not rejecting or summarily repressing--the role of the artist-intellectual, *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* stands here in marked contrast to *LAND IN ANGUISH*. The Cuban intellectual in those years was in a very real sense positioned "at the center of history," in large part because the society openly acknowledged that group's access to, if not total control over, the mechanisms through which history would be represented. Cuban filmmakers' concern with "the determinations of their discourse" and their relationship to their medium therefore always carried a more utilitarian motivation, precisely because art and thought were highly valued as essential to the perpetuation of the new regime and the extension of its bases of support. The debate in Cuba was not over essential merit, but over methods.

The intricate relationship of context to content in the two films under consideration here solicits that both be viewed in light of contemporary attempts in Cuba, Brazil, and elsewhere to understand processes of development, modernization, or social transformation as cultural processes, and to grasp the role of "cultural elites" in the implementation or obstruction of that process. The particular views on these issues put forth by Glauber Rocha, Tomas Gutierrez Alea, and Edmundo Desnoes are only fully accessible through a consideration of the formal strategies through which they are presented.

The Substance of Form

Both *LAND IN ANGUISH* and *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* adopt an "analogue artistic form" from outside their own medium in order to give coherence to works which would otherwise risk submerging themselves in their own formal heterogeneity. The Brazilian filmmaker turns to opera; the Cuban to collage. As Robert Stam has noted, "Paulo's death, coextensive with the film, recalls the protracted agonies of opera, where people die eloquently, interminably, and in full voice."¹⁴ Its exaggerated gestures, exalted poetic diction, and schematization of forces and events in the interest of dramatic effect, make *LAND IN ANGUISH* consummately operatic in both conception and effect. It is none other than Gutierrez Alea himself who characterizes *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* as "a sort of collage--a film that will have a bit of everything" in a sequence where he plays himself, screening for Sergio and Elena a series of "soft core" clips censored under the Batista regime. As I have argued elsewhere,

This particular sequence is a kind of crossroads in the film, a high point of humor and virtuosity which also reveals false attitudes toward sexuality. (...) Simultaneously, the sequence undermines the entire question of censorship, takes brilliant advantage of the camera's ability to reduplicate action, transcend space and ignore time, totally confuses the planes of 'fiction' and 'documentary truth' which remain more clearly separate in the rest of the film, and, most important, allows the director in person to present his audience with a crucial key to understanding the film.¹⁵

Like the collage form as cultivated by the Cubists, *MEMORIES* assembles apparently random odds and ends, "found incidents and characters" in place of "found objects," juxtaposing them in a way which simultaneously confers coherence on the assemblage while maintaining a certain autonomy of the composite elements. The "play"--as well as the import--lies in the articulation of the interrelationships, an operation which is left to the beholder.¹⁶

Gutierrez Alea uses the collage technique on a less transcendental level when he offers us the diverse fragments of Sergio's past and present which both compose the fictional portion of the narrative and reveal Sergio's character. Sergio's psychology is carefully grounded in history and material circumstance. The more allegorical impulse behind Rocha's film leads him to turn his characters into emblems. Their schematic nature inhibits viewer identification with them. Paulo is the emblematic artist-intellectual, both journalist and poet, socially concerned yet in the end tainted by the same self-seeking will to power as the succession of political leaders he serves and rejects. Porfirio Diaz, like his Mexican namesake, embodies the conservative, aristocratic, European-identified, "Christian" tradition: authoritarian, reactionary, elitist. Felipe Veira is the typical Latin American caudillo--the rural populist whose will to reform ultimately substitutes compromise and self-interest for consistency and conviction. Julio Fuentes represents the "progressive" bourgeoisie: a dynamic entrepreneur and media magnate,

cynically opportunist in his changing political alliances. Sara, Paulo's lover, is the committed political activist. The strongest of all Rocha's female characters, she personifies equilibrium, authenticity, trust, sacrifice, perseverance. Her strength and integrity are enhanced by the contrast with Paulo's former fiancée, Sylvia--a purely ornamental figure who postures and poses without ever speaking. Paulo's colleague Alvaro represents a less mature political position than Sara's. His commitment is more superficial, sentimental. Even in suicide, he lacks Paulo's histrionic flair. EXPLINT is not a character but an agency, an unseen, unheard "structuring absence" (the anagram of a multinational corporation) whose invisible power shapes action and character "from the wings."

Though in no sense as allegorizing as Rocha, Gutierrez Alea does use a similar technique of emblematic characterization when depicting more secondary figures. Without being reduced to them, each of Sergio's friends and consorts embodies a different component of his personality. Of the four women in Sergio's life, his wife Laura represents the Euro-Amerization of the Cuban bourgeoisie, transformed by Sergio from a "slovenly Cuban girl" into a woman of elegant if artificial exterior. Hanna, a young German refugee, is, in contrast, a natural blonde--the real thing rather than the imitation. Though idolizing her as the ideal woman, Sergio let her slip through his fingers while he pursued more material interests. Despite her working-class status, Elena is clearly not "the new Cuban woman." She aspires to be an actress, longs for luxury imports from the United States, but scorns the mold Sergio tries to fit her into. Noemi, the Protestant maid, remains an object of Sergio's fantasy and, as such, another example of his essentially contemplative stance. Pablo, his sole male friend, represents those elements of his own past which Sergio now rejects. He is small-minded, self-deluding, crude, and self-righteously "apolitical." "Although it may destroy men," Sergio thinks in voice-over as he watches Pablo and his wife depart for Miami, "this revolution is my revenge against the stupid Cuban bourgeoisie. Against idiots like Pablo."

Rocha's inclination to emblemization extends beyond character to mise-en-scene. He uses sets in an expressionistic fashion to "externalize" social roles. Diaz is shot against the magnificent marble staircases and opulent interiors of a baroque palace which imitates the grand European style (in fact the Rio de Janeiro Opera House). Viera is often framed beneath the arches of his colonial hacienda. Fuentes' environment is alternately a nightclub in which togaed females writhe in apparent parody of LA DOLCE VITA, and the roof of an office building under an enormous broadcasting tower. Paulo's own apartment is multilevel modern, lined with the obligatory books and objects d'art. Despite abundant windows and general openness, the chiaroscuro lighting and the camera's emphasis on bars and barriers render this space confining and oppressive. Sergio's apartment is emblematic in a similar if more intricate way. The dead bird in the cage, the cover photo of Brigitte Bardot which he conceals before Elena's arrival, the innocuous "modern" art and gaudy tourist trophies testify to a certain shallowness in his pretensions to cultivation. After touring Hemingway's house, he comments disparagingly that everything there originated outside of Cuba, without ever drawing the obvious parallel to his own (de-nationalized) personal space.

Mise-en-scene can only be artificially separated from the camera style used to capture the elements within the frame. The cinematography in both *LAND IN ANGUISH* and *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* is self-consciously heterogeneous. Both filmmakers prefer a hand-held over a more stable camera, adopting a style of shooting which was at the time more conventionally associated with documentary than with fictional filmmaking. Both filmmakers play with their infringement against these conventional "rules." Rocha uses documentary style ironically, as a means of further theatricalizing action and character. Gutierrez Alea uses documentary style and content to contextualize, complement, contrast, and comment upon the elements and especially the personalities of his fiction. Rocha uses the extreme depth of field associated with Orson Welles' *CITIZEN KANE*, and incorporates some grotesque, illuminated-from-below closeups which recall Eisenstein's *IVAN THE TERRIBLE*.

Both films delight in exhibiting the conflict of their various cinematic styles. What Robert Stam has noted in the case of *LAND IN ANGUISH* is equally true for *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT*. Such a self-conscious display of styles in conflict means that, at least in part, meaning "must emerge from the creative tension between diverse methods of film writing."¹⁷ The camera in both these films displays an autonomy seldom associated with more "classical" cinematic representation. Rather than being subordinate to the action, these filmmakers seem to encourage their camera(people) to choreograph their own movements, to assert prerogatives more appropriate to a participant or agent-provocateur.

The editing style in both films is disjunctive, favoring unexpected discontinuities and abrupt juxtapositions. Sound is often used in an equally disjunctive manner, particularly in *LAND IN ANGUISH*. *MEMORIES* uses frequent voice-over by the protagonist (in some cases, as in the Bay of Pigs sequence, only identifiable in retrospect) as well as ambient noise, familiar classical and popular compositions, and electronically synthesized sound; but composer Leo Brouwer's impressive score manages to incorporate all these disparate elements into a harmonious whole. Rocha, in contrast, prefers dissonance. Post-dubbing the film's score, which he himself "composed" or more accurately "juxta-posed," he uses solos of particular musical instruments (oboe, piano, drums) and styles (jazz, folk, sacred, orchestral) to further accentuate the emblematic presentations of character and setting. He combines this "aural collage" with blatant manipulation, presenting visual evidence of speech, for example, while withholding the aural evidence. He overlays different sound strata. He leaves the actors' post-synched dialogue just a bit "off" in certain sequences to enhance the spectators' sense of alienation from particular characters. If Sergio's voice-over in *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* manages to convey the degree to which he is both lucid and, ultimately, lost, Paulo's discourse ranges to delirium and hysteria, and even in its more measured moments, when the viewer expected "rational" speech, often turns instead to poetic declamation.

Both films revolve around a series of dichotomies: attraction versus repulsion, identification versus distancing, subjectivity versus objectivity, emotionality versus didacticism. Enchantment and

disenchantment in Rochaian terms; alienation and dealienation in the language of Gutierrez Alea.

The alternation of "subjective" and "objective" camera in MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT (from Sergio's point of view in the first case, incorporating his image into a larger context in the second) simultaneously indulges and undercuts the spectator's efforts to identify with Sergio according to the norms of identification established by the dominant cinema. Sergio submits himself to criticism while the juxtaposition of events, memories, experiences--documentary and fictional--in and through which the film contexts his character offer the "raw material" for an even more trenchant critique. But the real target of these critical and self-critical operations, according to Gutierrez Alea, is the spectator--and more precisely, "the spectator who lives within the Revolution."

As the film progresses, as the character undergoes a progressive process of destruction, the spectators should gradually become aware of (tomar conciencia de) their own situation, of the inconsistency of having identified with Sergio. ... This is why, when they leave the theater, they are not content. They have not discharged their passions, but rather the reverse: they have taken on all sorts of disquieting concerns which should lead to their taking action first upon themselves and consequently upon the reality they inhabit.¹⁸

Thus the dialectical conflict posed in MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT is metacinematic in a double sense: formally conscious of itself, and seeking to transcend the limits of the cinema by invading--subtly, deviously--not just the consciousness but the behavior of the spectator.

Rocha's dialectics are "meta" in a more intraconflictive sense. LAND IN ANGUISH is perhaps the film which best answers Cuban theorist Julio Garcia Espinosa's call for "making a spectacle out of the destruction of the spectacle."¹⁹ In and through LAND IN ANGUISH, Rocha reveals how an artist "can have his culture and destroy it too."²⁰ Opera is associated in both soundtrack and mise-en-scene with the reactionary Diaz, yet Rocha also chooses to make this form the analogue for his entire film. As Xavier argues,

The same cultural code assumed as a constitutive factor in the film is cited as a target of criticism. ... Both Paulo and the film share a 'double perspective' as a principle informing their basic attitude toward the dominant codes.... Opera ... recapitulates the way in which both exhibit, in their own practice, that code and that style which they simultaneously attack because they associate it with the enemy.²¹

In their efforts to undercut spectator identification with the characters of their fictions, in their determination to place the spectator in an analytical frame of mind, both LAND IN ANGUISH and MEMORIES

OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT are thoroughly Brechtian. Their debt to this theorist-practitioner of politicized modernism--and to his most noted disciple, Jean-Luc Godard--also manifests itself in a number of other formal strategies: interrupted or repeated action; sound-image disjunctions; abrupt spatio-temporal juxtapositions; heterogeneous mixtures of modes, styles, and media; the intermingling of drama and commentary.

Both Paulo and Sergio play a dual role as character and as narrator. In the latter capacity, they speak to the audience in direct aural address (voice-over) and in Paulo's case, direct visual address as well (with synchronous sound). Rocha uses sequence repetitions as a kind of antirealistic or "de-naturalizing" device, as in the sequence where Paulo sees Sara enter the newspaper office for the first time, or when Alvaro comes to tell him of the alliance between Fuentes and Diaz. The events immediately prior and subsequent to Paulo's shooting are also the subject of a "double take." Depicted at the beginning of the film, and then redepicted with significant differences at the end, the repetition of these scenes gives formal closure to the film. Gutierrez Alea uses the device of the "double take" much more extensively: (1) the precredit dance sequence and shooting incident from an "anonymous" viewpoint and the same sequence later filtered through Sergio's subjectivity; (2) Sergio bidding goodbye at the airport first from his point of view and then from the points of view of his departing relatives; (3) candid shots of people on the street "colored" by Sergio's projected malaise followed by a similar sequence towards the end of the film through a more neutral eye; (4) the tape recorder incident which precipitated Sergio and Laura's breakup first evoked aurally with temporally subsequent visuals, later "replayed" in its entirety with synchronous visuals; and (5) Noemi's baptism sequence eroticized and lyrical in Sergio's imagination followed by a snapshot "reportage" of the actual, disappointingly chaste and prosaic proceedings. Each of these replays takes the spectator to an enhanced level of awareness, allowing for a process of reflection and growth during the course of the film.

LAND IN ANGUISH is formally diverse, incorporating an abundance of elite and popular cultural forms: poetry and opera (domestic and imported); photography and journalism; folk music, jazz, choral chants, as well as more traditional musical compositions; baroque, colonial, and modern architectural forms as emblems of different social roles; theater and tableaux; carnival-like pageantry and processions. MEMORIES also juxtaposes formally heterogeneous materials, but here the central contrast is not between elite and popular forms, but between fictional and documentary modes. This fictional film incorporates an entire catalogue of documentary sequences: photo essays, historical and contemporary television footage, a full-scale reportage on the trial of the Bay of Pigs invaders, a fragment from one of Cuban filmmaker's Santiago Alvarez' most famous documentaries (Now!), radio programs, even a survey of the contents of a newspaper, as well as a number of "casual documentaries"--sequences shot in public places, often with a hidden camera. These sequences interrupt the fictional narrative, creating an expanded, alternative context within the film for response to and evaluation of Sergio's person and experience. Against the

protagonist's unremitting subjectivity, they counterpose another pole--not absolute objectivity, since the filmmakers would dispute its very existence--but a kind of "collective subjectivity" based upon shared historical and perceptual experience. As the director explains in an article written several years after the filming, "The truth does not lie in one as opposed to the other [fictional as opposed to documentary sequences], not even in the sum of one and the other, but in what the confrontation of the one and the other with the protagonist in the context of the film instigates (sugiere) in the spectator."²²

Both films seek closure by returning in the last frames to a scene which was represented (with subtle but telling differences) in the opening: Paulo in his death agony, machine gun held on high, silhouetted against an ethereal (non)landscape; Sergio, in sleepless terror of the impending invasion, surveying the sunrise panorama of Havana from his balcony. "Everything remains the same," he had observed in an opening sequence; this shot reveals just how drastically everything has changed.

Despite this structural circularity, however, *MEMORIES OF UNDER-DEVELOPMENT* is essentially open-ended--an open rather than a closed circle, so to speak. Sergio's fate remains unspecified. If Cuban audiences tend to see his floundering beyond hope of rescue, North American audiences tend to defend his potential capacity for change, growth, involvement--for a more meaningful, less alienated future. In narrative terms, his story has been a "progressive" one; he is "further along" in time and understanding at the end of the film. Frequent flashbacks embellish the narrative; they do not constitute it.

LAND, IN ANGUISH, in contrast, is much more closed in structural and ideological terms. Paulo's flashbacks constitute the body of the film, which ends at almost the same instant as it began. Though Paulo's death appears to be imminent, it never is in fact represented on the screen, so there is little to prevent the inventive viewer from conjuring some hypothetical deus ex machina to wrest him from the jaws of death. While Sergio continues to demonstrate an investment in his own physical if not moral survival, Paulo goes in search of his own demise, enacting "the agony of his illusory status, the death of his anachronistic view."²³

In an unpublished article on the difference between "documentary truth and cinematic fiction," Warren Bass argues that "A more open form approaches the documentary end of the continuum, and a closed form necessarily fictionalizes. An otherwise fictional film that is open-ended...is somewhat defictionalized by this openness."²⁴ Certainly the two films under discussion here replicate this coincidence of open form with a documentary (historicizing) impulse, and closed form with a more fictionalized (in this case, allegorical) modality.

Context Revisited

MEMORIES is formally open in another sense--in its quest to expand the repertoire of available cinematic techniques, approaches, representational strategies. But to address this issue is to circle back again to the question of cinematic context. Consistent with the historical moment of art and culture in Cuba, and with a certain tendency (stronger in the Film Institute than in other artistic organizations) to defend freedom of artistic expression and critical latitude in the face of a more sectarian position which argued the subordination of both to a predefined didacticism, MEMORIES exhibits an ideological expansiveness in its formal conception. Ismail Xavier observes the opposite tendency in LAND IN ANGUISH: "Acknowledging the crisis of available representations (especially those elaborated by intellectuals), the film expresses a deep exasperation with the play of appearances that contaminates all aspects of national life."⁵ LAND IN ANGUISH, an embattled, essentially pessimistic film, poses a series of negations. MEMORIES, though equally critical toward the shortcomings and failures of the Latin American artist-intellectual, retains its optimism. Rather than compose the epitaph for the intellectual's role in society, it offers a critique which seeks, through its self-reflexive nature, to evolve more constructive practices.

In LAND IN ANGUISH, both form and content converge on a particular target: populism. Rocha's film aggressively critiques Latin American populism as a political and aesthetic practice, as an essentially manipulative and paternalistic form which cultivates charisma over content, demagogery over analysis, passivity over active involvement. Rocha's film may implicitly call for a radical revision of the pedagogical, representational, and ideological assumptions and practices of art and politics--and art as politics, as is inevitably the case, whether by commission or omission, among Latin American artists and intellectuals--but he does not postulate even tentative models. It is Sara, his most sympathetic character, who proclaims the futility of such an attempt, proclaiming that "Art and politics are too much for one man."

Gutierrez Alea, in contrast, explores a broader range of potential models and points (self-referentially, as it turns out, though extremely modestly) to less alienated and alienating options for politically committed artistic practice. Though Sergio makes apparently scant progress with his own writing career, he confronts several other intellectual models in the course of the film: Ernest Hemingway, a writer on the run from himself who, he concludes, "killed [wild game] in order not to kill himself" and "must have been unbearable;" a group of intellectuals from Latin America and Europe (including Edmundo Desnoes in person) who pontificate in abstract and inconsequential terms about literature and revolution; Jack Gelber, a New York playwright whose just observations on the inappropriateness of these public lucubrations to the revolutionary context are expressed, equally inappropriately, in English; and, finally, in a cameo appearance, Tomas Gutierrez Alea himself in the screening room sequence (and--earlier and almost instantaneously--in a police lineup shot, a photo-document of his arrest for political activities against Batista). Gutierrez Alea's appearance in his own film postulates an alternative to the more hollow intellectual postures represented therein: that of the self-aware, self-reflexive artist

who has turned his talents and energies toward creating a complex and uncompromising work of art which expands the radius of artistic and intellectual possibility and expression from a perspective of political and critical commitment.

Conclusion

For reasons which are indisputably inflected by historical and political changes, but which remain in the last analysis highly speculative, neither the Brazilians nor the Cubans are currently producing films which impose analogous demands on their audiences. Modernist approaches have been supplanted by a resurgence of more "classical" narrative forms. Neither are producing films which are simultaneously as thematically intrepid and formally audacious as *LAND IN ANGUISH* and *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT*. In the name of accessibility and the quest for a genuine popular culture, many Brazilian filmmakers have returned to a "transparent" style and the aesthetics of "easy" (and too often also sensationalist) viewing. In contrast to modernist films like *LAND IN ANGUISH*, this more traditional (Hollywood-evolved) style is arguably more democratic because it requires less of its audience. Yet it is arguably less democratic for the same reason: because it grants its audience less space for reflection and participation. It seems that in Brazil, and in Cuba as well under somewhat different circumstances, the populist cinema that Glauber Rocha attacked in his theoretical writings and on the screen is winning out. According to Xavier, "The new context of film production [which evolved] in the 70's, reinforced the separation of the two concerns, experimentation and communication."²⁶

Since the mid-sixties, the context of film production has also undergone significant changes in Cuba, though perhaps not of the magnitude occasioned in Brazil after 1975 by the inception of organized state participation in the distribution, production, and eventually exhibition of national films. In 1978, the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC), long regarded as the most autonomous of Cuba's cultural agencies, became one of five branches of the newly established Ministry of Culture. One aspect of this greater centralization involved the financial reorganization of film production and distribution in an attempt to impose greater cost-effectiveness on a cultural industry which had always prided itself on prioritizing other than monetary criteria. In the fall of 1982, Alfredo Guevara, founder of ICAIC in March of 1959 and its director since that date, stepped down. Julio Garcia Espinosa--founding member of the Film Institute, filmmaker and theorist whose most famous essay is "For An Imperfect Cinema"--has been appointed Guevara's successor, but it is early yet to discern changes in direction.²⁷

Though filmmaking in Brazil continues to be an active, vital form of cultural expression (and a terrain for perpetual national polemicizing), Cuban filmmakers seem to have lost much of the creative elan which characterized their work through the mid-70's. Economic and political constraints cannot be underestimated, particularly during

the Reagan years, yet there are clearly internal impediments as well to both quantity and quality of production.

I would like to return to a question posed explicitly by one film and implicitly by both, in order to reformulate it. Rather than asking, Are art and politics too much for one individual?--or for one society?--, I would inquire instead: Is a society without a self-conscious articulation of the reciprocal relationships between art and politics--between symbol and action--too little for both the individual and the society?

As a way of opening this paper to a broader range of reflections, I would like to address the issue of ideology more directly. I want to posit a logical and necessary connection between reflection on intellectuals and reflection on ideology, and between both these and a process which I have referred to variously as self-consciousness and self-reflexivity: the process of reflecting critically upon one's own critical reflections which is at the core of modernist art.

I was struck by two independent and unrelated sentences in Phillip Rieff's collection, On Intellectuals. In the lead essay to the volume, Talcott Parson's states simply and suggestively that "Ideology is in a sense history grown self-conscious."²⁸ I would extend J. P. Nettl's assertion that "the study of intellectuals belongs in a special sense to the internal history of modernity" to suggest that it also belongs, "in a special sense," to the history of modernism as an historical-cultural phenomenon. Nettl himself promptly points to this self-reflective dimension when he raises the issue of "professional self-interest": "Most analysts of intellectuals and of ideas consider themselves intellectuals or hope to become such. Preoccupation with such problems may be the sociologist's only recognized ticket...to acquir[ing] the status of an intellectual."²⁹

Engaging in a bit of rudimentary collage-making of my own, I would like to juxtapose two conceptions of ideology from two different historical periods and perspectives: the Parsonian conception as articulated in the article just quoted, which dates from the same period as the films I have discussed here, and a more contemporary view.

With only a passing parenthetical nod to the implication to interdependence, Parsons begins his essay on "'The Intellectual': A Social Role Category" by stating,

In theoretical terms the key reference point is the analytical independence (...) between social and cultural systems. Social systems are organized about the exigencies of interaction among acting units.... Cultural systems, on the other hand, are organized about the patterning of meaning in symbolic systems. Relative to action in the more usual senses, meaning systems are always in some respects and to some degree normative in their significance; they specify what in some sense should be done....³⁰

Several pages later he makes the following argument (which my own "cutting and pasting" has ever so slightly realigned):

It is through the assertion of commitments to values on the one hand and the exertion of influence through the prestige of the individual, institutional, disciplinary and other sources of 'reputation' on the other that the intellectual insofar as he does not control the more 'material' means of having an impact must try to exercise his responsibility, and his right to be heard. Considerations such as these seem to have something to do with the prominence of 'ideologies' in our time.

I am asserting that ideology has become the primary instrument of the modern secular intellectual classes in their bid to be considered generally important, to have an impact on the affairs of the society, commensurate with, or perhaps running somewhat ahead of, their actual position of strategic importance in it.

I would define an ideology as a body of ideas that is at once empirical and evaluative in reference to action and potential states of a social system. ... Ideology is in a sense history grown self-conscious and socially responsible but at the same time more selective relative to technical standards, more passionately partisan, more justificatory, and, under the pressure for justification, more analytical and rationalistic.³¹

I would now propose to selectively trace some basic elements of a much more recent text which derives from a humanistic rather than a sociological tradition: Bill Nichols' Ideology and the Image, a work which seeks "to understand how ideology takes root in the same soil as our visual perception of the world around us."³² In implicit contrast to the Parsonian notion that ideology is how the individual represents society to society, Nichols argues that ideology "is how the existing ensemble of social relations represents itself to individuals; it is the image a society gives of itself in order to perpetuate itself."³³ This kind of definition, as the author himself points out, "stresses the interconnection of base and superstructure or of social existence and consciousness."

If we abstract ideology into a system of beliefs or ideas justifying a dominant class's position, we may begin to assume that social existence or the economic base lacks an ideational dimension, that it is devoid of meaning or value and therefore 'produces' them as a separate realm of consciousness or superstructure in order to justify itself. ... Communication and exchange are always signifying acts and part of what they signify or represent is our own place within the processes of communication and exchange, be they base or superstructure. Language, especially when it

is conceived of semiotically as including all forms of communication based upon signs, ... belongs to neither base nor superstructure but is a necessary element of all material social practice. ... All human activity that involves communication and exchange, whether it is the economic production of an automobile or the artistic production of a painting, produces meaning. The elements of this production that represent the needs of the dominant class order are ideological elements.³⁴

In the mid-60's, Parsons persists, however hesitatingly, in positing an analytical distinction between material and symbolic action. What developments in semiotics and critical theory over the intervening years have sought to articulate is the way in which "acting units" constitute symbolic systems and symbolic systems constitute acting units.

To pursue Nichols' argument somewhat further,

Ideology appears to produce not itself, but the world. It proposes obviousness, a sense of 'the way things are,' within which our sense of place and self emerges as an equally self-evident proposition.

In those terms, ideology is clearly not coercive, nor is it reducible to specific, articulated systems of belief, (populist or racist ideology, for example). Such systems may constitute specific ideologies, but they rest upon a more general process of representation through which individuals are recruited into a social order.³⁵

Because "what remains hidden is the process of representation itself, the investment of meanings as a material social process, we need to be able to identify those ideological elements, to discover the aspects of representation that embody them, to understand the place set out for us within such processes."³⁶ In situations of cultural complicity with the dominant order, as those examined by most contemporary analysts of cultural production tend to be, ideology, in Nichols' terms, "uses the fabrication of images and the processes of representation to persuade us that how things are is how they ought to be and that the place provided for us is the place we ought to have."³⁷ In situations of cultural opposition to the dominant order, the fabrication of images and the processes of representation can be expected to suggest that how things are is not how they ought to be, and that the place provided for us is not the place we ought to have. Or even, though much more rarely, that how things are not (yet) is how they ought to be, and that where we are not (yet) is where we ought to be. That is, not simply to criticize or subvert the dominant order of things but to envision/exemplify a new order.

Unexpectedly, abruptly, but quite appropriately for my interests here, Parsons ends his article, which had taken Western Europe and North America as its geo-cultural framework, by casting a wary glance southward:

If sharp clarity of ideological orientation and conflict is ... blurred in North American and Western European societies, it is a very conspicuous feature of societies at various levels of 'underdevelopment.' ... Where there is a conflict with 'traditional' elites, the emerging elites are much more likely to be based on 'intellectual' status than they are in highly differentiated societies, precisely because the broad base of more modern structures in the field of economic production, governmental administration, and the like is relatively so much weaker. The cultural base of their ideologies also tends to be much more diffuse and less differentiated, as, for example, in the strong aristocratic-humanistic trend of Latin American intellectuals' orientations ... which can on occasion incorporate an important element of Marxism or even tip radically into a communist pattern.³⁸

In the face of the internal contradictions and (always debatable) subsequent historical "rectifications" of the above assessment, I would argue simply that the most significant contribution of the entire New Latin American Cinema movement of the last two decades has been its emphasis on developing representational strategies for making the operations of ideology "visible," often by making them strange. As spectators of those efforts, we North Americans hold but secondary status here. We bring our own ethno-cultural "strangeness" to the films we view from other national/regional traditions, a strangeness which is, initially at least, more disruptive than functional. The functional estrangement which critical-oppositional filmmakers from Latin America have cultivated is primarily directed at their compatriots and fellow Latin Americans. In the face of the alleged "weakness" of Latin American political and economic systems, this is a compensatory strength in the realm of cultural-symbolic action that has been, also, a material force. Though the levels of mediation are more numerous, and thus the effort required of us as spectators greater, we who belong to other cultures also can have our vision of the world and our place within it revised or renewed through our exposure to attempts to render the invisible operations of ideology more visible.

The contemporary theorists of ideology whom Nichols summarizes and typifies avoid portraying ideology as a monolith of manipulation. They take pains instead to assert that "we are more than what ideology makes of us."³⁹ But none would deny that, because of what ideology makes of us, we are simultaneously less than we might be. The operations of ideology suppress, displace, deny "all those underrepresented selves we might otherwise become."⁴⁰

To the extent that oppositional cinema in Latin America has developed a tradition of its own, this has evolved out of the determination to discover and redeem for national awareness underrepresented sectors of the society: primarily but not exclusively the rural and urban poor, and those ethnic groups displaced because of their ethnicity from positions of social well-being and political power. *LAND IN ANGUISH* and *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* deviate from that "tradition" by undertaking first and foremost the representation of the privileged rather than the marginalized, of the self rather than the "other." Yet, in a larger sense, the impulse behind the entire New Latin American cinema movement as an historical-political project involves a kind of "autoethnography" which can ultimately be understood as the attempt to recuperate underrepresented aspects of the self, conceiving of selfhood as encompassing both individual and national-cultural identity. In a world which daily grows more culturally homogenized, such a project is a vital and urgent one to be appreciated by all of us who value the endangered diversity of world (as opposed to "universal") culture.

To the degree that the entire history of ideas in Latin America pivots around the question of identity, to the degree that the region's artists and intellectuals have been and continue to be involved in the quest for "national reality" and the components of that living hybrid organism which is their national and continental culture, the project of the New Latin American cinema movement is but one branch of a much broader undertaking. The fiction of Gabriel Garcia Marquez traces a parallel course, as Jean Franco argues in a recent essay which describes his novels as myths of the construction of the modern dependent state from the point of view of the marginalized. Because of their potential to empower the powerless, such works combat the "voluntary amnesia" of the dominant classes and the involuntary amnesia of the dispossessed. These attempts to "inscribe alternate histories in the collective memory" constitute practical, constructive, even "utopian" ideologies.⁴¹ Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano perceives a similar process being unleashed nationwide in Nicaragua as the literacy campaign, community development, land reform and other new government programs uncover "the secret countries within the larger country," those places where no one whose concept of culture is restricted by the privileges of race, class, and geography can freely travel. "Revolutions," he claims, "involve the recovery of national memory, which is the key to identity."⁴² "This process of reclamation and revelation, a process of nationalization, does not end with literacy and the compilation of myths, legends, folk songs, records of history, memoirs and prescriptions of folk medicine," asserts Galeano. "It starts there."⁴³

Fifteen years ago, *LAND IN ANGUISH* and *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* sought to expose the existing limitations and contradictions of the privileged artist-intellectual in dependent and developing societies and to call for a radical revision of the representational and ideological assumptions and practices of the politics of art and intellectual life. As recipient of the 1982 Nobel Prize for literature, Gabriel Garcia Marquez currently struggles against the cult of individual greatness by characterizing his own voice as the distillation of a multitude of silences imposed by violence or indifference. In Nicaragua, a poet-priest

(Ernesto Cardenal) heads the Ministry of Culture; another poet (Daniel Ortega) and a novelist (Sergio Ramirez) are members of the governing junta; and the writing and recitation of poetry is a national pastime among all sectors of the population. Throughout Latin America, "testimonial literature"--a collaborative genre which utilizes the presentational skills of the educated to capture, compile, and disseminate the experience of those whose lives are seldom touched by the written word--is on the rise.

In light of these developments, the current return to prominence of the Latin American intellectual, as measured by the attention conferred by the Western press, is both predictable and diversionary. In a recent cover article in the New York Times Magazine, Alan Riding depicts Latin American intellectuals as members of an exclusive club which coheres even more tightly by virtue of the political debates which divide it. Riding isolates the "stars," portrays them as hungry for power ("... And they clearly feel a strong need to speak out and to be heard. It is as if they see themselves mirrored in the power structure and become hypnotized by their image."), and then confers upon them a degree of power which even such stars would be reluctant to claim ("Intellectuals may not be the principal actors in the Latin drama, but they define the issues. Before causes win out, it is their ideas that triumph.").⁴⁴ This vision of a distillation of power ignores and disguises the opposite trend which is so marked in Latin America today. The current situation is best characterized not as the disaffected impotence of Rocha's poet-intellectual, nor the alienated self-deception of Gutierrez Alea's would-be writer, not the contentious concentration of power which Alan Riding discerns, but a more pervasive and balanced integration of reflection and activity, creativity and participation, which will, in the years to come, produce new versions and revisions of the intricate symbiosis of art and politics in Latin America.

COMMENTARY

Third World people are either abject and corruptible or proud and not so easy to buy. In the Western discourse about Latin America it is assumed we all have a low price, a cow or a tape recorder, a woman or a country to oppress (a woman because it is mainly men you wish to buy). There is a famous anecdote about the Mexican revolutionary generals: They endured heavy artillery--but were always destroyed by firing at them a million-pesos shot. So it is a disturbing fact that the leaders of the Cuban revolution, or Allende or the people and leaders of the Central American revolution are, at times, incorruptible.

I am corruptible and proud like so many intellectuals in the First, Second, and Third Worlds. I am here today out of arrogance because I have an advantage: I lived and worked in Cuba during twenty years of revolution.

My respect for the work of Julianne Burton is deep. She is able to understand an alien discourse, the discourse of Latin American culture. It is something of a miracle: a critic that can think in terms alien to her culture. Julianne Burton is a bridge, and we are deeply in need of cultural bridges to overcome the continental polarization of North and South--of the United States of America and the Disunited States of America. At present this misunderstanding is greater and deeper than the misunderstanding between East and West.

I feel, therefore, comfortable to engage in a more radical commentary--in going to the root of certain issues discussed in her talk today. Julianne defines Tomas Gutierrez Alea (from here on Titón, the name most of us know him by) as "the self-aware, self-reflexive artist who turned his talents and energies toward creating a complex and uncompromising work of art which expands the radius of artistic and intellectual possibility and expression from a perspective of political commitment." Yet she shifts in her analysis from film fiction to essay fact: "a group of intellectuals from Latin America (including Edmundo Desnoes in person) who pontificate in abstract and inconsequential terms about literature and revolution."

I think this is an appropriate moment to set certain things straight and I am taking the liberty of being as manipulative and self-serving as Julianne. I want to displace slightly the focus. My work was the first to introduce in revolutionary Cuba the theme of underdevelopment not as an economic category but as a form of cultural colonization. I wrote the novel which Titón followed closely, and even wrote the new scenes incorporated in the film version. Only one complete sequence was introduced by Titón, the documentary essay on the invasion of Playa Girón, known in broken English as "Bay of Pigs." I would like to introduce a doubt, a heresy in most analyses of MEMORIES: Titón is quite possibly the creator of the cinematic form of the film, and as far as the records show, I am the author of the content of the film. The intellectual history of Cuban culture requires a more rigorous approach. I could agree that the film is formally more successful than the novel as art, though I would be hard pressed if asked to define art, form or aesthetic value in itself. But following the

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proposition that good novels make bad films, one could argue that only bad novels could make good films. A proposition that amuses and satisfies me.

When the film first appeared I ceded all the glory to Titón, since my novel was already successful, and wrote generously that it was his film since the creator, the God, in any film, is the director. Now I would add that one of us is God and the other one his prophet.

Now about the surrogate characters. I believe Paulo in LAND IN ANGUISH is closer to what Julianne calls "the artist intellectual as anti-hero" than Sergio in MEMORIES. Sergio is not an intellectual, he is more a metaphor for the possibilities and limitations of bourgeois patterns of behavior within a revolution. One must remember that Sergio chose to go into business before he was forced into writing by the revolution. Sergio starts a diary--which is just another form of fiction--and a device to reveal the clash between his middle-class outlook and revolutionary praxis. I made him keep a diary so as to reveal the mind of the neocolonial bourgeoisie. My intention was to show that the best a middle-class approach could offer, faced with the revolution, would inevitably fail.

Sergio begins feeling above it all, "the island is a trap, we are too small to survive; it's quite an expensive dignity," only to discover at the end that he is under it all, truly underdeveloped as a social being. The revolution is not a trap, his apartment is a trap. It is only in action, and not in passive contemplation, that radical understanding and change is possible--only through socialized activity and not mental masturbation is man able to fight alienation. Maybe alienation can never be avoided, but at least it can be mitigated. Alienation is, as far as I have seen, part of being a symbolic animal.

Sergio is an intellectual only insofar as we all are intellectuals; his professional specificity is not that of a writer--if I were to describe his social role I would consider him a retired businessman turned writer. Sergio stands for the consciousness and behavior of a bourgeois trying to read the future in terms of the past.

I believe that in spite of Rocha and Titón insinuating or throwing at us the image of "the artist-intellectual as anti-hero" both Paulo and Sergio are for all cultural purposes contemporary heroes. They are contemporary heroes of the Western world in the second half of the twentieth century, cleverly placed in the Third World. That is why I felt the destruction of Sergio as inevitable in the context of the Cuban revolution.

First of all, the idea of an intellectual questioning his role in society is imported cultural colonialism. And this is something we all suffer from: a cross-eyed vision of the world; one eye looking towards Europe or the United States and the other condemned to our sad and suffering Latin American republics. And these two views overlap and create double exposures.

Those, I believe, are the two central points LAND IN ANGUISH and MEMORIES make visually and intellectually and emotionally evident to someone already conditioned to read the cultural discourse of Latin America in terms of class differences and colonial distortion. "On the part of these filmmakers," Julianne has stated, "this refusal of the artist-intellectual as hero is simultaneously political and aesthetic in its motivation, reflecting the directors' analysis of the Latin American political situation and their opposition to the conventions of character portrayal in the dominant cinema." I do not think there is a refusal of the artist-intellectual as hero. I am the first to admit that my novel defeats its purpose. The opposition to the conventions of character portrayal in the dominant cinema seems only a figure of speech, an intellectual discourse of deceit.

The problem of most Latin American artists and intellectuals is a problem with their native audience. Their products are mainly addressed to an audience in London, Venice, Paris, New York, or San Francisco. To an audience of critics and sectors of the enlightened bourgeoisie.

Their true audience is often impatient with them, critical of their self-sufficiency. This is an audience of professionals, students and radical social organizers. An audience that functions within a Latin American context: proud of the political and social future of our countries and not afflicted by any sense of cultural inferiority. They are struggling, agonizing for a socialist reorganization of society. The other group, stronger but less culturally sophisticated, is made up of the growing Latin American bourgeoisie, growing only at the expense of sixty or seventy percent of the rest of the population--a group interested in securing a consumer society for an enclave of material wealth. Eventually with a space for artistic experimentation and a need for popular consensus.

These two groups are fighting for the control of Latin America, and these two groups, and the republics in which they are dominant will determine the course of Latin American culture. Countries and societies are torn by this dichotomy. Brazil and Cuba are at the center of the struggle. Both are weary of the tendency of most artist-intellectuals to present themselves as the conscience of society, a society they often see in terms of the past, the past being either the decisive influence of European or United States culture or the nostalgia for the dead magical world of One Hundred Years of Solitude.

This is the cause of the present crisis, the historical and political changes discussed in the opening paragraph of the conclusion. It is true that "neither the Brazilians nor the Cubans are currently producing films which are as thematically intrepid or formally audacious." I believe this is a sign of maturity, of social growth and, above all, historical density. I do not believe, as Julianne seems to believe, that the more populist or classical styles are not necessarily less democratic because "they require less of their audience."

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She finds them "arguably less democratic because they grant their audience less space for reflection and participation."

My point is that the audience for these films was never significant; they never attracted a large popular audience. In Latin America these films were always for the happy few, therefore they only require less space for reflection and participation from a cultural and political elite. I have found that films like *EL BRIGADISTA* and *RETRATO DE TERESA*, although they are less formally complex and more chronologically narrative, have reached, touched, and influenced a broader audience in Cuba than films such as *LUCÍA* or *MEMORIES*.

Both Rocha and Titón have won an international audience at the expense of a national audience in Cuba or Brazil. There is a vital need for films like *LAND IN ANGUISH* and *MEMORIES* but these films should rely more heavily upon a national film industry linked to a massive national audience, than to a foreign discourse, both in form and content. I still remember having seen *CANTATA DE CHILE*, a film by Humberto Solás, the director of *LUCÍA*, in Havana. I enjoyed the projection of the film, alone, seated in the dilapidated opulence of a neighborhood cinema.

As a writer of fiction I can only mourn the crisis of experimental films, since I can only write novels for enlightened minorities; but as a writer of essays I cannot fail to understand the precarious nature of dense and complex art forms that exclude the participation, namely the emotional participation, in art of vast sectors of our countries.

EDMUNDO DESNOES

FOOTNOTES

¹ Julianne Burton, "Film Artisans and Film Industries in Latin America, 1956-1980: Theoretical and Critical Implications of Variations in Modes of Filmic Production and Consumption," WWICS Latin American Program, Working Paper No. 102 (1981).

² Tomas Gutierrez Alea, "Memorias del subdesarrollo: Apuntes de trabajo," Hablemos de cine (Peru) No. 54 (July-August 1970), p. 19. (my translation).

³ Robert Stam, "Land in Anguish," in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, eds., Brazilian Cinema (East Brunswick, N.J., 1982), p. 161.

⁴ Ismail Xavier, Allegories of Underdevelopment: From the "Aesthetics of Hunger" to the "Aesthetics of Garbage." Doctoral dissertation, New York University Department of Film Studies; Ann Arbor: University Microfilm, 1982, p. 111.

⁵ Ibid., p. 117.

⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

⁷ Jean Franco, "The Crisis of the Liberal Imagination and the Utopia of Writing," Ideologies and Literature (Minneapolis, MN), Vol. I:1, 1977, p. 17, passim.

⁸ Xavier, op. cit., p. 121.

⁹ Stam, op. cit., p. 153.

¹⁰ Frank Bonilla, "Cultural Elites," in Seymour Martin Lipset and Also Solari (eds.), Elites in Latin America (New York: Oxford), p. 250.

¹¹ Xavier, op. cit., p. 216.

¹² Ibid., pp. 218-219.

¹³ Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁴ Stam, op. cit., p. 156.

¹⁵ Julianne Burton, "Cultural Context and Selective Perception: MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT in the Land of Overdevelopment," Cineaste (New York), Vol. VIII:1, pp. 19-20.

¹⁶ In an influential article, "Towards a Non-Bourgeoisamera Style," Brian Henderson distinguished filmic collage from the more familiar technique of the montage: "Montage fragments reality in order to reconstitute it in highly organized, synthetic emotional and intellectual patterns. Collage...collects or sticks its fragments together in a way that does not entirely overcome their fragmentation. It seeks to recover its fragments as fragments. In regard to overall form, it seeks

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to bring out the internal relations of its pieces, whereas montage imposes a set of relations upon them and indeed collects or creates its pieces to fill out a pre-existent plan." Film Quarterly (Berkeley), Vol. XXIV, No. 2, Winter 1970-1971, p. 5.

¹⁷ Stam, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

¹⁸ Tomas Gutierrez Alea, "Memorias de Memorias," in Dialectica del espectador (Havana: Cuadernos de la Revista Union, 1982), p. 71.

¹⁹ Julio Garcia Espinosa, "Carta a la revista Chilea Primer Plano," Una imagen recorre el mundo (Havana: Letras Cubanas, 1979), pp. 26-27.

²⁰ Roger Greenspan, review of LAND IN ANGUISH, The New York Times, May 15, 1970: a useful example of insight through exasperation in an otherwise thoroughly negative review.

²¹ Xavier, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

²² Gutierrez Alea, op. cit., ("Memorias de Memorias"), p. 68.

²³ Xavier, op. cit., p. 122.

²⁴ Warren Bass, "Is There a Clear Dividing Line Between Documentary and Cinematic Fiction?" (Unpublished paper, Society for Cinema Studies Conference, UCLA, 1982).

²⁵ Xavier, op. cit., p. 121.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 217.

²⁷ For an interview with Garcia Espinosa just prior to his appointment to the directorship of ICAIC, see Julianne Burton, "Theory and Practice of Film and Popular Culture in Cuba: A Conversation with Julio Garcia Espinosa," Quarterly Review of Film Studies (Los Angeles), Vol. 7, No. 4 (Fall, 1982), pp. 341-351.

²⁸ Talcott Parsons, "'The Intellectual': A Social Role Category," in Phillip Rieff (ed.), On Intellectuals: Theoretical Studies, Case Studies (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), p. 22.

²⁹ J. P. Nettl, "Ideas, Intellectuals, and Structures of Dissent," in Rieff, ibid., p. 54.

³⁰ Parsons, op. cit., p. 4.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 22, 23, 24, respectively.

³² Bill Nichols, Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1981), Preface: x.

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³³Ibid., Introduction, p. 1.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 1-2.

³⁵Ibid., p. 2.

³⁶Ibid., p. 2.

³⁷Ibid., p. 1.

³⁸Parsons, op. cit., p. 24.

³⁹Nichols, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Jean Franco, "¿Que ha pasado con el coro? García Marquez y el Premio Nobel," Areito (New York), Vol. VIII, No. 32 (1983), pp. 18-22.

⁴²Eduardo Galeano, "The Revolution as Revelation," translated by Walter I. Bradbury, Socialist Review #65 (Vol. 12, No. 5) (September-October, 1982), p. 15.

⁴³Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁴Alan Riding, "Revolution and the Intellectual in Latin America," The New York Times Magazine (March 13, 1983), p. 31.